

Does the Parents' Sex Really Matter On Children's Psychological Development? a Literature Review

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Introduction. More same-sex couples become parents by having children in previous heterosexual relationships, through donor insemination, adoption, fostering or surrogacy. Does the parents' sex impact on the offspring's psychological development?

Method. Literature review on Pub-Med.

Results. Research shows that the warmth and closeness between parents and children –including adolescents- is what counts for the offspring's psychological development and not their parents' sex. Children's cognitive abilities, sexual orientation and gender identity seem also unrelated to their parents' sex. Positive outcomes have been observed both for gay and lesbian-parented families. Even though the children of gay and lesbian couples may be exposed to discriminatory sentiments against their parents, their influence on the children's long-term psychosocial adjustment appears debatable. They may even be more tolerant towards marginalized groups but they also describe concerns about becoming friendless and tend to conceal their parents' sexual orientation. Furthermore, the children seem to be negatively influenced when their parents are not allowed to marry. Marriage could increase stability within a couple and also assist in lessening the stigma and social discrimination faced by many same-sex parents. Future research should address the weaknesses of the existing studies (small samples of white, well-educated and affluent gay and lesbians).

Conclusions. Based on the available data, what counts for the children's normal psychological development seem to be the quality of parenting rather than their parents' sex. Parenting stress appears to be more predictive of children's psychological problems. The social prejudice and legal discrimination against same-sex parented families seem to lack scientific validation.