



# Psychological and Social Outcomes for Children of Same-Sex Couples

---

One of the arguments against permitting same-sex couples to adopt or foster children is that allowing them to become parents would be detrimental to the psychological and social well-being of the children. Social science research, however, challenges this theory. Data suggests that children raised by same-sex couples are equivalent to children of heterosexual partners in their psychological adjustment, cognitive abilities, and social relationships with peers and adults.

## Research Findings about Children raised by Same-Sex Couples

- Studies indicate that children of same-sex couples are equal to children raised by heterosexual parents in their school functioning (e.g., concerning grades or school connectedness),<sup>1</sup> cognitive and physical abilities,<sup>2</sup> and self-concept.<sup>3</sup>
- These children do not show greater tendencies toward psychosocial problems (e.g., depression, anxiety, or low self-esteem) than children in heterosexual households.<sup>4</sup>
- Researchers have consistently found that children of gay and lesbian parents reported having normal, positive and healthy relationships with their peers.<sup>5</sup>
- The overall perceived quality of parent relationship, care from other adults,<sup>6</sup> closeness with parents, understanding from parents, and perceived autonomy was reportedly equivalent among children with same-sex parents to youth raised by opposite-sex couples.<sup>7</sup>
- Studies show that children with lesbian mothers are equal in their emotional and behavioral adjustment to their counterparts raised by heterosexual mothers.<sup>8</sup>
- Empirical data suggest that children with lesbian mothers experience greater mother-child interaction and contact with biological fathers than children with single heterosexual mothers.<sup>9</sup>
- In a scientific survey, children of lesbian mothers reported having a better relationship with their step parent than those of heterosexual mothers.<sup>10</sup>
- Scholarly research confirmed that children with lesbian parents have equal contact with grandparents, other relatives, and adult non-relatives to those with heterosexual parents.<sup>11</sup>
- According to scientific evidence, substance abuse, delinquency, or feelings of victimization are no more common among children of same-sex couples than among children of heterosexual couples.<sup>12</sup>

## About SPSSI

The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI) is an international group of approximately 3000 psychologists, allied scientists, students, and others who share a common interest in research on the psychological aspects of important social issues. In various ways, the Society seeks to bring theory and practice into focus on human problems of the group, the community, and nations, as well as the increasingly important problems that have no national boundaries.

For more information, please contact Alex Ingrams, SPSSI Policy Coordinator, at (202) 675-6956 or [aingrams@spssi.org](mailto:aingrams@spssi.org).

*Fact sheet created by Abigail Woodruff and Jutta Tobias; December 2009.*



# Psychological and Social Outcomes for Children of Same-Sex Couples

## References

---

- <sup>1</sup> Wainright, J. L., Russell, S. T., & Patterson, C. J. (2004). Psychosocial adjustment, school outcomes, and romantic relationships of adolescents with same-sex parents. *Child Development, 75*(6), 1886-1898.
- <sup>2</sup> Golombok, S., Tasker, F., & Murray, C. (1997). Children raised in fatherless families from infancy: Family relationships and the socioemotional development of children in lesbian and single heterosexual mothers. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 38*(7), 783-791.
- <sup>3</sup> Patterson, C.J. (2000). Family relationships of lesbians and gay men. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 62*, 1052- 1069.
- <sup>4</sup> Wainright et al. (2004).
- <sup>5</sup> Patterson, C.J. (2000); Tasker, F. (1999). Children in lesbian-led families - A review. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 4*, 153 – 166; 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*(4), 551-572; Wainright, J. L., & Patterson, C. J. (2008). Peer relations among adolescents with female same-sex parents. *Developmental Psychology, 44*(1), 117-126.
- <sup>6</sup> Wainright & Patterson (2008).
- <sup>7</sup> Wainright et al. (2004).
- <sup>8</sup> Golombok et al. (1997).
- <sup>9</sup> Golombok et al. (1997).
- <sup>10</sup> Tasker, F., & Golombok, S. (1997). *Growing up in a lesbian family*. New York: Guilford Press.
- <sup>11</sup> Fulcher, M., Chan, R. W., Raboy, B., & Patterson, C. J. (2002). Contact with grandparents among children conceived via donor insemination by lesbian and heterosexual mothers. *Parenting: Science and Practice, 2*(1), 61-76.
- <sup>12</sup> Wainright, J. L., & Patterson, C. J. (2006). Delinquency, victimization, and substance use among adolescents with female same-sex parents. *Journal of Family Psychology, 20*(3), 526-530.