



## REFUTING POINTS NO ONE IS MAKING

*A Response from Focus on the Family to  
the American Academy of Pediatrics'  
July 2006 Report on Same-Sex Parenting*

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*The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has released their second major contribution to the debate over same-sex parenting and the well-being of children in their July 2006 journal Pediatrics, in an article entitled "The Effects of Marriage, Civil Unions, and Domestic Partnership Laws on the Health and Well-being of Children." This analysis was requested by their Board of Directors and examines the "effects of marriage, civil unions, and domestic partnership statutes and amendments on the legal, financial, and psychosocial health and well-being of children whose parents are gay or lesbian."<sup>1</sup>*

This new report follows the Academy's first policy statement and supporting technical report on the issue of coparent and second-parent adoption by same-sex parents in early 2002 [*Pediatrics* 109 (2002): 339-340; 341-344].

This first policy statement was profoundly influential, leading many other professional

medical and mental health organizations to offer statements in support of same-sex parenting.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Multiple professional organizations developed position statements on same-sex marriage and parenting following the AAP's 2002 policy statement. They include: American Psychoanalytic Association, "Position Statement on Gay and Lesbian Parenting," adopted May 16, 2002, <<http://www.apsa.org/AboutAPSAA/PositionStatements/tabid/191/Default.aspx>> (26 July 2006); American Academy of Family Physicians, "Policy on Adoption," October 2002, <<http://www.aafp.org/fpr/assembly2002/1017/7>.

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<sup>1</sup> James G. Pawelski et al., "The Effects of Marriage, Civil Unions, and Domestic Partnership Laws on the Health and Well-being of Children," *Pediatrics* 118 (2006): 349.

Collectively, these have created an assumption that no serious questions exist regarding the way policies promoting the development of same-sex homes will benefit children. But as the AAP rightly suggests with the release of this new analysis, there is a need for greater scientific and academic discussion.<sup>3</sup> Our response is offered in the spirit of this invitation. The importance of the debate – and its potential impact on generations of children – demands that more information be considered than what the new AAP report offers.

### ***Analysis of the Pediatrics 2006 Article on Marriage and Child Well-being***

The AAP's article begins with an overview of the legislative and court developments on civil marriage, civil unions, domestic partnerships, adoption, and constitutional amendments in the United States. It also offers the U.S. Census Bureau's understanding of same-sex family demographics. The report then moves into the meat of the article: how these public policies affect same-sex couples and the well-being of their children. The core

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[html](#)> (26 July 2006); American Psychological Association, "Resolution on Sexual Orientation and Marriage," adopted July 2004, <<http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbcpolicy/marriage.pdf>> (26 July 2006); American Psychiatric Association, "Support of Legal Recognition of Same-Sex Civil Marriage Position Statement," approved July 2005, <[http://www.psych.org/edu/other\\_res/lib\\_archives/200502.pdf](http://www.psych.org/edu/other_res/lib_archives/200502.pdf)> (26 July 2006); National Association of Social Workers, "Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Issues," 2005, <<http://www.socialworkers.org/da/da2005/policies0505/documents/lgbissues.pdf>> (26 July 2006); American Medical Association, "A Status Report to the 2005 House of Delegates: Resolution from the 2004 House of Delegates," June 2005, <<http://www.mmaonline.net/pdf/HODactionplan2005.pdf>> (26 July 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Lori O'Keefe, "Special article in *Pediatrics* outlines laws affecting children of same-gender parents," *AAP News* 27 (2006): 1-21.

argument is that passage of laws offering legal marriage and adoption recognition to same-gendered couples would improve the well-being of the children because "civil marriage is a legal status through which societal recognition and support are given to couples and families."<sup>4</sup> They support their argument for changes in current marriage and adoption law by citing studies that indicate gay and lesbians make good parents.

We have four primary concerns of which medical professionals and public and private policy makers should be aware. The AAP article:

- 1) Misses the primary point of this debate
- 2) Rests solely on a new, developing literature and poorly represents the reliability of that new literature
- 3) Fails to appreciate the diversity and complexity of the larger literature on family configuration and child well-being
- 4) Fails to recognize the radical implications of their own argument

As we shall see, the first three criticisms are closely-related facets of the same issue.

### **1) The AAP misses the point.**

The authors begin their discussion of same-sex homes with a psychological evaluation of homosexual parents. The first sentence of this discussion states:

Discriminatory practices are based on the assumption that lesbian mothers and gay fathers are different from heterosexual parents

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<sup>4</sup> Pawelski et al., "The Effects of Marriage, Civil Unions, and Domestic Partnership Laws on the Health and Well-being of Children," 356.

in ways that are detrimental to their children's well-being.<sup>5</sup>

Beyond the loaded language of “discriminatory practices” – and the paper is unclear on just what these pernicious practices are – the authors assume that the basis for the discrimination is the belief that gay and lesbian parents, as individuals, are detrimentally different by nature of their orientation than their heterosexual counterparts. No documentation is offered that any party to this debate has actually made such a supposition. It is just assumed. This is a regrettable omission, as the argumentation set forth over the next few pages is in response to this unfounded assertion.

To counter this assumption, the AAP article states:

However, few differences have been found in research conducted over the last 3 decades comparing lesbian and heterosexual mothers' self-esteem, psychological adjustment, and attitudes toward child rearing. ... Overall, there are more similarities than differences in parenting styles and attitudes of gay and nongay fathers.<sup>6</sup>

*This is where the authors miss the point.*

To say that gay or lesbian couples should be able to marry and raise children because they are very similar to heterosexuals in the ways they love and care for children is to answer an argument that very few are making.

Few would deny that most gay and lesbian couples raising children are loving people who work tirelessly to provide the best possible life for children. Few would assert

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<sup>5</sup> Pawelski et al., “The Effects of Marriage, Civil Unions, and Domestic Partnership Laws on the Health and Well-being of Children,” 359.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

that sexual orientation, in itself, profoundly alters a person's care for children.

Identifying as gay or straight does little to dampen a parent's desire for their child to work hard in school, be kind to others, eat healthy snacks, keep active, develop confidence, keep their rooms somewhat clean, read more good books and watch less television.

So what *is* the point?

The concern is not about the individual qualities of the parents, but the family configuration itself. Let us look at one important and relevant aspect of this. As the AAP report admits, most children in same-sex families are being raised in reconstituted homes as stepchildren.

