

Homosexual Parenting: Is It Time For Change?



Are children reared by two individuals of the same gender as well adjusted as children reared in families with a mother and a father? Until recently the unequivocal answer to this question was "no." Within the last decade, however, professional health organizations¹, academics, social policymakers and the media have begun asserting that prohibitions on parenting by homosexual couples should be lifted. In making such far-reaching, generation-changing assertions, any responsible advocate would rely upon supporting evidence that is comprehensive and conclusive. Not only is this not the situation, but also there is sound evidence that children exposed to the homosexual lifestyle may be at increased risk for emotional, mental, and even physical harm.

Biology matters

Over thirty years of research confirms that children fare best when reared by their two biological parents in a loving low conflict marriage. Children navigate developmental stages more easily, are more solid in their gender identity, perform better academically, have fewer emotional disorders, and become better functioning adults when reared within their natural family.^{2,3,4,5,6,7,8} This is, in part, because biology contributes to parent-child bonding.⁹

While single parenthood, adoption, and remarriage are each loving responses to failure of the natural family, children reared in these settings face unique challenges.^{9,10} Single parents face greater financial challenges and time constraints. Consequently, children of single mothers often spend significantly less time with both biological parents. Children within stepfamilies can experience difficulties forging a relationship with the stepparent, and be faced with a sense of divided loyalties. Every adopted child must come to terms with a sense of rejection from her biologic parents and a longing to know her roots. While not insurmountable, these challenges can have a negative impact on a child's development. Clearly, apart from rare situations, depriving a child of one or both biologic parents, as homosexual parenting requires in every case, is unhealthy.

Children need a mother and a father

There are significant innate differences between male and female that are mediated by genes and hormones and go well beyond basic anatomy. These biochemical differences are evident in the development of male and female brain anatomy, psyche, and even learning styles.¹¹ Consequently, mothers and fathers parent differently and make unique contributions to the overall development of the child.^{11,12,13} Psychological theory of child development has always recognized the critical role that mothers play in the healthy development of children. More recent research reveals that when fathers are absent, children suffer as well. Girls without fathers perform more poorly in school, are more likely to be sexually active and become pregnant as teenagers. Boys without fathers have higher rates of delinquency, violence, and aggression.^{12,13}

Gender-linked differences in child rearing styles between parents are complementary and protective for children. Erik Erikson was among the first to note that mother-love and father-love are qualitatively different. Mothers are nurturing, expressive, and more unconditional in their love for their children. Father-love, by contrast, often comes with certain expectations of achievement.¹³ Subsequent research has consistently revealed that parenting is most effective when it is both highly expressive and highly demanding. This approach to parenting "provides children with a kind of communion characterized by inclusiveness and connectedness, as well as the drive for independence and individuality [which is] virtually impossible for a man or woman alone to combine effectively."¹³

Gender differences are also reflected in the way mothers and fathers use touch with their children. Mothers frequently soothe, calm, and comfort with touch. Fathers are more likely to use touch to stimulate or excite their children during play. Mothers tend to engage with children on their level providing opportunities for children to take charge and proceed at their own pace. As fathers engage in rough and tumble play, they take on a teaching role like that of a coach. Roughhousing between fathers and sons is associated with the development of greater self-control in adolescent boys.¹³

Gender-linked diversity is also observed in parental approaches to discipline. "The disciplinary approaches of fathers tend toward firmness, relying on rules and principles. The approach of mothers tends toward more responsiveness, involving more bargaining, more adjustment toward the child's mood and context, and is more often based on an intuitive understanding of the child's needs and emotions of the moment."¹³