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Marriage's effect on lesbian and gay couples studied

March 16, 2009 -- Legal recognition of same-sex relationships, including marriage, influences how gay and lesbian baby boomers prepare for late life and end of life issues. Unmarried same-sex couples may suffer greater fear and anxiety around end of life issues than those in state-sanctioned unions, according to a new study published today by the journal *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*.



Professor of Gerontology Brian deVries

"We are just beginning to explore the effects of legal recognition of relationships among lesbian and gay adults," said Brian deVries, professor of gerontology and lead author of the study.

According to deVries, lesbian and gay baby boomers who live in states that do not legally recognize same-sex couples are more

likely to have prepared for the end of life by completing such documents as living wills than those who live in states that do recognize their relationships. At the same time, these lesbian and gay people, single or part of a couple, are more likely to have greater fears and anxieties about end of life and later life issues.

"The bottom line is that those who reside in states that do not recognize relationships or sanctioned marriages between same-sex couples feel less cared for and less cared about and must take extra legal steps to prepare for their later years," deVries said. "The absence of recognition of same-sex relationships conveys a sense of second-class citizenship and a stress associated with such unwelcome status."

Brian deVries and his colleagues, Jean Quam, University of Minnesota; Kimberly Acquaviva, The George Washington University and Anne M. Mason, a graduate student and research assistant at SF State, based their findings on responses to a survey in which 797 gay and lesbian boomers were questioned about their fears regarding end of life issues and preparations for later life. Those queried were women and men, both single and couples, living in states that did and did not legally recognize marriage between same-sex partners.

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The paper, "State Recognition of Same-Sex Relationships and Preparations for End of Life Among Lesbian and Gay Boomers," was published in *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, the journal of the National Sexuality Resource Center (NSRC), and is available online at:

http://www.nsrc.sfsu.edu/sexuality_research_social_policy

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