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# **RACE AND ETHNICITY OF SAME-SEX COUPLES IN CALIFORNIA**

## **DATA FROM CENSUS 2000**

**February 2006**

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The Williams Project  
on Sexual Orientation Law and Public Policy  
UCLA School of Law

Using data from Census 2000, this report compares demographic and socio-economic characteristics of Asians and Pacific Islanders (APIs), blacks, Latino and Latinas (Latino/as), and whites (defined as white non-Latino/a) in same-sex couples in California. This report builds on previously released studies in which the Williams Project provided separate analyses of APIs, blacks, and Latino/as respectively.

### Key Findings:

- California's same-sex couples reflect California's racial and ethnic diversity; among Californians in same-sex couples, approximately 40% are racial/ethnic minorities.
- In California, the geographic distribution of minority (i.e., non-white) same-sex couples tends to mirror the respective distribution of minorities generally.
- Disparity in the income, employment, education attainment, and home ownership of persons in same-sex couples is strongly associated with race and ethnicity.
- Out of same-sex parents' own children, over two-thirds belong to minority racial/ethnic groups.
- Across categories of race and ethnicity, same-sex couples raising children tend to have fewer economic resources than their different-sex counterparts.

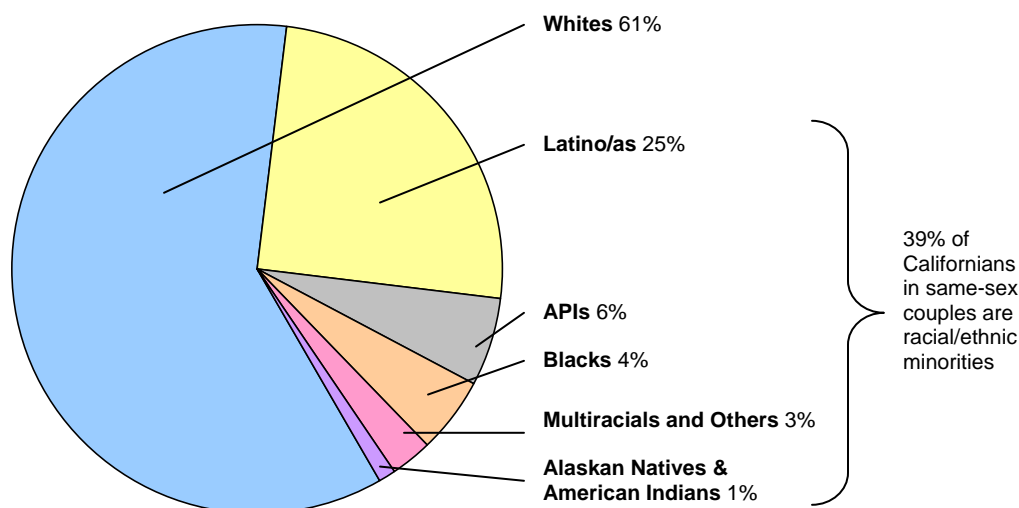
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\* The authors thank Regan Maas for producing the maps in this report.

**California’s same-sex couples reflect California’s racial and ethnic diversity.**

Among Californians in same-sex couples, approximately four out of every ten are racial/ethnic minorities.<sup>1</sup>

1(a). Race/Ethnicity of Californians in Same-sex Couples



California ranks first in the number of APIs, Latino/as, and whites in same-sex couples. California ranks third in the number of blacks who belong to same-sex couples.

