PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN OF SAME-SEX PARENTS

Many opponents of marriage equality claim that same-sex parents have different approaches to relationships and parenting, and that their children suffer decreased psychological and social outcomes. However, decades of empirical research shows no such differences: Children raised by same-sex parents are equivalent to children of opposite-sex parents in their psychological adjustments, cognitive abilities, and relationships with peers, parents, and other adults.

Same-sex and opposite-sex parents have similar approaches to relationships and child-rearing.

- Lesbian and heterosexual women share similar approaches to relationships (Farr, Forsell, & Patterson, 2010) and child rearing (Patterson, 2000). Gay fathers are no different from heterosexual fathers in their ability to parent and to foster the healthy development of their children (Armesto, 2002; Farr, Forsell, & Patterson, 2010; Patterson, 2004).

- In one large study, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) parents were more likely than opposite-sex parents to volunteer at their child’s school (67% v. 42%), attend events such as Back-to-School nights or parent teacher conferences (94% v. 77%), and become members of the school’s parent-teacher organization (41% v. 26%) (Kosciw & Diaz, 2008).

Parental sexual orientation has no adverse effect on a child’s psychological outcomes.

- Children of same-sex parents are not different from children of opposite-sex parents in their psychological adjustment (Lamb, 2012), school functioning (Fedewa & Clark, 2009; Potter, 2012; Rosenfeld, 2010), cognitive and physical abilities (Golombok, Tasker, & Murray, 1997), or emotional well-being (Patterson, 2000).

- Children of same-sex parents are no more likely to exhibit psychosocial problems (e.g., depression, anxiety, or low self-esteem) than are children of opposite-sex parents (Wainright, Russull, & Patterson, 2004).

- Children with lesbian mothers are similar to those raised by heterosexual mothers in their emotional and behavioral adjustment (Gartrell & Bos, 2010).

- Substance abuse and delinquency are no more common among children of same-sex parents than among children of opposite-sex parents (Wainright & Patterson, 2006).

Children of same-sex parents have healthy relationships with their parents and peers.

- Children with same-sex parents perceive the quality and closeness of their relationship with parents, care from other adults, and their own levels of autonomy similarly to children of opposite-sex parents (Wainright, Russell, & Patterson, 2004).

- Some research indicates that children with lesbian parents are less likely than children of opposite-sex parents to experience physical or sexual abuse by a parent or other caregiver (Gartrell, Bos, & Goldberg, 2011).

- Children of gay and lesbian parents consistently report normal, positive, and healthy relationships with their peers (Wainright & Patterson, 2008).

- Children of same-sex parents are more likely to express feeling empathy toward other minority groups than children of opposite-sex parents (Goldberg, 2007).
Children of same-sex parents experience sexual identity development similarly to children of opposite-sex parents.

- Parental sexual orientation has no apparent impact on their children’s sexual orientation (Golombok & Badger, 2010).

- The vast majority of gay and lesbian people are raised by opposite-sex parents, and the vast majority of children raised by same-sex parents grow up to be heterosexual (Goldberg, 2010).

Other findings

- The New Family Structures Study suggested that there might be negative consequences of growing up in an LGB home (Regnerus, 2012). However, due to significant methodological flaws, the journal’s audit and the mainstream scientific community have dismissed the findings (Sherkat, 2012).

References


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