

What About the Children?

American College of Pediatricians Warns Against Same-Sex Families

by Tom McFeely

LONDON, Ontario — Dawn Stefanowicz says she knows from personal experience that what the American College of Pediatricians recommends is true. She is a Canadian woman who grew up in a homosexual household. She says Americans wouldn't support same-sex "marriage" if they understood how it can harm children. Stefanowicz, author of the book *Out From Under: the Impact of Homosexual Parenting*, rejects the claim of homosexual activists that same-sex households are just as healthy for kids as heterosexual homes. "That hasn't been my experience or the experience of people who have contacted me who have been raised in a similar situation," said Stefanowicz. "We've all faced negative challenges in this kind of household."

Brad Luna, director of communications for the Human Rights Campaign, disagreed with critics of same-sex households with children. "My response would be to look at every major psychological and child-welfare national organization," he said, "who have all come out and said that children raised with same-sex parents have no less development than children who were raised in a heterosexual relationship."

But one organization that does not endorse homosexual parenting is the American College of Pediatricians. "The environment in which children are reared is absolutely critical to their development," the college states in a position statement about homosexual parenting posted in the "Position Statements" section of its website, acpeds.org. "Given the current body of research, the American College of Pediatricians believes it is inappropriate, potentially hazardous to children, and dangerously irresponsible to change the age-old prohibition on homosexual parenting, whether by adoption, foster care, or by reproductive manipulation," it says. "This position is rooted in the best available science." The American College of Pediatricians' position statement references the many studies that have found that children thrive best in families with a married mother and father.

Dr. Michelle Cretella, a Rhode Island general pediatrician who is a board member of the American College of Pediatricians, said Luna is correct in saying that major medical groups have expressed support for homosexual parenting. But she said that they have done so despite the fact that scientific research has not established that such families are as healthy for kids as married heterosexual families.

Faulty Comparisons

Cretella said that when the American Academy of Pediatrics endorsed same-sex parenting in 2002, it acted on the recommendation of a small committee that she says had an agenda. The academy endorsed homosexual parents over the specific objections of some committee members who noted the flaws in the research studies that found same-sex parenting to be as healthy as heterosexual parenting, she said. A key methodological flaw in those studies is that they compared the wellbeing of children in homosexual households to those raised in difficult circumstances such as single-parent households that resulted from divorce, Cretella said. None of the studies compared children raised by homosexual parents to children with two heterosexual parents in a stable, loving marriage. Said Cretella, "Because if you do that, and we have decades of studies that have compared children in a traditional home with children of single mothers, children of single fathers, adoptive children, stepfamilies, children raised by a mother and grandmother, and across the board socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically children reared physically by their two biological parents do better across all those measures."

Cretella cited a recent meta-study conducted by two pro-homosexual researchers. It found that girls raised in homosexual households are more likely to be more aggressive, boys are likely to be less masculine and that both girls and boys engage in sexual experimentation at earlier ages and are more sexually promiscuous. While the researchers who conducted the meta-study did not regard their findings as negative, Cretella said, "those of us on the pro-family side look at that and say, 'No, you're rearing children with some gender confusion and you're putting them at risk for sexually transmitted diseases.'"

Another documented consequence of same-sex parenting is an increased likelihood that children of same-sex parents will claim a homosexual identity themselves. Cretella noted that multiple studies have found that

homosexually behaving teens and young adults suffer increased rates of depression, anxiety, eating disorders, addictions and suicidal thoughts. And in the case of boys who adopt a homosexual lifestyle because of the influence of their same-sex parents, Cretella said, they face a 30% chance of being dead or HIV-positive by the age of 30.

Personal Experience

Dawn Stefanowicz has personally experienced some of the negative consequences of homosexual parenting. In the 1960s and 1970s, from the age of 10 months old, she was raised in a Toronto household where her chronically ill mother lived along with her father and a succession of his same-sex partners. Her father eventually died of AIDS in 1991. Exposure to her father's promiscuous homosexuality hurt Stefanowicz in a variety of ways, she says. The fact that he had multiple same-sex partners generated profound feelings of insecurity, she said. "I always had that fear, beginning as a little child, that I could easily be discarded although I was a dependent living in this household and he happened to be my biological father," Stefanowicz said. "His partners were more important than I was. That was the sense I had."

Compounding her insecurity was the death by suicide of two of her father's sexual partners, and the confusion she felt about her own sexual identity because she was a young girl living in a home where male homosexuality and transsexuality were held up as attractive qualities. Said Stefanowicz, "It wasn't good enough to be a girl." Stefanowicz said she also learned from an early age that she shouldn't discuss what her family life was like. One of the things it included was accompanying her father to sites where the homosexual cruising subculture was occurring, such as parks and beaches and bathhouses. Along with witnessing her father's abnormal sexual behaviors, Stefanowicz said she also had to deal with other problems that he and his partners had, including mental health issues and addictions. Other adults who were raised in same-sex households have told Stefanowicz that they had to wrestle with the negative consequences of the same kind of experiences. Said Stefanowicz, "We see that as children and we are going to struggle with some of the same issues."

Ignoring the Consequences

American College of Pediatricians board member Cretella said that the interests of children like Dawn are being ignored in the renewed debate over the legalization of same-sex "marriage" that was triggered by last month's California Supreme Court decision legalizing such unions in that state. "The way the issue has been framed by same-sex marriage activists is purely looking at individual rights — the rights of adults," she said. "And they have removed any concept of family from the definition of marriage." Cretella said this ignores the historical fact that the primary purpose has always been to bond the father to his children and the children's mother, in order to create a healthy family environment where children will thrive. Said Cretella, "Marriage has everything to do with family."

Catholic psychiatrist Dr. Richard Fitzgibbons, co-author of the Catholic Medical Association's handbook "*Homosexuality and Hope*," said that highlighting this negative reality for children is critically important in explaining why same-sex "marriage" should not be legalized. "Children should not be placed in that lifestyle," Fitzgibbons said. "All of the sociological and psychological research makes it clear that the gold standard for children is a family life with a mother and a father who are married."

Stefanowicz agrees. Through her Christian faith and years of counseling, Stefanowicz was able to come to terms with the damage caused by her upbringing and subsequently to marry. Today, she is an accountant and home schools her two children and operates a website, dawnstefanowicz.com, dedicated to providing support and healing to other people reared in homosexual families. And she's also determined to tell Americans about the heartbreak they are inviting if they allow courts and legislatures to legalize homosexual "marriage" nationally, as Canada's federal parliament did in 2005. Said Stefanowicz, "I'm hoping that many, many people will wake up and start looking at children's best interests."

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