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THE IMPACTS OF MARRIAGE EQUALITY AND MARRIAGE DENIAL ON THE HEALTH OF LESBIAN, GAY AND BISEXUAL PEOPLE

Evidence Review & Annotated Bibliography

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FOREWORD



ACON and the Centre for Social Research in Health are proud to partner on the development of the following evidence review on the health impacts of marriage equality and the denial of this on the health of lesbian, gay and bisexual Australians. This document brings together key pieces of research with the aim of informing the current debate on marriage equality for same-sex couples in Australia.

As the debate and discussion about marriage equality unfolds it is our strong desire that pertinent health evidence is considered. The positive health impacts of marriage equality for same-sex couples are clear as are the potential negative health effects of marriage denial and a plebiscite.

Since its inception in 1990 the Centre for Social Research in Health has been working with lesbian, gay and bisexual communities across Australia. Our work initially focused on HIV social research. Since the start of the HIV epidemic in Australia the virus has disproportionately impacted on the health of gay communities. Over time our centre has expanded its remit; we promote exemplary social and behavioural science research in health across a range of health areas and populations. We are committed to making the health issues and experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual Australians visible through social research.

Since forming in 1985 at the height of the AIDS epidemic, ACON (formerly the AIDS Council of New South Wales) has worked at the coalface of communities affected by HIV/AIDS, particularly gay communities, by empowering them to protect and support themselves. Since 2000, ACON has taken an active role in promoting the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people throughout their life, more generally.

Together, we hope to bring the benefit of evidence-based research to an important and often polarising debate.

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INTRODUCTION

Marriage equality continues to remain out of reach for many people in Australia's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) communities. Despite years of advocacy on the part of LGBTI communities and their allies this issue has not yet been resolved. Since 2001 a variety of countries across the globe have legislated marriage equality for same-sex couples. In a world first, Ireland in 2015 held a national referendum to resolve the issue, as a change to their constitution was required.

The political process to enable change on marriage equality in Australia is currently under debate, it is not clear whether a plebiscite or a free vote in parliament will be the mechanism to bring about change on this issue. If the enabling legislation for a plebiscite on marriage equality does not pass through both houses of parliament the marriage equality debate will continue. This leaves the relationships between LGBTI people at risk of continued scrutiny and judgement.

It is within this context that the following review of the evidence exploring the health impacts of marriage equality and of marriage denial has been prepared. It is essential that policy makers, health professionals and the broader public understand how the health and wellbeing of LGBTI people is being impacted by the lack of marriage equality in Australia.

Minimal research evidence exists on the impacts of marriage equality and denial on transgender and intersex people. More work must be done to include transgender and intersex people in this debate and in a new definition of marriage. The evidence provided in this review reflects the focus on same-sex couples (LGB people) and the unfortunate lack of research that explores the transgender and intersex experience.

This document presents an overview of the key academic literature on the health impacts of marriage equality. This is by no means an exhaustive list of the research that has been undertaken on this topic. However their number and scope do demonstrate several important points. Firstly, the number of studies which have sought, in one form or another, to assess the impacts of marriage equality for same-sex couples, demonstrates that researchers have understood that this is a very important topic that merits rigorous academic investigation. Research questions relating to the health impacts of

marriage equality or marriage denial have become a consistent theme across a range of academic disciplines. Secondly, the studies presented here, from a range of countries, consistently demonstrate the negative health impacts on lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people of marriage denial and the positive impacts of marriage equality.

The majority of the research presented in this evidence review is from the United States of America. While the American context is unique and many of the jurisdictional issues faced there do not apply to the Australian context, there is much to be learned from their experience. Prior to the federal Supreme Court's decision in 2015, many states passed their own laws granting or banning same-sex marriage, creating a patchwork of different laws across the United States of America. This situation made it possible to investigate how different laws impacted the health of LGB people by examining these factors in comparable jurisdictions.

Many of the articles in this review reveal that systemic discrimination has clear impacts on the health of minority groups. Marriage equality will lessen the systemic discrimination experienced by LGB people and therefore impact positively on their health.

Very little research into the health impacts of marriage equality has been undertaken in Australia. However, the research presented here must be carefully considered in the lead up to a potential plebiscite on marriage equality in this country. The higher rates of mental health issues and suicidality in LGB communities make these groups more vulnerable to the potentially negative rhetoric that may arise in the prolonged national debate on this issue. Some studies in this review demonstrate the negative impacts of anti-same-sex marriage campaigns on the mental health of LGB people.

Marriage equality can and should be debated within the parliament of Australia. A potentially harmful plebiscite should be avoided. If a plebiscite does go ahead, or a prolonged period of ongoing debate on marriage equality continues, Australians must be presented with pertinent and trusted evidence to make an informed decision about marriage equality. The health and wellbeing of LGBTI people must be at the centre of the discussion and debate on this issue.



EVIDENCE REVIEW

IMPACTS OF MARRIAGE EQUALITY AND MARRIAGE DENIAL ON THE HEALTH OF LESBIAN, GAY AND BISEXUAL PEOPLE

Negative health effects have been observed in LGB people living in jurisdictions that limit their rights. In the United States, the mental health of LGB populations may be negatively impacted by living in states with discriminatory policies (Hatzenbuehler et al, 2010). Increases in the rates of psychiatric disorders (any mood disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, any alcohol use disorder, and psychiatric comorbidity) have been observed among lesbian, gay and bisexual respondents living in states that banned same-sex marriage (Hatzenbuehler et al, 2010).

Sexual minority populations living in high-prejudice communities have been shown to experience substantially elevated rates of suicide, homicide/violence and cardiovascular diseases (Hatzenbuehler et al, 2014). Furthermore, among people from sexual minorities who committed suicide, the average age was significantly younger in high prejudice communities compared to low-prejudice communities (37.5 years vs 55.7 years) (Hatzenbuehler et al, 2014).

Many of the differentials in mental health outcomes observed between heterosexuals and lesbian, gay and bisexual persons appear to diminish when lesbian, gay and bisexual people are in a legally recognized same-sex relationship, marriage in particular (Wight et al, 2013). The mental health of gay and lesbians, especially among younger individuals, appears to be protected by relationship formalisation (Bariolao et al 2015). Significant improvements in wellbeing are gained by LGB people when their relationships are socially and legally accepted (Rigle et al, 2010). Same-sex couples report higher levels of self-assessed health when living in jurisdictions that possess marriage equality, compared to jurisdictions with antigay constitutional amendments (Lennox et al, 2015).