Most children who have 1 or 2 gay or lesbian parents were born in the context of a heterosexual relationship. That relationship may still exist or may have been dissolved; if the latter, either or both partners have found new partners of the same or different gender.<sup>7</sup>

The well-established body of literature on family configuration and child well-being outcomes is instructive here. This literature addresses the way stepfamilies impact child development and how the configuration of the relationship between the parents, over and against the individual qualities of the parents, affects outcomes for children.

This literature consistently reveals important differences between stepfamilies and first-marriage families. David Popenoe, the Rutgers sociologist, explains:

Social scientists used to believe that, for positive child outcomes, stepfamilies were preferable to single-parent families. Today, we are not so sure. Stepfamilies typically have an economic advantage, but some recent

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 358.

studies indicate that the children of stepfamilies have as many behavioral and emotional problems as the children of single-parent families, and possibly more. ...Stepfamily problems, in short, may be so intractable that *the best strategy for dealing with them is to do everything possible to minimize their occurrence.*<sup>8</sup> (emphasis added)

### ***Why the marked difference in outcomes for stepfamilies?***

The difference in outcomes for these families is *not* because stepparents are dramatically or qualitatively different from non-stepparents as parents or people. The issue is that a family configuration comprising a biological and non-biological parent – regardless of how loving, caring and competent they might be – creates a different growing-up experience for children because the child is living in a reconstituted home. This, rather than the parents' individual abilities, is what seems to diminish the success of these children.<sup>9</sup> The authors fail to address this dynamic of the new family union, focusing instead on the qualities of the parents as individuals. (We present a much fuller examination of the current stepfamily research and its application to this topic in our third criticism.)

Blindness to this family-configuration dynamic is reflected in statements throughout the AAP article as the authors continue to compare parents based solely on sexual preference. Witness the following assertion:

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<sup>8</sup> David Popenoe, "The Evolution of Marriage and the Problems of Stepfamilies," in Alan Booth and Judy Dunn, eds., *Stepfamilies: Who Benefits? Who Does Not?* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), 5, 19.

<sup>9</sup> Dennis R. Hogan, "Stepfamilies: Selectivity of High-Risk Persons or Risk State?" in Booth and Dunn, eds., *Stepfamilies: Who Benefits? Who Does Not?*, 147-151.

Lesbian and heterosexual mothers describe themselves similarly in marital and maternal interests, current lifestyles, and child-rearing practices.<sup>10</sup>

Focusing on the aggregate similarities of mothers regardless of sexual preference, they completely overlook one primary and fundamental difference between the two: heterosexual mothers, as a rule, have the deep "marital and maternal interest" of sharing love, life and the daily parenting tasks with the child's father. They, in their ideal, are generally interested in raising the child with the man whose biological product and love helped create the child. These women will expend a great deal of effort and energy to realize this goal, even if they do not always achieve it.<sup>11</sup> The other group of mothers, by design, tends to have no such interest in the significant man in their child's life. Do the authors find this is of no consequence? Their silence on such a fundamental point is both remarkable and curious.

### ***Can father be replaced by an additional loving mother?***

Fathers do matter. An analysis of over 100 studies on fatherhood and child development outcomes found that having a loving and nurturing father was *as important* for a child's happiness, well-being, and social and academic success as having a loving and nurturing mother. Some studies indicated father-love was a *stronger* contributor than mother-love to some important positive child well-being outcomes. The study concludes:

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<sup>10</sup> Pawelski et al., "The Effects of Marriage, Civil Unions, and Domestic Partnership Laws on the Health and Well-being of Children," 359.

<sup>11</sup> Helen E. Fisher, *Anatomy of Love: The Natural History of Monogamy, Adultery and Divorce* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 59-74.

Overall, father love appears to be as heavily implicated as mother love in offsprings' psychological well-being and health.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, it is the question of the kinds of homes adults form due to their new or past relationships that seems to affect family-configuration dynamics and the concomitant child well-being, rather than these adults' sexual preferences. What concerns organizations like Focus on the Family and the Family Research Council that have been critical of public policies favoring the creation of same-sex families is that these homes are intentionally motherless or fatherless. Unlike most single-mother families, where the mother often *desires* a healthy father in the home for their child, same-sex families, by definition, have no such interest. We do not believe, based on a very robust and diverse scientific literature, that two loving mothers are the qualitative equivalent of a loving father. A father's contribution to his child is much more than the donation of his reproductive material or the delivery of an on-time child-support payment.<sup>13</sup>

## **2) The analysis rests solely on a new, developing literature and poorly**

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<sup>12</sup> Ronald P. Rohner and Robert A. Veneziano, "The Importance of Father Love: History and Contemporary Evidence," *Review of General Psychology* 5.4 (2001): 382-405.

<sup>13</sup> Paul R. Amato and Fernando Rivera, "Paternal Involvement and Children's Behavior Problems," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61 (1999): 375-384; Kyle D. Pruett, *Fatherhood: Why Father Care is as Essential as Mother Care for Your Child*, (New York: The Free Press, 2000); Ronald P. Rohner and Robert A. Veneziano, "The Importance of Father Love: History and Contemporary Evidence," *Review of General Psychology* 5.4 (2001): 382-405; David Popenoe, *Life Without Father: Compelling Evidence that Fatherhood and Marriage Are Indispensable for the Good of Children*, (New York, The Free Press, 1996); Michael E. Lamb, "Fathers: The Forgotten Contributors to Child Development," *Human Development* 18 (1975): 245-266.

## **represents the reliability of that new literature.**

The authors of the AAP article present and discuss exactly 29 published academic studies and one fact sheet that examine child well-being in same-sex homes.<sup>14</sup>

The authors did little to help the reader appreciate the shortcomings and methodological problems that have plagued research examining the outcomes of same-sex homes, offering only a single sentence explaining that early studies "encountered predictable challenges in sample selection, sample size, investigator bias and measurement."<sup>15</sup> This problem pertains to more than just early studies, and an examination of these problems should be a significant part of a serious academic discussion on the topic. Its absence from the AAP's analysis is unfortunate.

### ***Meezan and Rauch***

A recent article, written by William Meezan and Jonathan Rauch and published by the Princeton University-based Future of Children Foundation, candidly considers the serious methodological flaws in the current literature, despite the authors' support of same-sex parenting.<sup>16</sup> We will examine just two primary methodological difficulties identified by Meezan and Rauch in their literature review before inspecting some particular studies referred to in the AAP article. (Meezan and Rauch also provide analyses of other methodological shortcomings in the current research on same-sex homes that should be read in full by those interested in this topic.)