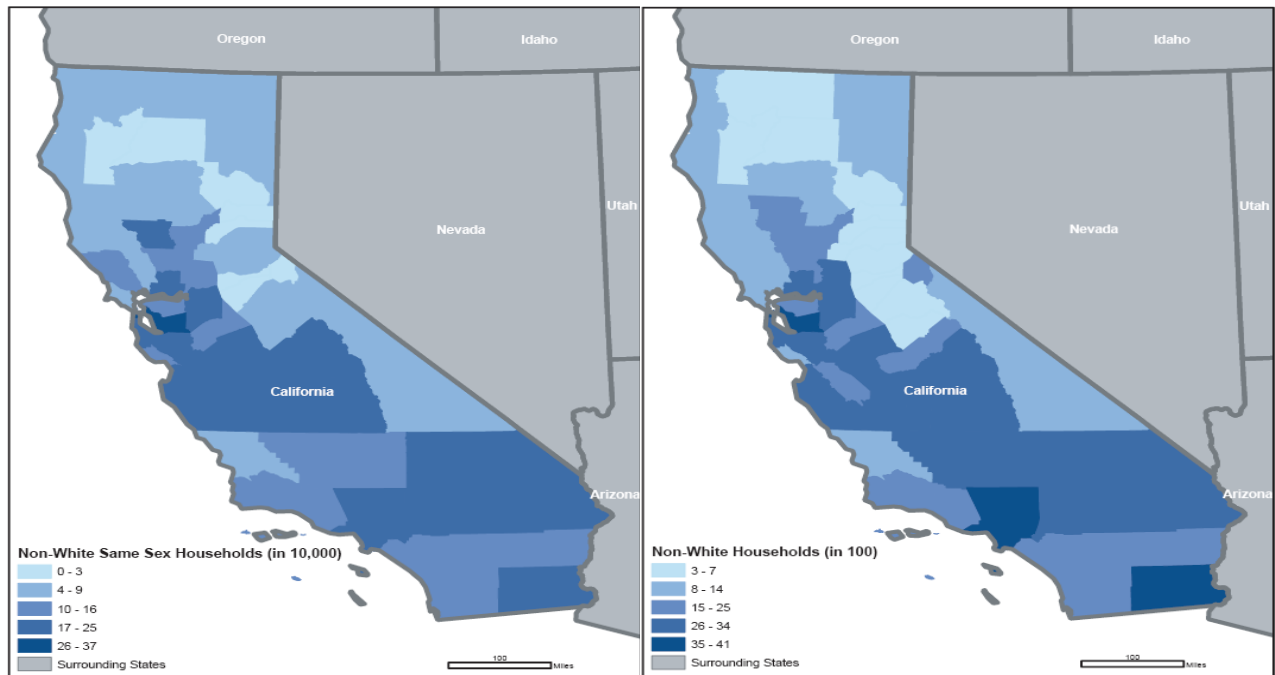
1(b). States with the Largest Numbers of Unmarried (Cohabiting) Same-sex Partners, by Race/Ethnicity

Rank	APIs	Blacks	Latino/as	Whites
1	California 13,288	New York 13,091	California 44,821	California 116,786
2	New York 4,775	Georgia 9,980	Texas 23,626	New York 62,258
3	Hawaii 2,186	California 9,590	New York 13,322	Florida 59,413
4	Texas 1,989	Texas 9,553	Florida 12,376	Texas 49,913
5	New Jersey 1,498	Florida 8,725	Illinois 6,651	Pennsylvania 36,091

<sup>1</sup> Racial/ethnic minorities include (1) all persons who did not identify themselves as “White” when completing their census forms, and (2) all persons who identified themselves as “White,” but also as “Spanish/Hispanic/Latino.”

