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## Lesbian and Gay Parenting

### *I. SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS*

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Like families headed by heterosexual parents, lesbian and gay parents and their children are a diverse group (Martin, 1993). Unlike heterosexual parents and their children, however, lesbian and gay parents and their children are often subject to prejudice because of sexual orientation that turns judges, legislators, professionals, and the public against them, frequently resulting in negative outcomes such as loss of physical custody, restrictions on visitation, and prohibitions against adoption (Falk, 1989; Editors of the Harvard Law Review, 1990). As with all socially stigmatized groups, the beliefs held generally in society about lesbians and gay men are often not based in personal experience, but are instead culturally transmitted (Herek, 1991). The purpose of this summary of research findings on lesbian and gay parents and their children is to assist psychologists and other professionals to evaluate widespread beliefs in the light of empirical data and in this way ameliorate the negative effects of unwarranted prejudice.

Because many beliefs about lesbian and gay parents and their children are open to empirical test, psychological research can evaluate their accuracy. Systematic research comparing lesbian and gay adults to heterosexual adults only began in the late 1950s, and research comparing children of gay and lesbian parents with those of heterosexual parents is of a more recent vintage. Research on lesbian and gay adults began with Evelyn Hooker's landmark study (1957) and culminated with the declassification of homosexuality as a mental disorder in 1973 (Gonsiorek, 1991). Case reports on children of gay and lesbian parents began to appear in the psychiatric literature in the early 1970s (e.g., Osman, 1972; Weeks, Derdeyn, & Langman, 1975) and have continued to appear (e.g., Agbayewa, 1984). Beginning with the pioneering work of Martin and Lyon (1972), first person and fictionalized descriptions of life in lesbian mother families have also become available (e.g., Alpert, 1988; Clausen, 1985; Jullion, 1985; Mager, 1975; Perreault, 1975; Pollock & Vaughn, 1987; Rafkin, 1990). Systematic research on the children of lesbian and gay parents did not, however, begin to appear in major professional journals until 1978, and most of the available research has been published more recently.

As this summary will show, the results of existing research comparing gay and lesbian parents to heterosexual parents and children of gay or lesbian parents to children of heterosexual parents are quite uniform: common stereotypes are not supported by the data.

Without denying the clarity of results to date, it is important also for psychologists and other professionals to be aware that research in this area has presented a variety of methodological challenges, not all of which have been surmounted in every study. As is true in any area of research, questions have been raised with regard to sampling issues, statistical power, and other technical matters (e.g., Belcastro, Gramlich, Nicholson, Price, & Wilson, 1993); no individual study is entirely invincible to such criticism.

One criticism of this body of research (Belcastro et al., 1993) has been that the research lacks external validity because it may not be representative of the larger population of lesbian and gay parents. This criticism is not justified, because nobody knows the actual composition of the entire population of lesbian mothers, gay fathers, or their children (many of whom choose to remain hidden) and hence researchers cannot possibly evaluate the degree to which particular samples do or do not represent the population. In the long run, it is not the results obtained from any one specific sample, but the accumulation of findings from many different samples that will be most meaningful.

Research in this area has also been criticized for using poorly matched or no control groups in designs that call for such controls. Particularly notable in this category has been the tendency in some studies to compare development among children of a group of divorced lesbian mothers, many of whom are living with lesbian partners, to that among children of a group of divorced heterosexual mothers who are not currently living with heterosexual partners. It will be important for future research to disentangle maternal sexual orientation from maternal status as partnered or unpartnered.

Other criticisms have been that most studies have involved relatively small samples, that there have been inadequacies in assessment procedures employed in some studies, and that the classification of parents as lesbian, gay, or heterosexual has sometimes been problematic (e.g., some women classified by researchers as lesbian might be regarded as bisexual by other observers). It is significant, however, that even with all the questions and/or limitations that may characterize research in the area, none of the published research suggests conclusions different from those that will be summarized below.

This summary consists of four sections. In the first, results of research on lesbian and gay adults (and parents) are summarized. In the second section, a summary of results from research comparing children of lesbian and gay parents with those of heterosexual parents or with established norms is presented. The third section summarizes research on heterogeneity among lesbian and gay families with children. The fourth section provides a brief conclusion.

### ***A. Lesbian and Gay Parents***

One belief that often underlies both judicial decision-making in custody litigation and public policies governing foster care and adoption has been the belief that lesbians and gay men are not fit to be parents. In particular, courts have sometimes assumed that gay men and lesbians are mentally ill, that lesbians are less maternal than heterosexual women, and that lesbians' and gay men's relationships with sexual partners leave little time for ongoing parent-child interactions (Editors of the Harvard Law Review, 1990). Results of research to date have failed to confirm any of these beliefs (Falk, 1989, 1994; Patterson, 1994b, 1995b, 1996).

## **Mental Health of Lesbians and Gay Men**

The psychiatric, psychological, and social-work professions do not consider homosexual orientation to be a mental disorder. More than 20 years ago, the American Psychiatric Association removed "homosexuality" from its list of mental disorders, stating that "homosexuality *per se* implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capabilities" (American Psychiatric Association, 1980). In 1975, the American Psychological Association took the same position and urged all mental health professionals to help dispel the stigma of mental illness that had long been associated with homosexual orientation (American Psychological Association, 1975). The National Association of Social Workers has a similar policy (National Association of Social Workers, 1994).

The decision to remove homosexual orientation from the list of mental disorders reflects the results of extensive research, conducted over three decades, showing that homosexual orientation is not a psychological maladjustment (Gonsiorek, 1991; Reiss, 1980; Hart, Roback, Tittler, Weitz, Walston, & McKee, 1978). The social and other circumstances in which lesbians and gay men live, including exposure to widespread prejudice and discrimination, often cause acute distress; but there is no reliable evidence that homosexual orientation *per se* impairs psychological functioning (Freedman, 1971; Gonsiorek, 1991; Hart et al., 1978; Hooker, 1957; Reiss, 1980).

### **Fitness of Lesbians and Gay Men as Parents**

Beliefs that gay and lesbian adults are not fit parents likewise have no empirical foundation (Cramer, 1986; Falk, 1989; Gibbs, 1988; Patterson, 1996). Lesbian and heterosexual women have not been found to differ markedly either in their overall mental health or in their approaches to child rearing (Kweskin & Cook, 1982; Lyons, 1983; Miller, Jacobsen, & Bigner, 1981; Mucklow & Phelan, 1979; Pagelow, 1980; Rand, Graham, & Rawlings, 1982; Thompson, McCandless, & Strickland, 1971), nor have lesbians' romantic and sexual relationships with other women been found to detract from their ability to care for their children (Pagelow, 1980). Recent evidence suggests that lesbian couples who are parenting together tend to divide household and family labor relatively evenly (Hand, 1991; Patterson, 1995a) and to report

satisfaction with their couple relationships (Koepke, Hare, & Moran, 1992; Patterson, 1995a). Research on gay fathers has similarly found no reason to believe them unfit as parents (Barret & Robinson, 1990; Bigner and Bozett, 1990; Bozett, 1980, 1989).

### **B. Children of Lesbian and Gay Parents**

In addition to judicial concerns about gay and lesbian parents themselves, courts have voiced three major kinds of fears about effects of lesbian or gay parents on children.

The first general concern is that development of sexual identity will be impaired among children of lesbian or gay parents for instance, that children brought up by gay fathers or lesbian mothers will show disturbances in gender identity and/or in gender role behavior (Falk, 1989; Hitchens & Kirkpatrick, 1985; Kleber, Howell, & Tibbits-Kleber, 1986). It has also been suggested that children brought up by lesbian mothers or gay fathers will themselves become gay or lesbian (Falk, 1989; Kleber et al., 1986).

A second category of concerns involves aspects of children's personal development other than sexual identity (Falk, 1989; Editors of the Harvard Law Review, 1990;

Kleber et al., 1986). For example, courts have expressed fears that children in the custody of gay or lesbian parents will be more vulnerable to mental breakdown, will exhibit more adjustment difficulties and behavior problems, and will be less psychologically healthy than children growing up in homes with heterosexual parents.

A third category of specific fears expressed by the courts is that children of lesbian and gay parents may experience difficulties in social relationships (Editors of the Harvard Law Review, 1990; Falk, 1989; Hitchens & Kirkpatrick, 1985). For example, judges have repeatedly expressed concern that children living with lesbian mothers may be stigmatized, teased, or otherwise traumatized by peers. Another common fear is that children living with gay or lesbian parents may be more likely to be sexually abused by the parent or by the parent's friends or acquaintances.

### **Sexual Identity**

Three aspects of sexual identity are considered in the research: gender identity concerns a person's self-identification as male or female; gender-role behavior concerns the extent to which a person's activities, occupations, and the like are regarded by the culture as masculine, feminine, or both; sexual orientation refers to a person's choice of sexual partners--i.e., heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual (Money & Earhardt, 1972; Stein, 1993). To examine the possibility that children in the custody of lesbian mothers or gay fathers experience disruptions of sexual identity, research relevant to each of these three major areas of concern is summarized below.

*Gender identity.* In studies of children ranging in age from 5 to 14, results of projective testing and related interview procedures have revealed normal development of gender identity among children of lesbian mothers (Green, 1978; Green, Mandel, Hotvedt, Gray, & Smith, 1986; Kirkpatrick, Smith, & Roy, 1981). More direct assessment techniques to assess gender identity have been used by Golombok, Spencer, and Rutter (1983) with the same result; all children in this study reported that they were happy with their gender, and that they had no wish to be a member of the opposite sex. There was no evidence in any of the studies of gender identity difficulties among children of lesbian mothers. No data have been reported in this area for children of gay fathers.

*Gender-Role Behavior.* A number of studies have examined gender-role behavior among the offspring of lesbian mothers (Golombok et al., 1983; Gottman, 1990; Green, 1978; Hoeffler, 1981; Kirkpatrick et al., 1981; Patterson, 1994a). These studies reported that such behavior among children of lesbian mothers fell within typical limits for conventional sex roles. For instance, Kirkpatrick and her colleagues (1981) found no differences between children of lesbian versus heterosexual mothers in toy preferences, activities, interests, or occupational choices.

Rees (1979) administered the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) to 24 adolescents, half of whom had divorced lesbian and half of whom had divorced heterosexual mothers. The BSRI yields scores on masculinity and femininity as independent factors and an androgyny score from the ratio of masculinity to femininity. Children of lesbian and heterosexual mothers did not differ on masculinity or on androgyny, but children of lesbian mothers reported greater psychological femininity than did those of heterosexual mothers. This result would seem to run counter to expectations based on stereotypes of lesbians as lacking in femininity, both in their own demeanor and in their likely influences on children.

Sex role behavior of children was also assessed by Green and his colleagues (1986). In interviews with the children, no differences between 56 children of lesbian and 48 children of heterosexual mothers were found with respect to favorite television programs, favorite television characters, or favorite games or toys. There was some indication in interviews with children themselves that the offspring of lesbian mothers had less sex-typed preferences for activities at school and in their neighborhoods than did children of heterosexual mothers. Consistent with this result, lesbian mothers were also more likely than heterosexual mothers to report that their daughters often participated in rough-and-tumble play or occasionally played with "masculine" toys such as trucks or guns; however, they reported no differences in these areas for sons. Lesbian mothers were no more or less likely than heterosexual mothers to report that their children often played with "feminine" toys such as dolls. In both family types, however, children's sex-role behavior was seen as falling within normal limits.

In summary, the research suggests that children of lesbian mothers develop patterns of gender-role behavior that are much like those of other children.

No data are available as yet in this area for children of gay fathers.

