

LGBTQ Families - Research Article Summaries**5. Whether and How Parental Sexual Orientation Matters:  
A Review of 21 Psychological Studies of Lesbian and Gay Families**

Stacey, J., & Biblarz, T. J. (2001). (How) does the sexual orientation of parents matter?  
*American Journal of Sociology*, 40, 572-183.

This paper is a sociological review of 21 psychological studies of lesbian and gay families. It explores whether and how parental sexual orientation might lead to meaningful differences among children. The findings of these studies were reconsidered, suggesting that parental sexual orientation matters somewhat more than the original authors suggested. Six of the 21 studies were highlighted—those that isolated unique differences between heterosexual and lesbian or gay families.

Findings demonstrated that children with lesbian mothers more often play, behave, and dress in ways that are not traditionally feminine or masculine as compared to children with heterosexual mothers. Thus, lesbian parenting may relieve children from conforming to rigid gender roles. Results also showed that adult children of lesbian mothers more frequently report same-sex attraction or romantic experiences than those of heterosexual mothers. **However, adult children of lesbian mothers were no more likely to identify as lesbian or gay.** No significant differences in psychological well-being have been found between children of lesbian or gay and heterosexual parents.

Findings showed that lesbian mothers more often had gender-neutral preferences for their children's play as compared to heterosexual mothers. Non-biological lesbian mothers were found to be more skilled at parenting and more involved with children than stepfathers in 2-parent families. These findings may be the result of a difference in gender rather than sexual orientation. No significant differences in quality of parent-child relationships or psychological well-being were found between lesbian or gay and heterosexual parents. In fact, lesbian mothers exhibited a slightly higher tendency toward positive psychological resources.