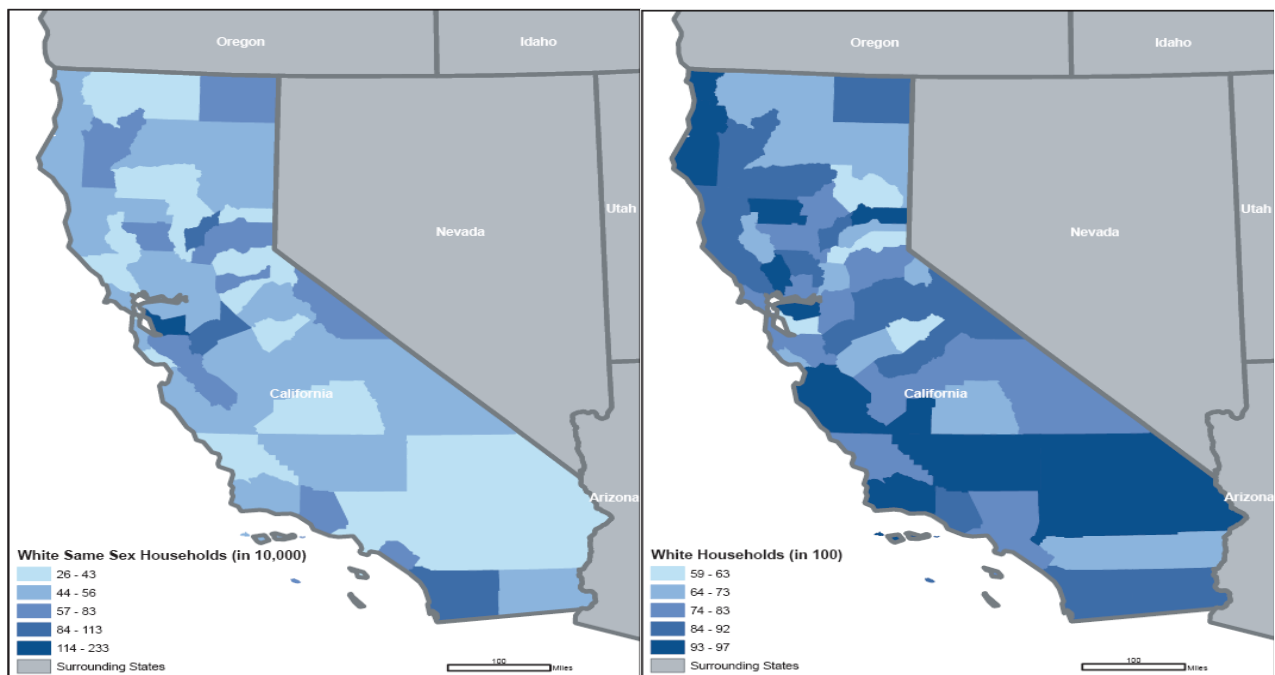
In California, the geographic distribution of minority (i.e., non-white) same-sex couples tends to mirror the respective distribution of minorities generally.

2(a). Geographic Distribution of Non-whites, Same-sex Households v. All Households