*Sexual Orientation.* A number of investigators have also studied a third component of sexual identity: sexual orientation (Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, & Mikach, 1995; Bozett, 1980, 1982, 1987, 1989; Gottman, 1990; Golombok et al., 1983; Green, 1978; Huggins, 1989; Miller, 1979; Paul, 1986; Rees, 1979). In all studies, the great majority of offspring of both gay fathers and lesbian mothers described themselves as heterosexual. Taken together, the data do not suggest elevated rates of homosexuality among the offspring of lesbian or gay parents. For instance, Huggins (1989) interviewed 36 teenagers, half of whom were offspring of lesbian mothers and half of heterosexual mothers. No children of lesbian mothers identified themselves as lesbian or gay, but one child of a heterosexual mother did; this difference was not statistically significant. In a recent study, Bailey and his colleagues (1995) studied adult sons of gay fathers and found more than 90% of the sons to be heterosexual. Because the heterosexual and nonheterosexual sons did not differ in

the length of time they had resided with their fathers, the effects of the exposure to the fathers' sexual orientation on the sons' sexual orientation must have been either very small or nonexistent.

### **Other Aspects of Personal Development**

Studies of other aspects of personal development among children of gay and lesbian parents have assessed a broad array of characteristics. Among these have been separation-individuation (Steckel, 1985, 1987), psychiatric evaluations (Golombok et al., 1983; Kirkpatrick et al., 1981), assessments of behavior problems (Flaks, Ficher, Masterpasqua and Joseph, 1995; Golombok et al., 1983; Patterson, 1994a), personality (Gottman, 1990), self-concept (Gottman, 1990; Huggins, 1989; Patterson, 1994a; Puryear, 1983), locus of control (Puryear, 1983; Rees, 1979), moral judgment (Rees, 1979), and intelligence (Green et al., 1986). Research has shown that concerns about difficulties in personal development in these areas among children of lesbian mothers are unwarranted. As was the case for sexual identity, studies of these other aspects of personal development have revealed no major differences between children of lesbian versus heterosexual mothers. One statistically significant difference in self-concept emerged in Patterson's (1994a) study: children of lesbian mothers reported greater symptoms of stress but also a greater overall sense of well-being than did children in a

comparison group of heterosexual families. The responses of both groups were, however, within a normal range (Patterson, 1994a). Overall, the belief that children of gay and lesbian parents suffer deficits in personal development has no empirical foundation.

### **Social Relationships**

Studies assessing potential differences between children of gay and lesbian versus heterosexual parents have sometimes included assessments of children's social relationships. The most common focus of attention has been on peer relations, but some information on children's relationships with adults has also been collected. Research findings that address the likelihood of sexual abuse are also summarized in this section.

Research on peer relations among children of lesbian mothers has been reported by Golombok and her colleagues (1983), Green (1978), and by Green and his colleagues (1986). Reports by both parents and children suggest normal development of peer relationships. For example, as would be expected, most school-aged children reported same-sex best friends and predominantly same-sex peer groups (Golombok et al., 1983; Green, 1978). The quality of children's peer relations was described, on average, in positive terms by researchers (Golombok et al., 1983) as well as by lesbian mothers and their children (Green et al., 1986).

No data on the children of gay fathers have been reported in this area.

Studies of relationships with adults among the offspring of lesbian and gay parents have also yielded a generally positive picture (Golombok et al., 1983; Harris & Turner, 1985/86; Kirkpatrick et al., 1981). For example, Golombok and her colleagues (1983) found that children of divorced lesbian mothers were more likely to have had recent contact with their fathers than were children of divorced heterosexual mothers. Another study, however, found no differences in this regard (Kirkpatrick et al., 1981). Harris and Turner (1985/86) studied the offspring of gay fathers as well as those of lesbian mothers; parent-child relationships were described in positive terms by parents in their sample. One significant difference between lesbian and gay parents, on the one hand, and heterosexual parents, on the other, was that heterosexual parents were more likely to say that their children's visits with the other parent presented problems for them (Harris & Turner, 1985/86).

In the Golombok et al. (1983) study, children's contacts with adult friends of their lesbian mothers were also assessed. All of the children were reported to have contact with adult friends of their mothers, and the majority of lesbian mothers reported that their adult friends were a mixture of homosexual and heterosexual adults.

Concerns that children of gay or lesbian parents are more likely than children of heterosexual parents to be sexually abused have also been addressed. Results of work in this area reveal that the great majority of adults who perpetrate sexual abuse are male; sexual abuse of children by adult women is extremely rare (Finkelhor & Russell, 1984; Jones & MacFarlane, 1980; Sarafino, 1979). Moreover, the overwhelming majority of child sexual abuse cases involve an adult male abusing a young female (Jenny, Roesler, & Poyer, 1994; Jones & MacFarlane, 1980). Available evidence reveals that gay men are no more likely than heterosexual men to perpetrate child sexual abuse (Groth & Birnbaum, 1978; Jenny et al., 1994; Sarafino, 1979). Fears that children in custody of gay or lesbian

parents might be at heightened risk for sexual abuse are thus without basis in the research literature.

## **Summary**

Overall, then, results of research to date suggest that children of lesbian and gay parents have normal relationships with peers and that their relationships with adults of both sexes are also satisfactory. The picture of lesbian mothers' children that emerges from results of existing research is thus one of general engagement in social life with peers, with fathers, and with mothers' adult friends--both male and female, both heterosexual and homosexual. Studies in this area to date are few, and the data emerging from them are sketchy. On the basis of existing research findings, however, fears about children of lesbians and gay men being sexually abused by adults, ostracized by peers, or isolated in single-sex lesbian or gay communities are unfounded.

### ***C. Diversity Among Gay and Lesbian Families***

Despite the tremendous diversity evident within gay and lesbian communities, research on differences among lesbian and gay families with children is as yet quite sparse. One particularly important kind of heterogeneity involves the circumstances of children's birth or adoption. Some men and women have had children in the context of heterosexual relationships that split up after one or both parents assumed lesbian or gay identities. Much of the existing research on lesbian mothers, gay fathers, and their children was initiated to address concerns that arose for such families in the context of child custody disputes, and it was often designed at least in part to examine the veracity of common stereotypes that have been voiced in legal proceedings. A growing number of men and women have also had children *after* assuming lesbian or gay identities. Recently, a small body of research (e.g., Flaks, et al., 1995; McCandlish, 1987; Patterson, 1994a, 1995a; Steckel, 1987) has begun to address issues relevant to families of this type. Parents and children in these two kinds of families are likely to have experiences that differ from one another in many respects.

Many issues (for example, residential versus nonresidential parenting) have yet to be addressed directly by research. In this section, research findings on the impact of parental psychological and relationship status and on the influence of other stresses and supports are described. One dimension of difference among gay and lesbian families concerns whether or not the custodial parent is involved in a couple relationship, and if so what implications this may have for children. Pagelow (1980), Kirkpatrick et al. (1981), and Golombok et al. (1983) all reported that, in their samples, divorced lesbian mothers were more likely than divorced heterosexual mothers to be living with a romantic partner; however, none of these investigators examined connections between this variable and children's adjustment or development in lesbian mother families.

Huggins (1989) reported that self-esteem among daughters of lesbian mothers whose lesbian partners lived with them was higher than that among daughters of lesbian mothers who did not live with a partner. Because of the small sample size and absence of statistical tests, this finding should be seen as suggestive rather than conclusive. On the basis of impressions from her own work, Kirkpatrick has also stated her view that "contrary to the fears expressed in court, children in households that included the mother's lesbian lover had a richer, more open and stable family life" than did those in single parent lesbian mother households (Kirkpatrick, 1987, p. 204).

Issues related to division of family and household labor have also been studied. In families headed by lesbian couples, Patterson (1995a) found that, although mothers did not differ in their reported involvement in household and family decision-making tasks, biological mothers reported more time spent in child care and nonbiological mothers reported more time spent in paid employment. In families where mothers reported sharing child care duties relatively evenly between themselves, parents were more satisfied and children were better adjusted. Thus, equal sharing of child care duties was associated with more advantageous outcomes both for parents and for children in this study.

Another aspect of diversity among gay and lesbian families relates to the psychological status and well-being of the parent. Research on parent-child relations in heterosexual families has consistently revealed that children's adjustment is often related to indices of maternal mental health. One might therefore expect factors that enhance mental health among lesbian mothers or gay fathers also to benefit their children. Lott-Whitehead and Tully (1993) reported considerable variability in the amounts of stress described by lesbian mothers, but did not describe sources of stress nor their relations to child adjustment. Rand, Graham, and Rawlings (1982) found that lesbian mothers' sense of psychological well-being was associated with their degree of openness about their lesbian identity with employers, ex-husbands, and children; mothers who felt more able to disclose their lesbian identity were more likely to express a positive sense of well-being. Unfortunately, no information about the relations of these findings to adjustment or development among children of these women has been reported to date.

Another area of great diversity among families with a gay or lesbian parent concerns the degree to which a parent's gay or lesbian identity is accepted by other significant people in a child's life. Huggins (1989) found a tendency for children whose fathers were rejecting of maternal lesbian identities to report lower self-esteem than those whose fathers were neutral or positive. Due to small sample size and absence of significance tests, this finding should be regarded as preliminary and suggestive rather than definitive. Huggins' (1989) finding does, however, raise questions about the extent to which reactions of important adults in a child's environment can influence responses to discovery of a parent's gay or lesbian identity.

Effects of the age at which children learn of parental homosexuality have also been a topic of study. Paul (1986) found that offspring who were told of parental gay, lesbian, or bisexual identity either in childhood or in late adolescence found the news easier to cope with than those who first learned of it during early to middle adolescence. Huggins (1989) also reported that those who learned of maternal lesbianism in childhood had higher self-esteem than did those who were not informed of it until they were adolescents. From a clinical perspective, it is widely agreed that early adolescence is a particularly difficult time for children to learn that a father is gay or that a mother is lesbian (Bozett, 1980; Pennington, 1987; Schulenberg, 1985).

Some investigators have also raised questions about the potential role of peer support in helping children to deal with issues raised by having a gay or lesbian parent. Lewis (1980) was the first to suggest that children's silence on the topic of parental sexual orientation with peers and siblings might add to their feelings of isolation from other children. All of the 11 adolescents studied by O'Connell (1993) reported exercising selectivity about when they disclosed information about their mothers' lesbian identities. Paul (1986) found that 29% of his young adult respondents had never known anyone else with a gay, lesbian, or bisexual parent, suggesting that the possibility of isolation is very real for some young people. Potentially



negative effects of any such isolation have not, however, been uncovered in research to date. Lewis (1980) suggested that children would benefit from support groups consisting of other children of gay or lesbian parents, and young people interviewed by O'Connell (1993) agreed, but systematic evaluations of such groups have not been reported.

In summary, research on diversity among families with gay and lesbian parents and on the potential effects of such diversity on children is only beginning (Martin 1989; Patterson, 1992, 1995b) Existing data on children of lesbian mothers suggest that children may fare better when mothers are in good psychological health and living with a lesbian partner with whom they share child care. Children may find it easier to deal with issues raised by having lesbian or gay parents if they learn of parental sexual orientation during childhood rather than during adolescence. Existing data also suggest the value of a supportive milieu, in which parental sexual orientation is accepted by other significant adults and in which children have contact with peers in similar circumstances. The existing data are, however, still very sparse, and any conclusions must be seen as tentative.

It is clear, however, that existing research provides no basis for believing that children's best interests are served by family conflict or secrecy about a parent's gay or lesbian identity, or by requirements that a lesbian or gay parent maintain a household separate from that of a same-sex partner.

#### ***D. Conclusion***

In summary, there is no evidence to suggest that lesbians and gay men are unfit to be parents or that psychosocial development among children of gay men or lesbians is compromised in any respect relative to that among offspring of heterosexual parents. Not a single study has found children of gay or lesbian parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of heterosexual parents. Indeed, the evidence to date suggests that home environments provided by gay and lesbian parents are as likely as those provided by heterosexual parents to support and enable children's psychosocial growth.

