

NEWS

ingly, "The children of gay male couples were much more likely to be poor."

Albelda said most antipoverty programs in American were designed from the default position of a single parent household with children: "There is no incentive whatsoever to claim somebody's income in the household if you don't have to." This discourages heterosexual marriage.

At the same time, employment-based benefits packages "are based on a male breadwinner model" with families in mind. "Gay and lesbian families don't look like either of those," she said.

One thing that surprised Albelda is the effect of education. "Highly educated lesbian and gay male couples are much less likely to be in poverty than comparably educated married couples. And the reverse is true, those [lesbians and gay men] with lower levels of education are much more likely to be poor. So the payoff for education at both ends is much more extreme for gay and lesbian couples."

Badgett said employment discrimination was a major explanation of lower economic status. "We see a large income gap for gay men compared with heterosexual men."

Some reports have theorized that gay men are more likely to be self-employed, perhaps by choice, suggesting they might

be making career decisions based on job satisfaction rather than on maximizing income. But Badgett said she has not seen solid data confirming any of this.

Another possibility was that some people might be limiting their income in order to meet eligibility qualifications for programs such as housing assistance or AIDS drug assistance programs (ADAP).

Albelda readily acknowledged anecdotal accounts of this occurring, though she was not aware of any data on the extent of that activity. She said with incomes between about \$13-\$25 an hour, "You run in place and lose valuable support" as income increases.

Diego M. Sanchez, legislative assistant to Rep. Barney Frank (D), admitted this is a problem for people in the congressman's Boston area district living with HIV. "If you make too much money you don't get medical entitlements. You get pulled off of the waiting list for housing."

Sanchez said they were working to try to remove these disincentives in the Medicare and Medicaid program.

"Poverty in the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community" was prepared by The Williams Institute at UCLA and is available online at www.law.ucla.edu/WilliamsInstitute/pdf/LGBPovertyReport.pdf.

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