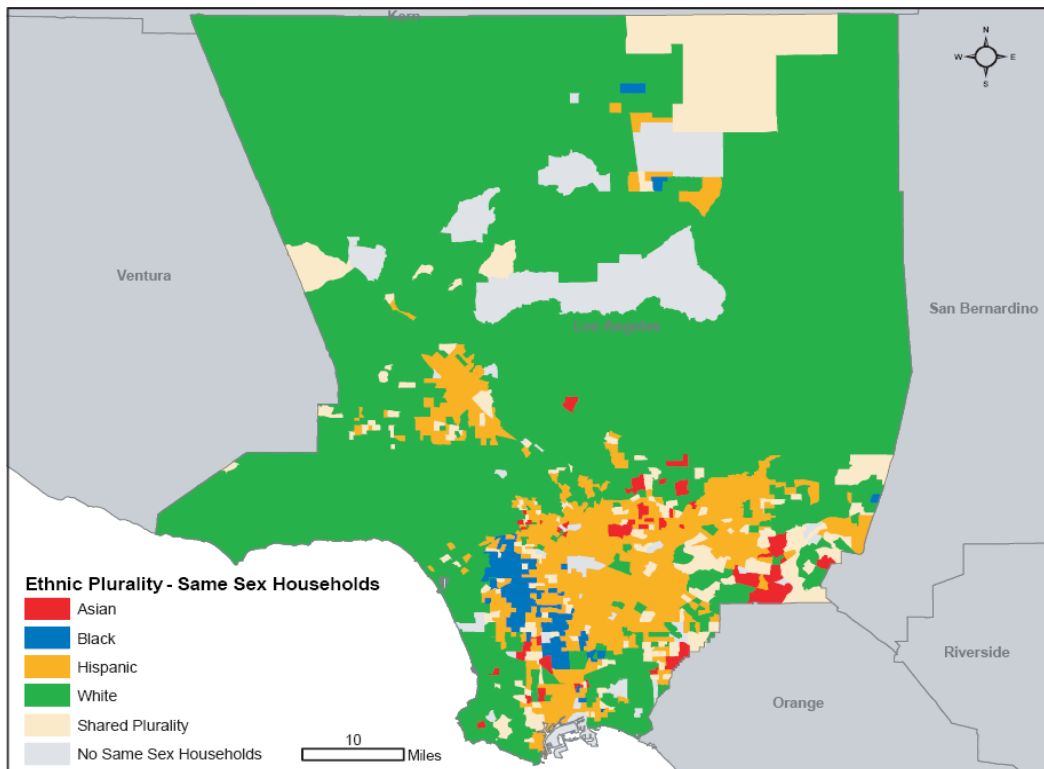
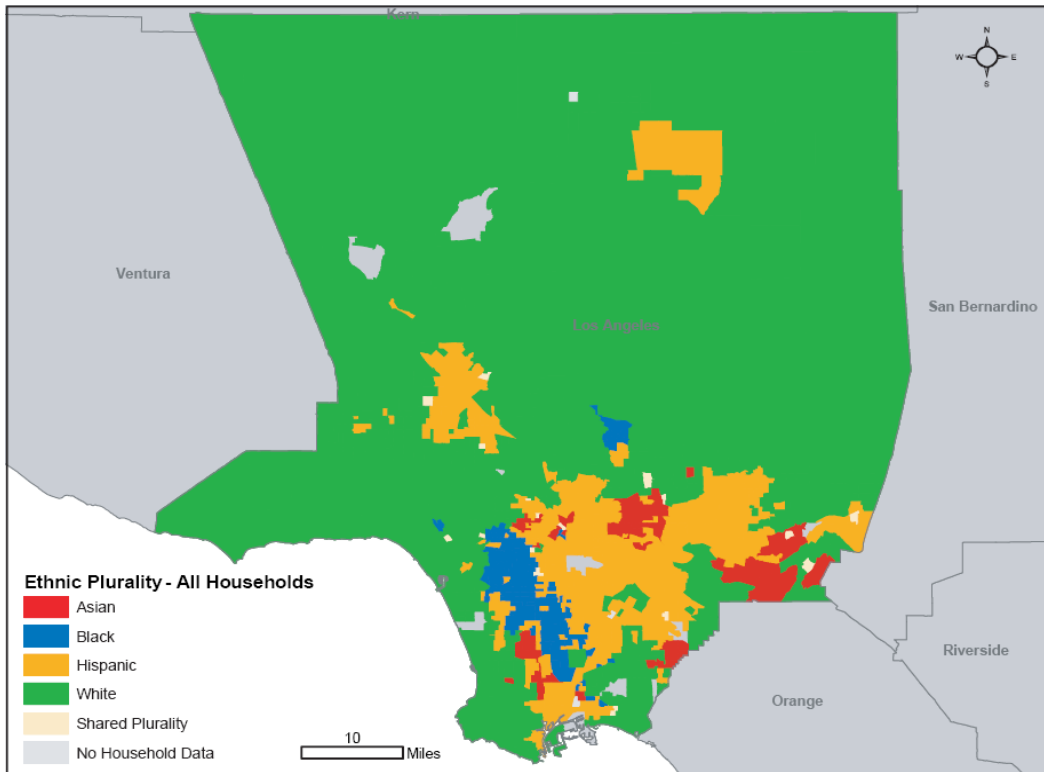
In contrast, white same-sex couples' geographic distribution is not as closely tied to the broader distribution of the white population.

