

## Exhibit E-1

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

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EDITH SCHLAIN WINDSOR, in her  
capacity as Executor of the Estate  
of CLARA SPYER,

Plaintiff,

-against-

10-CV-8435

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Defendant.

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT

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JOANNE PEDERSEN & ANN MEITZEN,  
GERALD V. PASSARO II, LYNDIA  
DEFORGE & RAQUEL ARDIN, JANET  
GELLER & JOANNE MARQUIS, SUZANNE  
& GERALDINE ARTIS, BRADLEY  
KLEINERMAN & JAMES GEHRE  
DAMON SAYVOY & JOHN WEISS,

Plaintiffs,

-against-

Civil Action No.  
310 CV 1750 (VLB)

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT,  
TIMOTHY F. GEITHNER, in his official  
capacity as the Secretary of the  
Treasury, and HILDA L. SOLIS, in her  
official capacity as the Secretary of  
Labor, et al.,

Defendants.

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DEPOSITION OF MICHAEL E. LAMB, Ph.D.

Friday, June 24, 2011



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DEPOSITION OF MICHAEL E. LAMB, Ph.D., a  
Witness herein, taken by Intervenors, pursuant to  
Notice, at the offices of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind,  
Wharton & Garrison LLP, 1285 Avenue of the  
Americas, New York, New York 10019 on Friday,  
June 24, 2011, at 8:45 a.m., before DEBRA  
STEVENS, a Registered Professional Reporter and  
notary public, within and for the State of New  
York.



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## CHAPTER 11

# Gay Fathers

SUSAN GOLOMBOK and FIONA TASKER

**A**LTHOUGH IT HAS always been the case that gay men have had children, it is only in recent years that children have been raised in gay-father families. This has occurred through several routes. First, children of previously married gay men are more likely to live with their father following divorce. Second, more gay men are adopting children both singly and as couples. Third, a small but increasing number of gay men are having children with lesbian women and sharing parenting with them. Finally, as a result of increasing accessibility to assisted reproductive technologies, gay men are beginning to have children through surrogacy arrangements. In their recently published report, the Ethics Committee of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine (2006) concluded that requests for assisted reproduction should be treated without regard for sexual orientation. Consequently, there is likely to be a rise in the number of gay men who become parents through assisted reproductive techniques.

In spite of these new routes to parenthood, it remains the case that most gay fathers who no longer reside with the mother of their children do not have children living with them. This chapter traces the various ways in which gay men become fathers. We examine the experiences of those who had children in the context of a heterosexual relationship or marriage and those who planned their family after coming out as gay. The consequences for children are also explored, followed by a consideration of the implications of the existing body of research on gay-father families and the limitations of the findings.

### PATHWAYS TO PARENTING

It is difficult to accurately estimate how many gay men are involved in parenting. Given the prejudice that is regularly encountered by lesbians and gay men (homophobia) and mainstream society's assumption of heterosexuality (heterosexism), many individuals are reluctant to disclose their sexual identity. Further, a universally accepted definition of sexual identity remains elusive (Savin-Williams, 2005) or even untenable (Alexander, 1999;



Butler, 1990, 1993). Data from the National Health and Social Life Survey have indicated that between 2.7% and 4.9% of U.S. men have had a same-sex relationship (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994). These data have been used to estimate that between 1% and 12% of children are being raised by a gay or lesbian parent (Perrin, 2002a, b). If we consider only the male same-sex couples who declared an "unmarried partner" in the U.S. census in 2000, then 22% of male same-sex partner households also contained resident children (Simmons & O'Connell, 2003).

More detailed surveys using convenience and snowball sampling through the gay community have indicated that between 8% and 10% of gay men in the United States have parenting responsibilities (Bryant and Demian, 1994; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2001) and, as discussed later, more may be involved in the upbringing of children if broader definitions of parenting are considered.

Changes in the sociohistorical context for gay men have raised the visibility of gay parenthood, and gay fatherhood is less likely to be viewed by either mainstream society or the gay community as the "social enigma" it once was (Barret & Robinson, 2000; Bigner, 1996). Moreover, fathers generally are becoming more acceptable as primary caregivers within mainstream society. The increasing proportion of fathers being awarded custodial responsibility for their children has meant that "motherless" families are less likely to be seen as unusual or to necessarily threaten the "best interests of the child." Greater advocacy of gay fathers within increasingly diverse gay communities has meant that they are more accepted or tolerated by gay men not involved in parenting (Barret & Robinson). Gay parenthood seems more likely to be contemplated by younger cohorts of gay men than ever before. For example, for the 39 young adult gay men in Berkowitz's U.S. study: "The so-called gay lens into the future has shifted from an imagined life of childlessness to a life with new potentialities that include many familial possibilities, some of which involve becoming a parent and some of which do not" (Berkowitz, 2007, p. 245). Stacey (2006) identified a passion-for-parenthood continuum in the interview transcripts of the gay male parents and non-parents in Los Angeles who talked to her about their views on becoming a parent: Of the 50 men interviewed, 22 revealed a passionate commitment to parenting, 26 indicated how situational factors (especially a partner's interest in parenting) influenced their own decision making, while only two could be classed as completely rejecting the idea of parenthood.

