

LGBTQ Families - Research Article Summaries

**12. Adult Sexual Orientation and Child Development:
A Child Welfare and Family Law Policy Perspective**

Wald, M. S. (2006). Adults' sexual orientation and state determinations regarding placement of children. *Family Law Quarterly*, 40, 381-434.

This paper explores the question of whether a parent's sexual orientation should be considered in cases of placing adoptive or foster care children in homes, resolving custody disputes, or with regard to access to assisted reproductive technologies (ART).

The author argues that a parent's sexual orientation should be irrelevant, except in particular custody cases where an older child indicates that it is relevant. The "best interests of the child" should be carefully considered and form the basis of decisions. In all cases, the adequate care of children should be ensured.

The claim that children raised by two heterosexual parents fare better than children raised by two same-sex parents is not supported by research. In reviewing 20 to 30 studies, children of lesbian and gay parents show no significant differences from other children in terms of cognitive abilities, school performance, serious behavioral problems, self-esteem, peer relations, emotional and mental health, gender identity, and sexual orientation. The evidence supports that there is not a particular family type that provides an optimal home environment for raising children.

There is evidence that being raised by married parents is somewhat more advantageous than being raised by a single heterosexual mother or by a divorced parent, but this does not include lesbian or gay parents. It is unclear that the gender of parents matters, and instead, most researchers attribute the difference to the fact that there are two parents rather than one.