2(b). Geographic Distribution of Whites, Same-sex Households v. All Households



Within counties, the geographic distribution of minority same-sex couples also tends to mirror the general distribution of minorities. For example, in Los Angeles County, same-sex couples tend to live where there are high concentrations of the couples' respective race/ethnicity.

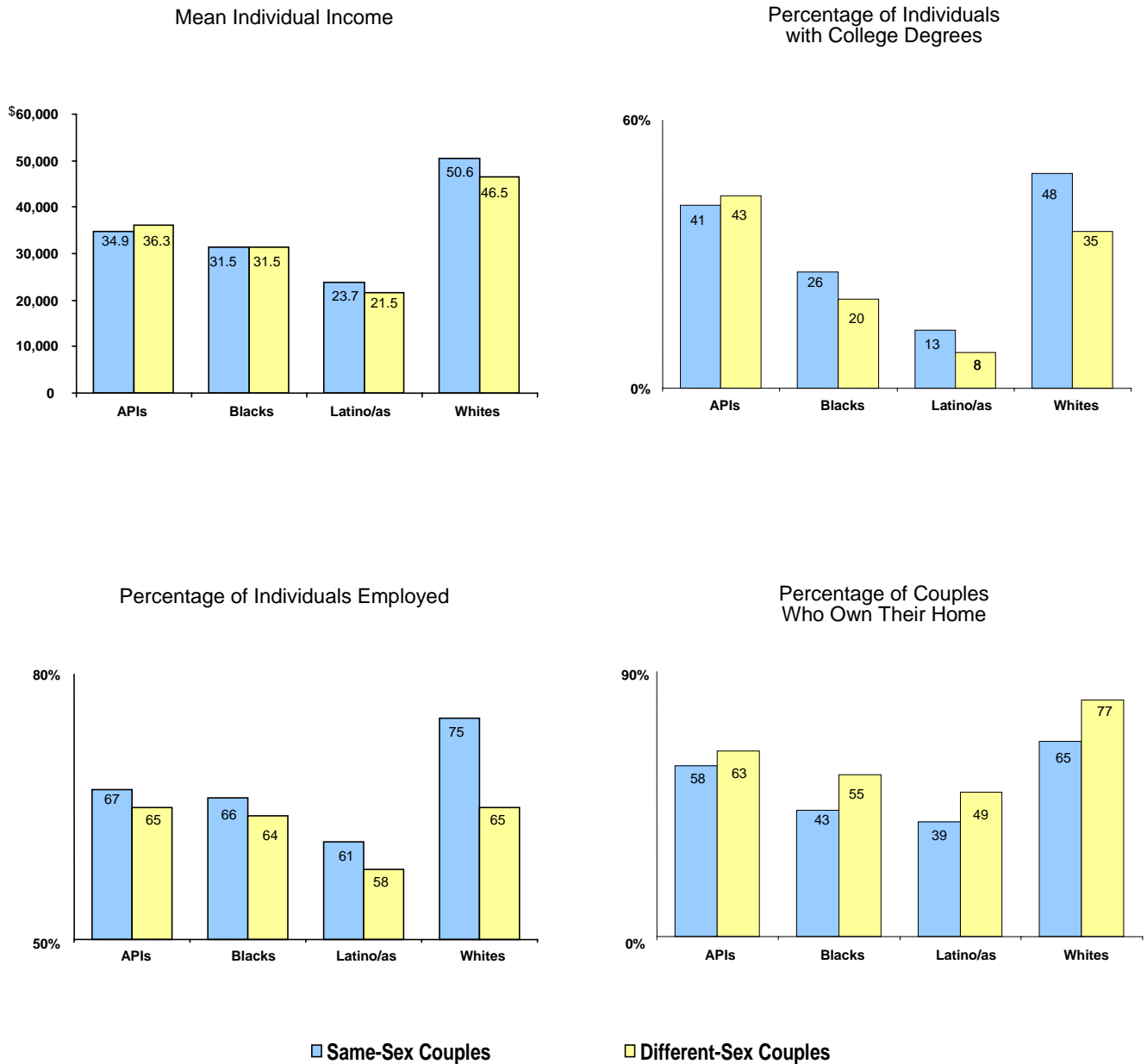
2(c). Locations of Ethnic Pluralities, All Household v. Same-sex Households