Gay men's involvement in parenting arises through various routes in a wide diversity of circumstances. The largest group of gay parents so far researched appear to be those who had children in the context of previous heterosexual relationships and have subsequently identified as gay (Barrett & Tasker, 2001; Dunne, 2001). Both studies were conducted with nationwide samples in the United Kingdom. Most of these men then move out of the marital home, but some continue their relationship with the mother of their child. One common misconception is that gay men who fathered children through previous heterosexual relationships "are not really gay." Some men would no doubt self-identify, or be identified as, bisexual rather than gay in many contexts. Dunne has argued that the sexual and emotional feelings and

relationships complex than that (Dunne).

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relationships narrated by the 50 gay fathers she interviewed were more complex than the identity categories available to them as descriptions (Dunne).

A growing group of gay parents are men who have children after coming out as gay in planned gay-father families. Parenthood may be achieved through adopting or fostering a child, through a surrogacy arrangement, or through a formal or informal agreement to share parenting with a single lesbian mother or a lesbian couple. Surrogacy may appeal to gay men who want a genetic connection with their baby and those who do not wish to share parenting across households (Lev, 2006). However, the financial costs of surrogacy can be prohibitive for many gay men: Not only do they need to pay expenses (and in some cases a fee) to the surrogate mother and sometimes to an egg donor as well, but they also must fund the necessary legal costs to ensure assignment of custody once the child is born.

Gay community surveys, such as the U.S. National Survey of Gay and Lesbian Parents have indicated that a sizeable group of planned gay-father families have been formed through adoptive parenting (Johnson and O'Connor, 2002). Nevertheless, gay men face a long and difficult journey when applying to adopt. A survey of adoption agencies in the United States has suggested that a growing number of agencies will consider lesbian or gay applicants (Brodzinsky, Patterson, & Vaziri, 2002). However, even when agencies are open to applications, studies surveying social workers in the adoption field have suggested that these professionals often hold negative and stereotypical views of gay men (Hicks, 2006), and gay parents have recounted previous instances of discrimination prior to successful adoption, for example, being placed last in the queue for babies, being matched with hard-to-place children, or experiencing "false starts" in the adoption process when a child's birth family member registers an objection (Hicks & McDermott, 1999). In a study conducted in New England, Gianino (2008) concluded that facing discrimination by public agencies can make private adoption agencies seem a more attractive option for gay men who can afford them but may expose them to the possibility of exploitation.

When joint adoption by a same-sex couple is not legal, couples are more likely than they would be elsewhere to conceal their relationship from the adoption agency, placing a strain on their relationship with each other and with the agency (Gianino, 2008). The gay father who is not legally recognized is left in a potentially vulnerable position, being unable to authorize medical or legal decisions for their child. The lack of legal recognition may also expose gay fathers to more subtle forms of prejudice. For example, the gay couples in Gianino's study who were not able to jointly adopt were sometimes quizzed by others as to who was the legal (i.e., the "real") adoptive parent (Gianino).

We can also catch glimpses of gay parenting in child-rearing arrangements with lesbian mothers in multiparental families (Gross, 2006; Stacey, 2006). In many of these cases, a gay father may be the known sperm donor and so be genetically related to the child he parents; or his partner may be the actual donor but the couple have planned fatherhood and both are involved in parenting. Children may be resident only part-time with their gay father(s) or may simply visit their fathers on a regular basis. Anecdotal reports indicate that these arrangements can be satisfying for the gay fathers involved, but if

the living arrangements of the lesbian mother(s) change, it may be difficult for the father to claim legal rights (*The Times*, 2008).

Studies of planned lesbian-led families have indicated that in the absence of any continued involvement with a donor father, lesbian mothers often identify a close male friend to be a male role model or play a significant mentoring role in their child's life. Hare and Richards (1993) liken the mentoring role ascribed to these men by the lesbian mothers in their study to that of an older close friend rather than a father. Clarke (2006, 2007) has highlighted the hegemonic tensions involved for lesbian mothers in claiming gay men as role models. However, systematic research has not yet examined how gay men define their relationship to children in these family arrangements.

