

The discussion of gay individuals being parents is quite the issue. Homosexuals can become parents in many ways: adoption, foster programs, surrogacy, donor insemination and having children from a previous heterosexual relationships. In a few states it is explicitly or implicitly illegal for homosexuals to adopt children or be in a foster program and in some cases even use a surrogate, Utah's policies implicitly attempts to prevent homosexual parenting. 11 states however have policies in place that sexual orientation cannot be a basis to prevent people from adopting. In states where policies are undefined or ambiguous discrimination against gay adoption applicants is frequent. In a study by the Evan B. Donaldson Institute one third of the adoption agencies that responded to the survey denied or rejected all homosexual applications for various reasons and only 1.3% of adoptions were to self-identified homosexual parents. Also social workers can use personal bias to find homosexual and non-normative parents unfit for adoption in states that do not check for this behavior.

So the big issue and question is are homosexual and non-normative individuals and couples fit to be parents and, should they be allowed to have children through the various methods?

There are two major sides, obviously yes and no.

The no side is populated heavily with traditional ideas and beliefs, often religion and other socially conservative reasons as a basis. Religious beliefs are very centered in the sin discourse discussed in this class towards homosexuals, this is amplified due to the sensitive topic of raising children. Most of the religious argument is god made man and woman to have a child, that's what is natural and anything else is unnatural. Most arguments against gay parents are very much based in stereotypes we have analyzed and religion is simply used as a tool to provide emphasis. In my research the stereotype of the gay man as a child molester came up multiple times. I read an article by the chairman of the family research institute in Colorado Springs. In this article he describes one incident of homosexual foster parents engaging in misconduct and then uses other newspaper articles about molestation as empirical evidence to come to the conclusion that sexual orientation is a screening instrument for predicting molestation. This argument against gay adoption and parenting is based very strongly in prejudice. For people to listen to and believe your prejudice as truth you must have a medium of delivery such as a study that does not exist, religion or even a series of Google searches on newspaper articles. For

example several politicians have stated “studies show” that children are better off with a mother and father. However in all studies cited sexual orientation was never measured, simply the use of the phrase “studies show” and a point to a possible source is enough to win many over.

Another stereotype I encountered as an argument is that homosexuals are careless or irresponsible with their sexual lives and children should not be subjected to this behavior or that this irresponsibility will cross over into raising their children. This hetero-sexist belief that homosexuals are deviant and different in these ways is simply fear of sexual difference. One of the more prominent arguments is that a child needs a parent of both genders to develop their gender role. It’s been found that in homosexual families, household tasks are distributed more evenly without the constraint of gender-roles this is well established and repeatable, maybe gender-roles need to be destroyed, ha. No evidence has shown that having two same-sex parents negatively impacts development of a child. In fact a meta-analysis of 20 years of relevant research on the subject found the only negative impacts to children with same-sex parents was harassment by peers. Other arguments with less basis are that a child is more likely to become homosexual if they have same-sex parents, they are more likely to fall prey to drug use, etc, etc.

All of these arguments can be boiled down to personal morals, prejudice, heterosexism and homophobia. Arguments based in morals and prejudice attempt to give reasoning and then have flimsy or absent evidence. Arguments based in heterosexism and homophobia are less rational and reasoning is almost always stereotypes and misconceptions. Should decisions and policies be made purely off of morals? Because they often are.

The yes side is supported by empirical evidence and the benefits can be quantified. Around half a million children live in foster care in the United States. Of these around 100,000 children live in institutions government institutions or have run away. The biggest obstacle reported by states in terms of adoption is recruiting families to adopt. Several surveys and 2000 census data, with figures in the millions, was compiled to findings that around 50% of self-identifying homosexuals showed a desired to raise children and 46% of those considered adoption seriously. This puts potential adopting families at around a million, this number is not completely solid but it simply shows that a large number of same-sex families wish to adopt.

Policies that keep homosexuals from adopting keep children from a family environment. The detrimental effects of an institutional environment and the foster care system on children are

well documented by the department of health and human services. Children who go through an institutional environment have lower scores on social and cognitive functioning, are more likely to demonstrate behavioral problems and repeat a grade, and very young children are even likely to have lower scores on motor development and communication skills than children in a family environment. Children who “age out” of the foster care system face high rates of mental health disorders, homelessness, poverty and have low education rates beyond high school with less than 10% going to college. Costs to tax payers for banning homosexual’s from adopting and from the foster care system is between 50 and 70 million dollars every year, due to expenditures for institutional care, recruitment costs being squandered and training costs.

The financial costs and the costs on children in the system are high and measurable, however damage to children with homosexual parents hasn’t been shown. A study by the American academy of pediatrics on coparent or second-parent adoption by same-sex parents has found that children with 1-2 gay or lesbian parents fare as well in emotional, cognitive and social functioning as children whose parents are heterosexual. They also found that what most influences a child’s development is the nature of the relationships and interactions with the family unit not the particular structure of the unit. It has also been found that there is no difference in gender identity development, social development or sexual orientation in children with homosexual parents than straight parents. So simply having parents who care is far more important to a child’s development than their orientation or beliefs or the structure of the family unit. The number of professional organizations that agree with scientific research on homosexual parents and state that sexual orientation is not a determining or even an important factor in assessing the ability of individuals to raise children is many, these organizations include the American medical association, the national adoption center, the national association of social workers, the American academy of child and adolescent psychiatry and many others. Even with the support of this evidence dissenters in high-profile cases such as Justice Scalia in the recent prop 8 argument stated that, there's considerable disagreement among sociologists as to what the consequences of raising a child in a single-sex family, whether that is harmful to the child or not. As I have stated the only negative effect on children with homosexual parents that can be quantified is that they are more likely to be bullied and harassed mentally or emotionally. But just because people are going to oppose you isn’t a reason to hide from doing what you feel is right or living your way, is it? [Pause 2-3 sec]

Beyond empirical evidence and research there is some theory supporting gay parenting and adoption based on solid logic which should be analyzed at its value as theory, some of this theory is mine. As mentioned earlier power dynamic shifts from traditional gender roles and gender role preferences are more neutral in same-sex parenting. Since gender roles do not need to be established gay parents are often more nurturing of emotional development in children rather than restrictive of behaviors. A father-dominated (patriarchal) authoritarian family model is threatened by same-sex families and the dissolving of traditional sex-roles.

People in a same-sex relationship can't accidentally have children, it must be a decision and one that is well planned. Financing and scenario based planning and musing are more likely if having children is a long term goal. The more planning and thought that goes into raising children the better chance the children have to be well acclimated and developed mentally and emotionally. When people don't simply have a right to something and it must be worked for they don't take it for granted and generally take it more seriously.

In closing, as we have discussed in this class, good evidence and theory should make decisions not morals and prejudice, even if they are majority beliefs. And based just on the evidence, homosexual individuals should not be barred from being parents, love is love. Thank you.