

A Proposal for Research Tentatively Titled:
Academic, Behavioral, and Emotional Outcomes of Adopted Children
by
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April 30, 2020
Submitted for SOCW 497-A Research Methods
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Background

In the year 2018, 262,956 children entered the United States foster care system (AFCARS, 2018). Concerning those currently placed in foster care, approximately 125,000 children were waiting to be adopted, a number that has gradually increased since 2012 (AFCARS, 2018). Such statistics place emphasis on the growing need for foster and adoptive families within the United States. However, there are currently twenty-one states without explicit protections against discrimination of LGBTQ couples hoping to foster or adopt (Foster and Adoption Laws, 2020). Despite the absence of credible research suggesting that children adopted by LGBTQ couples are predisposed to negative outcomes, currently eleven states permit state-licensed child welfare agencies to refuse to place and provide services to children and families, including LGBTQ couples, if doing so conflicts with their religious beliefs (Foster and Adoption Laws, 2020). Such policies place limitations on the amount of homes available not only to the increasing number of children in the foster care system but to all children in need of adoptive families across the board.

According to research from the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law, same-sex couples are significantly more likely to be raising foster or adopted children, with twenty-one percent of same-sex couples raising adopted children compared to three percent of different-sex couples (American Community Service Survey, 2016). These statistics suggest that the probability of an LGBTQ couple adopting or fostering a child is proportionally higher than that of a heterosexual couple. Therefore, with policies in place allowing discrimination against LGBTQ couples, a significant number of prospective adoptive parents hoping to foster or adopt may not have equal access to government-funded child welfare agencies. Consequently, adoption wait times for children within the foster care system could potentially increase. Not only does

this adversely impact the children awaiting adoption, as prolonged placement instability places children at an increased risk of negative developmental outcomes (Font, S., Gershoff, E., & Sattler, K., 2018), it also presents notable fiscal implications to society. Foster care services, including the monthly payments to foster parents caring for children in state custody, are provided by a combination of federal, state, and local funding (Barth, Depanfilis, & Haksoon, 2018). Although foster care rates vary from state to state and specialized financial assistance is often additionally provided, the monthly national average cost per child in foster care in 2016 **was** estimated to be \$749 per month per child for children 0-4 years old; \$859 per month per child for children 5-13 years old; and \$941 per month per child for children 14-18 years old (Barth, Depanfilis, & Haksoon, 2018).

A deeply embedded belief within American society is that heterosexual couples provide “inherently better contexts for positive child development” than same sex couples (Prickett, Martin-Storey, & Crosnoe, 2015). This has largely contributed to the controversial debate over whether or not same-sex couples should be permitted to legally adopt, as it suggests children raised by lesbian and gay parents are at a greater risk for adverse consequences in the domains of psychological and behavioral adjustment. With the number of children awaiting adoption showing significant increase within the last six years and several states granting faith-based agencies receiving federal funding the right to discriminate against LGBT adoptive couples, it is vital that social workers intervene through analyzing longitudinal outcomes of adoptive children within the context of diverse family types.

Other research has examined comparable outcomes of children raised by same-sex couples and children raised by different-sex couples. Of the studies conducted, the findings consistently reflect that the functioning of children and/or adolescents with same-sex parents is

similar compared to children and adolescents with different-sex parents (Farr, 2016). However, the sample size presented within these studies is small and often represents only domestic infant adoption. Additionally, studies that centrally focus on comparable outcomes of adoptive children raised by LGBT couples are scarce, as many of the literature reviewed focused on either the experiences of LGBT parents or of biological children in same-sex families.

There are no known longitudinal studies that have thoroughly evaluated and compared the behavioral, emotional, and academic outcomes of children adopted by same-sex parents to children adopted by heterosexual couples over a significant time period. The purpose of this study is to conduct in-depth longitudinal research on the academic, behavioral, and emotional outcomes of adopted children. The results of this present study can assist social work practitioners in understanding the longitudinal outcomes of adoptive children within diverse family types.

Literature Review

In this section, we will review research (see Appendix A) on the outcomes of biological and adopted children of same-sex couples that has been published in the last eight years. There is very little research on adopted children's outcomes when reared by same-sex parents.

Because of this, our literature review focuses largely on the outcomes of biological children raised in same-sex couple families.

Academic Performance Outcomes

Current research has looked at the school progression of children reared by same-sex couples. When looking at the academic outcomes of children raised in same-sex couple families, Boertien and Bernardi found that "the odds of being behind in school were 11% higher...than for their peers" (2019, p. 487). However, they also found that over time, the rate of

children being behind in school in 2010 dropped to 2.4% from 5.1% in 2008. Compared to the outcomes of different-sex parental reared children, in 2008 the percentage of children that were behind in school was 3.0 and only dropped to 2.9% in the same amount of time.

(Boertien & Bernardi, 2019). When looking at the odds of normal progression of children through school, it was found that those of children of same-sex parents are less than that of children of different-sex parents (Watkins, 2018). However, Watkins (2018) also found that when at least one of the same-sex parents was biologically related to the children, their odds of normal progress through school was higher than those of different-sex parents.

In comparison, Potter (2012) found that “the math scores for children in same-sex parent families were 3.4 points lower, on average...” (p. 564) than those of different-sex families. Now, Potter (2012) goes on to say that it is not definitive that the lower math assessment scores are directly related to having been reared by same-sex parents, rather it has to do with the transitions the family has gone through. He also looked at reading assessment scores in the children. Additionally, the findings indicate that in reading also, “children in same-sex parent families had lower baseline scores relative to their peers” (p. 566). It is important to know that in Potter’s research, “there was no evidence that the outcomes of children in same-sex parent families were unique relative to their peers from opposite-sex parent nontraditional families” (Potter, 2012, p. 566). This is important because it begs the question, is the difference related more to the non-traditional aspect of their family structure, or specifically because of the same-sex couple’s sexual orientation.