Gay men also have planned families with single heterosexual women, for example, with an intermediary organization arranging donor insemination for gay men and single heterosexual women wanting parenthood without intimate partnership (Segal-Engelchin, Erera, & Cwikel, 2005). In these hetero-gay family configurations, the single heterosexual mother and single gay father maintain separate households and the child generally resides with only one parent (usually the mother) but both share parental responsibilities (Segal-Engelchin et al.). The practical arrangements of coparenting between two households may in many ways be similar to those reached in harmonious divorce settlements, but the planned nature of these families may mean that their resemblance to postdivorce households is untainted by previous conflict. Segal-Engelchin and colleagues suggest several reasons why gay men may want to parent in this context, including perhaps wanting to coparent with a woman rather than a man in a quasi-traditional family arrangement, not wanting to be a resident parent, or the relative ease of this route to parenthood compared with the costs and difficulties associated with adoption or surrogacy. However, we do not know how gay men experience parenting in this context, or how the experience of growing up in a hetero-gay family may impact on child development.

#### GAY MEN AS PARENTS: CONTEXT AND EXPERIENCE OF PARENTHOOD

Given the diversity in routes to gay parenthood and the variety of family structures formed, the main issue that gay fathers have in common may not be related to parenting per se but to how to best prepare their children to deal with societal institutions, communities, and individuals that rarely affirm gay fathering, frequently ignore it, or sometimes are openly hostile toward it.

Surveys that have assessed heterosexuals' attitudes toward same-sex parenting have found that same-sex parents are rated more poorly than heterosexual parents (Morse, McLaren, & McLachlan, 2007). From other studies, we can see indications of the complexity of responses that gay fathers might encounter from heterosexuals. For example, McLeod, Crawford, & Zechmeister (1999) assessed the attitudes of heterosexual college students toward gay male parenting through comparison of the responses to two vignettes: the first one depicting a boy with a gay couple, the second portraying an identical parenting situation except with a heterosexual couple.

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In comparison to the control condition, students rated the child with the gay couple as experiencing significantly higher levels of general distress and, in particular, being more confused about their sexual and gender identity. While the gay fathers in the vignette were rated as being more loving, nurturing, and responsive to their adopted son than was the heterosexual father, this was paradoxically seen to count against the child's well-being because the alleged effeminacy of the gay men was seen as a contravention of the traditional patriarchal concept of fatherhood. In another study where heterosexual students were asked to evaluate vignettes depicting parenting competency, gay male parenting skills were rated most positively and heterosexual female parenting skills most negatively perhaps because low expectations of men's parenting meant greater praise for gay fathers who were seen as active parents (Massey, 2007).

Armesto (2002) has suggested that parenting is inevitably more stressful for gay men than for heterosexual men because gay fathers are a socially stigmatized group. While studies have not systematically examined coming out and psychological adjustment among gay fathers, other research has indicated that whether or not gay men decide to disclose to others, coming out decisions are omnipresent, stressful, and associated with increased risk to mental health (Carragher & Rivers, 2002; Meyer, 2003). Gay fathers additionally fear that disclosure may mean that their child will be stigmatized by association or that they will be rejected by their child (Bigner, 1996).

#### DIVORCED GAY FATHERS

At first glance, one enigma of gay parenting is how gay men came to have children within a marital or long-term heterosexual relationship. Findings from earlier and more recent research suggest these gay fathers often married because they had wanted to be a traditional husband or father (Barret & Robinson, 2000; Benson, Silverstein, & Auerbach, 2005; Bigner & Jacobsen, 1989; Bozett, 1981, 1987; Dunne, 2001; Miller, 1979; Wyers, 1987). These retrospective studies have recorded a mixture of motivations underlying fatherhood. Some men felt they had been responding to societal or interpersonal pressure to marry. Others recalled that when they married they did not know what it meant to have a gay identity, thought that a gay identity was incompatible with fatherhood, or could not see a reflection of themselves in the negative stereotypes of gay men they had encountered. Some felt that marriage would change their sexual desires away from men or that having children would emphasize their manhood both to themselves and to others. Others cited more positive personal reasons for matrimony and fatherhood, such as the desire to have children or an affection for their wife.