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<sup>14</sup> Pawelski et al., "The Effects of Marriage, Civil Unions, and Domestic Partnership Laws on the Health and Well-being of Children," 363-64.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 359.

<sup>16</sup> William Meezan and Jonathan Rauch, "Gay Marriage, Same-Sex Parenting, and America's Children," in *The Future of Children* 15 (2005): 34.

Regarding representative subject samples in the current literature on same-sex parenting, Meezan and Rauch explain:

All but one of the studies we examined employed samples composed of either totally or predominantly white participants. Almost all the participants were middle- to upper-middle class, urban, well-educated and “out.” Most were lesbians, not gay men.<sup>17</sup>

They describe sample sizes:

Most studies describing the development of children raised in gay or lesbian homes report findings on fewer than twenty-five children, and most comparative studies compare fewer than thirty children in each group studied. Other things being equal, the smaller the number of subjects in the groups studied, the harder it is to detect differences between those groups.<sup>18</sup>

They also cite the criticisms of other scholars, such as the testimony of respected scholar Steven Nock in a 2001 Canadian court case. Nock asserted that the current body of literature on same-sex homes faced so many methodological challenges that “all the studies I reviewed contained at least one fatal flaw of design or execution. ... Not a single one was conducted according to generally accepted standards of scientific research.”<sup>19</sup>

Meezan and Rauch compare this conclusion with one from two equally prominent scholars, Judith Stacey and Timothy Biblarz. Though they personally support policies promoting gay and lesbian families and write in favor of them, they recognize the same kinds of limitations in the literature

that Meezan and Rauch do.<sup>20</sup> They also observe that, “Thus far, no work has compared children’s *long-term* achievements in education, occupation, income, and other domains of life.”<sup>21</sup> (emphasis in original)

Even the AAP’s 2002 Technical Report on coparent adoption recognized that, “research exploring the diversity of parental relationships among gay and lesbian parents is just beginning.”<sup>22</sup>

How can the AAP be so confident that children will fare well in same-sex homes when no long-term comparative studies have been conducted on the matter and the research “is just beginning”?

### ***Comparing Meezan and Rauch with the AAP***

The newness and shortcomings of this research cause Meezan and Rauch to be consistently more cautious in their conclusions about the outcomes from same-sex families than the authors of the AAP article.

For example, where the AAP authors state:

There is *ample evidence* to show that children raised by same-gender parents fare as well as those raised by heterosexual parents. ... These data have demonstrated no risk to children as a result of growing up in a family with 1 or more gay parents.<sup>23</sup> (emphasis added)

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<sup>20</sup> Judith Stacey and Timothy Biblarz, “(How) Does the Sexual Orientation of Parents Matter?” *American Sociological Review* 66 (2001): 164-167.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>22</sup> Ellen C. Perrin, “Technical Report: Coparent and Second-Parent Adoption by Same-Sex Parents,” *Pediatrics* 109 (2002): 343.

<sup>23</sup> Pawelski et al., “The Effects of Marriage, Civil Unions, and Domestic Partnership Laws on the Health and Well-being of Children,” 361.

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

Meezan and Rauch, reflecting on the same literature, are more precise and circumspect in their language:

To make the same point a little differently, those who say the evidence shows that many same-sex parents do an excellent job of parenting are right. Those who say the evidence falls short of showing that same-sex parenting is equivalent to opposite-sex parenting [or better, or worse] are also right.<sup>24</sup>

They also explain:

In other words, *virtually no empirical evidence* exists on how same-sex parents' marriage might affect their children. Nonetheless, we can do some theoretical probing.<sup>25</sup> (emphasis added)

Such caution and recognition of the weaknesses of the current literature leads these two supporters of same-sex families to recommend something much more conservative than the authors of the AAP suggest. They encourage our nation to “try same-sex marriage on a limited scale – without, so to speak, betting the whole country.”<sup>26</sup> They endorse a “limited, localized experiment” where the impact of same-sex parenting could be examined for a longer period of time: marriage in Massachusetts, civil unions in Vermont and Connecticut and neither in New Hampshire. These reflect the current policy of each of these states and offer “a near ideal natural laboratory.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> <sup>24</sup> Meezan and Rauch, “Gay Marriage, Same-Sex Parenting, and America’s Children,” 104.

<sup>25</sup> Meezan and Rauch, “Gay Marriage, Same-Sex Parenting, and America’s Children,” 107.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

### *Studies utilized in the AAP article*

When examining the reliability of the current studies in the literature on same-sex parenting, Meezan and Rauch recommend only four studies as “methodologically rigorous.”<sup>28</sup> The AAP praises two of these studies as being an improvement over earlier work but do so with serious misrepresentation of the truth. The AAP paper asserts:

The importance of these studies is that the research was planned and conducted by people who had no particular interest or investment in research regarding same-gender parents.<sup>29</sup>

Anyone casually familiar with this literature knows that this is just not true. The two studies referred to are authored – along with co-authors – by Susan Golombok and Charlotte Patterson, respectively.<sup>30</sup> These are two of the brightest stars in the same-sex family research constellation.

Dr. Golombok has written and published numerous studies and books on the subject of lesbian parenting and artificially-assisted reproduction, including the influential *Growing Up in a Lesbian Family: Effects on Child Development*.<sup>31</sup> Her bio-brief on the website of the City University of London explains that she “has also been involved in a number of studies of lesbian mother families from the mid 1970s until the present time.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>29</sup> Pawelski et al., “The Effects of Marriage, Civil Unions, and Domestic Partnership Laws on the Health and Well-being of Children,” 360.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 364.

<sup>31</sup> Fiona L. Tasker and Susan Golombok, *Growing Up in a Lesbian Family: Effects on Child Development*, (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 1997).

<sup>32</sup> “Professor Susan Golombok, BSc, MSc, PhD,” City University, London website, <<http://www.city.ac.uk/psychology/research/fcerc/staff/golombok.html>> (27 July 2006).

Charlotte Patterson's notable and influential work on same-sex families is likewise substantive, earning her an award for Distinguished Scientific Contributions from the Society for Psychological Study of Lesbian and Gay Issues in 1996. The following year, she received an Outstanding Achievement Award for her work from the APA Committee on Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Concerns. A blurb about Dr. Patterson on her University of Virginia webpage recognizes her as a "well-known researcher of the development of children being raised in gay/lesbian families."<sup>33</sup>

Beyond this false representation of the authors, there are important methodological concerns with these two studies that are left unaddressed. Though they do indeed excel previous studies in their utilization of nationally representative samples, there is a serious problem with their comparison of lesbian homes with heterosexual homes.