Behavioral Outcomes

Research has also studied the behavioral outcomes of children reared by same-sex couples. Using the *Child Behavior Checklist (CBC)* along with the *Teacher Report*

Form (TRF), Farr, Oakley, and Ollen (2016), determined that there were very similar results of children reared by same-sex couples as those by different-sex couples.

To further look at the outcome of behavioral changes during the adoption process of lesbian and gay parents, the *Child Behavioral Checklist (CBC)* was used on same-sex couples' adopted children between the ages of ages six to eighteen (Farr, Brun, & Simon, 2019). The study showed that the behavioral outcomes of children after their adoption were below clinical levels, showing positive feelings towards their adoption and living arrangements (Farr, et al., 2019). During analysis of the results, Farr and colleagues found that regardless of the sexual orientation of the parents, the children's behaviors were most likely associated with their home environment and the quality of their family interactions (Farr, et al., 2019). A high level of positive behavioral success was also indicated by the level of cohesiveness of the family (Farr, et al., 2019).

Emotional and Adjustment Outcomes

Farr and colleagues (2016) also looked at the school adjustment of children reared by same-sex couples. With the same measures mentioned previously (CBC and TRF) along with qualitative parental interviews, "98% of parents felt their children adjusted well to school" (Farr, et al., 2016, p. 445). Some of the key findings from the interviews with parents showed that their kids had "positive transitions....and few behavior problems" (Farr, et al., 2016).

In contrast to Farr and colleagues, through utilization of the *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)* and the *Kessler Scale of Psychological Distress (SPD)*, Sullins (2015) found that "children in same-sex families are at least twice as likely to experience serious emotional problems compared to their counterparts in opposite-sex families" (p. 105). She found that there is no greater increase of bullying in children of same-sex families than in different-sex

families (Sullins, 2015). These conflicting findings make evident the imperative need for further research on this topic.

While studying comparable differences in emotional adjustments, Lick, Patterson, and Schmidt (2013) found that children with same-sex parents have better adjustment outcomes than children with different-sex parents (Lick, et al., 2013). Additionally, the study revealed that children who grew up in a family with at least one openly gay or lesbian parent had more emotional openness during adolescence and adulthood (Lick, et al., 2013). In comparison, those raised in heterosexual families showed a significant difference (Lick, et al., 2013).

Gaps in the Research

As made evident throughout this paper, there are many gaps in the research regarding the outcomes of children reared by same-sex parents, a notable one being that very few studies have centered the focus on non-biological adopted children with same-sex parents. This fact coupled with the lacking research on behavioral outcomes conclusively justifies the need for more research to take place. There has been a copious amount of research done on the outcomes of biological (to at least one parent) children of same-sex couples, including academic and emotional/adjustment outcomes. This is considered a strength that can later be compared to adoptive children of same-sex couples to assist in the development of a more definitive answer about the cause of differences in outcomes. We hope to address this large gap in the research by collecting data on adopted children of same-sex parents over the three main outcomes examined in this literature review, and then comparing those results with the results of similar research on biological children.

Conclusion

After thorough examination of the existing literature pertaining to this topic, it is our hypothesis that the sexual orientation of adoptive parents will have little to no effect on the outcomes of their adopted children. However, it is crucial that further research be conducted in conjunction with the utilization of updated checklists during data collection. Within the last ten years, the acceptance of same-sex parents has increased significantly in the United States. We believe that further, extensive exploration of this topic could propel this progression and, consequently, reduce the difference in the outcomes of children regardless of their biological or adopted state.

Methodology

Overview

In this study we will use a longitudinal and mixed methods design to address comparable outcomes of children adopted by same-sex couples and children adopted by different-sex couples in the United States. This study will include survey questionnaires and interviews with same-sex and different-sex adoptive parents. The interviews will be conducted by phone, in person, and through video conference. This research study seeks to find if the sexual orientation of an adoptive parent affects the academic, behavioral, and/or emotional outcomes of the adopted child.

Quantitative Methods

Sampling and Recruitment

Study participants will be part of a non-random quota sample of 750 families living in the United States: 250 female same-sex parent families, 250 male same-sex parent families, and 250 different-sex parent families. Eligibility requirements for participation are that participants must

be at least 25 years old, English-speaking, and live in the United States. Participants must have had custody of the child for at least one year, the adopted child must be at least six while no older than eight years old, and the adoptive parents must have been together since the adoption of the child.

Aggregate data from the 2020 census will be used to identify families in the United States with same-sex parents. Participants will be recruited by collaborating with adoption agencies in the United States who permit adoption by both different-sex couples and same-sex couples, such as the Department of Children's services in the counties of each state that permit adoption by same-sex couples and private agencies that have partnered with the All Families-All Children Project. A letter (see Appendix B) will be sent to each of these agencies requesting that the agency send out flyers to adoptive parents. Flyers (see Appendix C) will be distributed to each agency to assist in finding participants for the study. Additionally, each agency will be asked to call and notify eligible participants using a script providing information about the dates and locations of the research study. As an incentive, all participants who agree to complete the survey questionnaire will be given the opportunity to enter a drawing for a week-long family trip to Disney World.

Measurement

We will measure the academic, behavioral, and emotional outcomes of adopted children raised by same-sex couples and different sex couples. The Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory and the Children's Emotional Adjustment Scale will be the two scales utilized within this study (see Appendix D).

Research constructs.

The independent variable in this study is the sexual orientation of the adoptive parents, with equal representation of heterosexual couples, male same-sex couples, and female same-sex couples. The Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory will be used to measure the dependent variable of behavior. The Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory is a 36-instrument designed to measure conduct-problem behaviors in children and adolescents. It measures a range of problem behaviors including aggression, non-compliance, temper tantrums, disruptive and annoying behaviors, stealing, lying, and so forth. The behaviors are rated on a 7-point scale that indicates how often the behavior occurs and a yes/no problem scale that tells how the parent perceives the behavior. One example of Eyberg's questions includes: "how often does your child act defiant when told to do something? (1-never, 2-3-seldom, 4-sometimes, 5-6-often, 7-always; is this a problem for you? Yes or no)". The Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory has two scores. The intensity score is the total frequency of occurrence for the 36 behaviors and the problem score is the total number of behaviors for which the response is "yes". The Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory has good concurrent and known group validity, significantly correlating with independent observations of children's behavior (Burns & Patterson, 1990).