On one hand, the right to marry may have significant protective mental health benefits for gay men (Wight et al, 2012). On the other hand, marriage equality bans can limit the hopes that sexual minority men have of being fathers and may negatively influence their psychosocial development (Bauermeister, 2014). Similarly, in Denmark, same-sex married men have experienced a reduction in mortality rates, compared to persons in other relationship categories, mirroring greater societal acceptance over the past few decades (Frisch & Simonsen, 2013).

Research into the experiences of lesbians has found that a healthy lesbian marriage was found to correlate, as it does for heterosexual marriages, with psychological, physical and financial health benefits for lesbian couples (Ducharme & Kollar, 2012).

Overall, the health benefits that heterosexual couples experience as a result of marriage are likely to also be conferred to lesbians and gay men who are allowed to marry (Kertzner, 2012). However, due to a range of factors, the “added value” for the health of lesbians and gay men may be different as the support systems and cultural significance of marriage in these communities are different than amongst heterosexual communities (Kertzner, 2012).



PUBLIC HEALTH BENEFITS

Findings from a diverse set of research approaches and contexts align to support marriage equality and highlight its significance as a public health issue with considerable policy implications (Fingerhut et al 2011). Critical in the fight for marriage equality is support from professional bodies and peak organisations, across a range of sectors, to endorse and support change. Organisations such as the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, came out in support of marriage equality in the United States during the lead up to the US Supreme Court's decision to legally support same-sex marriage across the country (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Committee on Health Care for Underserved Women, 2013). This kind of support for marriage equality by clinical associations, and other key stakeholders is critical; it is based in sound evidence, and supports solid public health policy (Buffie, 2011).

Marriage equality in Australia, if implemented, can be a powerful public health strategy in this country to improve the health of LGB people and reduce societal and individual stigma and discrimination experienced by these groups. Ritter et al, (2012), have called on the alcohol and other drug sector, and others, to consider the positive health impacts that will flow on from marriage equality in Australia. Professional bodies and other peak organisations have a moral duty in Australia to reflect on the available data which clearly demonstrates the positive health impacts of marriage equality and take a position on this issue.

IMPACT OF MARRIAGE EQUALITY ON HEALTH CARE UTILISATION BY LGB PEOPLE

Health care utilisation is complex and often mediated by a number of individual and social factors. It has been found in the US, that the introduction of marriage equality may in fact improve access to health care (Gonzales, 2014). Research has shown that health care utilisation could be improved, among both partnered and non-partnered gay and bisexual men, in environments where marriage equality exists (Hatzenbuehler et al, 2012). Health related costs could also be reduced in these environments (Hatzenbuehler et al, 2012).

MARRIAGE EQUALITY AS A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

Same sex marriage is a critical issue of our time, nationally and globally. Australia is not the first country to grapple with this issue and it will not be the last. Marriage equality is an issue for all of Australian society to resolve not just LGB people; governments should address this issue to reduce public discord and social conflict (Chamie & Mirkin, 2011). Researchers have suggested that the right to choose one's partner should be a basic right of sexual citizenship and that "*Marriage is not only a primary means for the achievement of social, legal, moral, political, and economic benefits and rights in the United States but also a critical way to enhance the authenticity of the self and intimate relations*" (Herdt & Kertzner, 2006). The denial of marriage equality is a clear injustice and has damaging effects on the health of LGB people (Campion et al, 2015).



EFFECTS OF A PLEBISCITE

Many LGB people across Australia are very concerned about the negative health impacts that a plebiscite will have on the health of our communities. Researchers in the United States warn of the negative mental health impacts of marriage equality debates in the lead up to voter referendums which have taken place there, “Exposure to a devaluing social discourse regarding the rights of same-sex couples represents a unique form of social stress resulting in negative consequences for the psychological and relational well-being of same-sex couples” (Frost & Fingerhut, 2016). Marriage amendments, such as the ones voted on in the 2006 US elections to limit the definition of marriage, are associated with negative psychological outcomes for LGB people (Rostosky et al, 2009).

In Australia a plebiscite is not required by law for marriage equality to be established for same-sex couples. The negative health impacts of a plebiscite must be avoided.

Further research from the United States highlights the fact that minority rights are less likely to be supported in jurisdictions employing direct democracy approaches (e.g., a plebiscite) , in part due to a lack of the “filtering mechanisms” of representative democracy, which help to protect minority rights (Lewis, 2011: 380). Same-sex marriage bans are actually more likely to be found in US states that utilise a direct democracy (e.g. a plebiscite) approach (Lewis, 2011). Therefore a plebiscite might not only have negative health effects for LGB people but be more likely to produce a negative outcome for LGB people in relation to equal marriage rights.

If a plebiscite does go ahead, LGB people must be supported to withstand the negative psychological impacts of marriage amendment campaigns that seek to deny them access to legal marriage (Rostosky et al, 2010). The potential negative health impacts of a plebiscite must be understood by decision makers, and by clinicians, who will need to support LGB people through this potentially difficult period.

EFFECTS OF MARRIAGE EQUALITY ON OPPOSITE-SEX MARRIAGE

Many opponents to marriage equality for same-sex couples site the negative effect that this change would have on the marriages between heterosexual couples. Research from the United States has shown that marriage equality for same-sex couples has no effect on the rates of opposite sex marriage (Dinno & Whitmey, 2013). In the Netherlands, there were also no significant effects on different-sex marriage rates after the introduction of laws which allowed same-sex couples the right to registered partnerships and ultimately to marriage (Trandafir, 2014). In an analysis of data from a variety of OECD countries where same-sex marriage or registered partnerships have been introduced, no significant effects have been observed on the rates of different-sex marriage & divorce and extramarital births (Trandafir, 2015).

SOCIAL COHESION AND INCLUSION BENEFITS OF MARRIAGE EQUALITY

The psychological, social and health benefits that same sex couples will receive through increased legal recognition through marriage will be substantial and the benefits from marriage will be greater than those achieved through recognition of civil unions and domestic partnerships (Herek, 2006). Findings from different jurisdictions using different data collection methods have demonstrated that feelings of social inclusion are enhanced among LGB people when given the legal right to marry (Badgett, 2011). The financial, legal and legitimising aspects of marriage have been identified by many LGB people as some of the major benefits of marriage equality (Hass & Whitton, 2015). All of society benefits from LGB people who are happier, healthier and more included within social structures, such as marriage.



ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Topic: Health impacts of marriage equality / marriage denial.

Sources: Academic journal articles

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Badgett MVL. Social inclusion and the value of marriage equality in Massachusetts and the Netherlands. *J Soc Issues*. 2011;67(2):316-34.

Introduction: In this article, two studies (one US and one from the Netherlands) are presented and discussed by Badgett, the psychological benefits of marriage equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are explored.

Scope & Research Methods: The study from the Netherlands was comprised of qualitative interviews with 19 same-sex couples in 2004, which was 3 years after the Dutch gained marriage equality. The Massachusetts study used data from the 2009 Health and Marriage Equality in Massachusetts survey, a total of 556 people who were married to a same sex partner were included in this analysis.

Usefulness: This article provides an insightful comparison of different international jurisdictions, utilises a mixed methods approach and helps demonstrates positive psychological benefits for some LGBT people in these samples, garnered through marriage equality.

Limitations: The sample size in the qualitative sample was small, and the time period since marriage equality has been legislated is still short.

Conclusions: Findings from two separate countries and utilising two different data collection methods, demonstrate that feelings of social inclusion are enhanced among LGBT people when given the legal right to marry.

Bariola E, Lyons A, Leonard W (2015) The mental health benefits of relationship formalisation among lesbians and gay men in same-sex relationships, Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, online, doi: 10.1111/1753-6405.12432

Introduction: In this article, Bariola et al, explore the links between mental health and relationship formalisation among gays and lesbians in Australia.

Scope & Research Methods: The authors assessed data collected online, from Private Lives 2, a national survey of the health and wellbeing of LGBT Australians. Data analysed in this study came from participants in a same-sex relationship, the K10 Psychological Distress Scale was used as an indicator of mental health.

Usefulness: This article presents Australian data on LGBT people and the effects of same-sex relationship formalisation, such as registered domestic partnerships and commitment ceremony unions, on mental health

Limitations: This is a cross sectional study that employed a limited measure of relationship formalisation

Conclusions: The mental health of gay and lesbians, especially among younger individuals, appears to be protected by relationship formalisation. The authors make the case that this is both a public health issue and a civil rights issue.

Bauermeister JA (2014) 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, *Journal Youth Adolescence*, vol 43, 1295-1305, DOI 10.1007/s10964-013-0059-6

Introduction: In this article, Bauermeister explores the impact of state level marriage equality legislation on the psychological wellbeing of sexual minority men and of their fatherhood aspirations.

Scope & Research Methods: The authors used data from an online national US cross-sectional survey to assess how living in states with marriage equality bans, same-sex joint parenting bans and second parent adoption bans impacted on fatherhood aspirations, self-esteem and depressive symptoms among sexual minority men.

Usefulness: This study clearly shows how anti-equality policies can impact on the psychosocial development of sexual minority men.

Limitations: No impact was observed on the self-esteem and depressive symptoms among men that lived in states with bans, the survey was cross-sectional and fatherhood aspiration was measured as a single-item.

Conclusions: Marriage equality bans can limit the hopes that sexual minority men have on being fathers and may negatively influence their psychosocial development.

Chamie J, Mirkin B (2011) Same-Sex Marriage: A New Social Phenomenon, Population and Development Review vol37 no 3, pp 529-551

Introduction: The authors in this article frame same-sex marriage as a new social phenomenon and provide a global snapshot and comparison of same-sex marriage policies and the impacts that same-sex marriage has had on societies.

Scope & Research Methods: Statistical (levels, trends, differentials) and related evidence is presented in this article on same-sex marriage around the world. Arguments for and against same-sex marriage in a variety of contexts are also presented.

Usefulness: A global history of same-sex marriage equality is presented, as of 2011, the rates of same-sex marriage in countries that have allowed it are shown, it points to interesting trends observed in countries that have allowed same-sex marriage and it summarises the range of benefits that same-sex marriage bestows on same-sex couples.

Limitations: The varieties of settings described in this article are unique and each faces or has faced its own jurisdictional challenges to reaching marriage equality for same-sex couples.

Conclusions: Same sex marriage is a critical issue of our time globally, it is not merely an individual issue but increasingly a social and even international one and governments should address this issue to reduce public discord and social conflict.

Dinno A, Whitney C (2013) Same Sex Marriage and the Perceived Assault on Opposite Sex Marriage. PLOS ONE 8(6): e65730. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0065730

Introduction: In this article, Dinno and Whitney explore the effect of same sex marriages and other same sex unions on rates of heterosexual / opposite sex marriage in the United States.

Scope & Research Methods: Marriage rates from 1989 to 2009 were assessed; all states in the US were examined, including the District of Columbia. Opposite sex marriage rates in states that had passed same sex marriage or strong or weak same

sex union laws were compared to the rates in the other states.

Usefulness: The results indicate that marriage equality, and even lesser forms of same sex relationship recognition, do not impact on the rates of opposite sex marriage, an argument frequently employed by anti-marriage equality advocates.

Limitations: The data is US based; the same kind of analysis is not available in Australia yet.

Conclusions: Marriage equality has been shown to have no effect on the rates of same sex marriage, in a comparable international jurisdiction, the US.

Ducharme JK, Kollar MM. Does the “marriage benefit” extend to same-sex union? Evidence from a sample of married lesbian couples in Massachusetts. J Homosexuality 2012;59(4):580-591.

Introduction: In this study, Ducharme and Kollar, examine the relationship between marital quality and wellbeing among married lesbians in the US state of Massachusetts

Scope & Research Methods: Data was obtained by mailed survey, 225 participants were included and they completed the following scales: demographic questionnaire, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), and the World Health Organisation Quality of Life-Brief Instrument (WHOQOL-Bref).

Usefulness: This study explores the unique and often under researched experience of lesbian women. It provides evidence to support the protective wellbeing benefits of marriage among lesbians.

Limitations: The study has a US focus, has a racially homogenous sample and does not include gay or bisexual men.

Conclusions: A healthy lesbian marriage was found to correlate, as it does for heterosexual marriages, with psychological, physical and financial health benefits for lesbian couples.