The first study<sup>34</sup> examines 39 lesbian-mother families (20 single-parent, 19 couple-headed). Twenty-eight of the children in these homes were born into heterosexual homes before the formation of the lesbian home. The other 11 children had been conceived by donor insemination.

Regarding the 74 heterosexual families where children were present, the study merely states they lived with their parents from birth. It does not say whether these heterosexual couples were married or cohabiting, nor whether both parents were biological, though the latter was implied.

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<sup>33</sup> "Charlotte Patterson," University of Virginia Faculty Experts Guide, <<http://www.virginia.edu/facultyexperts/expert.php?id=390>> (27 July 2006).

<sup>34</sup> Susan Golombok et al., "Children with Lesbian Parents: A Community Study," *Developmental Psychology* 39 (2003) 20-33.

The second study<sup>35</sup> involved 44 adolescents parented by same-sex couples (only 6 were headed by two males) and 44 adolescents parented by opposite-sex couples. No explanation is given of the nature of these opposite-couple homes. It is simply stated that they are two-parent homes in which both adults are heterosexual. Were they married? Stepfamilies? Cohabiting? The report offers no clarification, nor hints that this is an important issue worthy of clarification.

But these are important points, because research involving the varying types of heterosexual homes over the past thirty years reveals a diversity of outcomes for children in various configurations of heterosexual homes.<sup>36</sup> Heterosexual homes

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<sup>35</sup> Jennifer Wainright, Stephen T. Russell and Charlotte J. Patterson, "Psychosocial Adjustment, School Outcomes, and Romantic Relationships of Adolescents with Same-Sex Parents," *Child Development* 75 (2002): 1886-1898.

<sup>36</sup> David H. Demo and Martha J. Cox, "Families With Young Children: A Review of Research in the 1990s," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 64 (2000): 876-895; Michael P. Johnson and Kathleen J. Ferraro, "Research on Domestic Violence in the 1990s: Making Distinctions," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 64 (2000): 948-963; Karen Secombe, "Families in Poverty in the 1990s: Trends, Causes, Consequences, and Lessons Learned," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 64 (2000): 1094-1113; William Marsiglio, Paul Amato, Randal D. Day and Michael E. Lamb, "Scholarship on Fatherhood in the 1990s and Beyond," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 64 (2000): 1173-1191; Judith E. Seltzer, "Families Formed Outside of Marriage," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 64 (2000): 1247-1268; Paul R. Amato, "The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 64 (2000): 1269-1287; Marilyn Coleman, Lawrence Ganong and Mark Fine, "Reinvestigating Remarriage: Another Decade of Progress," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 64 (2000): 1289-1307; Catherine L. Cohan and Stacey Kleinbaum, "Toward a Greater Understanding of the Cohabitation Effect: Premarital Cohabitation and Marital Communication," 64 (2002): 180-192.

are not monolithic in terms of outcomes for children, and it is imprecise to treat them as such. We will explore some of these differences in the next section.

So, when the authors of these two studies – and the AAP as well – conclude that children raised in lesbian homes look similar to children raised in heterosexual homes, they actually tell us very little.

We do not know if children in same-sex homes look more like children from heterosexual stepfamilies, cohabiting homes or intact first-marriage homes because the studies do not specify the make up of these two-parent families (although the first study is more specific in that the children lived in the home “since birth”).<sup>37</sup>

The only time the AAP article distinguishes between same-sex homes and particular types of heterosexual family configurations at all is in an oblique acknowledgment that “children of divorced lesbian mothers grow up in ways that are very similar to children of divorced heterosexual mothers,” explaining that no differences have been found between these two groups.<sup>38</sup>

### **3) The AAP fails to appreciate the diversity and complexity of the larger literature on family configuration and child well-being.**

Not a single one of the twenty-nine studies cited in the AAP article addresses parenting, family configuration and child well-being from outside a same-sex family focus. This failure to compare and contrast the current literature on same-sex homes with the larger, established literature what we know about family configuration and child-wellbeing is a crippling limitation.

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<sup>37</sup> Golombok et al., “Children with Lesbian Parents: A Community Study,” 22.

<sup>38</sup> Pawelski et al., “The Effects of Marriage, Civil Unions, and Domestic Partnership Laws on the Health and Well-being of Children,” 359.

For example, as we have already noted, the authors of the AAP article state that most gay and lesbian homes closely resemble stepfamilies in formulation:

Most children who have 1 or 2 gay or lesbian parents were born in the context of a heterosexual relationship. That relationship may still exist or may have been dissolved; if the latter, either or both partners have found new partners of the same or different gender.<sup>39</sup>

Given this admission, do the authors not feel that the vast academic literature on stepfamily outcomes is relevant to their discussion? While the comparison is the closest comparison group because the family system dynamics are tied to reconstituted families, regardless of parental sexual orientation, there are possible confounding differences because of the gender issues of same-sex parents and the reasons these new families develop. However, the well-developed literature on stepfamilies allows us to apply a good deal of reliable knowledge of child well-being outcomes to a new family form that is less understood.<sup>40</sup>

What has the explosion of stepfamilies in the past three decades, and the resultant wealth of academic studies, revealed about the well-being of children in this particular family configuration? And how does this information contribute to our understanding of gay and lesbian marriage and parenting?

Current literature on stepfamilies raises concern that children growing in these

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 358.