In Benson et al.'s (2005) qualitative study of 25 gay fathers living in metropolitan areas in the United States who had children while married, some highlighted having children as a catalyst that opened them up emotionally and from which they started to gain a sense of their own sexual identity (Benson et al.). Identifying as gay, however, meant that these fathers faced the challenge of whether and how to integrate their new sense of self within the traditional boundaries of fatherhood. Some fathers in Benson

et al.'s study decided not to disclose their sexual identity to their families or attempt to integrate their sexual identity with fatherhood; prominent reasons in these men's accounts were protecting their children from any problems disclosure might bring, feeling obliged to respond to pressure from their wife (or other family members) not to disclose a gay identity, or not knowing when to disclose or how to deal with the reactions they imagined their children or other family members might have (see also Dunne (1987) for reflections on group therapy with gay fathers around the issues involved in "coming out"). Writing from his psychoanalytic work with homosexual men married to women, Isay (1998) suggested subconscious reasons connected with early emotional loss of a psychological relationship with their own mother as the motivation for some gay men to comply with matrimony and deny their sexual feelings for other men. Other authors have suggested that some gay or bisexual men reach an accommodation with their wives allowing for gay relationships while still remaining married to, residing with, and/or continuing an emotionally or sexually intimate relationship with her (Dunne, 2001; Matteson, 1987).

For some fathers in Benson et al.'s study, the desire for greater authenticity became the drive for "coming out" and the reason for disclosing to their families (Benson et al., 2005). Other researchers have suggested that a key factor in coming out and precipitating the end of a prior heterosexual relationship was falling in love with a same-sex partner (Miller, 1979). Studies have not systematically addressed whether having their father come out as gay in the context of a gay partnership clarifies or compounds children's ability to come to terms with their father's gay identity. However, children's acceptance may be complicated by disclosure of HIV infection (Shuster, 1996) or other family members' objections (Lynch & Murray, 2000). Looking back at their experiences of disclosing, many gay fathers said that managing family reactions was generally not as difficult as they had anticipated (Miller). Nevertheless, one author has argued that emotional distress surrounding the process of "coming out" may last several years before resolution occurs (Bigner, 1996).

No studies have yet compared the emotional well-being and parenting of gay fathers who have come out to their children versus those who have not. However, uncontrolled and retrospective studies have suggested long-term benefits for fathers of coming out to one's children (Armesto, 2002). Nearly half of the fathers in Benson et al.'s study who had come out to their children regarded it as a transformative experience, increasing openness and honesty in their relationship with their children, and felt that this was reciprocated by their children (Benson et al., 2005). These men felt both lucky to be a father and satisfied with their gay identity. One father summed this up as having "the best of both worlds" (pp. 15). However, the gay fathers in Benson et al.'s study had to work hard to create a new social support network for themselves that both facilitated their parenting and recognized their new gay identity.

Researchers have suggested that some of the gay fathers who had "come out" to their children had developed a new parenting ideology that separated fathering from (hetero)sexuality (Benson et al., 2005; Silverstein, Auerbach, & Levant, 2002). Here, the gay father's parenting identity and sexual identity are

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seen as complementary rather than exclusive—sexuality was not important for gay men's parenting; instead, it was the quality of their relationship with their children that mattered.

Entering into a new partnership may be a goal for many previously married gay men who would again like to have the commitment of a long-term relationship initially sought in marriage (Bigner, 1996). While forming new gay relationships postseparation or divorce presents similar challenges to those encountered in heterosexual stepfamilies, the process is more complicated in a new gay stepfather family because family members need to negotiate how "out" they will be as a family group (Lynch & Murray, 2000). In nearly all of the lesbian and gay stepfamilies interviewed by Lynch and Murray, decisions about whether to be out as a family had been a family decision led by the child's level of comfort with being out rather than by the biological parent and his or her new partner, who, for example, may have had to make compromises in openly expressing affection for each other.

A couple of research studies have indicated that successful gay partnerships are associated with positive parenting, although as yet no longitudinal studies have investigated causal linkage. Barrett and Tasker (2001) found that gay fathers with cohabiting partners rated themselves as being more successful than single gay fathers at meeting a variety of emotional, practical, and financial parenting challenges. In another study of 48 gay-father stepfamilies, the level of integration of a gay partner into family life with the children was the factor most associated with positive ratings of family satisfaction as reported by either divorced gay fathers, their partners, or their children (Crosbie-Burnett & Helmbrecht, 1993).

#### PLANNED GAY-FATHER FAMILIES

Brinamen and Mitchell have proposed a six-stage model describing the transition to parenting delineated from their thematic analyses of interviews with 10 gay men living in the San Francisco Bay area who were parenting a pre-school-age child (Brinamen & Mitchell, 2008). Initially these gay men recalled *abandoning a parent identity* as during their youth they had viewed fatherhood as incompatible with their developing sense of a gay identity. Later on, a growing sense of *comfort in a gay identity* engendered greater confidence in working out their own life goals, which led them to reexamine previously held views of both fatherhood and gay identity. Subsequently, *recognition (of the strength) of gay families* engendered a feeling of confidence in the contribution that families of choice built on strong emotional ties could make in supporting parenthood. In Gianino's study, the eight gay couples who had adopted children saw partnership as the foundation of their parenting and felt that their partnership was in turn strengthened by their experience of parenting together (Gianino, 2008).