One question will measure the dependent variable of academic progression: What is your adopted child's GPA? One question will measure the variable of academic retention: Has your adopted child been retained? The Children's Emotional Adjustment Scale will be used to measure the dependent variable of emotional outcomes. The Children's Emotional Adjustment Scale is a parent-answered behavior rating scale that assesses the emotional competencies of children aged 6-12 years old across four broad factors: temper control (14 items), mood repair (14 items), social assertiveness (10 items), and anxiety control (9 items) (Thorlacius & Gudmundsson, 2015). Parents rate the items on a four-point scale (0=never, 1=seldom,

2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=always) reflecting how often the given statement applied to their child within the last month. Example items addressing emotional outcomes are “easily able to distract himself/herself when worried” and “is good at cheering himself/herself up”. Factor Analysis of the Children’s Emotional Adjustment Scale has revealed a clear four-factor structure, with all items corresponding to their intended constructs (Thorlaciuss & Gudmundsson, 2015). The factors have demonstrated adequate levels of internal consistency ($\alpha = .92-.95$) and satisfactory concurrent validity with established measures of child psychopathology, made evident by moderate to high correlations ($r = .70-.78$) between mother-reported scores on the CEAS and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the Revised Child Anxiety and Depression Scale-Parent Version (RCADS-P) (Thorlaciuss & Gudmundsson, 2015).

Demographic and other variables.

The last part of the survey questionnaire will ask demographic questions to determine each participant’s age, gender, marital status, number of children, the adopted child’s age, the adopted child’s education level, the child’s adoption age, the race/ethnicity of each parent and of the adopted child, the amount of time each parent has lived in the United States, and the primary language of each parent.

Procedures for Data Collection

Data will be collected through surveys e-mailed to each participant to complete at their convenience. Surveys will be self-administered but assistance will be provided if needed. The survey is estimated to take 30-45 minutes to complete. The three researchers will be collecting data. Data will be collected over the course of nine years; 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9. The drawing for the family trip to Disney World will be held after all data is retained.

Qualitative Methods

Sampling and Recruitment

We will begin recruitment from the participants of our survey. These participants will be familiar with our research goal already and understand that it is a longitudinal study over nine years. We will be using nonrandom quota sampling with 60 families total to participate in the interview phase of our research. This will include 20 male same-sex couples, 20 female same-sex couples and 20 different-sex couples. Once we have these 60 interviews completed, we will delve into the content of the interviews and determine if more interviews are needed. Eligibility for participation in the interview phase is the same as our survey participants. As an incentive we are offering entrance of all participants into a drawing for an all expenses family vacation to Disney World upon completion of the study. We are also using flexibility in the way that interviews will be conducted to alleviate hardships on families wishing to participate. Phone interviews, and video conferencing will be authorized to use, to ensure families can participate from all over the United States.

Procedures for Data Collection

Using a semi-structured interview guide, 45-minute to one-hour interviews will be conducted repeated over the course of nine years: Y1, Y3, Y5, Y7 and Y9. These interviews will be done at the participants discretion of either video conference, phone call, or in person. The interviews will be conducted by the researchers Riley, Viteri-Ruiz and Yates, never to have less than two of the three present. The interviews will be held in a way that is conversational, where the parents tell us about their children's lives thus far. The topics of the interview will be as follows: behavioral issues (i.e. violent episodes, aggression, etc.), adjustment issues, academic progress, mental health changes (i.e. anxiety, depression, etc.). Given the participants permission, all interviews will be recorded. Three graduate students will be hired to transcribe

the recordings and redact the identifying information. The entire interview will be transcribed, to ensure all information is passed on, due to the semi-structured type of interview. These files will then be assigned pseudo names for peer analysis.

Trustworthiness

Mitigation of researcher bias.

Reflexivity is a strategy used to mitigate researcher bias. Authors Riley, Viteri-Ruiz and Yates are going to be using self-disclosure as an important technique to do so. Because bias can come out in other ways, the researchers will be using additional strategies to lessen this bias. After the interviews have been conducted, the researchers will practice member checking to ensure that the information collected is as accurate as possible. Not only will the researchers Riley et al. be asking participants to complete surveys of complied questions from the Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory and the Children's Emotional Adjustment Scale, but participants will be asked to take part in multiple qualitative interviews throughout the longitudinal study. This use of triangulation will help to balance out the disadvantages of both the qualitative and quantitative collection methods. Lastly, to mitigate researcher bias, the interviews will always be conducted with at least two of the three researchers in the room. This use of multiple observers will help ensure that the information being collected from the participants is not missed, or misinterpreted.

Self-disclosures.

Author Yates does not have personal experience with adoption or with being reared by same-sex couples. She believes that there is not going to be a significant difference in the academic, behavioral, or emotional outcomes of adopted children that have been reared by same-sex couples. Author Yates thinks that there could be a difference because of family structure

including, but not limited to single parent families, children who were adopted at an older age, and children who have been exposed to trauma either physical or mental. Author Riley does not have personal experience with adoption nor was she raised by a same-sex couple. She does maintain personal relationships with same-sex couples who are raising children and has participated in advocacy work for the LGBT community. Author Riley believes that the sexual orientation of adopted parents will not affect the academic, behavioral, or emotional outcomes of adopted children. She believes that these outcomes will instead be determined by family structure. Author Viteri-Ruiz doesn't have any personal experience with adoption or being raised by same-sex parents. Author Viteri-Ruiz does have experience with knowing same-sex couples who are trying to adopt. Author Viteri-Ruiz believe that not matter whether a child is raised or adopted by same-sex or different-sex parents there is not a significant difference on the child's development whether it be academic, behavioral, or emotional.