Fingerhut AW, Riggle EDB, Scales Rostovsky S (2011) Same-Sex Marriage: The Social and Psychological Implications of Policy and Debates, Journal of Social Issues, vol 67, no 2, pp 225-241

Introduction: In this article, Fingerhut et al, explore the research into the psychological and social impacts of political debates and marriage equality policies on lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals and couples.

Scope & Research Methods: The authors provide an overview of the American context in 2011 and also some global examples of same-sex marriage policy and debate. The article is organised around three key questions: "(1) what are the social and psychological effects of anti-gay legislation and voter driven initiatives on members of the LGB community? (2) How does civil marriage compare to other statuses for same-sex couples or marriage in other countries? (3) How do anti-gay initiatives affect heterosexual allies and intergroup relationships?"

Usefulness: The article provides a good overview of research, from a variety of research approaches on the topic.

Limitations: This is a review of existing literature.

Conclusions: The range of findings presented in this article from a diverse set of research approaches and contexts align to support marriage equality and highlight its significance as a public health issue with considerable policy implications.

Francis A, Mialon H and Peng H. In sickness and in health: Same-sex marriage laws and sexually transmitted infections. Soc Sci Med 2012; 75: 1329-1341.

Introduction: The relationship between rates of sexually transmitted infections and same-sex marriage laws were analysed, the authors hypothesise that same-sex marriage laws may directly affect risky sexual behaviour.

Scope & Research Methods: A state-level panel data set was used with data from 1981 to 2008 to estimate the association between STIs and state based same sex marriage bans.

Usefulness: The research explores the sexual health impact of marriage equality bans.

Limitations: The data is US focused and the time period during which same-sex marriage was

legalised at the point of data collection was short.

Conclusions: Only a modest positive association between syphilis and same-sex marriage bans was found, if at all.

Frisch M, Simonsen J (2013) Marriage, cohabitation and mortality in Denmark: national cohort study of 6.5 million persons followed for up to three decades (1982-2011). International Journal of Epidemiology 42 pp 5559-578 doi:10.1093/ije/dyt024

Introduction: In this article by Danish researchers, Frisch and Simonsen, the impact of marriage and cohabitation on mortality are presented and explored.

Scope & Research Methods: Data from a national cohort study were analysed, 6.5 million Danish people were followed for 122.5 million person years from 1982 to 2011.

Usefulness: Among married same sex men, mortality has decreased since the mid-1990s, mirroring increasing social acceptance in Danish society. Same sex married women have highest, and even increasing, mortality rates.

Limitations: The impact of the introduction of marriage equality isn't specifically assessed.

Conclusions: Married same sex Danish men have experienced a reduction in mortality rates, compared to persons in other marital categories.

Frost DM, Fingerhut AW (2016) Daily exposure to negative campaign messages decreases same-sex couples' psychological and relational well-being, Group Processes & Intergroup Relations, vol 19, 4, 477-492. DOI: 10.1177/1368430216642028

Introduction: In this article, the authors examine the impact of the exposure to discourses leading up to decisions on marriage equality on the mental health of sexual minority populations.

Scope & Research Methods: Data collected in the US during the 2012 general election on the psychological and relational wellbeing of same-sex couples were examined in this article. The participants recruited lived in four states in which marriage equality was subject to a voter referendum. A total of 64 couples participated in the study which involved a survey and daily diary components.

Usefulness: This article presents data that is particularly pertinent in the current Australian context in which a marriage equality plebiscite may occur and in which same sex couples will be exposed to antigay discourses.

Limitations: The sample in the study is small and the research is US in focus.

Conclusions: The authors warn of the negative mental health impacts of marriage equality debates in the lead up to a voter referendum, "*Exposure to a devaluing social discourse regarding the rights of same-sex couples represents a unique form of social stress resulting in negative consequences for the psychological and relational well-being of same-sex couples*".

Hass SM, Whitton SW (2015) The Significance of Living Together and Importance of Marriage in Same-Sex Couples, Journal of Homosexuality, 62:9, 1241-1263 DOI:10.1080/00918369.2015.1037137

Introduction: In this article, Hass and Witton, explore the meaning and significance of cohabitation to same-sex couples and also the perceived importance of legal marriage.

Scope & Research Methods: Qualitative data collected in an online survey from same sex couples from across the US were analysed, responses from 526 participants were assessed.

Usefulness: This article presents the perspectives of same sex couples themselves about the issue of marriage equality and cohabitation.

Limitations: The study is US based and the sample was young, well-educated and well connected to LGBT communities.

Conclusions: Cohabitation was viewed as significant by most, as was marriage. The financial, legal and legitimising aspects of marriage were highlighted as the major benefits of marriage equality.

Hatzenbuehler ML, McLaughlin KA, Keyes KM, Hasin DS (2010), The Impact of Institutional Discrimination on Psychiatric Disorders in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Populations: A Prospective Study. American Journal of Public Health, vol 100, no.3, pp. 452-459. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2009.168815

Introduction: This article examines the mental

health impact of living in states in the US with discriminatory policies towards lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Scope & Research Methods: The authors used data from a longitudinal, nationally representative study of noninstitutionalized adults in the US from two time periods (2001-2002) and (2004-2005).

The relationship between living in states that instituted bans on same-sex marriage during elections in 2004 and 2005 and the prevalence of psychiatric morbidity among lesbian, gay and bisexual populations was examined.

Usefulness: This analysis provides an insightful comparison between the impact of policies related to same sex marriage in like-jurisdictions, and provides evidence to overturn discriminatory policies.

Limitations: The data examined in this article was collected over ten years ago and the focus is US specific.

Conclusions: Psychiatric disorders increased significantly between the two time periods among lesbian, gay and bisexual respondents living in states that banned gay marriage for the following outcomes: any mood disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, any alcohol use disorder, and psychiatric comorbidity. The mental health of LGB populations may be negatively impacted by living in states with discriminatory policies.

Hatzenbuehler ML, O'Cleirigh C, Grasso C, Mayer K, Safren S, Bradford J. Effect of same-sex marriage laws on health care use and expenditures in sexual minority men: a quasi-natural experiment. Am J Public Health 2012;102:285-91.

Introduction: In this article, Hatzenbuehler et al. sought to explore the effect that laws on same-sex marriage have on the usage and expenditures on health care of gay and bisexual men.