Prior to embarking on parenthood, Brinamen and Mitchell (2008) interpose a fourth stage in their model of gay fatherhood: *seeking models and mentors*. Other researchers also have noted that gay fathers have carefully explored the prospect of parenthood by getting to know other gay families with children (these were more likely to be lesbian-led families than families led by gay

men) and by researching the growing literature on nonheterosexual parenting (Gianino, 2008; Schacher, Auerbach, & Silverstein, 2005). Once committed to the idea of parenthood, the gay men in these studies often made major adjustments to their lives, such as moving to a different neighborhood or changing jobs, to find a more conducive environment or access more support in bringing up children. Preparation for parenthood also involved telling others of their plans, and in particular sensitively informing their family of origin and coping with any negative responses. In Brinamen and Mitchell's fifth stage of the transition to parenthood, the gay father is seen as *recognizing the strengths of the gay father* as a parent: valuing what he could offer as a parent through being a gay man, for example, in terms of valuing difference or in being more emotionally available than most heterosexual fathers were seen as being. In the final stage of Brinamen and Mitchell's model, gay fathers are viewed as transitioning into parenthood through *integrating an expanded identity* as gay men and as fathers.

As gay fathers, the men interviewed in various studies have indicated how they have valued drawing upon a variety of sources of social support, not only from their own family of origin, with whom they often felt a deeper connection through parenthood, but also from other types of nontraditional families and new friends made through common parenting experiences with heterosexual couples (Brinamen & Mitchell, 2008; Gianino, 2008; Schacher et al., 2005). Some of the gay couples in Gianino's (2008) study described feeling isolated from mainstream parenting groups and children's services but linked this to their observation that these revolved around mothers, not fathers, as primary caregivers; their experiences as gay fathers were thus different from those of lesbian mothers in this key respect.

Most of the gay fathers studied have reported a positive response from the gay community to the announcement that they were expecting a child but also said that most of their gay friends would not choose to parent and indicated that some friendships had cooled over the years (Brinamen & Mitchell, 2008; Gianino, 2008; Mallon, 2004). In Brinamen and Mitchell's study, gay fathers felt that they had expanded their identity to become more than just a gay man and more than just a father, although this expanded identity was also countered by the feeling that they were set apart from both other gay men and other (heterosexual) fathers. Single gay fathers seem to have been more vulnerable to these feelings of isolation than were men in gay couples (Brinamen & Mitchell). Gay couples also appeared to have an easier time being accepted by heterosexual parents and by mainstream parenting services, perhaps because they fitted a more traditional parenting model (Brinamen & Mitchell). However, parenting as a gay couple may also increase the public visibility of the gay-father family, raising the greater possibility of encountering prejudice and the need for vigilance (Gianino).

In reflecting on the strengths they brought to parenthood, gay fathers have argued that they have been able to be more child centered than most heterosexual fathers could through their greater openness and tolerance of their child's choices (Brinamen & Mitchell, 2008). Bigner (1999) additionally has argued that gay fathers may model androgynous behavior, particularly for their sons, as fathers in motherless families must necessarily incorporate

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nurturing roles into their parenting repertoire. The 21 urban American gay fathers interviewed by Schacher et al. (2005) described *degendered parenting* because their roles were not prescribed by gender as they were in the majority of heterosexual couples they knew. The gay fathers described themselves as having a hybrid parenting role, where both they and their partner divided child care duties by preference, aptitude, or equality, rather than splitting into "mother" or "father" roles, thus challenging the dominance embedded in (hetero)patriarchal fatherhood (see also Gianino, 2008; Silverstein et al., 2002).

Schacher et al. (2005) reported that the gay fathers they interviewed described a variety of different examples of heterosexist gender role strain as they experienced double prejudice: first, against nonheterosexual parenting; second, against a man taking on the role of the child's primary caregiver. They sometimes were the recipients of greater critical attention and comment even as they walked their children down the street. Within this context, gay fathers felt the responsibilities of trailblazing and the need to be "super-parents" to counteract cultural stereotypes, although pioneering social change also brought its own satisfactions. Nevertheless, these fathers described experiencing conflict, both internally and with their partner, as they made career compromises in order to look after their children. They sometimes felt personally devalued as a result of these compromises, despite clearly prioritizing children and fatherhood over monetary or career success and feeling immense personal satisfaction in their parenthood.