Participant reactivity.

Upon accepting participation in the study, participants will be asked their preference for interview type. Interviews can be conducted via video conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Skype or FaceTime or even on the phone if the participant has set up a secure passphrase to ensure confidentiality. The researchers hope that by allowing participants to choose the ways the interviews and surveys are conducted; it will allow the participants to feel more at ease and lessen their reactivity. Lastly, the researchers will be practicing prolonged engagement. Participants will be asked to take part in multiple qualitative interviews throughout the longitudinal study (one interview of approximately 45-minutes to one-hour every two years for the duration of the study). After the interviews are completed, the researchers Riley et al. will create summaries of the responses and with the use of personalized password protected documents, these summaries

will be sent back to the participant for overview to ensure that the interpretation is correct. The longer the interviews, to a certain extent, and the longitudinal nature of the study, will help make the participants more comfortable and lower the participant reactivity.

Protection of Human Subjects/Research Participants

In order to conduct this study, the authors, Riley, Viteri-Ruiz and Yates, will be seeking permission from the Institutional Review Board at Southern Adventist University. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identities of research participants. The files containing information collected from the surveys will be stored in locked file cabinets in a restricted access room. The personal information of the participants will be known only to the researchers conducting the study. All subjects will be required to sign a consent form electronically (see appendix E) upon acceptance for participation in the study. These consent files will be kept in a secured file within a restricted access room.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the survey questionnaire will be analyzed by the latest version of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Statistics version 26.0). Descriptive Statistics will be used to summarize each research and demographic variable (see Appendix B). We will report the frequencies in percentage for the independent variable of sexual orientation, the dependent variable of academic retention, and the demographic variables of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, adoption age, race/ethnicity of the parent and of the adopted child, and primary language. The mean, standard deviation, and range will be calculated for the dependent variables of behavioral outcomes, emotional outcomes, and academic GPA, as well as the demographic variables of the number of children in the household, the adopted child's age, and

the adopted child's education level. If the data is skewed, the median will be calculated instead of the mean.

A Simple Linear Regression Analysis and a Binominal Logistic Regression Analysis will be utilized to answer our research question. We will use a Binominal Logistic Regression Analysis to test if there is a relationship between the independent variable of the sexual orientation of adoptive parents to the dependent variable of academic retention. An odds ratio will be included to measure the effect size of sexual orientation and academic outcomes. A Simple Linear Regression Analysis will be conducted for the dependent variable of behavioral outcomes, a second Simple Linear Regression Analysis will be done for the dependent variable of emotional outcomes, and a third Simple Linear Regression Analysis will be done for the dependent variable of academic performance (GPA). An R^2 will be included to measure the effect size of sexual orientation and behavioral outcomes and the effect size of sexual orientation and emotional outcomes. We will use a statistical significance level of .05 (see Appendix B).

Data from our demographic variables, such as number of children and adoption age, will be analyzed as well by factoring these out to determine if these variables affect the scores of the academic outcomes, behavioral outcomes, and emotional outcomes. If it is determined that these demographic variables affect our outcomes, they will be included in the Simple Linear Regression Analyses.

Qualitative Data Analysis

To manage and store our analysis of the qualitative data, we will use the QSR International's NVivo 12 software. After reviewed and arranged, each interview transcript will be uploaded to NVivo. Analysis of the data will begin with the initial interview and occur

simultaneously with data collection. Several steps will be incorporated to analyze the interview data.

We will first preview the data by listening to audio recordings and/or watching the video recordings and reading the transcript. We will then write a one-page report summarizing the interview and highlighting key information collected by thoroughly analyzing the transcript. We will proceed with identifying meaning units and assign specific code words to each, with each code word clearly defined. Constant comparisons will be made to identify how each category correlates with one another, enabling us to recognize the potential patterns of relationship between each one. Next, emergent coding will be utilized by each researcher. All three researchers will separately code two similar transcripts and develop a codebook. The three researchers will then come together to compare the codes and develop a mutually agreed-upon codebook. This new codebook will be utilized for the proceeding transcripts. This process will be repeated should any new codes emerge.

Memos will be used to record each researcher's thoughts about the meanings, themes, and patterns recognized within our data. Memos will also be utilized to note our analytical ideas concerning the data analysis and if any changes are needed to strengthen the analysis. We will discuss constant comparisons between each couple interviewed to determine which factors contribute to each developmental outcome. Additionally, we will ask participants to read our interpretation of the data collected and give feedback on it. The recognition of inconsistencies in the data analysis will be resolved through team meetings in which an in-depth review will be conducted until a general agreement is made.

Summary of Study

In order to assess the academic, behavioral, and emotional outcomes of adopted children of both same-sex and different-sex couples, we will conduct a longitudinal study comprised of a mixed methods research design. The quantitative component will include a survey of a non-random quota sampling of 750 families living in the United States. The qualitative phase will consist of a subsample of 60 families who participated in the quantitative study. Data will be collected from this subsample through 60-90-minute interviews at the participant's discretion of either video chat, phone call, or in person.

Limitations

There are several limitations to our research study. First, we are only collecting data from adoptive couples within the United States who speak English and whose adoptive child is at least six years old. This prevents us from evaluating early childhood outcomes in children under the age of six, as well as outcomes of children from non-English speaking families. Additionally, we are ensuring equal representation of each adoptive couple (different-sex, male same-sex, and female same-sex) through non-random quota sampling. This lack of random sampling and small sample size will further limit the generalization of the data collected.

Another limitation is that the questionnaires utilized in the quantitative portion of this study do not address the child's pre-adoption history, therefore any pre-adoption factors that might be contributing to the child's outcomes will not be included. Additionally, although the Child Emotional Adjustment Survey has good validity and reliability for children aged 6-12, validity and reliability has not yet been established for children over 12. Lastly, this study will only collect information from the adoptive parents, therefore excluding data from the children themselves or from others who may have valuable input, such as teachers, social workers, and counselors.