It should be acknowledged that research on lesbian and gay parents and their children is still very new and

relatively scarce. Less is known about children of gay fathers than about children of lesbian mothers. Little is known about development of the offspring of gay or lesbian parents during adolescence or adulthood. Sources of heterogeneity have yet to be systematically investigated. Longitudinal studies that follow lesbian and gay families over time are badly needed.

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#### **[E. References](#)**

### ***II. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY***

The citations in this annotated bibliography come from a number of sources: from the original APA publication *Lesbian Parents and Their Children*, from a PsycLit

search on gay and lesbian parenting from the years 1987-1993, and from recommendations made by our expert reviewers. We recognize that this bibliography is not all inclusive. The literature on lesbian and gay parenting is rapidly expanding, and we may have missed some resources. Furthermore, there are a number of doctoral dissertations on gay and lesbian parenting. We have not included dissertations or some of the material that is written directly for lesbian and gay parents themselves. While primarily drawing upon psychology, we did include some citations from law, psychiatry, and social work publications.

The annotated bibliography is divided into four sections. The first section focuses on empirical psychological studies. The second section contains book chapters and articles from the periodical literature. The third section contains books. And the bibliography concludes with a section that lists additional resources and organizations.

This bibliography was compiled by Bianca Cody Murphy and Lourdes Rodríguez-Nogués with the assistance of Mary Ballou, Edward J. Dunne, Susan Iasenza, Steven James, Linda Jones, Ena Vazquez Nuttall, Gary Ross Reynolds, and William Sanchez.

## Empirical Studies on Lesbian and Gay Parenting

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**Ainslie, J., & Feltey, K.M. (1991). *Definitions and dynamics of motherhood and family in lesbian communities. Marriage and Family Review, 17, (1/2), 63-85.***

Reports results of a study of the meaning of motherhood and family to lesbian mothers, how these meanings are created and maintained both in the lesbian community and outside world, and the centrality of lesbian feminist communities to the lives of lesbian women and their children. Uses an explicitly feminist framework and interactive social psychological perspective. Includes intensive interviews with 17 lesbian mothers who were involved in lesbian feminist communities. Interviewees were mostly White women who ranged in age from 25 to 48, and the children ranged in age from 2 to 28. All respondents were biological mothers of the children they were raising and viewed motherhood as a positive forum for social change. They taught children feminist principles and organized their families accordingly--each person treated as a unique individual. Lesbian feminist communities provided support and a social context in which the families felt at home. The lack of language to describe the relationships in extended lesbian families was a common theme.

**Bailey, J.M., Bobrow, D., Wolfe, M., & Mikach, S. (1995). *Sexual orientation of adult sons of gay fathers. Developmental Psychology, 31, 124-129.***

Reports the result of a study of 55 gay or bisexual men who had a total of 82 sons at least 17 years of age. The fathers were recruited through advertisements in gay publications. Eighty-nine percent of the fathers identified themselves as gay. The rest identified themselves as bisexual. More than 90% of the sons whose sexual orientation could be rated were heterosexual. The sexual orientation of the sons was not positively correlated with the amount of time the sons lived with their fathers. The authors conclude that the available evidence fails to provide empirical grounds for denying child custody to lesbian and gay parents because of concern about the effect on the child's sexual orientation.

**Baptiste, D.A., (1987). *Psycho-therapy with gay/lesbian couples and their children in stepfamilies: A challenge for marriage and family therapists. Journal of Homosexuality, 14 (1/2), 223-238.***

Assesses lesbian and gay subjects who previously had been heterosexually married on five dimensions: personal traits, marital history, marital problems and their impact, and comfort with their gay identity. Discusses issues about the physical custody; the proportion of custody determinations that were conflictual and personally destructive; satisfaction regarding custody arrangements; the percentage of lesbian/gay parents who were open with their children about their sexual orientation; how the disclosure was made; the impact on the children of the parent's coming out; and the frequency of reported difficulties experienced by the children because of their parent's sexual orientation.

**Bigner, J.J., & Jacobsen, R.B. (1989). *The value of children to gay and heterosexual fathers. Journal of Homosexuality, 18 (1/2), 163-172.***

Reports on similarities and differences between 33 heterosexual fathers (aged 26-55 years) and 33 matched gay fathers who responded to the value of children questionnaire. Overall scores for both groups did not differ. Significant differences

were found in two sub-scales (Tradition-Continuity-Security and Social Status). Gay fathers reported that their marriage and family orientation reflected a traditional attitude toward family life and served to protect against societal rejection. Sample reported on was a self-selected group of gay fathers attending a self-help group. Comparison group was constructed from a larger sample of men who are fathers, without knowledge of the men's sexual orientation.

***Bigner, J.J., & Jacobsen, R.B. (1989). Parenting behaviors of homosexual and heterosexual fathers. Journal of Homosexuality, 18(1/2), 173-186.***

An empirical study of the differences and similarities between 33 gay fathers and 33 nongay fathers as reflected in their responses to the Iowa Parent Behavior Inventory. Fathers of both types were quite similar on degree of involvement and level of intimacy with children. Gay fathers were generally more strict, but were also more responsive, and took more care in socializing their children than their nongay counterparts. The convenience nature of the sample of gay fathers (all drawn from a support group for gay fathers) makes generalizations to other gay fathers problematic. No data are available on the sexual orientation of the control group drawn at random from a pre-existing group of study participants. Makes no claim to generalizability, recognizing the limits of their sampling procedures, yet speculates on the nature of the differences between the two groups, suggesting the more socially desirable behavior of the gay fathers may result from perceived pressure to be a "good" father, which they feel more acutely than their nongay counterparts.

***Bigner, J.J., & Jacobsen, R.B. (1992). Adult responses to child behavior and attitudes toward fathering: Gay and nongay fathers. Journal of Homosexuality, 23(3), 99-112.***

Provides a concise review of research on gay fathers and reports the results of a study of 24 gay and 29 nongay fathers. Finds a high degree of similarity between the two groups of fathers with regard to parenting styles and attitudes toward fathering. Discusses methodological short-comings, including the lack of standardization of the instruments used and the familiar limitations of convenience sampling that plagues much of gay and lesbian research.

***Bozett, F. W. (1981). Gay fathers: Evolution of the gay-father identity. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 51(3), 552-559.***

Reports the results of an exploratory interview study of 18 gay fathers (28-51 years old). Reveals that as the men participate in both the gay world and the world of fathers they begin to develop a congruent identity. Concludes that the gay father's self-disclosure of his identity as father in the gay world and as gay in the father world is crucial to the gay father's achievement of self-acceptance.

***Dunne, E. J. (1987). Helping gay fathers come out to their children. Journal of Homosexuality, 14(1/2), 213-222.***

Discusses the obstacles to disclosure that gay fathers confront in coming out to their children. Describes a time-limited, role-play group designed to assist seven gay fathers to develop effective responses to a variety of situations they are likely to face. Six-month follow-up revealed that two members had voluntarily disclosed their identity to their children and a third reported that the group helped him to respond to parental confrontation about his sexual orientation. All reported that the group helped them feel more comfortable about their children eventually knowing about their sexual orientation

**Flaks, D. K., Ficher I., Masterpasqua, F., & Joseph, G. (1995). *Lesbians choosing motherhood. A comparative study of lesbian and heterosexual parents and their children. Developmental Psychology, 31, 105-114.***

Compares a group of 15 White lesbian couples living together with their 3-9 year old children born to them through artificial insemination with a matched sample of heterosexual parents and their children. A variety of assessment measures including the Child Behavior Checklist, Teacher's Report Form, the Spanier Dyadic Adjustment Scale, the Parent Awareness Skills Survey and either the WPPSI-R or WISC-R were used to measure the children's cognitive functioning and behavioral adjustment as well as the parents' relationship and parenting skills. Results revealed no significant differences between the two groups of children. Both groups of parents showed similar dyadic adjustment. However, the lesbian couples exhibited more parenting awareness skills than did the heterosexual couples.

**Golombok, S., Spencer, A., & Rutter, M. (1983). *Children in lesbian and single-parent households: Psychosexual and psychiatric appraisal. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 24, 551-572.***

Compares aspects of child development in 27 lesbian households with a total of 37 children (aged 5-17 years) and 27 heterosexual single-parent households with a total of 38 children (aged 15-17 years). Data were gathered through systematic standardized interviews with mothers and children and through parent and teacher questionnaires. Ratings of the children's psychosexual and psychiatric status were done "blind" to family circumstances. Results indicated no differences between the children of lesbian and heterosexual mothers in gender identity or sex-role behavior. There was no evidence of inappropriate gender identity among the children of lesbian mothers, and age and developmentally appropriate friendships and good peer relationships were observed in both groups. Psychiatric problems among the children were infrequent in both groups but proportionately higher in the heterosexual single-parent group. Limitations of the study were that the follow-up period was short, and the children were not old enough for sexual orientation to be documented behaviorally.

**Green, R. (1978). *Sexual identity of 37 children raised by homosexual or transsexual parents. American Journal of Psychiatry, 135, 692-697.***

Thirty-seven subjects aged 3-20 years were either raised by lesbian women (21) or by transsexuals (16). Subjects had lived in these households from 1-16 years, with a mean time of 4.9 years. All but one subject indicated that toys, games, clothing, and gender of peers were typical for their gender. Thirteen older subjects indicated erotic fantasies or sexual behaviors, and all these subjects were heterosexual in orientation.

**Green R. (1982). *The best interests of the child with a lesbian mother. Bulletin of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, 10, 7-15.***

Reviews theoretical models and empirical data concerning whether a homosexual parent or two homosexual individuals in parenting roles increases the chance that children will have a homosexual orientation. Also describes court evaluations of adults and children in lesbian custody cases. Fifty-eight children (aged 3-11 years) being raised by lesbian mothers were compared with 43 demographically matched children of divorced heterosexual mothers. Evaluation instruments included the Draw-A-Person test, questions regarding sex-typed activities, and future plans. There were no significant differences for boys or girls in either group of families. It

is concluded that difficulties experienced by children in lesbian mother households stem from reactions to divorce and not from the mother's lesbianism.

**Green, R., Mandel, J. B., Hotvedt, M. E., Gray, J., & Smith, L. (1986). *Lesbian mothers and their children: A comparison with solo parent heterosexual mothers and their children. Archives of Sexual Behavior, 15, 167-184.***

Assesses psychosexual and psychosocial development of 56 children living with lesbian mothers and 48 children of heterosexual mothers. Groups were matched on mothers' age, race, education and income and on number, age, sex of children, and time since separation from father. Data were collected via questionnaires, audiotaped interviews, and standardized tests. Results revealed no differences between the two groups of children in IQ, self-concept, or social adjustment. There was no evidence of conflict in gender identity in the children of lesbian mothers and no psychopathology related to the mother's sexual orientation. Daughters of lesbians preferred traditionally masculine job roles significantly more often than the daughters of heterosexual mothers and were less traditionally feminine in current dress and in activity preferences at school and at home, but these differences were not beyond the normal range. No difference was found for boys, with 95% of both groups choosing traditionally masculine jobs.

**Harris, M. B., & Turner, P. H. (1985). *Gay and lesbian parents. Journal of Homosexuality, 12, 101-113.***

Surveys a small, nonrandom sample of 23 gay and lesbian parents (aged 29-53 years) and 16 heterosexual single parents (aged 19-47 years) concerning relationships with their children. Subjects were all White and highly educated. Parents in all three groups reported positive relationships with their children and few serious problems. Among the differences reported were that heterosexual parents made more efforts to provide an opposite-sex role model for their children. Further, lesbians perceived greater benefits to their children relating to their homosexuality than gay men, while gay men reported fewer disagreements with partners over discipline, more encouragement of play with sex-typed toys, and more satisfaction with their first child than lesbians. One weakness of the study was that no independent observations were made of the children's behavior or adjustment.

