

# Statewide bans on marriage, adoptions affect mental health of gay men

November 21 2013, by Laurel Thomas Gnagey

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Young gay men who hope one day to be fathers experience psychological distress brought on by policies that ban same-sex marriage and adoption, say researchers at the University of Michigan School of Public Health.

Increasingly, public health researchers are providing evidence to show that these types of policies are linked to greater psychological and

[physiological stress](#), says José Bauermeister, the John G. Searle Assistant Professor of Health Behavior and Health Education and director of the U-M Center for Sexuality & Health Disparities.

"Our study extends this current work by noting that LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) discrimination can also affect how and what people dream for their future," he said.

Bauermeister and colleagues examined the impact of statewide bans on fatherhood aspirations. Their observational study generated complete responses from 1,487 men from all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico.

They found that in states that did not have bans on gay marriage or adoption, men who anticipated being parents in the future had lower depressive symptoms and higher self-esteem. In states with marriage equity and adoption bans, men with fatherhood aspirations reported higher depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem.

These associations were found for both same-sex joint parenting bans, those that involve a couple adopting a child from its biological parents or one who is in state custody, and second parent adoption bans, in which a person seeks to adopt the child of a partner.

"This study is the first to examine how young gay and bisexual men's hopes about the future—in this case, their dreams about becoming [fathers](#)—may fail to be a protective factor towards their psychological health if they live in states where LGBT discriminatory policies are in place," Bauermeister said.

**More information:** "How Statewide LGB Policies Go From 'Under Our Skin' to 'Into Our Hearts': Fatherhood Aspirations and Psychological Well-Being Among Emerging Adult Sexual Minority Men." José A

Bauermeister. Department of Health Behavior and Health Education, Center for Sexuality and Health Disparities (SexLab), School of Public Health, University of Michigan. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* (Impact Factor: 2.72). 11/2013; DOI: [10.1007/s10964-013-0059-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-013-0059-6). Source: PubMed

Provided by University of Michigan

Citation: Statewide bans on marriage, adoptions affect mental health of gay men (2013, November 21) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-11-statewide-marriage-affect-mental-health.html>

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