Strengths

One strength of this study is that data will be collected directly from the adoptive parents. A non-random quota sampling will be utilized, ensuring equal representation of each category of our independent variable (different-sex adoptive couples, male same-sex adoptive couples, and female same-sex adoptive couples) for comparable outcomes. An additional strength is that this research study will be longitudinal, enabling us to measure the comparable outcomes of each adopted child over the course of nine years. To measure the dependent variables of behavior and emotional outcomes, two validated scales of measurement will be used: The Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory for behavioral outcomes and the Child Behavior Checklist for emotional outcomes. The Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory has significant known-group validity, correlating with independent observations of children's behavior and temperamental characteristics of the child (Burns & Patterson, 1990). The four-factor structure of the Children's Emotional Adjustment Scale has demonstrated adequate levels of internal consistency ($\alpha = .92-.95$) and satisfactory concurrent validity with established measures of child psychopathology (Thorlacijs & Gudmundsson, 2015). While the quantitative phase will offer a wide range of data from diverse family types, the qualitative component will enable us to explore the outcomes of each adopted child in depth, therefore providing further insight and understanding to the quantitative data collected.

Implications

An implication of this study is that each state mandate policies that provide explicit protection against the discrimination of LGBT couples by both public and private adoption and foster agencies within the United States, if findings indicate there is no correlation between the sexual orientation of adoptive parents to the academic, behavioral, and emotional outcomes of

adoptive children. This may also assist social workers who work for adoption agencies in advocating for policies at both the state and federal level that ensure equal opportunity is given to both same-sex couples and different-sex couples to adopt. Should this study indicate that academic, behavioral, and emotional outcomes for adopted children of same-sex couples are comparable or greater than those adopted by different-sex couples, it is important that professionals who work with prospective and current adoptive families, such as child welfare workers and clinicians, are thoroughly educated on diverse family types and made aware that differences in family structure should not be equated with negative outcomes.

Future Studies

Future studies should incorporate data from informants outside the family, such as teachers, adoption caseworkers, and counselors. Including additional participants unrelated to the child will decrease the chance of parental bias, provide valuable input, and strengthen validity. Future research can take this a step further through the inclusion of data from the adopted child, as well as incorporating the pre-adoption history. Additionally, a future study that centers its focus on the experience of the adopted child could provide greater insight on the factors contributing to positive developmental outcomes. Lastly, recent research conducted on sexual minority populations has highlighted the roles of stigma, discrimination, and sexual minority stress on psychological adjustment and overall health (Farr, 2016). Therefore, future research studies should address the experience and influence of stigma and discrimination on same-sex couples and their children.

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Appendix A
Literature Review Table

Author	Type of Source	Sampling	Answer to Research Question	Strengths	Limitations
Farr, R. H. (2017)	Longitudinal Study	106 adoptive children (56 same-sex, 50 other-sex) from private adoption agencies, where same-sex adoption was legal. No children were biologically related to their adoptive parents. All children were placed with adoptive families between birth and one month old.	Using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) reveals no significant differences in children’s behavior as a function of parental sexual orientation.	Longitudinal design, using data from two points in the adopted children’s lives. Strong retention rate in the study with 91% of participants. Uses informants outside of the family to gather information.	Limited by only looking at one pathway to adoptive parenting, private domestic infant adoption. Because of the self-reporting nature of the surveys, there could be bias in the results.
Farr, R. H., Oakley, M. K., & Ollen, E. W. (2016).	Mixed Methods (questionnaires and in-depth interviews)	The sample targeted here involves 96 parents (45 lesbian mothers, 51 gay fathers) and their 50 children (26 girls, 24 boys; representing 50 same-sex parent families—24 with	Results were supported by parent- and teacher-reported questionnaires, as well as parent interviews, in which 94 of 96 parents reported that their children adjusted well to	One of the biggest strengths found in the study was that there was many informants – children, parents, and teachers.	One of the limitations was that the cross-sectional findings only showed associations with bullying and behavioral problems.

		lesbian parents, 26 with gay parents) who participated at W2 and 48 of the children’s teachers.	school. Moreover, children did not generally appear at risk for bullying and teasing due to having same-sex parents (parents reported only four of 50 children as having had these experiences)		
Goldberg, A. & Smith, J. (2013).	Quantitative Study	The sample examined 40 female same-sex, 35 male same-sex, and 45 different-sex parent families with adopted children, all of whom were placed in their adoptive homes under the age of 18 months.	Family type was unrelated to children’s adjustment. This finding is consistent with earlier work and provides support for arguments that prospective adopters should not be discriminated against, in policy or practice, based on sexual orientation.	This study utilized the Child Behavior Checklist, designed for children 1.5-5 years, that consists of three domains: internalizing problems, externalizing problems, and total problems. Internalizing and externalizing problem scores were used as outcomes.	Primary limitation is the reliance on parent reports as opposed to data gathered from multiple informants. In primary analysis, the same informant was reporting on the child and parent characteristics, leading to potential reporter bias.
Boertien, D.,	Quantitative Study (secondary data from	7792 children living in same-sex couple homes; Data	The analysis reveals that children living	Large sample size, less skewing of	A limitation of the data is that for certain groups of children, we cannot ensure that school delays took place before

