



# Gay adoption



## KEY POINTS

**B**ritish adoption law is based on Judeo-Christian ethics, which make the welfare of the child paramount. But new government proposals, in an effort to increase adoptions, may extend the right to adopt to unmarried couples: both homosexual and heterosexual. The assumption that homosexuals will make good adoptive parents has its roots in contemporary postmodern ideology rather than evidence-based research. By contrast, an overwhelming weight of evidence shows that children with married parents fare best in life, having fewer behaviour and psychiatric problems and less anti-social behaviour. Whilst adoption is a Christian concept which is echoed in God's adoption of us into his family through Christ's death on the cross, homosexual adoption runs counter to Christian concepts of sexuality, family and child development.

**A**doption is not a modern idea. Roman Civil law legislated adoption in order to provide a male heir for the estate. This sentiment is reflected in the adoption laws of various European and Latin American countries.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, British law is based on Judeo-Christian beliefs. Here adoption has always been used primarily to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.<sup>2</sup>

Concern for the welfare of the child is also the main impetus for the Government's current proposals on adoption fuelled by the increase in child abuse in children's homes. For currently there are about 55,300 children in care who are eligible for adoption.<sup>3</sup> In 1970 the number of adoptions nationwide was around 20,000 per year, but by 1999 it had fallen to 4,100. (This fall also reflects the growing incidence of abortion and the removal of stigma against having a child outside marriage.)

Under current adoption law children may only be adopted by married couples or a single person. Ninety-five per cent of adoptions are by married couples.<sup>4</sup> There are fears that an amendment to the Adoption and Children Bill may extend the right to adopt to unmarried couples: both homosexual and heterosexual.<sup>5</sup>

Homosexual parents per se are not a new phenomenon. Many children raised by homosexuals are born within marriage<sup>6</sup> but after their birth their father or mother declares same-sex preferences. The offspring of lesbians whose mothers have opted for self-insemination using donor sperm from either a sympathetic male<sup>7</sup> or a sperm bank<sup>8</sup> are fewer in number. Yet it is the emergence of this new type of family that has evoked support from social scientists. There have been many attempts to dismiss the adverse effects of this kind of relationship while claiming they provide all the benefits (and more) of two married parents.

This propaganda has had a dangerously misleading effect, and public policy has been

influenced to the extent that homosexual adoption is seen as a viable option for children. The assumption that homosexual parents will make good adoptive parents has arisen despite a complete lack of data on the comparative effects of homosexual foster care or adoption, and the questionable interpretation of the available information about the effects of homosexual parenting.

Families with homosexual parent(s) are relatively uncommon and therefore recruitment is difficult. Consequently sample sizes are small, for example one often-quoted study that looked at gay fathers and their children interviewed only 40 men.<sup>9</sup> Similarly one of the most eminent studies, which followed up the children of single mothers, both lesbian and heterosexual, over 15 years, had 27 mothers and 39 children in each group at the beginning. However by the end of the study although 51 mothers were traced, only 25 children from the lesbian families and 21 children from the heterosexual families were willing to participate.<sup>10</sup> In many homosexual parenting studies, anecdotal evidence or personal opinion is repeatedly presented as fact. For example, one study, which created headline news reporting that gay dads make better fathers, was based on the opinion of about 100 men, some of whom were not even fathers but hoped to be in the future.<sup>11</sup>

Despite their flaws, these studies still show that between eight per cent<sup>12</sup> and 33 per cent<sup>13</sup> of children with homosexual parents subsequently adopt a homosexual lifestyle as adults. This consequence is explained by describing 'same-gender sexual attraction' as a positive trait derived from open-mindedness and acceptance of homosexuality.<sup>14</sup> Yet many adolescents are often afraid or too embarrassed to tell their peers about their home circumstances<sup>15</sup> and young children suffer from gender confusion. Thus 40 per cent of the sons of lesbian mothers displayed mainly feminine qualities whilst 50 per cent of their daughters showed mainly masculine qualities. By contrast, among the children of

## What does the research show?

- Children born to cohabiting couples are twice as likely to experience a family break up compared to children born within a marriage.<sup>18</sup>
- The incidence of child abuse was 20 times higher for children living with their cohabiting parents compared to those living with their married parents.<sup>19</sup>
- Children in single parent households had maths and reading levels that were 11% and 10% lower than those of children with married parents.<sup>20</sup>
- Compared with children of married parents, children with unmarried parents were six times as likely to exhibit violent misbehaviour in school.<sup>21</sup>
- 87% of children with married parents graduated from high school, compared to 68% with a single parent at home.<sup>22</sup>
- Children in single parent households had risks of injury that were 20% to 30% higher than for children who lived with their married parents.<sup>23</sup>
- Boys raised outside of an intact marriage are, on average more than twice as likely as other boys to go to jail.<sup>24</sup>
- Being with a stepfamily or with a single mother at the age of ten more than doubled the chances of a boy being arrested eventually compared with the son of married parents.<sup>25</sup>
- Under 16s were three times more likely to run away from step-families, and twice as likely to run away from a lone-parent, than were children living with both birth parents.<sup>26</sup>
- Young men were 1.5 times more likely to be out of school and not working if their parents were not married.<sup>27</sup>
- Women who spent time with a single parent were 111% more likely to have teenage births, 164 per cent more likely to have premarital births and 92 per cent more likely to have failed marriages than daughters who grew up in two-parent homes.<sup>28</sup>
- When wives experienced parental divorce, the odds of divorce increased by half and when both spouses experienced parental divorce, the odds nearly tripled.<sup>29</sup>

heterosexual mothers, none of the boys had predominantly feminine characteristics or the girls predominantly masculine characteristics.<sup>16</sup> As the fifth commandment implies, children need a mother *and* a father as a role model with each parent providing a complementary but different perspective. Even lone- and lesbian-parenting manuals acknowledge this and often encourage the creation of an 'extended' family consisting of friends and past partners.<sup>17</sup>

The further away you move from the traditional family structure, the poorer the outcomes for children (see box). The largest study to compare children of married, cohabiting and homosexual parents,<sup>30</sup> even though it was carried out by someone with gay rights sympathies, showed that children of gay couples performed the worst in school followed by the children of cohabiting couples whilst the children of married couples performed the best.

Homosexual adoption is radically opposed to the Judaeo-Christian family ethic which views marriage as the only right context for sexual relations, procreation and childrearing.<sup>31</sup> Christian involvement in adoption and fostering is rooted in some central Christian beliefs. Paul argues that all Christian believers are adopted into God's family and have the full rights as sons.<sup>32</sup> This adoption is made possible only by Christ's sacrifice of himself on the cross in our place, as the substitute for our sins. As Christ said: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends'.<sup>33</sup> Christians are to show this same love towards their neighbours because they themselves are beneficiaries of God's love in being adopted as sons. This is a very strong motivation to care for children in need, particularly for those who have no parents.

*Dr Oluseyi Hotonu, worked with Patricia Morgan on her new book 'Children as trophies?' which reviews the research evidence on same-sex parenting. Copies are available for £8 (inc p&p) from The Christian Institute on 0191 281 5664 or [www.christian.org.uk](http://www.christian.org.uk)*

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31. See Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26-27; Matthew 5:27-28; 1 Corinthians 6:9
32. See Galatians 4:4-6
33. John 15:13 (AV)