Today's piece was prepared by Laura Chen, MD based on an October 25, 2012 *US News and World Report* article, "[Foster kids adopted by same-sex parents make big gains, study says](http://health.usnews.com/health-news/news/articles/2012/10/25/foster-kids-adopted-by-same-sex-parents-make-big-gains-study-says)"

This article summarizes a study published in *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* comparing high-risk foster children adopted by heterosexual and homosexual parents.[[1]](#footnote-1) The study followed 82 high-risk children 4 months to 8 years old. Sixty children were placed with heterosexual parents and 22 with homosexual parents, of whom 68% were married or living with a partner. Children adopted by same-sex parents had more identified risk factors, including prematurity, prenatal substance exposure, history of abuse, and multiple prior placements. Children were followed for mental and social development.

The study assessed children at 2, 12 and 24 months after placement, using standardized psychologist- and parent-completed instruments. IQ scores increased similarly between groups by ~ 10 points over the course of the study. Same-sex marriage is in headlines; in keeping with the research, the journalist makes no reference to comparison between outcomes of the 1/3 of children who were adopted into single- vs. 2-parent households. The researchers mention methodological limitations in their research design (e.g., small sample size, and parent- rather than 3rd-party-report of social outcomes) which may diminish research reliability; the journalist does not make any reference to such design weaknesses. Additionally, the journal in which the research is published presents a specific social justice mission that may influence the impartiality of its editors and reviewers. Still, in keeping with most related research regarding sexual identity (in parents and/or in youth) and mental health and other outcomes showing no adverse impact, this study offers support that sexual orientation of adoptive parents does not adversely affect the development of foster children, for whom there is an urgency to find homes.

**RESOURCES ON FOSTER CARE & ADOPTION**:

* Foster Parenting & Relative Caring for Kids. Washington State Department of Social & Health Services. <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/index.asp>
* The Center for Adoption Medicine at the University of Washington. <http://adoptmed.org/>

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!

1. Justin A. Lavner, Jill Waterman, Letitia Anne Peplau. Can Gay and Lesbian Parents Promote Healthy Development in High-Risk Children Adopted From Foster Care? *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 2012; 82(4): 465 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)