<p>& Bernardi, F. (2019).</p>	<p>the American Community Survey)</p>	<p>from the American Community Survey waves 2008–2015 was used.</p>	<p>with same-sex parents were significantly more likely to be behind in school in 2008 but that this association had disappeared by 2010.</p>	<p>findings. Using data from the American Community Survey.</p>	<p>children started living within the family type observed at the time of measurement.</p>
<p>Miller, B. G., Kors, S., & Macfie, J. (2016).</p>	<p>Meta-analysis</p>	<p>10 studies from the past 10 years to evaluate child psychological adjustment by parent sexual orientation. Search terms including <i>same-sex, parent, child, gay, and same gender</i> were used on a list of over 6000 studies. The list had peer-reviewed, nonpeer-reviewed, and unpublished studies to make sure there was no publication bias. (a) reported distinct statistics for the group of children of gay</p>	<p>The negative directionality indicates that children of gay parents had better outcomes than did children of heterosexual parents.</p>	<p>The list had peer-reviewed, nonpeer-reviewed, and unpublished studies. Only using studies from the last 10 years means more accurate data.</p>	<p>Small sample size. By restricting inclusion of studies to the more relevant range of the last 10 years, potential statistical power was lost and descriptive analysis of moderator variables was not possible. Even though the quality-effects model does mitigate some of the looser methodological controls, it does not remove them. The grouping of related measures into a larger category runs the risk of missing some of the nuances in the data.</p>

		<p>fathers, (b) measured some element of. (c) had a control sample or provided population normative data, and (d) were quantitative studies with results that could be used to calculate meta-analysis statistics. This process resulted in 10 studies and 35 standardized mean differences (SMDs).</p>			
<p>Farr, R. & Patterson, C. (2019)</p>	<p>Longitudinal Study</p>	<p>This study examined co-parenting and child adjustment during early and middle childhood among 106 lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parent-adoptive families. All target children in this sample were the eldest adopted</p>	<p>Findings are consistent with the view that family processes are more important than parental sexual orientation for child outcomes. Findings provide no empirical support for the barriers LGBT</p>	<p>The inclusion of observational, survey, and longitudinal data serve to create a much more detailed picture.</p>	<p>Sample represents only private domestic infant adoption. It is possible that families formed via other pathways, who represent more diversity, would demonstrate different child adjustment outcomes. Overall sample size is small.</p>

		child between 1 and 5 years old.	couples continue to face when attempting to adopt children as the LGBT parents in this sample provide high quality parenting and have well-adjusted children.		
Lavner, J., Waterman, J. & Peplau, L. (2012)	Longitudinal Study	This study compared the cognitive development and behavioral problems at 2, 12, and 24 months post-placement of 82 high-risk children adopted from foster care in heterosexual (60) and gay or lesbian households (22).	Children in both household types showed significant gains in cognitive development and maintained similar levels of behavior problems over time, despite gay and lesbian parents raising children with higher risks prior to placement. Results demonstrated that high-risk children show similar patterns of development over time in both family-type households.	At each time point of the study (2, 12, and 24 months), children accompanied their adoptive parents to complete in-person interviews and complete age-appropriate cognitive assessments and the primary parent completed a questionnaire regarding the child's behavioral problems.	Only 22 gay and lesbian adoptive families were sampled. Additionally, this study only included high risk children adopted from foster care.

<p>Farr, R. H., Bruun, S. T., & Simon, K. A. (2019)</p>	<p>Empirical Study; Longitudinal Study; Quantitative Study</p>	<p>This study consisted of 96 adoptive families; 26 lesbian, 29 gay, 41 heterosexual parents. These families were examined there were observations of adoptive family conflict and associations with child adjustment and feelings about adoption.</p>	<p>Results showed that families generally displayed high and positive results with moderate negativity/conflict. The results also showed the children had very positive feelings, a few negative experiences, and moderate level of concern related to their adoption. Regarding relationship status of the parents that didn't have any significant differences, In no case were the differences significant between correlations among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parent families.</p>	<p>One of the strengths shown was that data provided from multiple sources provided a bigger picture of factors influencing child adjustment. Participation of Lesbian, Gay, and heterosexual parents allowed for cross-comparisons underrepresented in family systems research.</p>	<p>Limitations included that Although their relatively high-SES sample is representative of families who complete private domestic adoptions, future research should consider how SES, parental sexual orientation, race, and varying pathways to parenthood intersect with family dynamics and child development.</p>
<p>Potter, D. (2012)</p>	<p>Quantitative</p>	<p>Seven wave panel study of</p>	<p>Lower math scores, lower</p>	<p>Very large sample pool.</p>	<p>The parents in the families identified by this study were not self-proclaimed</p>

	(Secondary data from the <i>Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten cohort</i>).	20,000 plus children during kindergarten in 1998, following them through the 8 th grade. (Data was collected in K, 1 st grade, 3 rd grade, 5 th grade, and 8 th grade.)	reading scores. Not definitive that it is due to the parents’ sexual orientation or family structure.		lesbian mothers or gay fathers, and although the ECLS – K did not have a policy prohibiting same-sex parent households from participating in the data collection future research is needed that better details parents’ residential and romantic relationships. Only parents in two parent same-sex households were used in this study.
Sullins, P. D. (2015)	Mixed methods (Includes some secondary data from the <i>U.S. National Health Interview Survey</i>).	Representative sample of 207,007 children (512 from the <i>U.S. National Health Interview Survey</i>).	Emotional problems were over twice as common in children reared by same-sex parents.	Extensive sample size compared to other similar studies.	Only 512 same-sex families are used for this study.
Watkins, C. S. (2018)	Quantitative (uses secondary data from 2012, 2013, and 2014 <i>ACS Microdata via IPUMS</i>).	1,012,927 children were used. Children from married same-sex, married opposite-sex, unmarried same-sex, unmarried opposite-sex families.	Children of same-sex couples do not appear to be developmentally disadvantaged in comparison to children on different-sex couples.	No single parents were used. Can only identify after grade retention has occurred.	Lacks longitudinal data sets and detailed measures of academic progress and family transitions.

Appendix B
Recruitment Letter



Elizabeth Riley
Primary Investigator

Southern Adventist University
Department of Social Work
4881 Taylor Circle
Collegedale, TN 37315

To Whom It May Concern:

We are looking for participants in a research study that will be held through Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, TN. The study we are conducting is seeking understand the academic, behavioral, and emotional outcomes of adopted children in diverse families.