**KEY FINDINGS**

**Disparity in the income, employment, educational attainment, and home ownership of persons in same-sex couples is strongly associated with race and ethnicity.**

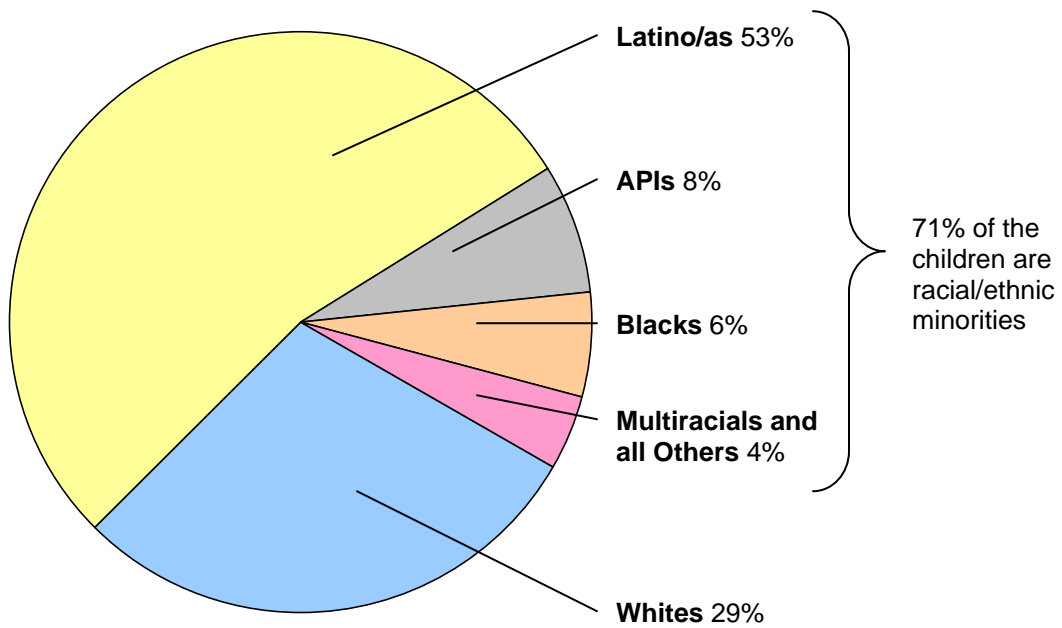
3(a-d). Socio-economic Characteristics, by Race/Ethnicity and Couple Type



**Out of same-sex parents' own children, over two-thirds belong to minority racial/ethnic groups.**

Over 70,500 Californian children are being raised by same-sex parents. Among them, roughly 58,600 are the same-sex parents' "own" children (Sears and Badgett).<sup>2</sup>

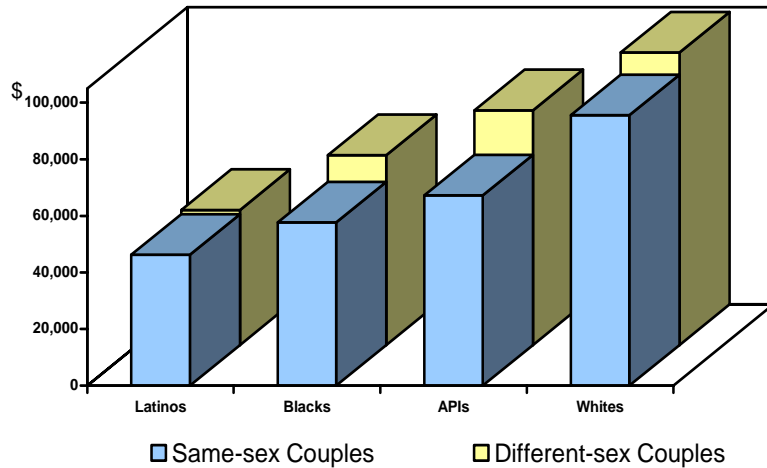
4. Race/Ethnicity of Same-sex Couples' Own Children



<sup>2</sup> The Census category of "own" children refers to children who are biologically-related to, adopted by, or step-children of the householder. Children who live with same-sex couples, but are not those couples' "own children," include foster children and other children who are not related to the couple.

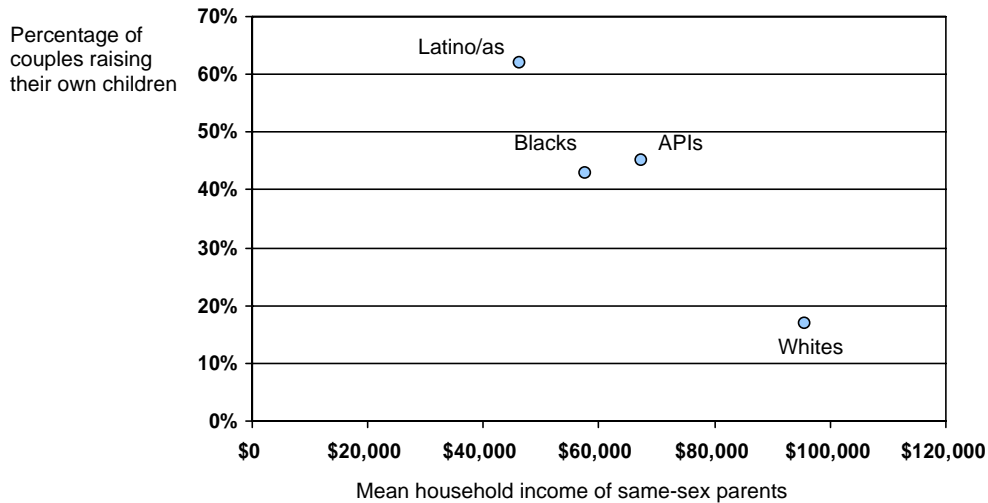
Across categories of race and ethnicity, same-sex couples raising children tend to have fewer resources than their different-sex counterparts.

5(a). Mean Household Income of Couples<sup>3</sup> Raising Their Own Children, by Race/Ethnicity and Couple Type



Same-sex couples that are racial/ethnic minorities are much more likely than their white counterparts to be raising their own children. These same-sex racial/ethnic-minority parents tend to be poorer than their white counterparts.

5(b). Prevalence and Income of Same-sex Couples<sup>3</sup> Raising Their Own Children, by Race/Ethnicity



<sup>3</sup> For this graph, we controlled for age by including only couples in which both partners are between the ages of 25-55.



### Data

Data for this report come from several Census 2000 public data releases. Geographic data are drawn from Summary File-2, a set of tables describing characteristics of households based on the race/ethnicity of the “householder,” the person who filled out the census form.

Estimates of other demographic characteristics are made using the Census 2000 Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS). The 5% PUMS represents a one in four sample of the approximately 26% of American households that filled out a census long-form. The 1% PUMS represents a one in sixteen sample of the same households. The census long-form contains detailed information about all members of the household, including citizenship, country of origin, and a variety of demographic and economic characteristics.

### Terminology

In this report, the term “black” refers to all persons who identified their race as “Black, African Am., or Negro” when completing the census forms. Similarly, “Asians and Pacific Islanders” (“APIs”) refers to all persons who identified their race as one of eleven API categories listed in the census forms.<sup>4</sup> “Latinos and Latinas” (“Latino/as”) are defined as those who identified their ethnicity as “Spanish/Hispanic/Latino” when filling out the census forms. All persons who identified as such, regardless of how they identified themselves racially, are designated as Latino/a in this report. The term “white” refers to all persons who (1) identified their race as “White” when completing the census forms, and (2) did not identify as Latino/a.