<sup>40</sup> A recent review of the current research on stepfamilies observes, “The body of stepfamily research published this decade [1990s] exceeds the entire output of the previous 90 years of the century.” The authors note significant gains made in our understanding of stepfamily dynamics based on this increased body of knowledge. [See Coleman et al., “Reinvestigating Remarriage: Another Decade of Progress,” 1289-1307].

reconstituted homes face greater developmental problems than children living with their original parents. Some of these risks<sup>41</sup> can be quite serious:

- Stepparents provide less warmth and communicate less with their children than do original parents and “biological mothers [express] more warmth, rapport, and closeness with their own children, regardless of family type or the complexity of the stepfamily system.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Popenoe, “The Evolution of Marriage and the Problems of Stepfamilies”; Nicholas Zill, “Understanding Why Children in Stepfamilies Have More Learning and Behavior Problems Than Children in Nuclear Families,” in *Stepfamilies: Who Benefits? Who Does Not?*, eds. Booth and Dunn, 98; Martin Daly and Margo Wilson, “Child Abuse and Other Risks of Not Living with Both Parents,” *Ethology and Sociobiology*, 6 (1985): 197-210; Martin Daly and Margo Wilson, *Homicide*, (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1988), 87-88; Margo Wilson and Martin Daly, “Risk of Maltreatment of Children Living With Stepparents,” in *Child Abuse and Neglect: Biosocial Dimensions*, eds., R. Gelles and J. Lancaster (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1987), p. 230; Michael Stiffman et al., “Household Composition and Risk of Fatal Child Maltreatment,” *Pediatrics*, 109 (2002), 615-621; “Shuttle Diplomacy,” *Psychology Today*, July/August 1993, p. 15; Douglas B. Downey, “Understanding Academic Achievement Among Children in Stepparents: The Role of Parental Resources, Sex of Stepparent and Sex of Child,” *Social Forces* 73 (1995): 875-894; William L. MacDonald and Alfred DeMaris, “Parenting Stepchildren and Biological Children: The Effect of Stepparent’s Gender and New Biological Children,” *Journal of Family Issues* 17 (1996): 5.

<sup>42</sup> E. Mavis Hetherington and Kathleen M. Jodl, “Stepfamilies as a Setting for Child Development,” in *Stepfamilies: Who Benefits? Who Does Not?*, eds., Alan Booth and Judy Dunn (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), p. 67; See also, E. Thomson, S. McLanahan, & R. Curtin, “Family Structure, Gender, and Parental Socialization,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 54 (1992): 368-378.

- While biological parents in stepfamilies show more warmth than stepparents, “biological parents in stepfamilies are less supportive of their children than biological parents in nonstepfamilies,” and even a happy (re)marriage “bears a very different relation to the quality of parent-child relationships and children’s outcome than it does in non-stepfamilies.”<sup>43</sup>
- Stepfamilies are more conflicted about child-rearing and financial support of children, are less cohesive and suffer from more role ambiguity and disparate role expectations of the different adults and parents. They also suffer from more stress and experience more problems in childrearing and child adjustment than families in first marriages.<sup>44</sup>
- Children from stepfamilies, where their biological father is missing, are substantially more likely to have to repeat a grade and twice as likely to be expelled or suspended, compared to children living with their mother and father.<sup>45</sup>
- Children living in stepfamilies are also likely to have significantly greater “emotional, behavioral, and academic problems” than children living with their biological mother and father. These children more closely resemble those in single-

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<sup>43</sup> Judy Dunn and Alan Booth, “Stepfamilies: An Overview,” *Stepfamilies: Who Benefits? Who Does Not?*, eds., Booth and Dunn, 220.

<sup>44</sup> Hetherington and Jodl, 1994, p. 57.

<sup>45</sup> Zill, “Understanding Why Children in Stepfamilies Have More Learning and Behavior Problems Than Children in Nuclear Families,” in *Stepfamilies: Who Benefits? Who Does Not?*, eds., Booth and Dunn, 100.

parent homes than those in original mother-father homes.<sup>46</sup>

- Children in stepfamilies exhibit significantly higher degrees of emotional and behavioral problems, needs for psychological help and reports of poor general health, along with greater likelihood of depression, than their peers in biological-parented homes.<sup>47</sup>
- Adolescents in stepfamilies experience significantly higher rates of drug use in 8<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> grade than do children living with their mother and father.<sup>48</sup>
- Preschool children who live with one biological parent and one stepparent are 40 times more likely to become a victim of abuse than children living with a biological mother and father.<sup>49</sup> Findings such as this led domestic violence researchers Martin Daly and Margo Wilson to conclude, “stepparenthood per se remains *the single most powerful risk factor* for child abuse that has yet been identified.” (emphasis added)<sup>50</sup> Compared to children in biological homes and even single parent

homes, “stepchildren are not merely ‘disadvantaged,’ but imperiled.”<sup>51</sup>

- What is more, a recent study on household composition and risk of child maltreatment published in *Pediatrics* (which, curiously, appeared in the *same* volume as the AAP’s technical report supporting coparent adoption) indicated that, “Children residing in households with [non-biological] adults were 8 times more likely to die of maltreatment than children in households with 2 biological parents. Risk of maltreatment death was elevated for children residing with step, foster, or adoptive parents.”<sup>52</sup>
- Paul Amato, a leading Pennsylvania State University sociologist on divorce and stepfamilies, sums it up by saying, “children in stepfamilies scored below children in continuously intact two-parent families across all outcomes” to varying degrees. He explains, “these results cannot be denied or ignored, no matter how unpalatable they may be to some people.”<sup>53</sup>

These factors indicate why an article in *Psychology Today* concluded, “stepfamilies are such a minefield of divided loyalties,

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>47</sup> Bonnie Barber and Janice Lyons, “Family Process and Adolescent Adjustment in Intact and Remarried Families,” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 23 (1994): 421-436; Popenoe, “The Evolution of Marriage and the Problems of Stepfamilies,” 5.

<sup>48</sup> Jeanne Jenkins and Sabrina Zunguze, “The Relationship of Family Structure to Adolescent Drug Use, Peer Affiliation, and Perception of Peer Acceptance of Drug Use,” *Adolescence* 33 (1998): 811-822.

<sup>49</sup> Daly and Wilson, “Child Abuse and Other Risks of Not Living with Both Parents,” 197-210.

<sup>50</sup> Daly and Wilson, *Homicide*, 87-88.

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<sup>51</sup> Wilson and Daly, “Risk of Maltreatment of Children Living With Stepparents,” in *Child Abuse and Neglect: Biosocial Dimensions*, eds., Gelles and Lancaster, 230.

<sup>52</sup> The authors note that the most significant risk factor for children is mother’s boyfriend residing in the same house with the mother’s child. Is father’s boyfriend the same risk to a child? This article, nor the larger literature to my knowledge, does not address this question [see Michael Stiffman et al., “Household Composition and Risk of Fatal Child Maltreatment,” 615-621].