This research is being conducted by Elizabeth Riley, Fabiana Viteri-Ruiz, and Susan Yates, students of the Social Work department. The study will include a survey questionnaire, and five interviews over the course of nine years. The interviews can be conducted via phone, in person, or video conference. Upon completion of the research all participants have an opportunity to enter a drawing to an all-expenses paid family vacation to Disney World. If you or anyone who would like to participate have any questions about the study, you can contact the researchers at:

Elizabeth Riley: eriley@southern.edu

Fabiana Viteri-Ruiz: fviteriruiz@southern.edu

Susan Yates: syates@southern.edu

Sincerely,
E. Riley, F. Viteri-Ruiz, & S. Yates

Appendix C
Flyer for Adoption Agencies



PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

For a longitudinal research study on the outcomes of adopted children in different types of adoptive families

Help us advocate for LGBTQ+ Equality within Public and Private Foster/Adoption Agencies in the U.S.

You May Qualify If:

- At least 25 years old
- English speaking
- Live in the United States
- Must also have adopted their children and have had custody for at least one year.

Participation Involves:

- Survey questionnaire
- Interviews to be conducted by phone, in person, or through video conference
- 5 sets of interviews

Location:

Chattanooga, Tennessee

Participants from all states are welcome

Potential Benefits:

Entrance of all participants into a drawing for an all expenses paid family vacation to Disney World upon completion of the study.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please Contact:

Elizabeth Riley: eriley@southern.edu

-Study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of Southern Adventist University-

powered by



Appendix D

Table of Quantitative Measures, Descriptive, and Inferential Analysis					
Descriptive Analyses					
Research Question Constructs	Name of variable	Name of measuring instrument/question	Measurement Level	How data are going to be analyzed	Signif. Level
Behavioral Outcomes	Behavior Intensity	Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory: 36 questions (How often does this occur with your child? 1: never, 2-3: seldom; 4: sometimes; 5-6: often; 7: always); Sum of the frequency of each behavior	Interval/Ratio	Mean, Standard Deviation (median instead of mean if data is skewed); range	N/A
	Behavior Problem	Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory Problem Score: (Is this a problem for you? yes/no); sum of all “yes” responses	Interval/Ratio	Mean, Standard Deviation (median instead of mean if data is skewed); range	N/A
Emotional Outcomes	Temper Control	Temper Control Subscale of the Children’s Emotional Adjustment Scale; 14 questions (For each given statement that applies to your child within the last month: 0=never, 1=seldom, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=always)	Interval/Ratio	Mean, Standard Deviation (median instead of mean if data is skewed); range	N/A
	Mood Repair	Mood Repair Subscale of the Children’s Emotional Adjustment Scale; 14 questions	Interval/Ratio	Mean, Standard Deviation (median instead of mean if data is skewed); range	

		(For each given statement that applies to your child within the last month: 0=never, 1=seldom, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=always)			
	Social Assertiveness	Social Assertiveness Subscale of the Children’s Emotional Adjustment Scale; 10 questions (For each given statement that applies to your child within the last month: 0=never, 1=seldom, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=always)	Interval/Ratio	Mean, Standard Deviation (median instead of mean if data is skewed); range	
	Anxiety Control	Anxiety Control Subscale of the Children’s Emotional Adjustment Scale; 9 questions (For each given statement that applies to your child within the last month: 0=never, 1=seldom, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=always)	Interval/Ratio	Mean, Standard Deviation (median instead of mean if data is skewed); range	N/A
Academic Outcomes	GPA	What is the child’s GPA?	Interval/Ratio	Mean, Standard Deviation (median instead of mean if data is skewed); range	N/A
	Retention	Has the child been retained? Yes/No	Nominal	Frequencies in Percentages	N/A
Table of Quantitative Measures, Descriptive, and Inferential Analysis Cont’d					
Demographic/ Background	Name of variable	Name of measuring instrument/question	Measurement level	How data are going to be analyzed	Signif. Level

and other Constructs					
Sex	Gender	1 question: What is your gender? Male, Female, Other (please state)	Nominal	Frequencies in Percentages	N/A
Sexual Orientation	Sexual Orientation	1 question: What is your sexual orientation? Gay, Asexual, Lesbian, Heterosexual, Bisexual, Pansexual	Nominal	Frequencies in Percentages	N/A
Marital Status	Marital Status	1 question: What is your marital status? Married (same-sex), Married (different-sex), Divorced (same-sex), Divorced (different-sex), Widowed (same-sex), Widowed (different-sex), Never Married (same-sex), Never Married (different-sex), Single Parent (same-sex), Single Parent (different-sex)	Nominal	Frequencies in Percentages	N/A
Children	Number of Children	1 question: How many children do you have? (please state _____)	Interval/Ratio	Mean and standard deviation (median instead of mean if data is skewed); range	N/A
	Adopted Child's Age	1 question: How old is/are your adopted children? (please state _____)	Interval/Ratio	Mean and standard deviation (median instead of mean if data is skewed); range	N/A

	Adopted Child's Education Level	1 question: What is your child's highest level of completed education? No education, Head start, Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, Grade 1-3, Grade 4-7, Grade 8-12, Bachelors, Postgraduate	Interval/Ratio	Mean and standard deviation (median instead of mean if data is skewed); range	N/A
	Adoption Age	1 question: What age was your child when they were adopted? (please state _____)	Nominal	Frequencies in Percentages	N/A
Race/Ethnicity	Ethnicity	Are you Hispanic or Latino/a/x?	Nominal	Frequencies in Percentages	N/A
	Race	1 question: What is your race? Asian, White/Caucasian, Black, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Other (please state)	Nominal	Frequencies in Percentages	N/A
	Adopted Child's Ethnicity	Is your adopted child Hispanic/Latino/a/x?	Nominal	Frequencies in Percentages	N/A
	Adopted Child's Race	1 question: What is your adopted child's race? Asian, White/Caucasian, Black, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Other (please state)	Nominal	Frequencies in Percentages	N/A
Time in U.S.	Time in U.S.	1 question: How long how you lived in the U.S.? Since Birth, <1 year, 1-3 years, 4-7 years, 8-10 years	Ordinal	Mean and Standard Deviation (median instead of mean if data is skewed); range	N/A

