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Sexual Identity Development of Children raised by Gay and Lesbian Parents

Scientific studies confirm that the sexual identities of children who grow up with same-sex parents develop in much the same ways as they do among children of heterosexual parents. Over the course of recent decades, researchers have created an increasingly substantial body of evidence on this topic. Their findings on the gender identity, gender-role behavior, and sexual orientation of children raised by lesbian and gay parents are summarized below.

Research Findings

- Empirical data suggests that children of same-sex couples show normal gender identity development and gender role behavior.¹
- According to scholarly evidence, children of same-sex couples were no more likely to have same-sex attractions than children of heterosexual couples.²
- In a recent research study, no significant difference between teenagers of same-sex and opposite-sex couples could be found concerning the percentage of children who were sexually active or who had recently been involved in a romantic relationship.³
- As reported in a scientific survey, individuals raised by lesbian mothers were no more likely to be or to have been involved in a same-sex relationship, have same-sex attractions or identify as a sexual minority.⁴
- Research indicates that lesbian mothers and heterosexual mothers do not differ in their perceptions of ideal sex-role behavior in children.⁵
- In an empirical study, researchers confirmed that there was no difference in sexual orientation between men with gay or bisexual fathers and those with heterosexual fathers.⁶

About SPSSI

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

References

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- ² 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; Patterson & Redding (1996).
- ³ Wainright et al. (2004).
- ⁴ Tasker, F., & Golombok, S. (1997). *Growing up in a lesbian family*. New York: Guilford Press.
- ⁵ 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(9), 967-975.
- ⁶ Bailey, J. M., Bobrow, D., Wolfe, M., & Mikach, S. (1995). Sexual orientation of adult sons of gay fathers. *Developmental Psychology*, 31(1), 124-129.