**Harvey, S. M., Carr, C., & Bernheine, S. (1989). *Lesbian mothers: Health care experiences. Journal of Nurse-Midwifery, 34(3), 115-119.***

A self-administered questionnaire was completed by 35 women who had delivered within the last 5 years and were self-identified lesbians when they conceived. The majority of women conceived through donor insemination and used the medical care system to achieve pregnancy. All sought prenatal care within the first 16 weeks, 89% participated in childbirth classes, and 80% breast fed for six months or more. Over half of the women (51%) sought obstetrical care from physicians, while 49% selected midwives. The majority (91%) disclosed their sexual orientation to their provider. Overall the women described their experience with obstetrical care providers as positive. However, a greater percentage of women who selected midwives reported higher levels of support from and satisfaction with their provider compared to those who selected physicians.

**Hoeffler, B. (1981). *Children's acquisition of sex-role behavior in lesbian-mother families. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 51, 536-544.***

Assesses sex-role behavior in 40 6-9 year old children of 20 lesbian and 20 heterosexual mothers. The mothers were matched for education and occupational category, the children for gender and age. Children's preferences for sex-typed masculine, feminine, and neutral toys were used as indices of sex-role behavior. No differences were found between the two groups of children in toy preferences, although sex differences emerged in both groups with girls scoring higher on feminine sex-typed toys and boys on masculine toys. One weakness was that the investigator was not "blind" to the child's family situation.

**Hotvedt, M. E., & Mandel, J. B. (1982). *Children of lesbian mothers*. In W. Paul, J.D. Weinrich, J. Gonsiorek, & M. Hotvedt (Eds.). *Homosexuality, social psychological and biological issues* (pp. 275-285). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.**

Reviews authors' study of 50 lesbian mothers and 20 heterosexual single mothers, with children ranging in age from 3 to 11 years. Questionnaires, tests, and in-depth interviews were conducted on the children. Using this comparative study format of lesbian and heterosexual single mothers' family units, the data do not support popularly held myths and family court assumptions that children of lesbian parents are prone to "... neglect, unpopularity, confused gender identity, or homosexuality" (p. 284). Stresses the need for divorce lawyers, judges, and child welfare providers to become familiar with the research and begin to change biased perceptions and myths. Presents the need for states to change laws making same sex orientation a felony. Makes no mention in either its literature review or authors' own study about the added complexities surrounding gay and lesbian minority families and the need for further research in this area.

**Huggins, S. L. (1989). *A comparative study of self-esteem of adolescent children of divorced lesbian mothers and divorced heterosexual mothers*. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 18 (1/2), 123-135.**

Examines the psychological construct of self-esteem using a comparative survey design with adolescent children of divorced lesbian mothers and divorced heterosexual mothers. There were 18 children in both groups, also divided equally by sex; that is, nine in each subgroup. Children ranged in age from 12-19 years. The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) was used to measure self-esteem. Mothers and children were also interviewed in order to obtain additional data. The sample was White, and the study did not discuss issues related to cultural/ethnic minorities and other issues of diversity. There was no significant difference between SEI scores of adolescent children from divorced heterosexual versus divorced lesbian mothers. Findings are consistent with other studies across different variables, indicating that children of lesbian/gay parents are not at greater risk for problems with "... sexual identity confusion, inappropriate gender role behavior, psychopathology, or homosexual orientation in children" (p. 124). Stresses the need for further comparative research examining lesbian and heterosexual couples and single lesbian mothers with single heterosexual mothers.

**Kirkpatrick, M., Smith, C., & Roy, R. (1981). *Lesbian mothers and their children: A comparative survey*. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 51, 545-551.**

Ten girls and 10 boys between the ages of 5 and 12 who were living full time with self-identified lesbian mothers were compared with 10 girls and 10 boys living full time with single, heterosexual mothers. Mothers were found to be similar in socioeconomic status, education, occupational history, and age at childbirth. Children were studied using WISC scales, the Holtzman Inkblot Technique, the

Human Figure Drawing Test, and a developmental history. There was no difference between groups in the regularity of fathers' visits, involvement with children, or financial support. Lesbian mothers were more likely to have only children, compared to heterosexual mothers. There were no differences between children of lesbian and heterosexual mothers on the Human Figure Drawing Test, the Rutter Scale of emotional disturbance, and developmental history. An unexpectedly high number of children in both groups showed emotional symptoms, which was attributed to the fact that the authors offered free psychological evaluations and thus this may have appealed to mothers who had some concern about their children.

**Koepke, L., Hare, J., & Moran, P. B. (1992). *Relationship quality in a sample of lesbian couples with children and child-free lesbian couples. Family Relations, 41, 224-229.***

Presents the results of a study that examined the quality of lesbian relationships by looking at three factors: presence of children, longevity of the lesbian relationship, and the degree of disclosure about the nature of the couple's relationship. Subjects were 47 lesbian couples, 40% of whom had children and 60% of whom did not. Couples were defined as women who perceived themselves as being in a committed relationship with another woman. Subjects were obtained using a non-random snowball sampling technique. The instruments used in the study were ENRICH and a 17-item, researcher-designed questionnaire, which included items about disclosure of the couple's relationship to others, relationship longevity, presence of children, annual income, age, and occupation. Lesbian couples with children scored significantly higher on measures of relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction. No differences in relationship quality were found based on longevity or disclosure. The article discusses the implications of the findings for policy and clinical practice.

**Kweskin, S. L., & Cook, A. S. (1982). *Heterosexual and homosexual mothers' self-described sex-role behavior and ideal sex-role behavior in children. Sex Roles, 8, 967-975.***

Subjects were 22 heterosexual single mothers and 22 lesbian mothers (aged 19-43 years). There were no statistically significant differences between the groups on the following variables: age, income, educational level, number of children, and number of years living without a husband in the home. Subjects were asked to rate themselves on the Bem Sex Role Inventory and to rate an "ideal child." Half of each group was asked to describe an ideal male child and the other an ideal female child. They found that mothers tended to rate an "ideal child" in the same manner in which they rated themselves. The mothers' own sex-role descriptions were the best predictors of desired sex role behavior in children. The mothers' sexual orientation was not a relevant variable.

**Lewin, E. (1984). *Lesbianism and motherhood: Implications for child custody. In T. Darty & S. Potter (Eds.), Women identified women (pp. 163-183). Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield.***

Discusses the negative assumptions that govern the decisions in custody cases involving lesbian mothers and presents data from a comparison study between 43 lesbian and 37 heterosexual single mothers that refute them. These negative assumptions include the following: lesbianism is immoral, children raised by lesbian women will become homosexual, being a child of a lesbian woman is a stigmatizing and damaging experience, lesbian experience cannot be combined with the maternal role, lesbianism is pathological, and sexual desire is the basis of lesbian experience. The home-based interview study was conducted with lesbian and



heterosexual single mothers from the San Francisco Bay area who were formerly married and were raising children ranging in age from 1-18 years. Participants were selected through networking and responses to publicity. Results revealed remarkable similarity between samples in terms of household structure, relations with kin and ex-husbands, and beliefs and values regarding their situation as single mothers. The only major difference was in the perceived vulnerability and stress experienced by lesbian mothers regarding custody litigation. Concludes that despite mounting evidence about the stability of lesbian mothers and the health of their children, judges remain antagonistic to them in the courtroom. Suggests the need for change in the rules of evidence and the adversarial model of litigation.

**Lewin, E., & Lyons, T. A. (1982). *Everything in its place: The coexistence of lesbianism and motherhood*. In W. Paul, J.D. Weinrich, J. Gonsiorek, & M. Hotvedt (Eds.). *Homosexuality: Social psychological and biological issues* (pp. 249-273). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.**

A study, which took place between 1977-1979, of the adaptive strategies of 43 lesbian and 37 heterosexual formerly married single mothers from the San Francisco Bay area. Subjects were selected through personal and professional referrals and media ads. A stratified sample was developed by sexual orientation, age of children, achieved socioeconomic status, and presence or absence of coresident sexual partner. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Results revealed remarkable similarity between lesbian and heterosexual single mothers regarding support from kin and friends, role of intimate partners, relationship with ex-husbands, and fear of custody challenges. Concludes that "single motherhood among lesbians and heterosexuals gives rise to a single adaptive system, one which is unified by the salience of motherhood as a central organizing force." Implications for research underscore the importance of viewing sexual orientation within social, economic, intrapsychic, and situational contexts where sexuality may intersect with these factors or where one or many of these factors may be more central in explaining behavior and experience.

**Lewis, K. G. (1980). *Children of lesbians: Their point of view*. *Social Work*, 25, 198-203.**

Presents interviews of 21 (10 male and 11 female) children aged 9-26 from eight lesbian families. Discusses children's reactions to their mothers' disclosure of lesbianism, the children's sense of being different, their sexuality, and their relationships to their fathers.

**Lott-Whitehead, L., & Tully, C. (1992). *The family of lesbian mothers*. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 63, 265-280.**

Based on a qualitative study of 45 lesbian mothers, the study explores the family lives of women from an ecological perspective. The subjects were mostly Caucasian and highly educated. Major themes from the interviews highlight the nurturing and accepting environments in lesbian mother families. Some lesbian mother families scored high on stress due to single parenthood and lack of external support. Families who were closeted were scored higher on stress. The women in this study were aware of the impact of their sexual orientation on their children's experiences in the world and attempted to soften and mediate potentially negative societal messages.

**Lyons, T. A. (1983). *Lesbian mother's custody fear*. *Women and Therapy*, 2, 231-240.**

Reports a study of support systems utilized by a sample of 43 lesbian and 37 heterosexual divorced mothers. The groups were matched for age of children, SES, and relationship status. One half of the lesbian mothers and one-third of heterosexual mothers lived with partners. Results indicated no differences between the two groups in utilization of social support. The only major difference was the lesbian mother's greater fear of loss of custody of her children.

**Matteson, D. R. (1987). *The heterosexually married gay and lesbian parent*. In F. W. Bozett (Ed.), *Gay and lesbian parents* (pp. 138-161). New York: Praeger.**

Details a "typical" developmental sequence of a heterosexual marriage in which one partner has same-sex attractions. Reports on a 6-year follow-up of several couples who were in "mixed-orientation" marriages. Discussion includes consideration of how acceptance and accommodation to spousal homosexual behavior affect marital harmony. Some discussion of impact of coming out to both spouse and children. Illustrates lives of people who describe themselves as bisexual, not gay or lesbian.

**McCandish, B. M. (1987). *Against all odds: Lesbian mother family dynamics*. In F.W. Bozett (Ed.), *Gay and lesbian parents* (pp. 23-36). New York: Praeger.**

Attempts to develop a theoretical model of the normal lesbian mother family structure, defined as a two-woman couple who conceive children by artificial insemination and raise one or more children. Develops a model through a home interview study of five lesbian mother families who were selected through networking. Families were Caucasian, middle-class, and consisted of parents who were both working. Four of the five pairs of parents had graduate level education, the fifth were trained in a specialized field. Parental ages ranged from 30-53 years. Relationship lengths ranged from 7.5-13 years. Couples were together for 3-7 years before the birth of the first child. Children's ages ranged from 18 months-7 years. All couples had one child 5 years old or younger. Children consisted of five males and two females. Results revealed that all families completed the early stages of family formation: couple formation, decision to conceive, pregnancy, birth, and the first 18 months to 5 years of childrearing. All families developed successful coping mechanisms to deal with social and legal pressures. Significant changes in couple relationship reported such as lost prior sexual intimacy and role redefinitions and conflicts. Observed healthy parent-child interactions as well as normal psychological and gender-role development in the children.