A further advantage of gay men's parenting may lie in the flexibility of multiparental child-rearing arrangements. There may be one, two, or more parents, some of whom live together in the same household while others live separately, some of whom may share the same ethnic identity while others do not, some of whom may be biologically related to a particular child while others are not. Many of the gay fathers in Schacher et al.'s study (2005) reconceptualized family relationships as being based on love rather than biology, encompassing a wide variety of family constellations.

#### CONSEQUENCES FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Studies of children raised by same-sex parents have almost exclusively focused on families headed by lesbian mothers rather than gay fathers. This body of research was initiated in the 1970s and concentrated on women who had become mothers within a heterosexual marriage before making the transition to a lesbian relationship. The findings of the early investigations were strikingly consistent (Golombok, Spencer, & Rutter, 1983; Green, Mandel, Hotvedt, Gray, & Smith, 1986; Hoeffler, 1981; Huggins, 1989; Kirkpatrick, Smith, & Roy, 1981). With respect to psychological well-being, children with lesbian mothers did not show a higher incidence of psychological disorder, or difficulties in peer relationships, than those from heterosexual homes. In addition, there was no evidence of gender identity confusion for any of the children studied, and in terms of gender role behavior, no differences were found between children with lesbian and heterosexual parents for either boys or girls (for reviews, see Falk, 1989; Golombok, 1999; Patterson, 1992, 2002). A longitudinal study of adults who had been raised as children in lesbian-

mother families found that these young men and women continued to function well in adult life (Tasker & Golombok, 1995, 1997). More young people from lesbian-mother families than from heterosexual families had experimented in same-sex relationships, although the large majority identified as heterosexual in adulthood (Golombok & Tasker, 1996).

More recent studies of children born through donor insemination and raised in lesbian-mother families from birth produced similar results. The children were not found to experience difficulties in terms of gender development, peer relationships, or psychological well-being (Bos, 2004; Brewaeys, Ponjaert, Van Hall, & Golombok, 1997; Chan, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998; Flaks, Ficher, Masterpasqua, & Joseph, 1995; Gartrell, 2005; Golombok, Tasker, & Murray, 1997; MacCallum & Golombok, 2004). Findings from general population samples in the United States (Wainright & Patterson, 2006; Wainright, Russell, & Patterson, 2004) and the United Kingdom (Golombok et al., 2003) are also in line with those of earlier investigations in that the children were found to be well adjusted with no differences in sex-typed behavior between the children of lesbian and heterosexual parents for either boys or girls.

#### CHILDREN OF GAY FATHERS WHO LIVE WITH THEIR MOTHER

Much less research has been conducted on children with gay fathers, and the few studies that do exist are of children who live with their mother. There are no indications, either from fathers' reports or from the limited number of interviews with the children themselves, that children who live with their mother but remain in contact with their gay father experience emotional or behavioral problems (Barret & Robinson, 1994; Bigner, 1999; Bigner & Jacobsen, 1989; Bozett, 1987; Harris & Turner, 1986; Miller, 1979). However, no systematic evaluations of the self-esteem or psychological adjustment of children of gay fathers have been carried out, and no study has systematically investigated how children respond to the loss of contact with a gay father after divorce (Tasker, 2005). Estimates vary as to how likely children with gay fathers are to experience stigma and relationship problems with peers or adults outside the family. Wyers (1987) reported that 20% of children in his U.S. study were believed by their father to have experienced discrimination due to his sexual orientation. In a survey of 101 gay and bisexual fathers in the United Kingdom by Barrett & Tasker (2001), 37% reported that their children had experienced teasing by other children. In contrast, neither Bozett (1987) nor Miller (1979) recorded many instances of homophobia directed against children of gay fathers in their U.S. samples, although it was thought that the children may have avoided disclosing their father's sexual orientation to those from whom they anticipated a negative response.

A recent investigation has shed light on the experiences of young people with gay fathers from their own perspective based on an analysis of 67 published accounts from children of lesbian and gay parents in the United Kingdom, United States, and New Zealand, one-third of which were from those with a gay father (Fairtlough, 2008). Whereas 37 of the accounts were predominantly positive or neutral, and only three were rated as somewhat negative, 27 were characterized by both positive and negative feelings.

