



## Same-sex marriage debate threatens redefinition of parenthood

Published September 25, 2006

The next great frontier in law and culture, stemming from the same-sex marriage debate, is the legal redefinition of parenthood, says a new report issued by U.S. and Canadian family and law think tanks.

The *Revolution in Parenthood: The Emerging Global Clash Between Adult Rights and Children's Needs* explores how the rights-based same-sex marriage movement places adult rights over the rights and needs of children.

The report also explores the status of parenthood in society and the ways in which natural parenthood — the biological mother-father model — is being legally challenged and redefined by states.

The report notes that states around the world are taking an increasingly active role in defining and regulating parenthood, moving far beyond its limited, historic, and child-centered role in finding suitable parents for needy children through adoption.

In Canada, for example, the law that legalized same-sex marriage “quietly included the provision to erase the term ‘natural parent’ across the board in federal law, replacing it with the term ‘legal parent.’ With that law, the locus of power in defining who a child’s parents are shifts precipitously from civil society to the state, with the consequences as yet unknown,” reads the report’s executive summary.

In Spain, after the legalization of same-sex marriage, birth certificates were changed to read “Progenitor A” and “Progenitor B” instead of “mother” and “father.” In New Zealand and Australia, influential law commissions have proposed allowing children conceived with use of sperm or egg donors to have three legal parents.

Authors of the report say U.S. judges “have seized upon the idea of ‘psychological’ parenthood to award legal parent status to adults who are not related to children by blood, adoption, or marriage. At times they have done so even over the objection of the child’s biological parent.”

“But what about the children?” asks the report, which also includes an exploration of the experiences of the first generation of children conceived with the use of donor sperm. The testimonies of several such children say that the children believe they were denied the birthright of being raised by or at least knowing about their biological fathers and that it has profoundly shaped their ability to understand who they are.

The think tanks insist that societies immediately open a vigorous, child-centered debate on marriage and child rearing. They say their report is intended to draw much-needed public attention to the current revolutionary changes in parenthood and the risks arising from increased state intervention in parenthood.

The report was issued the Institute for Marriage and Public Policy and the Institute for American Values in the United States, and the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada and the Institute for the Study of Marriage, Law and Culture in Canada.

You can read the full report at <http://www.marriagedebate.com/>