**Miller, B. (1979). *Gay fathers and their children*. *The Family Coordinator*, 28, 544-552.**

Presents data from a 3-year study on the quality and nature of the relationships of homosexual fathers with their children. In-depth interviews were conducted with a snowball sample of 40 gay fathers and 14 of their children. Uses a cross-national sample: Interviews were conducted in large and small cities in both Canada and the United States. Excluded from the study men who no longer saw their children. Fathers were aged from 24 to 64, and the children who were interviewed ranged from 14 to 33 years of age. Addresses the nature of the father-child relationship and the children's adjustment to their father's homosexuality. Four issues frequently raised in custody cases are discussed: do gay fathers have children to cover their homosexuality, do they molest their children, do their children turn out to be gay in disproportionate numbers, and does having a gay father expose a child to homophobic harassment. Concludes that concerns that gay fathers will have a negative impact on their children's development are unfounded.

**Miller, J. A., Jacobsen, R. B., & Bigner, J. J. (1981). *The child's home environment for lesbian vs. heterosexual mothers: A neglected area of research. Journal of Homosexuality, 7, 49-56.***

Examines the home environment of 34 lesbians (aged 21-42 years) with children (43 children, aged 6 months to 18 years) and 47 heterosexual women (aged 24-63 years) with children. The two groups of mothers were similar in level of education. Lesbian women were more likely to be skilled or unskilled workers, and heterosexual women were more likely to be housewives. Lesbian women had significantly lower family income than did heterosexual women. Lesbian mothers were more child-oriented in certain caregiver situations.

**Mucklow, B. M., & Phelan, G. K. (1979). *Lesbian and traditional mothers' responses to Adult Response to Child Behavior and self-concept. Psychological Reports, 44, 880-882.***

Subjects were 34 lesbian and 47 heterosexual mothers who were administered the Adult Response to Child Behavior instrument. They viewed a set of slides of children's behaviors and were assessed on an attitude scale measuring adult-, task-, and child-centered attitudes. To measure self-confidence, dominance, and nurturance, a modified form of the Adjective Checklist was administered. Results revealed no statistically significant differences between the groups on these dimensions. Results suggest that lesbian and heterosexual mothers may be more similar than different in their maternal attitudes and self-concept.

**Neisen, J. H. (1987). *Resources for families with a gay/lesbian member. Journal of Homosexuality, 14(1/2), 239-251.***

Reports on 39 families who had a gay or lesbian member and who were members of a support group for families and friends of lesbians and gays. Discusses the sources of support for family members and information available to them. Most families received their information about lesbian and gay issues from books and newspapers and from gay and lesbian acquaintances instead of family members. Provides reading list for members. Counselors and psychotherapists need to be better informed about lesbian and gay lifestyles in order to help such families.

**Newcomb, M. D. (1985). *The role of perceived parent personality in the development of heterosexuals, homosexuals, and transvestites. Archives of Sexual Behavior, 14, 147-164.***

Examines how a sample of 106 male and 122 female heterosexuals, 63 lesbian women, 34 gay men, and 77 male transvestites perceived their parents. The Parent Characteristics Questionnaire (PCQ) assessed the relative distribution of five personality traits between mothers and fathers. No significant differences were found among any of the male samples. But, lesbian women, in comparison to homosexual men, perceived their fathers as more dependent, more affiliative, and less aggressive/dominant than their mothers.

**O'Connell, A. (1990). *Voices from the heart: The developmental impact of a mother's lesbianism on her adolescent children. Smith College Studies in Social Work, 63, 281-299.***

Documents through qualitative research the thoughts and feelings of 11 teens and young adults whose mothers came out to them after divorce. Participants discuss issues created or complicated by their mothers' coming out: feelings about mother, secret keeping, friendships, sexuality, reactions to divorce, and the benefits of

mother's coming out. While this 1990 study was limited to a lower middle class, Caucasian, and predominately heterosexual sample, the issues revealed by these children of lesbian women increase our understanding of the dynamics at work in such families.

**Pagelow, M.D. (1980). *Heterosexual and lesbian single mothers: A comparison of problems, coping, and solutions. Journal of Homosexuality, 5, 198-204.***

Reports a descriptive study of the life experiences of lesbian and heterosexual single mothers with regard to child custody, housing, and employment. Data was gathered via questionnaire, participant-observation of various lesbian groups, and in-depth interviews. Findings are exploratory but interesting for the different patterns observed.

**Patterson, C. (1994). *Children of the lesbian baby boom: Behavioral adjustment, self-concepts, and sex-role identity. In B. Greene & G. Herek (Eds.), Contemporary perspectives of gay and lesbian psychology: Theory, research, and applications (pp. 156-175). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.***

Examines 37 4-to-9-year-old children of lesbian mothers. Data were gathered through the Achenback and Edelbrock Child Behavior Checklist for social competence and behavior problems, five scales from the Eder Children's Self-View Questionnaire for self-concept and interview techniques for sex-role behavior. The children of lesbian mothers scored in the normal range for all measures. Only two major differences (greater symptoms of stress and a greater sense of well-being) were found as compared to norms for children of heterosexual mothers. A discussion of psychological and legal implications is presented.

**Patterson, C. J. (1995). *Families of the Lesbian Baby Boom: Parents' division of labor and children's adjustment. Developmental Psychology, 31, 115-123.***

Presents study of 26 White, well-educated lesbian families composed of a lesbian couple and at least 1 child between 4-9 years old. The author studied the couples' division of labor and discovered that although both partners often reported sharing household tasks and decision-making equally, biological mothers were more involved in child care and nonbiological mothers spent more time in paid employment. Both biological and nonbiological mothers reported similar rates of relationship satisfaction.

**Pennington, S. B. (1987). *Children of lesbian mothers. In F.W. Bozett (Ed.), Gay and lesbian parents (pp. 58-174). New York: Praeger.***

Discusses the major issues faced by children of lesbian mothers based on 10 years of clinical experience and on the literature. Clinical sample consisted of 32 children, ages 5 to 29 years, from 28 lesbian mother families who were seen as outpatients at a clinic in San Francisco for gay and lesbian individuals and families. Twenty-two of the children were Caucasian, five were Black, and five were biracial. Various U.S. religious and socioeconomic groups were represented. Finds that children's problems were not necessarily related to their mother's sexual orientation, that the quality of mothering was the determining factor. Acknowledges the limitations of a clinical sample and offers implications for professionals as well as suggestions for further research.

**Pies, C. A. (1987). *Lesbians choosing children: The use of social group work in maintaining and strengthening the primary relationship. Journal of Social Work and Human Sociology, 5(2), 79-88.***

Examines ways that lesbian relationships are affected by the decision-making process to become parents. Data was gathered from facilitating "Considering Parenthood Groups" for lesbian women at a family planning clinic in California. Three hundred lesbian women participated. Groups consisting of 8 to 15 women lasted for 6 weeks, after which time 15% decided to have children. Issues raised in the groups were: planning for parenthood, dealing with families of origin, responding to questions about lesbians' becoming mothers and who is the "real" mom, internalized homophobia, time management, intimacy, commitment, decision-making, and making compromises. Gives examples of group exercises to explore these issues and comments on how a social work framework may be useful in helping this population.

**Rand, C., Graham, D. L. R., & Rawlings, E.I. (1982). *Psychological health and factors the court seeks to control in lesbian mother custody trials. Journal of Homosexuality, 8, 27-39.***

Reports a study of 25 self-identified lesbian mothers (aged 23-46) that assessed their psychological health and well-being using three subscales of the California Personality Inventory (i.e., self-acceptance, well-being, and achievement by independence). Comparison of scores on the CPI subscales with female norms indicated that the lesbian mothers scored about one standard deviation above the normative samples of self-acceptance and achievement via independence and slightly below (about one-half standard deviation) on well-being. Psychological health correlated positively with openness to employer, ex-husband, children in a lesbian community, and amount of feminist activism. The overall psychological health of lesbian mothers was found to be as good as that of the normative samples.

**Stiglitz, E. (1990). *Caught between two worlds: The impact of a child on a lesbian couple's relationship. Women and Therapy, 10(1/2), 99-116.***

Research studies have generally focused on the developmental status of children of lesbian mothers. The author examines the impact of a child on a lesbian couple's relationship. Reviews some of the literature on couples' relationship development. Also reviews some of the literature on the impact of a child on a heterosexual couple's relationship, the dynamic of lesbian relationships, and findings using questionnaire data from both lesbian and heterosexual couples. Examines three major variables across both lesbian and heterosexual couples: roles, intimacy, and social supports. The author examines questionnaire data from five heterosexual couples and seven lesbian couples, 2 years before the birth of a child and 2 years after the birth. Questions revolved around issues of intimacy, dependency, power, and social/community supports. Couples time alone and loss of freedom were reported as the most common area of dissatisfaction after birth by both groups. Lesbian mothers, however, were the only group to strongly report dissatisfaction with "the amount and depth of their intimacy and the degree of emotional sharing with their partner." For heterosexual women, an increase in emotional support from their families and community was experienced, while for lesbian mothers, they felt more "... like a separate family" (p. 111). With lesbian mothers the issues of mutual dependency played a role in dissatisfaction after the birth of a child. Variable of power in the relationship did not emerge as a major factor in the author's sample. Notes the need for research on the dynamics of lesbian relationships and how relationships change and adjust to the addition of a child.

The need for larger samples and issues related to ethnic and cultural minorities should also be added as important variables that need to be examined through further research.

**Turner, P. H., Scadden, L., & Harris, M. B. (1990). Parenting in gay and lesbian families. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Psychotherapy*, 1(3), 55-66.**

Presents descriptive information about homosexual parents gathered through structured interviews with 10 single gay fathers aged 29-43 and 11 single lesbian mothers aged 32-44. Differences between gay fathers and lesbian mothers were presented. Lesbian mothers had less income, were more likely to tell children about their homosexuality, and were more likely to have difficulty reconciling their lesbian and parental roles. Both gay and lesbian parents had few problems with their children as a result of their homosexuality.

**Zuger, B. (1989). Homosexuality in families of boys with early effeminate behavior: An epidemiological study. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 18(2), 155-166.**

In a 30 year follow-up of 55 boys with effeminate behavior aged 6-16 at the onset of the study, study found that the majority (73-94%) were homosexual as adults. Incidence of homosexuality among the parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins of these boys essentially did not differ from that of the general heterosexual population. Speculates that there may be biologic origins to homosexuality based upon the apparent increased susceptibility to pyloric stenosis in nongay males when compared to their gay monozygotic twin.

## Articles and Book Chapters on Lesbian and Gay Parenting

***Agbayewa, M. (1984). Fathers in the newer family forms: Male or female? Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 29(5), 402-406.***

Explores the alterations in social roles and functions in the family by looking at children raised by homosexual couples. Presents a theoretical review of sexual development in children, including biological, social learning, and cognitive development theories. Uses case study of a 6-year-old boy in a lesbian family to discuss the limitations of current sex-role development theories and the application to gay and lesbian families. Reviews the literature on father-absence and the roles of fathers and mothers, men and women. Suggests that women may function as fathers in certain family forms. Notes the need for longitudinal studies of children raised in these newer family constellations.

***Baggett, C. (1992). Sexual orientation: Should it affect child custody rulings? Law and Psychology Review, 16(171), 189-200.***

Reviews the current laws regarding custody cases as they affect gay and lesbian parents. Reviews important cases with regard to legal principles used in determining custody: the Per Se Classification; the Nexus Approach, and Using the Nexus Approach as a Minor Factor. Reviews whether sexual orientation should be a factor in child custody cases. Judges have at times used the "fear of harassment" to the child as a basis for judgement. Concludes that there have been gradual changes in court rulings and in particular using sex orientation as deeming a parent unfit. The author suggests that the court needs to examine each case and the context presented, rather than allowing itself to be influenced by "community biases" Only then can the courts begin to address what is "... in the true best interest of the children (p. 200)."