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Qualitative analysis of these accounts showed that the problems the young people experienced arose almost entirely from the negative views of others. In addition to negative societal views and institutional discrimination against lesbian and gay people, the adolescents and young adults described instances of homophobic behavior from family members, including parents, as well as from peers. Just as in Tasker and Golombok's (1995, 1997) study of young adults raised in lesbian-mother families, these young people reported benefiting from both parental openness and from having control over when and how their family life was made public. Although the authors did not state whether the pattern of findings differed according to the gender of the same-sex parent, it seems likely that homophobia is just as salient a problem to young people with gay fathers as it is for those with lesbian mothers. In a study of school experiences in Australia, Ray and Gregory (2001) found teasing and bullying to be common. The children were frustrated by peers' lack of understanding about their families and lacked confidence in their teachers' abilities to deal with homophobia.

#### CHILDREN WHO LIVE WITH GAY FATHERS

At present, little is known about the psychological development and well-being of the increasing number of children who are being raised by gay fathers, that is, children who live with their gay fathers and have done so from birth or early childhood. These children have generally been adopted by a gay couple or born through assisted reproduction procedures such as surrogacy and egg donation, although some are born within their gay father's marriage to, or relationship with, their mother and reside with their gay father.

Can we assume that the psychological outcomes for children who live with gay fathers will be the same as for children who live with lesbian mothers? Although the concern that children with lesbian mothers would show psychological problems was found to lack empirical support, the circumstances of children raised by gay fathers are more unusual. Not only are these children being raised by same-sex parents, but also it is rare for fathers, whether heterosexual or gay, to be primary caregivers. It is not known what the combined effect of these two factors will be on children's social, emotional, identity, and gender development as they grow up. Whereas studies of other types of nontraditional family suggest that the quality of family relationships is more important for children's psychological well-being than is family structure (Golombok, 2000), the psychological processes that operate in gay-father families may differ from those of other nontraditional family forms.

*Psychological Adjustment.* With respect to children's psychological adjustment, difficulties would not necessarily be predicted unless gay fathers differ from lesbian or heterosexual mothers with respect to the parenting processes that are associated with children's healthy psychological development such as parental warmth, sensitivity, emotional involvement, appropriate discipline, and control (Baumrind, 1989, 1991; Bornstein, 2002; Bowlby, 1969, 1988; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Maccoby, 1992). The literature on fathering

suggests that fathers are just as capable of parenting as are mothers (Lamb, 1997; Parke, 1996), and that children are just as likely to develop a secure attachment relationship with their father as their mother (van IJzendoorn & De Wolff, 1997). However, relationships between parents and their children do not take place within a social vacuum. The wider social environment can have a marked impact on the quality of family life and can also have a direct effect on children's psychological well-being irrespective of the quality of family relationships. It has been argued that children raised in gay-father families may be exposed to greater prejudice and discrimination than children who grow up in families headed by lesbian mothers and thus may be at greater risk of developing psychological problems. Although both lesbian-mother families and gay-father families deviate from the heterosexual norm, gay-father families possess the additional feature of being headed by men in the absence of women and thus may be more likely to be stigmatized by the outside world. In spite of greater acceptance of nontraditional family structures over recent decades, it is often thought that mothers are more suited to parenting than are fathers.

Adoption and assisted reproduction bring with them additional issues. In heterosexual families, adoption is associated with a greater incidence of emotional and behavioral problems for children, although it is important to stress that difficulties are most likely among those who are adopted later in childhood, especially those who have experienced trauma in their early years (Brodzinsky, Smith, & Brodzinsky, 1998). Assisted reproduction procedures such as surrogacy and egg donation have also been predicted to result in an increased risk of psychological problems for children in heterosexual families due to the absence of a genetic and/or gestational link with the mother. Although the existing empirical evidence does not support this claim (Golombok, Jadva, Lycett, E., Murray, & MacCallum, 2005; Golombok, MacCallum, Murray, Lycett, & Jadva, 2006a; Golombok, Murray, Jadva, MacCallum, & Lycett, 2004a; Golombok et al., 2004b; Golombok et al., 2006b), little is known about children born through surrogacy or egg donation beyond the early years, particularly the consequences of ongoing contact with the egg donor or surrogate mother. Moreover, studies of adoptive families and assisted reproduction families created through gamete donation demonstrate that the quality of communication about the nature of their family, and the circumstances of their birth including their genetic origins, is central to children's psychological well-being and self-esteem (Daniels & Taylor, 1993; Freeman, Jadva, Kramer, & Golombok, 2009; Turner & Coyle, 2000) indicating that, for children with gay fathers, open communication about their origins and their family structure may be of crucial importance. Just as with adopted children (Grotevant & McRoy, 1998) and children conceived by donor insemination (Jadva, Freeman, Kramer, & Golombok, 2009), it appears that parents should talk to children about their nontraditional family at an early age. Children who were told about their gay father when young were reported to be more accepting than those who found out when older (Turner, Scadden, & Harris, 1990).