It should be noted that, as a result of these definitions, the black, API, and Latino/a groups generally are not mutually exclusive because some individuals in the Latino/as category are also included in the black and/or API categories. Charts 1(a) and 4 are exceptions to this rule. To ensure that the figures in those charts summed to 100 percent, Latino/as who identified themselves as black or API were included in the Latino/a category, but excluded from the black and API categories.

In this report, the term “black couples” refers to couples in which both partners are black; “white couples” refers to couples in which both partners are white; etc. Although a significant portion of same-sex couples in California are inter-racial, they were excluded from this report in order to facilitate comparisons across racial/ethnic categories. For data pertaining specifically to inter-racial couples, see the studies by Gates and Sears listed in the Reference section of this report.

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<sup>4</sup> Those census categories included Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Other Asian, Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, and Other Pacific Islander.

### Methodology

Characteristics of same-sex couples and their families are estimated using a sample of those families drawn from both the 5% and 1% PUMS files for the State of California. The California sample includes 6,037 same-sex couples.

Characteristics of different-sex couples and their families are estimated using the 1% PUMS sample only. This sample includes 65,669 different-sex couples in California.

Same-sex couples are identified from the roster that the householder uses to describe how every person in the house is related to him or her. These same-sex couples are commonly understood to be primarily gay and lesbian couples even though the Census does not ask any questions about sexual orientation, sexual behavior, or sexual attraction (three common ways used to identify gay men and lesbians in surveys). Rather, census forms include a number of relationship categories to define how individuals in a household are related to the householder. These fall into two broad categories: related persons (including husband/wife, son/daughter, brother/sister, etc.) and unrelated persons (including unmarried partner, housemate/roommate, roomer/boarder, other non-relative, etc.).

Since 1990, the Census Bureau has included an “unmarried partner” category to describe an unrelated household member’s relationship to the householder. If the householder describes another adult of the same sex as his or her “unmarried partner” or “husband/wife,” the household counts as a same-sex unmarried partner household (see Gates and Ost 2004 for a detailed explanation of counting same-sex couples).

The Census data regarding same-sex couples do not capture all gay men and lesbians in the United States for at least two important reasons. First, the Census only captures data about same-sex couples of which one person in the couple is the partner of the householder. The Census does not identify single gay men and lesbians. Limited data make it difficult to assess exactly how coupled gay men and lesbians might differ from their single counterparts, but in the general population, single people tend to be younger, less educated, and have lower incomes than their coupled counterparts.

In addition, the Census most likely undercounts even the population of same-sex couples. There are several potential reasons for suspecting an undercount. Concerns about revealing their sexual orientation (even indirectly) to the federal government may have led many gay and lesbian couples to indicate a status that would not indicate the true nature of their relationship. Other couples may have felt that “unmarried partner” or “husband/wife” does not accurately describe their relationship. A study of the undercount of same-sex unmarried partners in Census 2000 indicates that these were the two most common reasons that gay and lesbian couples chose not to designate themselves as unmarried partners (Badgett and Rogers 2003). Census tabulations also would not capture couples who do not live together and couples living in a household with someone else who filled out the census form. While determining the size of this undercount is challenging, estimates suggest that the true counts are 10 to 50 percent higher than the Census figures (Gates and Ost 2004).

In addition to undercounting the number of same-sex couples in the population, the Census may erroneously include some different-sex couples in the same-sex couple population. Gates and Ost (2004) describe a measurement error resulting from different-sex married couples

inadvertently checking the incorrect sex of one of the partners. This error, although thought to be small, may impact some of the characteristics of same-sex couples. For example, estimates of child-rearing among same-sex couples could be overstated due to this sample error because different-sex couples are more likely to have children. The magnitude of this error is not easily ascertained, but Gates and Ost suggest that while national unadjusted figures show that 28.2% of same-sex couples are raising children, a more accurate estimate that attempts to adjust for the presence of different-sex couples is 27.5%. The estimates of child-rearing in this report do not adjust for this form of error and thus may somewhat overstate this characteristic.

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