Language	Primary Language	1 question: State your primary language	Nominal	Frequencies in Percentages	N/A
Table of Quantitative Measures, Descriptive, and Inferential Analysis Cont'd					
Inferential Analyses					
	Name of Variables & Relationship	Name of Measuring Instrument/Question	Measurement Level	How data are going to be analyzed	Signif. Level
	Relationship between sexual orientation and behavior intensity	Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory Intensity Score: 36 questions	Behavior Intensity: Interval/Ratio	Simple Linear Regression Effect Size: R ²	p=.05
	Relationship between sexual orientation and behavior problem	Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory Problem Score: (“Is this a problem for you? Yes/No”) Sum of all yes responses	Behavior Problem: Interval/Ratio	Simple Linear Regression Effect Size: R ²	P=.05
	Relationship between sexual orientation and temper control	Temper Control Subscale of the Children’s Emotional Adjustment Survey : 14 questions	Temper Control: Interval/Ratio	Simple Linear Regression Effect Size: R ²	P=.05
	Relationship between sexual orientation and mood repair	Mood Repair Subscale of the Children’s Emotional Adjustment Survey: 14 questions	Mood Repair: Interval/Ratio	Simple Linear Regression Effect Size: R ²	P=.05
	Relationship between sexual orientation and social assertiveness	Social Assertiveness Subscale of the Children’s Emotional Adjustment Survey: 10 questions	Social Assertiveness: Interval/Ratio	Simple Linear Regression Effect Size: R ²	P=.05
	Relationship between sexual orientation and anxiety control	Anxiety Control Subscale of the Children’s Emotional Adjustment Survey: 9 questions	Anxiety Control: Interval/Ratio	Simple Linear Regression Effect Size: R ²	P=.05
	Relationship between sexual orientation and school progression	1 question: What is your child’s GPA?	School Progression: Interval/Ratio	Simple Linear Regression Effect Size: R ²	P=.05

	Relationship between sexual orientation and school retention	1 question: Has the child been retained? Yes/No	School Retention: Nominal	Binominal Logistic Regression Effect Size: Odds Ratio	P=.05
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Appendix E
Participant Consent Form

PARENT INTERVIEW

Academic, Behavioral, Emotional Outcomes of Adopted Children

Principal Investigators: Elizabeth Riley, Fabiana Viteri-Ruiz, and Susan Yates

Introduction and Purpose

You are invited to participate in a research study to help us understand the academic, behavioral, and emotional, outcomes of adoptive children in same-sex and different-sex adoptive families. Principal investigators are Elizabeth Riley, Fabiana Viteri-Ruiz, and Susan Yates. We are Bachelor candidates in the School of Social Work at Southern Adventist University and are conducting this study as part of the requirements for our bachelor's degree. This form explains what you will be asked to do if you agree to participate in this study. Please read it carefully and feel free to ask us or our supervisor, Dr. Nina Nelson, any questions before you decide to participate. Our contact information is at the bottom of this form.

Who can participate in this Study?

You can participate in this study if you meet the following conditions:

- A) You are a parent/caregiver age 25 or older
- B) You are English-speaking and live in the United States
- C) You have had custody of the child for at least one year and the child is at least six and no older than eight years old
- D) You have been with your partner since obtaining custody of the child

Study Procedures

This study will consist of two parts: A survey questionnaire and in-depth interviews. Should you choose to participate, you may participate in only the survey questionnaire or both. The survey questionnaire will be completed by each parent and consist of a list of questions addressing your child's academic, behavior, and emotional development. You will receive a link to an online survey in your email, that you can complete at your own convenience.

The second part will be in-depth interviews. These interviews will last 45-60 minutes and will be conducted in-person or over the phone if preferred. These interviews will consist of open-ended questions. We will ask about your adoption journey, how your child has adjusted and how/if you believe this has correlated with your child's current emotional, behavioral, and academic progression.

Each questionnaire will be completed, and each interview will be conducted once every two years over the course of nine years; year one, year three, year six, and year nine.

Voluntary Participation

Participating in this study is voluntary. You can stop participating at any time without any consequences. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions and you can choose not to answer certain questions at your own discretion.

Benefits of Participation

Benefits of participation of this study is that the parents will have a better understanding of the factors that contribute to their child’s behavioral, emotional, and academic progression. Additionally, after the study we will provide an equal chance for one of the families that has participated to win a trip to Disney.

Possible Risks of Participation

Any risk to participating in this study is very low. It might be uncomfortable or upsetting to discuss the post-adoption history and/or adjustment of your child. However, we have found that many parents are open to discussing their journey and that of their children as they are eager to see the progression of their child’s adjustment. If needed, referral information to a counseling resource for yourself or your child will be provided.

Costs

There will be no cost to you for participating in this study, with the exception of transportation costs if you meet with us face to face.

Confidentiality of Records

What you share with us will be kept confidential. Any case files or case studies that review information from our interviews will only be used when reviewing results. Any results may be presented to a professional audience and used for scholarly purposes. Although the information you provide might be utilized, any names and information that can identify you and others will be kept confidential. When using the files, we will not use any of your direct personal information that can be used to identify you or any of your family members. Information you provide will always be kept under password protected files. The only exception to confidentiality is that if I have reason to believe a child may be at risk of child abuse or neglect or that you may at risk of immediate harm to yourself or others, I am required by law to make a report to the state child welfare or law enforcement agency.

Contact Persons

If you have questions or concerns, you may us at any time:
 Elizabeth Riley
eriley@southern.edu
 423.222.6565

Your signature on this form means that you accept and understand the terms of the research study, note that you may withdraw your participation at any time.

Print _____ Sign _____
 Date _____

Print _____ Sign _____
 Date _____