

43. Interviews with Children of Lesbian Mothers: Physical and Mental Health, Psychological Adjustment, and Peer Interactions

Gartrell, N., Deck, A., Rodas, C., Peyser, H. & Banks, A. (2005). The national lesbian family study: 4. Interviews with the 10-year-old children. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 75, 518-524.

This study is a 4th report from a longitudinal study of 78 lesbian-parented families who conceived children by donor insemination (DI) in the U.S. Results show that rates of physical and sexual abuse in these children are lower than national averages. Children of lesbian mothers in this sample demonstrate comparable psychological and social development to those of heterosexual parents. Children of known donors (n=27) are indistinguishable from children of unknown donors (n=48) in terms of psychological adjustment. Overall, 57% of children are completely open and 39% are somewhat open with their peers about their families, and 43% report that they have experienced homophobia. Children indicate a relatively advanced understanding about tolerance and diversity, and all are affirmative of having lesbian mothers. These results suggest that children of lesbian mothers are thriving and resilient.

Most children in the sample are physically healthy and the prevalence of developmental disorders is comparable to national averages. Children have internalizing, externalizing, sexual and total behavior problem scores lower than clinical averages and are not different from the normative sample. Higher total problem scores are associated with increased experiences of homophobia. Mothers report that 85% of the children are doing well academically, 81% relate well to their peers, and 64% go to school with children from other lesbian-parented families.

Study participants are predominantly college-educated, managers or professionals, middle- to upper-middle class, Christian or Jewish, and White. Children are also predominantly White, but are slightly more ethnically and racially diverse than mothers. The average age of mothers is 40 years.