In the first controlled study of parenting and child development in gay-father families conducted in the United States, Farr and Patterson (2009) compared 29 gay couples with 27 lesbian couples and 52 heterosexual

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couples, all of whom had an adopted child aged between 1 and 5 years. The children in the various family types did not differ with respect to psychological adjustment as assessed by the parent or teacher version of the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2000) or the gender development of boys or girls as measured by the Pre-School Activities Inventory (Golombok & Rust, 2009). Regarding parenting behavior, no differences in disciplinary techniques or parenting stress were identified according to family type. However, heterosexual fathers perceived themselves as less competent at parenting than the other parents and a greater division of labor in relation to child care was reported by the heterosexual couples than by the lesbian or gay couples. As with studies of other family types (Golombok, 2000), family processes were found to be the most important predictors of child outcomes.

*Gender Development.* What about children's gender development—are children who grow up with gay fathers likely to follow a different path from those with lesbian or heterosexual parents resulting from the presence of one or two male gay parents and the absence of a female parent from the home? Gender development is generally conceptualized according to three constructs: (a) gender identity, that is, a person's concept of him- or herself as male or female; (b) gender role behavior, that is, behavior that is considered to be typical for boys or girls in a particular culture; and (c) sexual orientation, that is, whether a person identifies as heterosexual, bisexual, lesbian, or gay. Although a male gender identity, masculine gender role behavior, and a heterosexual orientation typically go together, as do a female gender identity, feminine gender role behavior, and a heterosexual orientation, different permutations of these three constructs are not unusual. For example, a man may have a male gender identity, masculine gender role behavior, and a homosexual orientation, or he may have a female gender identity, feminine gender role behavior, and a heterosexual orientation. Similarly, a variety of patterns can be found among women (Hines, 2004).

A range of theories has been put forward to explain the processes involved in gender development, each suggesting a different developmental pathway for the sons and daughters of gay fathers. The most influential theories of gender development have arisen from biological (Hines, 2004), social learning (Bandura, 1977; Mischel, 1966, 1970), and cognitive developmental (Kohlberg, 1966; Martin, 1993) perspectives. It is now generally agreed that sex differences in behavior result from an interplay among biological, psychological, and social mechanisms from early fetal development onward (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Golombok & Fivush, 1994; Hines, 2004; Ruble, Martin, & Berenbaum, 2006), with parents playing a minor, and possibly insignificant, role (Golombok & Tasker, 1996).

A few studies have been conducted in the United States of the gender development of the sons and daughters of gay fathers, focusing on children who remained with their mother. With respect to gender identity and gender role behavior, a small survey found the children of gay fathers to be developing typical gender role identification and gender role behavior (Harris & Turner, 1986; Turner et al., 1990). Other investigators have examined sexual orientation. From interviews with gay fathers about the sexual

orientation of 27 adult daughters and 21 adult sons, Miller (1979) reported that 3 daughters identified as lesbian, and 1 son identified as gay. Six sons and 13 daughters of gay fathers, aged between 14 and 35 years old, were interviewed by Bozett (1987). Two sons reported being gay, and one daughter identified as bisexual. In a more extensive study of 55 gay fathers and their 82 sons, the large majority of the sons were reported by their fathers to be heterosexual, with 9% classified as gay or bisexual (Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, & Mikach, 1995). Data obtained directly from around half of the sons generally validated the fathers' reports. As suggested by Bailey et al., fathers with gay offspring may have been more likely to participate in research of this kind because they believed that the researchers would find them especially interesting.

The only investigation to include a control group of young adults with heterosexual fathers, thus allowing a comparison between individuals with gay and heterosexual fathers using identical criteria for the assessment of sexual orientation, is a study of 24 gay fathers and 24 heterosexual fathers by Tasker and Barrett (2004) in the United Kingdom. Each group of fathers, matched for age and social class, had 36 adult sons and daughters who participated in a standardized, in-depth interview about their psychosexual development. The children of gay fathers were more likely than the children of heterosexual fathers to have been attracted to someone of the same gender and to have had a sexual relationship with someone of the same gender. All of the offspring of heterosexual fathers identified as heterosexual. Whereas the large majority of offspring of gay fathers also identified as heterosexual, six young adults did not. Of these, two sons identified as gay, one daughter identified as lesbian, and two sons and one daughter identified as bisexual.

The investigations by Bailey et al. (1995) and Tasker and Barrett (2004) obtained additional data on family environment factors that potentially could be related to the development of a lesbian, gay, or bisexual orientation for the offspring of gay fathers. