

HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES

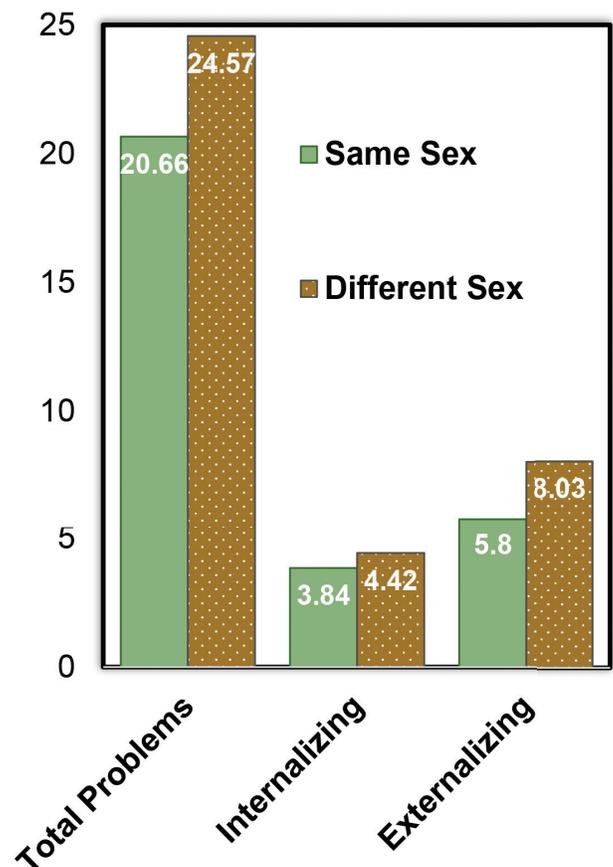
Behavioral Differences of Children Raised by Same-Sex Versus Different-Sex Parents

Student researcher: Harlie A. Lane, Senior

Limited adoption research has focused on the impact of parental-dyad sex composition on child behavior. In the current study, we examined differences in externalizing (e.g., aggression, bullying), internalizing (e.g., anxiety, depression), and total behavior problems measuring using the Child Behavior Checklist developed by T. M. Achenbach in *The Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment* published in 2009. Our sample was drawn from the Early Growth and Development Study published by L. D. Leve in *Twin Research and Human Genetics* in 2013, with a total sample size of 60 families composed of two parents and their adopted child. Pairs of same-sex and different-sex families were matched on seven key variables known to impact child behavior outcomes, such as child age, parental age and education, and socioeconomic status. By matching these pairs, we created two equivalent samples that only differed in parental sex composition to control for the effects of confounding variables. We then ran a series of independent samples *t* tests to determine any differences in internalizing, externalizing, or total behavior problems between children raised by same-sex versus different-sex adoptive parent dyads.

It was hypothesized that the outcomes of children from same-sex families would not be significantly different than those of the different-sex parents. There were no significant differences in externalizing behaviors ($t(0.49)=, p = 0.63$), social skills ($t(-0.11)=, p = 0.91$), or effortful control ($t(0.13)=, p = 0.90$) for children raised by different-sex and same-sex parent dyads, suggesting that the sex composition of parent dyads does not have a significant effect on these outcomes of adopted children. Ultimately, our findings support antidiscrimination legislation for LGBT parents in the field of adoption.

Research advisor Kristine Marceau writes: “Ms. Lane’s project found that the sex-composition of parents had no effect on child behavior, and rigorously controlled for many factors that can influence child behavior, like socioeconomic status and genetic risk for behavior problems. Her findings provide strong evidence for increased equality in adoption policies in the United States.”



Results of independent samples *t* tests and descriptive statistics for internalizing, externalizing, and total behavior problems by group.