***Baptiste, D. A., (1987). The gay and lesbian stepparent family. In F. W. Bozett (Ed.), Gay and lesbian parents (pp. 112-137). New York: Praeger.***

Discusses the dynamics of gay/lesbian stepparent families and the unique challenges faced by them that arise from the larger society's, as well as the lesbian women's and (especially) gay male communities', refusal to recognize the legitimacy of such families. The effects of stigma and secrecy on the gay/lesbian stepparent family are discussed as they affect partner, parent/child, and stepsibling relationships.

***Barret, R. L. & Robinson, B. E. (1994). Gay dads. In Gottfried and Gottfried (Eds.), Redefining families: Implications for children's development (pp. 157-170). New York: Plenum Press.***

Addresses three main questions: Who are gay fathers, how do gay fathers become parents, and how do the children of gay fathers turn out? Uses case studies and a literature review to answer these questions. Concludes that caution must be exercised in making sweeping generalizations about gay fathers and their families until larger and more representative samples are obtained.

***Basile, R.A. (1974). Lesbian mothers I. Women's Rights Law Reporter, 2, 3-25.***

A time capsule, with its companion piece "Custody and Homosexual Parents," that provides a thorough view of the issues relevant to child custody cases at that time. Through its numerous references, brings facts from anthropology, law, psychology, sociology, and other disciplines to illuminate the reader's understanding of the legal reasoning used in prominent cases of the early 1970s involving challenges to the custody rights of lesbian women and gay men. Issues of parental fitness, best interests of the child, and homophobia in the law are discussed with a minimum of legalese.

***Beargie, R. A. (1988). Custody determinations involving the homosexual parent. Family Law Quarterly, 22, 71-86.***

Discusses the constitutionality of basing custody decisions on sexual orientation and some approaches taken by the courts to deal with this issue. Gives special focus to the South Carolina courts and describes a model approach.

***Belcastro, P. A., Gramlich, T., Nicholson, T., Price, J., & Wilson, R. (1993). A review of data-based studies addressing the effects of homosexual parenting on children's sexual and social functioning. Journal of Divorce and Remarriage, 20 (1/2), 105-122.***

Summarizes the results of a computer and manual search of the published literature focused on children raised in gay and lesbian households. Studies were selected on the basis of the following criteria: data-based, post-1975 publications; independent variable/homosexual parent; and dependent variable/some aspect of the child's sexual or social functioning. Includes 14 studies that met the criteria. Concludes that the published research database is too weak to support a definitive conclusion that there are no significant differences in children raised by lesbian mothers versus those raised by heterosexual mothers.

***Bigner, J. J., & Bozett, F. W. (1990). Parenting by gay fathers. Marriage and Family Review, 14(3/4), 155-175.***

Asserts that gay fathers have a more complex psychosocial environment than other gay men or heterosexuals because they have to integrate the conflicting role demands of both the gay and heterosexual worlds. Sections deal with motivations for becoming a parent, relationships with children, the parenting styles of gay fathers, and specific issues such as disclosure to children and spouses. Implications for educators, family law professionals, and therapists are drawn. Provides a fairly wide introduction to issues surrounding gay male parenthood among heterosexually married men. Research cited in support of general assertions is usually survey-type with convenience samples. Attempts to relate the dilemma of gay fathers to social theory of Gibbs and Martin (1964) by invoking "low status integration" as a defining characteristic of gay fatherhood.

***Bozett, F. W. (1987). Gay and lesbian parents: Future perspectives. In F. W. Bozett (Ed.), Gay and lesbian parents (pp. 231-236). New York: Praeger.***

Notes obstacles met by gay/lesbian parents that arise from both the gay/lesbian and nongay communities, especially the absence of legal recognition for same-sex marriages. Argues for the development of a theoretical frame from which to view gay/lesbian families and lists priorities for research on gay/lesbian families.



**Bozett, F. W. (1989). *Gay fathers: A review of literature. Journal of Homosexuality, 18 (1/2), 137-162.***

Reviews the empirical literature on gay fathers. Groups articles dealing with gay fathers into categories depending upon whether or not a comparison group is used (gay-vs.-nongay fathers, gay fathers-vs.-lesbian mothers) and summarizes each. Studies with no comparison group use survey data from selected samples to describe concerns of gay parenthood as they relate to theoretical issues. Reports using comparison groups contrast several variables such as willingness to parent, degree of closeness to child, masculinity, and so forth. Makes several generalizations about gay fathers, based on literature reviewed. Can serve as an introduction to gay fathers and their unique issues. Notes that too little research has been done to support most of the generalizations drawn.

**Bozett, F. W., & Sussman, M. B. (1990). *Homosexuality and family relations: Views and research issues. Marriage and Family Review, 14(3/4), 1-8.***

A commentary on how homosexuality affects family relationships. Discusses areas for future research. Notes that acceptance of a family member's homosexuality may be particularly difficult for fathers and sons. Family members may have difficulty accepting the gay member's lover or friends. Parents may be concerned with the possibility of not having grandchildren. Research is needed to investigate whether gay/lesbian adolescents experience problems that other adolescents do not experience. Research is needed around lesbian parenting, custody issues, and the treatment of expectant lesbian mothers in the lesbian community. Lifespan studies of gays, the effect of AIDS in families, and the relationship of homosexual couples are other topics in need of investigation.

**Carl, D. (1990). *Parenting/blended family issues. In D. Carl (Ed.), Counseling same-sex couples (pp. 91-106). New York: Norton.***

Presents some of the author's thoughts on issues confronting gay parents, with many being similar to issues facing "blended families" in general. No research study is presented and no literature review cited. Three elements that families deal with are: individual needs, the couple's needs, and the family's needs. Notes that it is usually the couple's needs that get neglected with negative effects for future family functioning. The issues of gay parents being partially or totally "cut off" from their children, at times through court rulings, places further stress on individuals, couples, and families. Discusses the complexities for gay parents and couples in working out visitation which can come under informal and formal custody arrangements, along with the added stress gay/lesbian parents face in developing support networks in the community. The stress developed through secrecy is an issue presented in work with couples and parents. Suggests the active development of networks with the help of the therapist and the need for therapists to move beyond more traditional therapy roles as ways to increase and at times develop non-existent support networks.

**Clunis, D. M., & Green, G. D. (1988). *Lesbian couples with children. In D. M. Clunis & G. D. Green (Eds.), Lesbian couples (pp. 113-130). Seattle, WA: Seal Press.***

Descriptive chapter on issues of coming out, custody, legal rights, and roles of nonbiological parents; guidelines for coming out to children; and the relationship between the lesbian-headed family and society. Authors explore these issues for lesbian families where a couple has a child together, where one or both partners bring children from prior marriages, and where a child is added to children from a prior marriage.

***Cramer, D. (1986). Gay parents and their children: A review of research and practical implications. Journal of Counseling and Development, 64, 504-507.***

Reviews the research pertaining to the social, psychological, and legal concerns about the influence of gay/lesbian parents on their children's development. Focuses on three areas of reported concern: development (i.e., gender role and sexual orientation development), sexual abuse, and children's peer responses toward having a lesbian/gay parent(s). Reports that (a) parent sexual orientation does not play an important role in the child's sexual development, (b) children of gay/lesbian parents appear to adopt an "appropriate" gender-role identity; (c) there is no evidence that gay parents are likely to sexually abuse their same-sex child or reject their opposite-sex child, and (d) gay/lesbian parents consistently report an awareness that their children may experience social disapproval and make attempts to protect their children from harassment. Notes that concern about peer reactions generally were more acute during adolescence. Briefly describes the impact of family divorce and the role of the nongay parent in the child's adjustment, the process of the parent's coming out to children, and general implications for counseling.

***DiLapi, E. M. (1989). Lesbian mothers and the motherhood hierarchy. Journal of Homosexuality, 18(1/2), 101-121.***

Presents a conceptual framework, the "Motherhood Hierarchy," with which to view lesbian mothers that reflects and reinforces American societal values of compulsory motherhood and compulsory heterosexuality. Women are placed on the hierarchy according to sexual orientation and family form, heterosexual women in nuclear families at the apex, and lesbian women in nontraditional families at the bottom. Article elaborates, through child custody case material, how this hierarchy perpetuates the unequal distribution of power and resources through formal and informal social policy as it relates to parenting, denying lesbian women reproductive freedom afforded to heterosexual women. Myths regarding lesbian motherhood are addressed and refuted through summaries of the research literature.

***Erlichman, K. L. (1988). Lesbian mothers: Ethical issues in social work practice. Women and Therapy, 8, 207-224.***

Discusses how homophobic attitudes in the United States have denied rights to lesbian mothers, including custody of their children. Reviews the literature on legal, ethical, and psychological issues facing lesbian mothers and provides recommendations for human services professionals who work with lesbian mothers.

***Evans, B. K. (1990). Mothering as a lesbian issue. Journal of Feminist Family Therapy, 2(1), 43-52.***

Examines issues for lesbian women who want children, lesbian women who have children from prior heterosexual relationships, lesbian nonmothers, and issues affecting the partners of lesbian mothers. Clinical case examples are presented for each situation, as well as techniques for exploring mothering issues with lesbian women.

***Falk, P. J. (1989). Lesbian mothers--psychosocial assumptions in family law. American Psychologist, 44, 941-947.***

Reviews and critiques the research on a number of important questions relating to lesbian custody, including the mental health of lesbian women and their children, gender-role development, sexual orientation, and social stigma of children raised by lesbian mothers.

***Falk, P. J. (1994). The gap between psychosocial assumptions and empirical research in lesbian mother child custody cases. In A. E. Gottfried and A. W. Gottfried (Eds.), Redefining families: Implications for children's development (pp. 131 - 156). New York: Plenum Press.***

Uses a growing and consistent body of literature to argue against common psychosocial assumptions made in lesbian mother child custody cases. Points to two major categories of assumptions: those about the lesbian mother and her lifestyle and those about the impact of the lesbian mother on the development of the child. Notes two general assumptions frequently made by the courts about lesbian mothers: all homosexual individuals, including lesbian mothers, are mentally ill, and all lesbian women are less maternal and poorer mothers than their heterosexual counterparts. Discusses common assumptions about the health and welfare, as well as gender and sexual orientation of children of lesbian mothers. Citing empirical research, concludes that there are no significant differences between lesbian mothers and their heterosexual counterparts or between children raised by lesbian mothers and those raised by heterosexual mothers. States that there is no empirical evidence that children of lesbian mothers suffer any detrimental effects. Suggests that legal decision-makers should not focus on the sexual orientation of a parent or guardian when making custody decisions.

***Gibbs, E. D. (1988). Psychosocial development of children raised by lesbian mothers: A review of research. Women and Therapy, 8, 65-75.***

Reviews the issues facing lesbian mothers and their children. Reviews the literature on psychological adjustment of lesbian mothers and concludes that neither lesbian mothers nor their children show evidence of psychological distress.

***Goldyn, L. (1981). Gratuitous language in appellate cases involving gay people: "Queer baiting" from the bench. Political Behavior, 3(1), 31-48.***

Examines federal and state appellate cases where homosexual behavior was under judicial scrutiny. Reports that gay and lesbian litigants were frequently the recipients of judges' gratuitous comments. The frequency of such remarks depended upon a number of factors including the type of case. In child custody cases, mild forms of negative comments occurred frequently. Although not directly related to lesbian mother custodial cases, article describes the courtroom climate for lesbians and gay men.

***Gottman, J. S. (1990). Children of gay and lesbian parents. Marriage and Family Review, 14(3/4), 177-196.***

Reviews research on children of lesbian and gay parents. Studies of these children, though methodologically flawed, suggest no compelling differences from their heterosexually raised peers with regard to various measures of adjustment. Research on adult daughters of lesbian mothers further supports this contention. Provides suggestions for further research.