Scope & Research Methods: Prospective data from a community based health centre in the US state of Massachusetts were used; this was a quasi-natural experiment.

Usefulness: This research points to the possible economic benefits to the state of marriage equality

Limitations: The study is US focused and looks only at sexual minority men.

Conclusions: Health care utilisation and costs

could be reduced among both partnered and non-partnered gay and bisexual men in environments where marriage equality exists.

Hatzenbuehler ML, Bellatorre A, Lee Y, Finch BK, Muennig P, Fiscella K. Structural stigma and all-cause mortality in sexual minority populations. Soc Sci Med. 2014;103:33-41.

Introduction: In this article Hatzenbuehler et al, explore how exposure to structural stigma effects the risk of premature mortality for sexual minority communities. Structural stigma “*refers to societal-level conditions, cultural norms, and institutional practices that constrain the opportunities, resources and wellbeing for stigmatised populations*”.

Scope & Research Methods: National US survey data was obtained on sexual minority populations from the General Social Survey, which was then linked prospectively to data on mortality via the National Death Index.

Usefulness: This research makes a strong case for the significant negative health impacts and increased mortality experienced by sexual minorities who live in communities with high levels of anti-gay prejudice. It is one of a handful of studies that examine the negative “physical” health outcomes of living in a discriminatory environment for sexual minority populations.

Limitations: The study is exclusively US in focus

Conclusions: Sexual minority populations living in high-prejudice communities experienced substantially elevated rates of suicide, homicide/violence and cardiovascular diseases. Furthermore, among sexual minorities who completed suicide, average age was significantly younger in high prejudice communities compared to low-prejudice communities (37.5 years vs 55.7 years).

Herdt G, Kertzner R, (2006) I Do, but I Can't: The Impact of Marriage Denial on the Mental Health and Sexual Citizenship of Lesbians and Gay Men in the United States. Sexuality Research and Social Policy Journal of NSRC, Vol 3, Issue 1, pp. 33-49.

Introduction: This article reviews the impact of marriage denial on the mental health and wellbeing of gay men and lesbians

Scope & Research Methods: This article explores the impact of marriage denial through the

perspectives of the social sciences and psychiatry and psychology. The authors provide an analysis of the historical and cultural factors present that serve to discrimination against gay men and lesbians and maintain denial of marriage in 2006 in the United States.

Usefulness: This review serves as a call to action for policymakers in the United States, urging them to be concerned about the impact of the denial of marriage on the mental health and wellbeing of gay men and lesbians.

Limitations: The article was written before many of the major breakthroughs in marriage equality in the US.

Conclusions: The findings converge to support the notion that the right to choose one's partner should be a basic right of sexual citizenship and that “*Marriage is not only a primary means for the achievement of social, legal, moral, political, and economic benefits and rights in the United States but also a critical way to enhance the authenticity of the self and intimate relations*”.

Herek, G. M. (2006). Legal recognition of same-sex relationships in the United States: A social science perspective. American Psychologist, 61(6), 607–621. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.61.6.607

Introduction: In this article, Herek seeks to investigate the contentious policy issue of the recognition of same-sex relationships and how, if at all, civil society recognises these relationships.

Scope & Research Methods: The author in this article reviews behavioural and social science research to assess the claims made in this debate.

Usefulness: This article provides an overview of the social science literature on this topic, including literature reviews and meta-analysis, and explores the shifts in public opinion on this topic.

Limitations: Since this article was written (2006) the US context has completely changed in relation to marriage equality, however, many of the themes presented are still relevant in the current Australian context.

Conclusions: The psychological, social and health benefits that same sex couples will receive through increased legal recognition through marriage will be substantial and the benefits from marriage will be greater than those achieved through recognition of civil unions and domestic partnerships.

Kealy-Bateman W, Pryor L (2015) Marriage equality is a mental health issue, Australasian Psychiatry, vol 23, no. 5, pp. 540-543. DOI: 10.1177/1039856215592318

Introduction: In this article the authors critically evaluate the health impact of marriage equality in New Zealand and Australia

Scope & Research Methods: The article examines the history of same-sex marriage in Australia and the US, change in Australian society, marriage equality and identity, contrary evidence and evidence regarding concerns raised by opponents of marriage equality. This was undertaken through a review of the literature including medical literature, legal literature and mass media.

Usefulness: The article has an Australian focus; a recommendation to strongly support marriage equality is given as it has been shown to be a positive correlate of health

Limitations: Little Australian or New Zealand specific research on the health impacts of marriage denial or of marriage equality on lesbians or gay men exists for this review to incorporate.

Conclusions: There are lessons to be learnt in Australia from the New Zealand experience. Mental health professionals in Australia must be concerned about marriage equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people as the mental health impact of discrimination is clear.

Kertzner R, (2009) Marital Rights, Mental Health, and Public Policy, Journal of Gay and Lesbian Mental Health, 13:3, 187-193. DOI: 10.1080/19359700902913153

Introduction: In this article, originally presented as part of a panel presentation, the author discusses the mental health effects of marriage denial on lesbians and gay men

Scope & Research Methods: The authors summarise a previous paper - a comprehensive literature review examining the mental health effects of marriage denial on lesbians and gay men - and give the reader an idea of what it was like to be a psychiatrist entering the field of public policy discourse about marital rights for lesbians and gay men. The strengths and limitations of a mental health perspective in advancing marriage equality are explored.

Usefulness: This article supports the notion that

marital enfranchisement would yield significant mental health dividends for lesbians, gay men, and their families.

Limitations: This article reviews a previously published literature review, the research gaps that are highlighted in this article may have been partially filled since it was written.

Conclusions: Attitudes towards civil marriage amongst lesbians and gay men have changed over time. Not all lesbians and gay men want to marry and the health benefits of marriage equality may look different in these communities as they have a great variety of existing family and relationship forms.

Kertzner, R M. (2012) A Mental Health Research Perspective on Marital Rights and Civil Marriage for Lesbians and Gay Men, Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health, 16:2, 136-145, DOI: 10.1080/19359705.2012.652577

Introduction: This article examines areas of mental health research relevant to the inclusion of same-sex couples in the institution of civil marriage.

