



FocusFamilyINSIGHT

Ministry Strategy – Family Research

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To: Students of the Family

Re: Same-Sex Parenting, Child Sexual Orientation and Sexual Experiences

It is claimed by many that children raised in same-sex homes are no different in terms of outcomes than children raised in heterosexual homes. There are many reasons to question this conclusion which we address in other reports. However, one important reason is what the research reveals about how the sexual orientation and identification of children differs significantly between those raised by same-sex and heterosexual parents.

Only a few published studies have examined this question and nearly all examine only lesbian-headed families.

These studies consistently show a markedly greater likelihood of children raised by same-sex parents to identify with and experience same-sex or bi-sexual contact than children raised in heterosexual homes.

Gartrell, Bos and Goldberg, 2011

A study published in late 2011 by the US National Longitudinal Lesbian Family Study (NLLFS) reported that, “daughters of lesbian mothers were significantly more likely to have had same-sex contact” compared with their peers from heterosexual-parented homes.¹ Boys were not as likely to identify as homosexual as the girls, but more so than boys raised by heterosexual parents.

Girls from planned lesbian-mothered families were:

- Dramatically more likely to have used emergency contraception.
- Significantly less likely to have used other forms of contraception.
- More likely to identify as bisexual.²

Contrasting Young Adults Identifying as Exclusively Heterosexual by Parent-Type³

	Lesbian-Parented	Hetero-Parented
Girls	51%	93%
Boys	78%	98%

Adolescent Use of Emergency Contraception⁴

Lesbian-Mothered Girls	Hetero-Mothered Girls
35%	5%

Girls Reporting Sex with Other Girls⁵

Lesbian-Mothered Girls	Hetero-Mothered Girls
15%	5%

¹ Nanette K. Gartrell, Henny M. W. Bos and Naomi G. Goldberg, “Adolescents of the U.S. National Longitudinal Lesbian Family Study: Sexual Orientation, Sexual Behavior, and Sexual Risk Exposure” *Archive of Sexual Behavior*, 40 (2011):1199-1209, p. 1199.

² Gartrell, Bos and Goldberg, 2011. See Table 3, p. 1204; Table 4, p. 1205.

³ Gartrell, Bos and Goldberg, 2011, Table 3; National Survey of Family Growth, 2006-2010, “Sex Characteristics of Unmarried 15-19-Year-Olds”

⁴ Gartrell, Bos and Goldberg, 2011, Table 4, p. 1205.

⁵ Gartrell, Bos and Goldberg, 2011, Table 4, p. 1205.



Boys raised by lesbian moms were less sexually active in all categories, compared with boys raised in mother/father homes, which is consistent with other studies below.

Biblarz and Stacey, 2010

This study only addresses family type and child sexual practice/identification briefly by referring to an unpublished working paper from the University of Amsterdam. While not offering exact data, the authors report that daughters of lesbian mothers were less likely to report “heterosexual identity” than daughters of heterosexual couples.⁶ Sons appeared to show similar outcomes with other studies of greater sexual reticence.

Stacey and Biblarz, 2001

The next major study was a review published in the prestigious *American Sociological Review* by a lead author strongly sympathetic with GLBT causes. Her team describes the outcomes from the two different family types as “striking”: 64 percent of young adults raised by lesbian mothers reported considering having same-sex erotic relationships (in the past, now or future). Only 17 percent of young adults in heterosexual families reported this.⁷

Likewise “girls raised by lesbian mothers appear to have been more sexually adventurous and less chaste.” Boys raised in such homes tended to be more sexually reticent.⁸

Tasker and Golombok, 1997

One of the first major studies to examine this question – comparing outcomes among lesbian and heterosexual moms – found “significantly more young people from lesbian mother families than from heterosexual mother families reported having experienced a sexual relationship with someone of the same gender.”⁹

The study shows more young adults raised by lesbian mothers experienced each of the following attitudes and behaviors than peers raised by heterosexual mothers by the following differentials.¹⁰

Attitude/Behavior	Greater Likelihood of Lesbian-Parented Young Adults
Same-Sex Attraction	>2x
Identify as Gay/Lesbian/Bi	2x
Considering S-S Relationships	3x
Considered Such in the Past	7x
Had S-S Relationships	6x

They also reported a mild trend in the data “suggesting that mothers who reported...that they would accept their child’s developing a non-heterosexual orientation tended to have children who at follow-up were more likely to report same-gender sexual interest.”¹¹

Such findings seem to indicate a developmental nature for same-sex practice and identification among young adults.

Glenn T. Stanton is the director of family formation studies at Focus on the Family and the author of five books on various aspects of the family, the two most recent: Secure Daughters Confident Sons, How Parents Guide Their Children into Authentic Masculinity and Femininity (Waterbrook, 2011) and The Ring Makes All the Difference: The Hidden Consequences of Cohabitation and the Strong Benefits of Marriage, (Moody, 2011).

⁶ Timothy J. Biblarz and Judith Stacey, “How Does the Gender of Parents Matter?” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72 (2010): 3-22, p. 15.

⁷ Stacey and Biblarz, 2001, p. 170.

⁸ Stacey and Biblarz, 2001, p. 171.

⁹ Fiona L. Tasker and Susan Golombok, *Growing Up in a Lesbian Family: Effects on Child Development*, (New York: The Guilford Press, 1997), p. 111.

¹⁰ Tasker and Golombok, 1997. Table 6.1, p. 107

¹¹ Tasker and Golombok, 1997, p. 117.