***Gottsfield, R. L. (1985). Child custody and sexual lifestyle. Conciliation Courts Review, 23(1), 43-45.***

Gives a brief overview of the present state of the law on the effect of a parent's sexual variation--cohabitation (straight or gay), marital, and post-marital relationships (including adulterous relationships) on a child custody or visitation dispute. Recommends the use of two experts, one familiar with parent and child, and one, an authority on sexual variation.

***Greene, B. (1990). Sturdy bridges: The role of African-American mothers in the socialization of African-American children. Women and Therapy, 10(1/2) 205-225.***

A critical analysis of the role of African-American mothers in the socialization of African-American children. Stresses the reconceptualization of the role particularly as it relates to clinical intervention. Discusses the role of the African-American mother in protecting, educating, and helping the African-American child in negotiating a bicultural environment that is openly hostile. Examines the particular stress of teaching about racial dangers, racism, and sexism within the role of the African-American mother. Places stressors affecting "nontraditional Black lesbian mothers" within the context of racism, sexism, and the homophobic attitudes and biases of both heterosexual and homosexual communities. Stresses the tendency for mainstream theories to pathologize these nontraditional roles and the need for reconceptualization. Strongly delineates the tremendous need to analyze problems within the context of the chronic stress of "survival" for many African-American mothers.

***Green, G. D. (1987). Lesbian mothers: Mental health considerations. In F. W. Bozett, Gay and lesbian parents (pp. 188-198). New York: Praeger.***

Views the mental health needs of lesbian mothers as being no different than that of other mothers, though lesbian mothers may have additional needs related to societal treatment of homosexuals and particularly lesbians as mothers. Focuses on this issue by discussing the different ways that lesbian women may become parents (i.e., in heterosexual relationships, through artificial insemination with a known or unknown donor, and adoption). Discusses one subject in the context of a homophobic and heterosexist society and the strain this puts on lesbian parents, their children, and their parents.

***Green, G. D. & Bozett, F. W. (1991). Lesbian mothers and gay fathers. In J.C. Gonsiorek & J. D. Weinrich (Eds.), Homosexuality: Research implications for public policy (pp. 197-214). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.***

Presents brief synopses of many reports on gay and lesbian parents, addressing a variety of issues such as signs of psychopathology in children, gender differences in parenting behavior, and differences in contrast to nongay parents, children's acceptance of parents' sexual orientation, degree of "outness" to children, gender identity and sexual orientation development in children of gay and lesbian parents, and degree of involvement with opposite sex as role models for children. Public policy concerns are also presented, specifically with respect to custodial rights and adoption and foster care. Makes the point that the majority of state laws restricting gay and lesbian parental rights are based on prejudice rather than on scientific facts. Authors' opinions on a number of controversial issues are occasionally not substantiated by the studies they present (e.g., that the AIDS crisis is making more gay men think about becoming fathers in the context of a committed and presumably safe relationship). Provides a fairly quick introduction to the majority of the literature on the subject. The limitations of the studies are generally dealt with candidly. The arguments for social change are persuasive.

***Gunter, P. L. (1992). Social work with nontraditional families. In N. J. Woodman (Ed.), Lesbian and gay lifestyles: A guide for counseling and education (pp. 87-109). New York: Irvington.***

Discusses problems and stresses for individuals within families (of origin and choice) and society. Recommendations for clinicians are made based on a casework model that assumes the primacy of the family as a focus for intervention.

***Hall, M. (1978). Lesbian families: Cultural and clinical issues. Social Work, 23, 380-385.***

Discusses effective social work practices with lesbian couples and their children. It refers to social stigma of lesbian mothers.

***Herman, S. P. (1990). Special issues in child custody evaluations. Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 29(6), 969-974.***

Discusses the forensic psychiatrist's role in child custody cases. Mentions the historical reluctance of the courts to grant custody to gay or lesbian parents and notes the evidence that homosexuality *per se* is not a detriment to effective parenting. Provides a brief review of recent varying court opinions regarding the fitness of lesbian and gay parents.

***Hitchens, D. (1979/80). Social attitudes, legal standards, and personal trauma in child custody cases. Journal of Homosexuality, 5, 89-95.***

Describes the issues addressed in lesbian/gay custody cases (i.e., concerns about the sexual orientation of the child, the development of "appropriate" gender role identity, the presumed superiority of a heterosexual home environment, the potential for a child to experience stigma, and the courts' duty to "protect" the child from a homosexual parent). Authors state that the "best interest standard has no legal definition, hence judges may use their own criteria. There is no requirement that a judge establish a specific connection (or nexus) between a mother's lesbian sexual orientation and its effect on her children." Suggests that the psychological trauma of a child custody case is magnified for the lesbian/gay parent because of the lack of respect demonstrated by judges and attorneys for the parent's sexual orientation.

***Joseph, G. I. (1984). Black mothers and daughters: Traditional and new populations. Sage: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women, 1(2), 17-21.***

Reports that Black lesbian women do not pose a problem within the Black community, but that the negative attitudes of family and community do present a problem. Asserts that Black lesbian mothers have always existed and will continue to do so. Reproductive technology has assisted in making this even more possible. Cites the similarities found in the research between heterosexual and lesbian mothers and their children. Although not a research article, it is one of few articles that acknowledge Black lesbian mothers.

***Kirkpatrick, M. (1987). Clinical implications of lesbian mother studies. Journal of Homosexuality, 14(1/2), 201-211.***

Cites research data from previous studies and clinical examples to illustrate some of the similarities and differences between lesbian mothers and heterosexual mothers. Concludes the following: lesbian mothers had more congenial relationships with their ex-husbands than heterosexual mothers; lesbian women reported children had more contact with their fathers; lesbian women reported more concern about providing opportunities for their children to develop good relationships with men than heterosexual women; lesbian mothers had more men as family friends and included more male relatives in activities than heterosexual mothers; and both lesbians and heterosexual mothers experience difficulties in the areas of child care, have a need for improved employment skills, and face financial difficulties. Lesbian mothers experienced a greater lack of social and family support. With regard to the children's development, concludes that there is no evidence to support that children are negatively affected by their mother's sexual orientation, and there are effects on children with either lesbian or heterosexual mothers from the experience of divorce.

***Kleber, D. J., Howell, R. J., & Tibbits-Kleber, A. L., (1986). The impact of parental homosexuality in child custody cases: A review of literature. Bulletin of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, 14, 81-87.***

Reviews a number of studies investigating effects of lesbian mothering on various aspects of child development and summarizes findings indicating no evidence of detrimental effects. Discusses a number of specific custody issues as well as social factors relevant to lesbian motherhood. Calls for increased awareness of the facts of homosexual parenting by professionals involved in homosexual parent-child custody cases.

***Krestan, J. (1988). Lesbian daughters and lesbian mothers: The crisis of disclosure from a family systems perspective. Journal of Psychotherapy and the Family, 3(4),113-130.***

Working from a Bowen family system perspective, a critical aspect of the therapeutic task with lesbian clients is that of coaching them to "come out" in the family of origin. Discusses the disclosure of lesbianism, particularly that of a daughter to a mother or a mother to a daughter. Examines the societal context in which a woman makes a lesbian choice and discusses the necessity for disclosure. Presents the particular issues and difficulties involved, the clinical methodology used, and some common results. Case examples illustrate the ideas discussed.

***Leonard, A. S. (1991). Homophobia, heterosexism and judicial decision making. Journal of Gay & Lesbian Psychotherapy, 1(4), 65-91.***

In a tightly and lucidly written analysis of three homosexual rights cases, the author examines the influence of homophobia and heterosexism on the presiding judges' reasoning processes. The cases analyzed are *Bowers v. Hardwick* (Supreme Court decision upholding the Georgia sodomy statute), *Padula v. Webster* (U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia upholding the FBI's refusal to hire a lesbian woman), and *Constant A. v. Paul C.A.* (Superior Court of Pennsylvania denying joint custody to a divorced lesbian women).

***Mayadas, N., & Duehn, W. D. (1976). Children in gay families: An investigation of services. The Homosexuality Counseling Journal, 3, 70-83, 102.***

One of the earliest articles to describe the challenges facing lesbian and gay families and the absence of support from social service agencies to meet their needs. Describes a pilot program delivered by a social service agency to meet the needs of gay parents and their children.

***Morales, E. S. (1990). Ethnic minority families and minority gays and lesbians. Marriage and Family Review, 14(3/4), 217-239.***

Discusses the complex patterns of stress and developmental features of gay men and lesbian women who are also from ethnic minority groups. Visible and invisible minority are used as terms in considering ethnic minority gay men and lesbian women, the former being related to features that one cannot hide, for example skin color; and the latter being a characteristic that can be kept secret, for example, sexual orientation. Ethnic minority gays and lesbians face complex challenges in integrating the attitudes and reactions of three different groups: mainstream society, White gays and lesbians, and the ethnic family/community context. Ethnic minority gay men and lesbian women experience discrimination not only within the mainstream society at large, both with regard to their sexual orientation and ethnic minority identification, but also within the White gay and lesbian community as well. Stresses the need to integrate the complex issues of cultural and ethnic diversity and the reactions of different ethnic groups to disclosure of a family member's being gay or lesbian. Family for the ethnic minority member is, in particular, seen as a vital element in issues of identity development and system supports available to the ethnic minority gay and lesbian client. Discusses identity formation and presents a synthesis that relates to models of identity development for ethnic minorities and for lesbian women and gay men. Suggests five stages: denial of conflicts, bisexual versus gay/lesbian, conflicts in allegiances, establishing priorities in allegiance, and integrating the various communities. Notes that the "state" concept allows for a person to be at one or more states, depending on the context he/she is trying to cope with. Also presents the implications for therapy and the need to critically evaluate family context.

***Nungesser, L. G. (1980). Theoretical basis for research on the acquisition of social sex roles by children of lesbian mothers. Journal of Homosexuality, 5(3), 177-187.***

Reviews the literature on the assessment of sex-typing in individuals and how masculine and feminine behaviors have been classified. Describes how children learn by

modeling behavior. Reviews the literature on lesbian mothers in order to present descriptions of characteristics that are unique to lesbians that *might* affect the sex-typed behavior of children.

***Osman, S. (1972). My stepfather is a she. Family Process, 11, 209-218.***

Presents a case study of family therapy conducted with a lesbian couple and their two sons. Therapy was initiated around the acting-out behavior of the oldest son (15 years old), which the boy attempted to blame on his discovery of his mother's lesbianism. Suggests that the nontraditional structure of the family was not a direct contributor to the family dynamics. Observes that the issue of homosexuality was in the background for all involved. Clinicians are advised to be aware of their own biases within the current cultural matrix.

***Patterson, C. (1992). Children of lesbian and gay parents. Child Development, 63, 1025-1042.***

Reviews research done on children of lesbian and gay parents. Presents estimates of the number of children of lesbian and gay parents. Research reviewed has significant implications: dealing with child development theories and challenges to traditional views regarding the concept of "family" and what is needed for normal development; legal and public policy issues revolving around child custody decisions, foster care placements, adoption, parental rights, best interests of the child, and definitions of who is a parent; and social and cultural issues regarding the more recent development of large numbers of openly self-identified lesbians and gay men. Diversity of different family systems, for example, lesbian couples who are giving birth to children through donor insemination, is also another factor making research on children's development important. Reviews the comparative research looking at children of gay and lesbian parents and children of heterosexual parents in detail. Children of gay and lesbian parents did not differ significantly nor were they at any greater risk than children of heterosexual parents on many different variables, including development of gender identity, role behavior, sexual preference, risk for abuse and neglect, mental health variables, peer relationships, locus of control, moral judgment, self-concept, and intelligence. Notes the need for more research across different groups; longitudinal paradigms; and research looking more at "process" variables, rather than traditional "structural" concepts. Notes that most of the studies are based on a very homogeneous sample that are basically White, from this country, and middle-to-upper-middle class. Suggests there is a need for research with families from different ethnic, racial, and cultural minorities. Discusses the need for research findings to inform and guide legal and public policy debates and decisions.

