

By James C. Dobson

The American Academy of Pediatrics' (AAP) decision to endorse the adoption of children by homosexuals represents an unfortunate surrender to political expediency. Even more regrettable is the academy's apparent willingness to distort the scientific literature on this subject. It appears that the AAP has chosen to sacrifice scientific integrity in order to advance an activist agenda.

In its February journal, *Pediatrics*, the academy's "Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health" claims that: "There is a considerable body of professional literature that suggests children with parents who are homosexual have the same advantages and the same expectations for health, adjustment, and development as children whose parents are heterosexual."

Actually the professional literature suggests no such thing. The research on the effects of same-sex parenting is inconclusive at best. Lesbian activist Charlotte Patterson of the University of Virginia acknowledges that "research on lesbian and gay parents and

Pediatricians vs. children

Flimsy findings on gay parenting

their children is still very new and relatively scarce . . . research in this area has presented a variety of methodological challenges." In fact, the AAP's own report admits that "accurate statistics regarding the number of parents who are gay or lesbian are impossible to obtain [which] has hampered even basic epidemiological research." On what basis then, was the academy able to make such sweeping recommendations? Obviously not by examining the scientific evidence.

Studies on homosexual parenting suffer from numerous methodological problems. These include extremely small population samples, the absence of control groups, a lack of random sampling, and "self-presentation bias." In addition, since homosexual parenting is a rather recent social phenomenon, its long-term effects on children are unknown. In a comprehensive review of homosexual

parenting studies, Robert Lerner and Althea Nagai found no evidence to support that same-sex households are "just like" traditional families: "We conclude that the methods used in these studies are so flawed that these studies prove nothing. Therefore, they should not be used in legal cases to make any argument about 'homosexual vs. heterosexual' parenting. Their claims have no basis."

While the AAP claims that children raised by homosexual parents do not suffer adverse health or developmental effects, other research suggests they are more likely to engage in sexual experimentation and in homosexual behavior. In a 2001 article in *American Sociological Review*, authors Judith Stacey and Timothy Biblarz state that "recent studies indicate that a higher proportion of children of 'lesbigay' parents are themselves apt to engage in

homosexual activity." These findings have been confirmed by a large-scale study of same-sex parenting just released in Europe. Sociologist Patricia Morgan found that children raised by gay couples are more prone to experiment with homosexual behavior and to be confused about their sexuality. Due to the lack of longitudinal studies mentioned earlier, it is unknown whether these children will suffer other negative long-term consequences.

The benefits of being raised in a family headed by a mother and father are well documented. Children from married two-parent households do better academically, financially, emotionally and behaviorally. They delay sex longer, have better health and receive more parental support. Psychologist David Popenoe points out that mothers and fathers perform complementary functions in their chil-

dren's lives. While fathers tend to stress competition, challenge, initiative, risk-taking and independence, mothers stress emotional security and personal safety. Mothers provide an important flexibility and sympathy in their discipline, while fathers provide ultimate predictability and consistency.

While the advantages to growing up with a married mother and father are obvious, the impact of same-sex parenting on a child's health and well-being is largely unknown. Why then, would the American Academy of Pediatrics, an organization committed to "do no harm," promote a practice whose future health implications are unclear? It seems apparent that the AAP has submitted to the will of the homosexual activists within its ranks, whose goal is to redefine the very institutions of marriage and family. That goal is clearly articulated by Paula Ettelbrick, the former legal director of the Lambda Legal Defense Fund: "Being queer is more than setting up house, sleeping with a person of the same gender, and seeking state approval for doing so. Being queer means pushing the parameters of sex, sexuality, and family, and in the process transforming the very

fabric of society."

It is important to note that the AAP's Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health (made up of eight members) made its recommendations without consulting the broader membership of the academy. In fact, many AAP physicians learned about the committee's report through the media. It is highly doubtful that the opinions of the committee represent America's rank and file pediatricians. Reports have surfaced that some pediatricians are so incensed by the AAP's stance that they are considering resigning from the organization.

How unfortunate that such a respected body as the American Academy of Pediatrics has opted to advance the militant homosexual agenda at the expense of scientific honesty and the very children it seeks to serve. One can only hope that the academy will revisit the research and consider an objective search for truth for the benefit of the next generation.

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