<sup>53</sup> Paul R. Amato, “The Implications of Research Findings on Children in Stepfamilies,” in *Stepfamilies: Who Benefits? Who Does Not?*, eds., Booth and Dunn, 82.

emotional traps, and management conflicts that they are the most fragile form of family in America.”<sup>54</sup>

And here is why contrasting and comparing same-sex homes with stepfamilies is particularly instructive, especially given the AAP reports line of argumentation that gay and lesbian adults can make loving parents. Nowhere in the literature on stepfamilies is it concluded that these increased problems in stepfamilies are the result of lack of love or commitment to parenting on the part of the new spouses in these reconstituted families. No empirical studies bring into doubt the love and commitment of the stepparents themselves.<sup>55</sup> Rather, it seems that the family configuration and the resultant family-forging struggles make the adult relationship and parenting process more difficult – i.e., the dynamics of the reconstituted home encroach upon and dampen parental warmth and connectivity. The exact dynamics for these family configurations continue to be a topic of great discussion and investigation.<sup>56</sup>

Findings like these become particularly relevant in our current discussion when contrasted with conclusions like the following made in the AAP analysis: “Children born and raised by lesbian couples seem to develop in ways that are

*indistinguishable* from children raised by heterosexual parents.”<sup>57</sup> (emphasis added)

Children from gay and lesbian homes are “indistinguishable” from children in *which types* of heterosexual homes? The AAP analysis fails to clarify this, instead offering sweeping conclusions declaring that, “conscientious and nurturing adults, whether they are men or women, heterosexual or homosexual, can be excellent parents.”<sup>58</sup>

The stated mission of the American Academy of Pediatrics is to “attain optimal physical, mental, and social health and well-being for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.”<sup>59</sup> It seems a relevant issue to ascertain which family configuration contributes to the greatest level of overall well-being for children, thus accomplishing the AAP’s mission.

### ***Family Configurations Conducive to Child Well-being***

Child Trends, a national nonpartisan research organization working to improve the lives of children and their families, recently examined the current research literature on the way family structure affects childhood well-being.<sup>60</sup> This analysis found that different forms produce different results for children, stating, “Research findings linking family structure and parents’ marital status with children’s well-being are very consistent.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> “Shuttle Diplomacy,” *Psychology Today* (July/August 1993): 15.

<sup>55</sup> However, there is theoretical speculation from the biosocial perspective of family dynamics about the way biology influences parenting. This strain of thought argues that humans are more motivated, due to evolution, to care and provide for children that bear their genetic material over children in the clan that do not. [see Popenoe, “The Evolution of Marriage and the Problems of Stepfamilies,” 7-16].

<sup>56</sup> Coleman et al., “Reinvestigating Remarriage: Another Decade of Progress,” 1293-1296; Hogan, “Stepfamilies: Selectivity of High-Risk Persons or Risk State?” 148-150.

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<sup>57</sup> Pawelski et al., “The Effects of Marriage, Civil Unions, and Domestic Partnership Laws on the Health and Well-being of Children,” 359.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.

<sup>59</sup> “History,” American Academy of Pediatrics website, <<http://www.aap.org/75/profile/history.pdf>> (10 August 2006).

<sup>60</sup> This research was a part of their work in the federal welfare reauthorization debate and was therefore developed far from the politics of the current same-sex family debate.

<sup>61</sup> Kristin Anderson Moore, et al., “Marriage From a Child’s Perspective: How Does Family Structure Affect Children, and What Can We Do

Children in single-parent families are more likely to be poor and experience multiple living arrangements over their childhood, which contributes to lower educational attainment and involvement in higher risk behavior.<sup>62</sup>

Having divorced parents is linked to academic and behavioral problems in children, including “depression, antisocial behavior, impulsive/hyperactive behavior, and school behavior problems.”<sup>63</sup> Mental health problems in early childhood are also linked with parental divorce. They explain that “children growing up with stepparents also have lower levels of well-being than children growing up with biological parents.”<sup>64</sup>

What family configuration did Child Trends find best contributes to overall child well-being?

An extensive body of research tells us that children do best when they grow up with both biological parents in a low-conflict marriage... Thus, it is not simply the presence of two parents, as some have assumed, but the presence of *two biological parents* that seems to support child development.<sup>65</sup> (emphasis in original)

Another non-partisan organization, The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), which according to its website promotes “progressive policies on welfare reform, child support, child care, early education, workforce development, [and] child welfare,” examined the same question on

family form and child well-being.<sup>66</sup> Noting difference in outcomes for children in various family forms (i.e. divorced, widowed, never-married mothers, cohabiting and stepfamilies), they report:

Over the past 20 years, a body of research has developed on how changes in patterns of family structure affect children. Most researchers now agree that together these studies support the notion that, on average, children do better when raised by two married, biological parents who have low-conflict relationships.<sup>67</sup>

Though the Child Trends report did not specifically address same-sex homes, the CLASP analysis does, and it offers a helpful distinction about which heterosexual homes same-sex homes resemble. Given its pertinence, we will quote CLASP’s report at length.

Although the research on [same-sex] families has limitations, the findings are consistent: children raised by same-sex parents are no more likely to exhibit poor outcomes than children raised by *divorced* heterosexual parents. Since many children raised by gay or lesbian parents have undergone the divorce of their parents, researchers have considered the most appropriate comparison group to be children of heterosexual divorced parents. Children of gay or lesbian parents do not look different from their counterparts raised in *heterosexual divorced families* regarding school performance, behavior problems, emotional problems, early

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about It?” *Child Trends Research Brief* (June 2002): 1.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

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<sup>66</sup> “CLASP History,” CLASP website, <<http://www.clasp.org/history.php>> (10 August 2006).

<sup>67</sup> Mary Parke, “Are Married Parents Really Better for Children?” *Center for Law and Social Policy, Policy Brief* (May 2003): 1.

pregnancy, or difficulties finding employment. However, as previously indicated, children of divorce are at higher risk for many of these problems than children of married parents.<sup>68</sup> (emphasis added)

This is much more precise than the AAP's conclusions and thus tells us more. To say that children in gay and lesbian homes "look no different than their counterparts raised in heterosexual divorced families" is to say that children living in gay and lesbian homes *do not* look like their peers growing up with their own mother and father in a married home. This is an important distinction for the AAP to be aware of, given their mission of seeking "optimal" health and well-being for children.

The AAP itself voices strong concerns about the effects of divorce on children.

Interestingly, Dr. Ellen Perrin, a co-author of the present AAP analysis, served on the committee detailing the harms of divorce.

