

32. Children in Lesbian-headed Families Created by Donor Insemination: Peer Acceptance and Psychological Well-being

Vanfraussen, K., Ponjaert-Kristoffersen, I., & Brewaeyts, A. (2002). What does it mean for youngsters to grow up in a lesbian family created by means of donor insemination? *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology*, 20, 237-252.

This study involved interviewing 37 children with lesbian parents from 24 families created by donor insemination (DI). Children were asked about how they describe their family to others and whether they experience harassment because of their families. Virtually all children openly disclose to close friends that they live with two mothers and receive positive reactions. Children generally informed others when specifically questioned about their families. It appears that peers find it difficult to understand that children could have two mothers without a father somewhere, but nonetheless, children of lesbian parents do not feel less accepted by their peers. The results of this study support that reproductive technologies should not be limited to heterosexual parents.

A comparison group of 37 children from 24 families headed by heterosexual parents was included in the study. Results demonstrated that children of lesbian parents experienced more teasing related to their family structure but were not more likely to be teased overall than children of heterosexual parents. There were no significant differences in psychological well-being between the two groups of children, as reported by parents, teachers, and children. Teachers (but not parents and children) reported that children of lesbian parents had more attention problems.

The study was conducted in Belgium¹. All parents were Caucasian and Dutch-speaking. Families headed by lesbian and heterosexual parents were similar in parents' level of education level attained, age and gender of children, family size, and parent relationship status. In both groups, there were 18 couples together and 6 separated. The average age of children was 10 years.

¹ The authors point out that in Belgium at the time of this study, there were no official regulations regarding fertility treatments for same-sex couples.