Scope & Research Methods: The role mental health research has played in advancing arguments for marriage equality in the US is reviewed. The author examines three areas of research "1) recent studies that have documented the negative mental health effects of discrimination encoded in marriage denial, 2) marital exclusion that denies lesbians and gay men the psychosocial benefits of marriage as described in the general population, 3) research that suggests no fundamental difference in the psychological health and attributes of homosexual compared with heterosexual couples or children of homosexual compared with heterosexual parents".

Usefulness: The mental health literature is reviewed to support marital rights for sexual minority persons and their families.

Limitations: The article has a US focus.

Conclusions: The health benefits that heterosexual couples experience as a result of marriage are likely to also be conferred to lesbians and gay men who are allowed to marry. However, due to a range of factors, the "added value" for the health of lesbians and gay men may be different as the support systems and cultural significance of marriage in these communities are different than amongst heterosexual communities.

Lannutti, P. J. (2011). Security, recognition, and misgivings: Exploring older same-sex couples' experiences of legally recognized same-sex marriage. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 28(1), 64–82. doi: 10.1177/0265407510386136

Introduction: In this article, Lannuti explores the experiences of older (55+) same-sex couples' experiences of legally recognised same sex marriage, in the state of Massachusetts where marriage licenses have been granted to same-sex couples since 2004.

Scope & Research Methods: Older same-sex couples, aged 56 to 73 years, participated in semi-structured interviews. Topics explored included, their decision to marry, the impact of their marriage on their social networks and their own reaction to same-sex marriage and the debates on this issue.

Usefulness: This research pays particular attention to a generation of lesbian, gay and bisexual people who experienced immense shifts in societal acceptance towards their relationships.

Limitations: This research is US specific (and Massachusetts specific) and, due to the short period of time during which same sex marriage has been legal in the state of Massachusetts, does not allow for more long term effects to be explored.

Conclusions: Three main themes emerged from this research; an increased sense of security, an increased sense of recognition and misgiving about same sex marriage. The experiences and perspectives of older same-sex couples on legally recognised same-sex marriage are strongly influenced by their unique historical experiences of social change.

Lennox Kail B, Acosta KL, Wright ER (2015) State-Level Marriage Equality and the Health of Same-Sex Couples, *American Journal of Public Health* vol 105 pp 1101-1105 doi:10.2105/AJPH.2015.302589

Introduction: In this article the authors seek to assess the association between state level marriage equality and the health of same sex couples.

Scope & Research Methods: Secondary data analyses were conducted on data from Freedom to Marry, Inc. and on the 2010 to 2013 Current Population Survey in the US. The outcome variable used was a scale of individual self-assessed health

Usefulness: Interesting inter-state comparison of data is presented to demonstrate the effect of marriage equality legislation on health.

Limitations: Only 10 states had passed marriage equality legislation at the time of data collection so the results indicate a conservative estimate

Conclusions: Same-sex couples reported higher levels of self-assessed health when living in states that possessed marriage equality, compared to states with antigay constitutional amendments.

Lewis DC (2011) Direct Democracy and Minority Rights: Same-Sex Marriage Bans in the U.S. *States, Social Science Quarterly*, vol 92, no 2, 364–383, DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-6237.2011.00773.x

Introduction: In this article, Lewis explores direct democracy approaches to same-sex marriage bans in the US.

Scope & Research Methods: The author compares same-sex marriage bans in states in which direct democracy and non-direct democracy (representative democratic approaches) are utilised using a comparative, dynamic approach.

Usefulness: The results indicate that same-sex marriage bans are more likely to be passed in US states that employ direct democracy approaches.

Limitations: This is a US study and direct democracy approaches are one of many factors which may influence the likelihood of the adoption of a same-sex marriage ban.

Conclusions: Minority rights are less likely to be supported in US states employing direct democracy approaches. Same-sex marriage bans were more likely to be found in US states utilising this approach.

Philpot SP, Ellard J, Duncan D, Dowsett GW, Bavinton BR, Down I, Keen P, Hammoud MA, Prestage G (2016) Gay and bisexual men's interest in marriage: an Australian perspective, *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, DOI: 10.1080/13691058.2016.1184314

Introduction: In this article, Philpot et al, explore the interest gay and bisexual men have in Australia to marry.

Scope & Research Methods: Data collected in 2013-14 from a national online survey were assessed. Participants' intentions to marry their primary partner were explored as were their views

on marriage equality.

Usefulness: This data presents the intentions and perspectives of gay and bisexual men in Australia towards marriage and marriage equality.

Limitations: This was an online convenience sample, it was a cross-sectional survey and the analysis focused on men's current intentions with their regular partner which may not reflect their intentions moving forward.

Conclusions: While most men in this study who have a regular partner wouldn't marry him if marriage equality existed in Australia, many still did report they would. Many of the gay and bisexual men in the sample report support for marriage equality in Australia.

Riggle ED, Rostosky SS, Horne SG. Psychological distress, well-being, and legal recognition in same-sex couple relationships. J Fam Psychol. 2010;24(1):82---86.

Introduction: In this study, Riggle et al explore the association between legal recognition of same-sex relationships and levels of psychological distress and wellbeing among lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Scope & Research Methods: This study sought data through an online national survey and obtained a sample of 2,677 LGB individuals. The following four groups were created and data from each compared: single, dating, in a committed relationship and in a legally recognised relationship.

Usefulness: The data show an improvement in psychological distress and increases in wellbeing among people in committed relationships and further improved health for people in legally recognised relationships.

Limitations: This was a convenience sample, it was a cross sectional study and it has a US focus.

Conclusions: Significant improvements in wellbeing are gained by LGB people when their relationships are socially and legally accepted.

Rostosky, S. S., Riggle, E. D. B., Horne, S. G., & Miller, A. D. (2009). Marriage amendments and psychological distress in lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 56(1), 56-66. doi: 10.1037/a0013609

Introduction: In this article, Rostosky et al, examine the minority stress and psychological distress experienced by lesbian, gay and bisexual people following an election in the US where 9 states voted on constitutional amendments to limit marriage

Scope & Research Methods: The authors used data from a national cross-sectional online survey of LGB adults in the US to compare the effects of marriage amendments between states that passed marriage amendments and those that didn't.

Usefulness: This research demonstrates the association between exposure to negative media messages and negative conversations and higher levels of psychological distress experienced by LGB people.

Limitations: The research has a US focus and the sample is a highly community connected one which may represent a more resilient and well supported section of the LGB population.

