Lesbian and Gay Adoption: Looking Ahead

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Overview

• **Background of Current Research**
  – Adoptive Families Study
  – Gay Fathers Study
  – Desire for Parenthood Studies

• **Issues for Discussion**
  – *Increase options for lesbian/gay adoption*
  – *Expand post-adoption services*
  – *Learn about transgender parenting*

• **Conclusions**
Adoptive Families Study

• 106 lesbian, gay and heterosexual couples
• One adopted child, 1 - 5 years old
• Systematic sampling frame
  – 5 adoption agencies
  – Families living in 12 states
• Domestic infant adoptions
• Parents all legally recognized
• Information from multiple sources

Adoptive Families Study

• **Some findings** –
  – *Children and parents well adjusted*
  – *Parental sexual orientation does not matter for overall adjustment of children or parents*
  – *Same sex couples more likely to be interracial*
  – *Same sex couples more likely to complete transracial adoptions*

• **Implications for post-adoption services?**

Gay Fathers Study

- includes 231 gay adoptive fathers
- recruited via internet
- 89% of fathers are white
- 60% private adoptions
- 76% domestic adoptions
- children average 7 years of age
- 67% of children are nonwhite

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→ Many transracial adoptions

Gay Fathers Study

• What predicts parenting stress?
  – Expected adoption & family variables
    • Child’s age at adoption
    • Number of children in household
    • Social support
Gay Fathers Study

• **What predicts parenting stress?**
  – *Expected adoption & family issues*
    • Child’s age at adoption
    • Number of children in household
    • Social support from friends
  – *Issues related to parental sexual orientation*
    • Nature of gay identity
  – *Considering gay-specific issues helps predict stress*

Desire for Parenthood

• National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG)
  – 294 childless gay and lesbian respondents
  – Many express desire for parenthood
    • 54% of gay men
    • 37% of lesbian women
  – Among men, those who expressed desire were less likely than heterosexuals to intend parenthood
  – Gay men thus particularly likely to expect their desires for parenthood to be unfulfilled
  – Implications?

Ideas for Discussion

• Encourage more lesbian and gay adoptive parents
  – Many who want to parent aren’t sure how to do it
  – Lesbian/gay adults as relatively untapped resource for many adoption and foster care agencies
Ideas for Discussion

• Encourage more lesbian and gay adoptive parents
  – Many who want to parent aren’t sure how to do it
  – Lesbian/gay adults as untapped resource

• Expand post-adoption services, with needs of lesbian/gay adoptive parents in mind
  – For example, role of gay identity development in stress
  – Issues related to transracial and special needs adoptions
Ideas for Discussion

• **Encourage more lesbian and gay adoptive parents**
  – Many who want to parent aren’t sure how to do it
  – Lesbian/gay adults as untapped resource

• **Expand post-adoption services, with needs of lesbian/gay adoptive parents in mind**
  – For example, role of gay identity development in stress
  – Issues related to transracial and special needs adoptions

• **Need to know more about transgender parenting**
Overall Conclusions

• Need to create & expand adoption services for lesbian and gay prospective parents
  – Pre-adoption services (e.g., outreach)
  – Post-adoption services (e.g., support groups)

• Research can be helpful in this effort
  – Identify issues and needs
  – Document program effectiveness
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