***Patterson, C. (1994). Lesbian and gay couples considering parenthood: An agenda for research, service, and advocacy. Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 1(2), 33-55.***

Set against a foreground of prejudice, discrimination, and heterosexism, the needs of lesbian and gay couples considering parenthood are discussed. The article addresses innovative services, directions for further research, and service/advocacy.



***Patterson, C. (1995). Lesbian mothers, gay fathers and their children. In A. R. D'Augelli and C. Patterson, Lesbian, gay and bisexual identities across the lifespan: psychological perspectives (pp. 262-290). New York: Oxford University Press.***

Provides review of literature on lesbian and gay parents and their children. Organizes research into two categories: (1) parents whose children were born when they were heterosexually married and (2) parents whose children came to them after their lesbian or gay identities emerged. Carefully delineates why interest in this field is growing: an increase in interest in parenting by gay men and lesbians, an unfolding social phenomenon that is of interest in itself, and an increasing number of legal custody cases involving gay or lesbian parents. Separates out empirical from survey studies and candidly points out difficulties in a number of the cited studies. Suggests that research on gay and lesbian families has reached a turning point in that it is no longer enough to dispel myths about negative outcomes, leaving open the possibility to explore the diversity among these families. Makes a strong case for longitudinal analysis and for viewing whole family systems.

***Pies, C. A. (1987). Considering parenthood: psychosocial issues for gay men and lesbians choosing alternative fertilization. In F. W. Bozett, (Ed.), Gay and lesbian parents (pp. 165-174). New York: Praeger.***

Discusses the choice of parenting within the lesbian and gay communities and the decision for alternative fertilization. Discusses this parenting option in terms of its psychosocial and ethical issues for lesbian women and gay men. Also discusses AIDS and artificial insemination as well as the implications for professionals and research.

***Pies, C. A. (1990). Lesbians and the choice to parent. Marriage and Family Review, 14(3/4), 137-154.***

Explores the issues facing lesbian women who are deciding to become parents. Issues and comments are derived from women who have participated in lesbian parenting workshops since 1976. Issues include: reasons for wanting a child, internalized homophobia, families of origin, conception or adoption, known or unknown donors, legal protections for the nonbiological parent, legal protections regarding known donors, dealing with work and money, and sustaining intimacy and commitment in the couple relationship. Implications for psychotherapists are offered.

***Polikoff, N. (1986). Lesbian mothers, lesbian families: Legal obstacles, legal challenges. Review of Law and Social Change, 14(4), 907-914.***

Taken from a speech made by the author. Describes the inherent contradiction for feminists between wanting the courts to view lesbian mothers as no different from heterosexual mothers, and at the same time not wanting to uphold traditional patriarchal values. By asserting that children raised by lesbian mothers typically adopt a heterosexual orientation, the legal and psychological social structure perpetuates that heterosexuality is preferable to homosexuality. Further describes the issues of lesbians choosing to have children and the subsequent lack of legal status for the nonbiological mothers. Argues for legal parenthood for both mothers. Lastly, describes how the AIDS

crisis has affected lesbian mothers' custody cases and contributed to greater social invisibility for lesbian women.

**Ricketts, W. & Achtenberg, R. (1987). *The adoptive and foster gay and lesbian parent. In F. W. Bozett (Ed.), Gay and lesbian parents (pp. 89-111). New York: Praeger.***Addresses the history, legal issues, and trends regarding gays and lesbians' becoming adoptive and foster parents. The placement of gay, lesbian, and sexual-minority youth in gay and lesbian homes and joint and second-parent adoptions are examined. Presents the Boston foster care case of David Jean and Donald Babets and illustrates many of the issues that can arise, though qualification for foster parenting and adopting vary from state to state.

**Ricketts, W., & Achtenberg, R. (1989). *Adoption and foster parenting for lesbians and gay men: Creating new traditions in family. Marriage and Family Review, 14(3/4), 83-118.***

Recognizes the increasing interest gay men and lesbian women have in adoption and foster parenting and presents information and encouragement to them in their efforts. Reviews recent examples of adoption and foster parenting case law as a background. Discusses the dilemma of prospective parents remaining secretive about sexual orientation and the subsequent impact this has on child-rearing practices and the family's level of comfort. Argues effectively for openness as an antidote to homophobia and debunks the mythology that such openness is harmful to the children involved. Tackles the issue of foster parenting of gay and lesbian youth by gay and lesbian adults. Discusses the importance of both adoptive parents having legal rights. Generally takes a realistic view of the situation as it is emerging. Provides a list of resources for those interested in pursuing adoption or foster parenting.

**Riddle, D. I. (1978). *Relating to children: Gays as role models. Journal of Social Issues, 34, 38-58.***

One of the earliest articles reviewing the literature relating to sexual identity formation. Children internalize particular traits from a variety of models. Supports the idea of gays as positive models for both heterosexual and gay and lesbian children. Gay men and lesbian women offer alternatives to traditional sex-role models but do not determine same-sex sexual preference in children.

**Rivera, R. R. (1987). *Legal issues in gay and lesbian parenting. In F. W. Bozett (Ed.), Gay and lesbian parents (pp. 199-227). New York: Praeger.***

Briefly reviews the status of gay and lesbian individuals in the courts with regard to civil rights. Elucidates the specific climate and norms that generally operate in deciding custody cases as they affect lesbian women and gay men as well as the substantive legal issues involved in gay and lesbian parenting. Also details the types of harm to the child that are often alleged by the party seeking to deny custody to the gay/lesbian parent. A resource on the judicial process one might encounter in custody cases.

**Rohrbaugh, J. B. (1989). *Choosing children: Psychological issues in lesbian parenting. Women and Therapy, 8(1/2), 51-64.***

Discussion of issues for lesbian women who choose to have children after coming out. Discusses issues ranging from planning through pregnancy, birth, and the first 2 years of parenting. The main themes discussed in the article include: redefining lesbian identity to include motherhood, coping with homophobia, dealing with relationships with the lesbian mother's parents, and the effects of lesbian mothering on couples.

**Ross, J. L. (1988). *Challenging boundaries: An adolescent in a homosexual family. Journal of Family Psychology, 2(2), 227-240.***

Reviews issues related to secrecy, "passing," and boundaries within gay/lesbian families. A case study of an adolescent girl and the family's ability to confront the secrets and changes in boundaries is used as a vehicle to present various concepts in the work with gay and lesbian families. The additional stress related to adolescence and its challenges on family structure, boundaries, and family ideology is integrated with the particular stresses facing gay/lesbian families. Examines the need to confront secrecy and outer biases and homophobia in the community and internal homophobia within the gay/lesbian parents themselves, along with the need to develop networks and supports that are not as easily available to gay/lesbian parents. Stresses therapy as advocacy and assisting in establishing the family social support network.

**Sherhoff, M. J. (1984). *Family therapy for lesbian and gay clients. Social Work, July-August, 393-396.***

Describes issues and practice methods for social workers working with "homosexual families." Advises both practitioners and educators toward a nonhomophobic, contextual family therapy treatment.

**Steckel, A. (1987). *Psychosocial development of children of lesbian mothers. In F. W. Bozett (Ed.), Gay and lesbian parents (pp. 75-85). New York: Praeger.***

Reviews the research on the psychological development of children of lesbian women. Biased and traditional perceptions of what makes up a family unit (i.e., the traditional heterosexual nuclear family) have led to viewing other alternative family systems as deviant and responsible for the development of difficulties for children raised in these family units. The fact that there are children raised by lesbian women has raised fears regarding confused sexual identity in children or that they will become lesbian/gay. Notes that initial research on lesbian mothers studied women who had children before they identified themselves as lesbians. Research reviewed reveals that the children of lesbian mothers did not differ significantly from children in more traditional families in their fundamental sexual identity and choice of sex roles. Proposes that an important factor in any child's development is that of there being any second adult who is committed to the child. Sexual orientation of the parent alone is not the only factor that should be used in assessing the family unit. The need to examine other critical variables within context is vital. Suggests further research, particularly longitudinal studies, and the need for research with ethnic and cultural minorities.

**Stein, T. S. (1988). *Homosexuality and new family forms: Issues in psychotherapy. Psychiatric Annals, 18(1), 12-20.***

Reviews the recent literature on new family forms associated with homosexuality and an overview of issues relevant to psychiatry and psychotherapy with these families. Discusses the current knowledge about homosexual families and its use in therapy with such families. Addresses the issues particular to lesbian couples, gay male couples, and families with children. Also discusses the transference and counter transference reactions that may arise when working with these families. These issues are addressed with consideration to the stigmatization and discrimination of gay men and lesbian women in American society.

***Steinhorn, A. (1982). Lesbian mothers--the invisible minority: Role of the mental health worker. Women & Therapy, 1(4), 35-48.***

Discusses some of the issues lesbian mothers face in the area of economics, child care, socializing, custody, and choices about disclosure of lesbianism to the children. The context of the discussion is primarily with regard to lesbian mothers who conceived their children in previous heterosexual marriages. Encourages mental health providers to educate themselves about the dilemmas encountered by lesbian mothers so they may be supportive.

***Uhl, B. A. (1986-87). A new issue in foster parenting--gays. Journal of Family Law, 25, 577-597.***

Reviews the actions of the Massachusetts Department of Social Services in revoking placement of foster children with an openly gay couple and the legislature's subsequent action to codify a ban against such placements, noting that a similar process may be followed by other states. Summarizes states' policies on foster care placement with homosexuals. Discusses court actions regarding gay men's and lesbian women's fitness to parent and the constitutional issues involved.

***Weekes, R. B., Derdeyn, A. P., & Langman, M. (1975). Two cases of children of homosexuals. Child Psychiatry and Human Development, 6, 26-32.***

Reports on two cases of children with opposite-sex homosexual parents. Projective testing indicated difficulty with gender role identity. Articles cautions that it is not clear that these difficulties were related to parents' homosexuality and may have been related to the parents' divorce from a heterosexual marriage.

***Wolf, D. G. (1984). Lesbian childbirth and woman-controlled conception. In T. Darty & S. Potter (Eds.), Women-identified women (pp. 185-193). Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield Press.***

Delineates the growing use of insemination, noninstitutionalized medical practices, and home birth among lesbian feminists in the San Francisco Bay area. Lesbian women are choosing this alternative because it avoids child custody litigation, does not involve intercourse with men, and may serve as a model for other lesbian and single women who want to have children. They prefer community-network-based insemination organized by a feminist facilitator who found gay men to donate sperm for lesbians who want children. Since many lesbian women prefer female children, they use methods of conception that will favor girls. Groups of lesbian women have formed support groups to help the woman and her partner. Parents of lesbian women become more accepting of

their daughters with the arrival of grandchildren. The ideal childbirth situation is described as at home with the help of midwives.

***Wyers, N. (1987). Homosexuality in the family: Lesbian and gay spouses. Social Work, March/April, 143-148.***

Describes how gay and lesbian stepfamilies experience all the issues common to heterosexual stepfamilies in addition to issues that arise from the following: a lack of social approval for lesbian women and gay men, lack of legal recognition and protection for lesbian and gay families, stereotypes and myths about homosexuality that undermine family harmony, fear of losing custody, and the need for some families to maintain secrecy about parental sexual orientation and consequent feelings of isolation, particularly among children. Focuses primarily on the need for secrecy and the isolation children experienced because their families were different. Outlines issues for therapists and guidelines for therapy. Based on clinical observations and references to previous research.

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