This committee informs pediatricians that "the entire divorce process is a long, searing experience" for children.<sup>69</sup> According to this report, some of the problems that manifest themselves in children of divorce are: irritability, fearfulness, separation anxiety, sleep problems, aggressive behavior, regression in developmental skills, self-blame by children for the failed marriage, and doubts of self-worth. School performance can suffer, premature development of autonomy can develop, and the child can be at higher risk for substance abuse and early sexual activity as a way of coping with upheaval of their family. It recommends that pre-divorce efforts at intervention are "always justified" because

"the emotional implications of divorce are so profound" for the child and her family.<sup>70</sup>

This raises a question: if children of same-sex parents do look the same as children of divorce in outcomes, why is the *prevention* of one "always justified" while the other is whole-heartedly *endorsed*?

Additional research supports the AAP's conclusions on children of divorce.

Drs. Judith Wallerstein and Mavis Hetherington have separately studied the impact of divorce on children longer and more deeply than anyone. Dr. Wallerstein, who studied a smaller group of children of divorce – very intimately and intensely in their own homes and in her office – for twenty-five years observed:

Children in postdivorce families do not, on the whole, look happier, healthier, or more well adjusted even if one or both parents are happier. National studies show that children from divorced and remarried families are more aggressive toward their parents and teachers. They experience more depression, have more learning difficulties, and suffer from more problems with peers than children from intact families. Children from divorced and remarried families are two to three times more likely to be referred for psychological help at school than their peers from intact families. More of them end up in mental health clinics and hospital settings. There is earlier sexual activity, more children born out of wedlock, less marriage, and more divorce. Numerous studies show that adult children of divorce have

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>69</sup> Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, "The Pediatrician's Role in Helping Children and Families Deal with Separation and Divorce," *Pediatrics* 94 (1994): 119.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 120.

more psychological problems than those raised in intact marriages.<sup>71</sup>

Dr. Hetherington, who examined significantly larger, but less intimate, datasets of children over thirty years, found “divorce is usually brutally painful to a child” and that 25% of *adult* children of divorce continue to have “serious social, emotional, and psychological problems.” By contrast, only 10% of adult children from intact families who had such problems.<sup>72</sup> Divorce does indeed seem to be a “searing experience” for children.

### ***Comparing Untested Family Experiments: Learning from Our National Divorce Experience***

We can learn a great deal by comparing these early days of the same-sex family experiment with the early days of a previous and significant national experiment with the family. When our nation’s first no-fault divorce law was passed in 1969, it was assumed that children, being flexible and resilient, would quickly recover from the shock of divorce and, in the long-run, if their parents were in happier marriages, they too would be happier. The supposition was that happy parents make happy children.<sup>73</sup> These parents had the support of some early studies and some child-development professionals who offered advice according to “the prevailing view at the time, [that] divorce was a brief crisis that would soon

resolve itself.”<sup>74</sup> But no scholars really knew for sure, since divorce had not been experienced by large, diverse populations over long periods of time, like the same-sex family experiment today.

But after three decades of long-term experience with divorce upon millions of children, we know reality did not meet our early expectations. Dr. Wallerstein reflects on what we knew then about divorce and what we know now.

We made radical changes in the family without realizing how it changes the experience of growing up. We embarked on a gigantic social experiment without any idea about how the next generation would be affected. If the truth be told, and if we are able to face it, the history of divorce in our society is replete with unwarranted assumptions that adults have made about children simply because such assumptions are congenial to adult needs and wishes.<sup>75</sup>

This hindsight can be instructive for us on the present question of supporting policy changes that would allow the legal recognition of same-sex homes. We are discussing making radical changes in the family without really knowing how the next generation of children raised in these new homes will be affected. No society has ever raised a generation of children in same-sex homes, so we cannot be sure of the outcome. This will be an experiment with children and the adults who will raise them.

Advocates of same-sex parenting assure us that if children have loving parents, regardless of if they are male or female, they

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<sup>71</sup> Judith Wallerstein et al., *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce: A 25 Year Landmark Study*, (New York: Hyperion, 2000), xxiii.

<sup>72</sup> E. Mavis Hetherington, *For Better or For Worse: Divorce Reconsidered*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), p. 7.

<sup>73</sup> Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, “Divorce ‘for the Sake of the Children’,” in *The Divorce Culture*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 81-106; Judith Wallerstein and Joan B. Kelly, *Surviving the Breakup: How Children and Parents Cope with Divorce*, (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 4-8.

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<sup>74</sup> Judith Wallerstein and Sandra Blakeslee, *Second Chances: Men, Women and Children a Decade After Divorce*, (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1989), x.

<sup>75</sup> Judith Wallerstein et al., *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce*, xxii.

will have happy lives. But just like advocates of no-fault divorce assumed that divorced parents could equally care for children in different family configurations, the assumption that children will do fine in same-sex homes is nothing more than that – an unwarranted assumption – held simply because such assumptions are congenial to certain adults’ needs and wishes. This should give us caution in proceeding forward with this experiment, and is perhaps why Meezan and Rauch recommend their limited, localized period of “wait and see” with same-sex families.

#### **4) The AAP fails to recognize two radical implications of their own argument.**

To sum up our first three interrelated points, the AAP article:

- a) Misses the point of the debate: it is not about whether gays or lesbian can be loving parents, but the configuration of intentionally motherless or fatherless homes,
- b) Rests its argument on a selective, very young literature and poorly representing the reliability of that literature, and
- c) Fails to contrast the literature it does present with the much larger and more diverse literature on family formation and child-wellbeing.

In addition to these problems, the AAP’s argument fails to recognize two radical implications of their own argument.

The purpose of the AAP’s analysis, as explained by the authors, is to examine the “effects of marriage, civil union, and domestic partnership” policies on the health and well-being of children in gay and lesbian families.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Pawelski et al., “The Effects of Marriage, Civil Unions, and Domestic Partnership Laws on the Health and Well-being of Children,” 349.

The article’s first failure is found in the development and layout of the argument. The authors assert:

- 1) Policies that hinder individuals of the same sex from legally marrying and adopting children hinder these families in their task of providing resources and stability for their children. Therefore, the children are at increased risk.<sup>77</sup>
- 2) Research on same-sex families show that gay and lesbian homes are *currently* “indistinguishable” in terms of outcomes for children from those families that can marry under law.<sup>78</sup>
- 3) Not only are children from same-sex and opposite-sex families indistinguishable, but “growing up with parents who are lesbian or gay may confer some advantages to children”! These include being more tolerant of diversity, more “affectionate, responsive and protective of younger children.”<sup>79</sup>
- 4) Lastly, “the rights, benefits and protections of civil marriage can further strengthen these families.”<sup>80</sup>

So, according to the case unwittingly laid out by the AAP, changes in current law will not just level the playing field but will actually make new *uber*-families out of same-sex homes.