Conclusions: Marriage amendments, such as the ones being voted on in the 2006 US elections to limit the definition of marriage, are associated with negative psychological outcomes for LGB people.

Rostosky, S. S., Riggle, E. D. B., Horne, S. G., Denton, F. N., & Huellemeier, J. D. (2010). Lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals' psychological responses to amendments denying access to civil marriage *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 30, 302-310

Introduction: In this article, Rostosky et al, attempts to explain and understand how marriage amendment campaigns aimed at denying access to civil marriage impact on psychological distress experienced by lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals.

Scope & Research Methods: Data gathered in an online national US survey, from 300 participants, following an election in November 2006 was examined. A content analysis was performed and the responses fell into seven major themes; indignant about discrimination and denial of rights, distressed by negative rhetoric of campaign, fearful or anxious about protecting their families, feeling alienated, blaming, hopeless or resigned, hopeful optimistic or determined.

Usefulness: The themes presented and explored provide opportunities to understand how these campaigns negatively impact on the mental health of LGB people and ways in which discrimination

can be addressed.

Limitations: The research has a US focus and the sample is a highly community connected one which may represent a more resilient and well supported section of the LGB population.

Conclusions: LGB people need to be supported to withstand the negative psychological impacts of marriage amendment campaigns that seek to deny them access to legal marriage.

Trandafir M (2014) The Effect of Same-Sex Marriage Laws on Different-Sex Marriage: Evidence From the Netherlands, Demography, 51: 317-340, DOI 10.1007/s13524-013-0248-7

Introduction: In this article, Trandafir, investigates the effect that the introduction of same sex marriage laws had on rates of different-sex marriage.

Scope & Research Methods: Different-sex marriage rates were assessed in the Netherlands after the introduction of a registered partnership law in 1998 and a same-sex marriage law in 2001. OECD data from 1988-2005 were used as a synthetic control.

Usefulness: A common argument against the introduction of same-sex marriage is the impact it will have on the marriages of different-sex couples. This study demonstrates that in the Netherlands there has been a negligible effect.

Limitations: The data is specific to the Netherlands, the time period between the introductions of the two laws is very short as is the time for the change to impact on broader social patterns.

Conclusions: In the Netherlands, there were no significant effects on different-sex marriage rates after the introduction of laws which allowed same-sex couples the right to registered partnerships and ultimately to marriage.

Trandafir M (2015) Legal Recognition of Same-Sex Couples and Family Formation, Demography, 52: 113-151, DOI 10.1007/s13524-014-0361-2

Introduction: In this article, Trandafir investigates the impact of same sex marriage, or alternative, on different-sex marriage, divorce and extramarital births.

Scope & Research Methods: Data was assessed

from 28 OECD member countries, for the 1980 to 2009 period, indicators include rates of different-sex marriage & divorce and extramarital births.

Usefulness: In a variety of jurisdictions around the world, same-sex marriage and registered partnerships appear to have no significant effects on the rates of different-sex marriage & divorce and extramarital births.

Limitations: The indicators used in this study may not fully capture the impact that marriage equality may have on different-sex rates of marriage, divorce and extramarital births. Only a few countries in the analysis had actually legalised same-sex marriage during the study period and the time period since these changes have occurred are quite short.

Conclusions: In the various OECD countries included in these analyses where same-sex marriage or registered partnerships have been introduced, no significant effects have been observed on the rates of different-sex marriage & divorce and extramarital births.

Wienke C, Hill GJ. Does the “marriage benefit” extend to partners in gay and lesbian relationships? Evidence from a random sample of sexually active adults, J Fam Issues. 2008;30(2):259---289.

Introduction: In this article Wienke & Hill seek to examine whether the wellbeing benefits known to be conferred to heterosexual couples, extend to gay and lesbian people in relationships.

Scope & Research Methods: Data from multiple waves of three cross sectional population based surveys (1989-2002), a probability sample, were used in this analysis. The wellbeing of gays and lesbians who were partnered was compared with a range of other relationship statuses.

Usefulness: This research compares the wellbeing of people in gay and lesbian relationships with a variety of other people in other relationship types.

Limitations: The study is exclusively US in focus, it examines a relatively small sample of LGB people, and much has changed socially and legally in the US since the data collection period 1989-2002.

Conclusions: The partnered gay and lesbians in this sample reported higher levels of happiness than all single people in the sample however they reported less happiness than heterosexual married spouses.

Wight RG, LeBlanc AJ, De Vries B, Detels R (2012) Stress and Mental Health Among Midlife and Older Gay-Identified Men, American Journal of Public Health, 102:503-510, doi:10.2105/AJPH.2011.300384

Introduction: Wight et al, in this article explore the relationship between stress and mental health among midlife and older gay-identified men. The effects same-sex marriage had on the mental health of these men were also investigated.

Scope & Research Methods: Data from 2009 to 2010, collected by questionnaire from HIV positive and negative gay men, from a subsample of an AIDS-related cohort study in Los Angeles were used in this analysis. Associations between positive affect, depressive symptoms and stress were assessed.

Usefulness: Participants in this study who were legally married experienced a significant protective mental health benefit.

Limitations: The sample was comprised of self-selected gay men who volunteered, the study was cross-sectional and there may exist a confounding variable that may explain why the married men experienced the protective effect.

Conclusions: The right to marry may have significant protective mental health benefits for gay men.

legal recognition of marriage and improved psychological wellbeing.

Limitations: The study is cross-sectional and there was only a narrow window of opportunity to marry in California in the 2000s

Conclusions: The differentials in mental health outcomes observed between heterosexuals and lesbian, gay and bisexual persons appear to diminish when lesbian, gay and bisexual people are in a legally recognized same-sex relationship, marriage in particular.

Wight RG, LeBlanc AJ, Lee Badgett MV (2013) Same-Sex Legal Marriage and Psychological Well-Being: Findings From the California Health Interview Survey, American Journal of Public Health, vol103, pp. 339-346 doi:10.2105/AJPH.2012.301113)

Introduction: In this article, Wight et al, explore whether same-sex marriage was associated with nonspecific psychological distress among self-identified lesbian, gay and bisexual persons and heterosexuals.

Scope & Research Methods: The authors used data gained through the California Health Interview Survey in 2009 to determine if being married impacted on the psychological well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual people. Psychological wellbeing was examined using measures of psychological distress.