Put another way, according to the AAP, x and y are currently equal in outcomes, with y even enjoying a slight advantage over x. But adding z (a change in current marriage and adoption law) will improve the quality of y. Thus, y will become significantly superior to x.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 350-352.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 359.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 359.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 361.

In fact, one could conclude, based on this report, that if we changed current marriage and adoption law to support same-sex families, we would be subjecting children to lesser quality homes if we raised them in opposite-sex homes.

How many pediatricians believe this is true?

The *second* problem is contained in the first.

Putting aside all the research that is helpfully at our disposal and just consulting our common sense, can we really believe that children in same-sex homes and opposite-sex homes will really be “indistinguishable” from one another in terms of outcomes?

***How we answer this question has huge implications for our understanding of the nature of what it means to be human.***

Humanity expresses itself in two distinct ways: male and female.<sup>81</sup> Every human life is a dramatic and mysterious proclamation that male and female matter. *First*, every person’s identification is shaped by their experience of being either a male or a female. Femininity and masculinity expresses itself in countless ways.

*Second*, our very existence – every last one of us – is inconceivable without a significant contribution from both parts of humanity: male and female. Every new life, every breathing, functioning human body, is a reminder that both man and woman were and are essential to all of us as individuals and to humanity as a whole. Every one of us came into our existence through the gates of heterosexuality, either by intimate or mechanical binary union of sperm and egg.

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<sup>81</sup> Only 0.018% of the human population can be termed as truly intersexed [see Leonard Sax, “How Common is Intersex? A Response to Anne Fausto-Sterling,” *Journal of Sex Research* (2002): 174-178].

Though intricate experiments in human cloning are attempting to make this union optional, the very difficulty and blatant artificiality of the attempts demonstrate the rigidity of nature in this regard.

However, if the AAP’s analysis is to be believed, that is where the necessity of male and female to human development ends. If some participation from male and female are needed to bring all new life into existence, but same-sex and opposite-sex family unions do an “indistinguishable” job of bringing that new life to full human development, then the necessary extent of gender differentiation and complementarity is found *only* in our procreative material: sperm and egg. Any essential difference ends there. Beyond this, mothers and fathers, men and women have no intrinsic, independent quality in the vital task of parenting. Under this conception of humanity, a good mother is the equivalent of a good father to a child’s development and a loving father can replace a loving mother. Neither is required, and either is merely preferential.

This is what the same-sex family proposition unwittingly proposes: the deconstruction of humanity by deconstructing the mystery of male and female. And this is what concerns Focus on the Family.

We are foolish if we do not understand the implications of this turn. This is not merely a matter of challenging culturally-constructed Western conceptions of gender. Male and female are integral to all human cultures and every new generation of that culture, be it modern or ancient, developed or primitive, religious or secular, theistic or pagan.<sup>82</sup> If this were not true, we would

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<sup>82</sup> Suzanne G. Frayser, *Varieties of Sexual Experience: An Anthropological Perspective on Human Sexuality*, (New Haven, Conn: Human Relations Area Files Press, 1985), 248; Edward Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage*, Vols. I-III, (New York: The Allerton Book Company, 1922); Fisher, *Anatomy of Love*;

have cultures in the human record that adopted same-sex families as part of their recognized family script. But none exist. At least, not until the last few nanoseconds of human history.

Are pediatricians and child development specialists willing to admit that the gender of a parent is *only* specialized at fertilization, and all parenting beyond this initial event is either gender-neutral or gender-relative? Is this supported by their own experience either in clinical practice or their own family?

Our nation's multi-decade experiment in widespread fatherlessness has allowed scholars to examine whether or not a father – in the maleness of his parenting role – is a necessary component of healthy child development. The overwhelming conclusion of the vast majority of this research, as communicated in the subtitle of a leading book on the subject, is that “*Father Care is as Essential as Mother Care for Your Child.*”<sup>83</sup>

Other scholars' work has led them to conclude that fathers are “irreplaceable” in the lives of children and society. David Popenoe warns:

We should disavow the notion that ‘mommies can make good daddies,’ just as we should disavow the popular notion of radical feminists that ‘daddies can make good mommies.’ ...The two sexes are different to the core, and each is necessary – culturally and

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Margaret Mead, *Male and Female: A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World*, (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1949); Bronislaw Malinowski, *Sex, Culture and Myth* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1962); Eleanor E. Maccoby, *The Two Sexes: Growing Up Apart; Coming Together*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>83</sup> Kyle D. Pruett, *Fatherhood: Why Father Care is as Essential as Mother Care for Your Child*, (New York: The Free Press, 2000).

biologically – for the optimal development of a human being.<sup>84</sup>

In the same way, fathers are necessary for society in that a higher prevalence of married fathers in a community translate into lower prevalence of crime, violence, out-of-wedlock child bearing, poverty, mental and physical illness for children, academic failure and drop-out, illicit drug use and over all well-being. This has been shown time and again in the literature.<sup>85</sup>

### Conclusion:

In the AAP's news release touting their new analysis, Dr. David T. Tayloe, member of the AAP Board, explained, “The Board feels a commitment to do whatever is in the best interest of children.”<sup>86</sup> There is a great deal of data to suggest that children having daily access to their mother and father best serves the interests of children. Same-sex families, by design and definition, do not help us achieve this goal, regardless of how caring gay and lesbian people might be as parents.

Male and female are essential for the family and for children because mothers and fathers are essential for humanity.

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<sup>84</sup> Popenoe, *Life Without Father*, 197.

<sup>85</sup> Popenoe, *Life Without Father*; Marsiglio et al, “Scholarship on Fatherhood in the 1990s and Beyond,” 1173-1191; Amato and Rivera, “Paternal Involvement and Children's Behavior Problems,” 375-384; Pruett, *Fatherhood*; Rohner and Veneziano, “The Importance of Father Love,” 382-405; Michael E. Lamb, “Fathers: The Forgotten Contributors to Child Development,” *Human Development* 18 (1975): 245-266.

<sup>86</sup> O'Keefe, “Special article in *Pediatrics* outlines laws affecting children of same-gender parents,” 27:1-21.

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