Usefulness: This was a population based sample representative of Californians aged 18 to 70 years which demonstrates a relationship between

EDITORIALS

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Committee on Health Care for Undeserved Women (2013) Committee Opinion Number 574 – Marriage Equality for Same-Sex Couples, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Vol 122, No 3, pp 729-732.

Introduction: In this editorial, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists endorses marriage equality for same sex couples. It praises the US Supremes Court ruling that grants equal treatment for legally married same-sex couples.

Scope: The author reviews relevant federal and state legislation in addition to summarising the health and financial effects of marriage equality on same-sex couples.

Usefulness: This editorial is a good example of a professional medical college providing evidence-based support for the equal treatment of same sex couples, including equal marriage rights.

Conclusions: A key professional body in the medical profession in the US has endorsed marriage equality and clearly articulates the impacts, health and other, of this important reform.

Beyrer C (2014) Pushback: The Current Wave of Anti-Homosexuality Laws and Impacts on Health, PLOS Med 11(6): doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1001658

Introduction: In this “essay” article Beyrer provides a global overview of the impact on health of a wave of anti-homosexuality laws around the year 2013.

Scope: The author briefly reviews laws implemented in a range of countries around the world in this commentary. The link between human rights and health is articulated. The author proposes a community led response in efforts to pushback against anti-homosexuality laws.

Usefulness: While levels of discrimination differ around the world efforts to combat discrimination against LGBT people have much in common and must be community led.

Conclusions: At present in many counties a wave of anti-gay laws are being enacted, while in other countries rapid advances in LGBT rights are being won. Strong engagement with communities

must be central in our efforts to improve health outcomes and combat discrimination in challenging contexts.

Buffie WC (2011) Public Health Implications of Same-Sex Marriage, American Journal of Public Health, vol 101, no.6, pg 986-990. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2010.300112

Introduction: This article explores a resolution passed by the Indiana State Medical Association, endorsing the American Medical Association's policy statement from its November 2009 convention addressing public health policy and same-sex households.

Scope: This commentary reviews research on the health impacts of marriage equality in the context of the resolution that was passed by the Indiana State Medical Association. The research reviewed supports the move to recognise the negative health impacts of marriage denial.

Usefulness: The article presents an example of a state medical association embracing marriage equality.

Conclusions: The support of marriage equality by clinical associations, and other key stakeholders, through legislation and education is based in sound evidence, and is solid public health policy.

Campion EW, Morrissey S, Drazen JM (2015) In Support of Same-Sex Marriage, The New England Journal of Medicine, 372;19 pp 1852-1852 DOI: 10.1056/NEJMe1505179

Introduction: This editorial presents a succinct case for the recognition of same-sex marriage in the US context and more broadly.

Scope: The editorial was published at the time when the US Supreme Court was about to hear oral arguments on this matter and urges a decision to be made to support marriage equality.

Usefulness: This short but comprehensive editorial makes a compelling case to support same-sex marriage; many of the arguments are applicable to the current Australian context.

Conclusions: The denial of marriage equality is a clear injustice and has damaging effects on the health of LGBTI people.

Gonzales G (2014) Same-Sex Marriage – A Prescription for Better Health, The New England Journal of Medicine, 370;15 pp 1373-1376 DOI: 10.1056/NEJMp1400254

Introduction: The health benefits of marriage equality are articulated in this US editorial.

Scope: Written prior to the 2015 US Supreme Court ruling, the editorial outlines the positive effects on access to health, issues pertaining to health insurance coverage and taxation are touched upon, that marriage equality could have.

Usefulness: The author makes a strong case for the introduction of marriage equality in the US.

Conclusions: Some of the health disparities in health and access to health experienced by LGBTI people in the US may be improved with the introduction of marriage equality.

Halkitis PN (2012) Obama, Marriage Equality, and the Health of Gay Men, American Journal of Public Health, vol 102, no.09, pp 1628-1629. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2012.300940

Introduction: In this editorial article, Halkitis seeks to explore how the enactment of marriage equality could improve health outcomes for gay men.

Scope: The author examines marriage equality through a process of reflection on his personal experiences, of being a gay man and of witnessing the AIDS epidemic in his community. Presidents Obama's positions on gay marriage in 2012 and prior to 2012 are examined and supported by the author with research findings on gay men's health.

Usefulness: This editorial provides an example of a political role-model or champion for marriage equality, in President Obama.

Conclusions: The positions that President Obama had taken by 2012 paved the way for future developments in the marriage equality struggle in the US.

Perone, A K, (2015) Health Implications of the Supreme Court's Obergefell vs Hodges Marriage Equality Decision, LGBT Health, vol2, no.3, pp. 196-199.

Introduction: This article addresses the health implications of the United States Supreme Court's *Obergefell* vs Hodges decision.

Scope: In this "perspective" article, Perone

examines the impact of the *Obergefell* vs Hodges decision on minority stress and stigmatization and health related benefits, the issues affecting LGBT health that remain after *Obergefell* are also presented and discussed.

Usefulness: The author maps out, from the US perspective, the issues (legal, insurance, etc...) that remain for LGBT communities to overcome.

Conclusions: The *Obergefell* decision is a major step forward in the fight for equal rights for LGBT people in the US, which should have a positive health impact on these communities; however there is still work to be done.

Ritter A, Matthew-Simmons F, Carragher N (2012) Why the alcohol and other drug community should support gay marriage, Drug and Alcohol Review, 31, 1-3, DOI: 10.1111/j.1465-3362.2011.00410.x

Introduction: In this editorial, the authors explain how both community stigma and internalised homophobia impact on the health of LGBTI people and more specifically their alcohol and other drug (AOD) use.

Scope: Data highlighting the increased prevalence of problematic AOD use among LGBTI communities are presented as are data that describe the health impacts of marriage equality.

Usefulness: This editorial is written by Australian AOD experts. It is a powerful call on the AOD sector and policy makers to support marriage equality; doing so would reduce AOD related harms among LGBTI people and improve other health outcomes.

Conclusions: Marriage equality in Australia, if implemented, can be a powerful public health strategy to improve the health of LGBTI people and reduce societal and individual stigma and discrimination experienced by these groups. The AOD sector, and others, must consider the positive health impacts that will flow on from marriage equality in Australia.

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Please find further information, for health services seeking to support LGBT people during the marriage equality debate here: www.acon.org.au/marriageequality

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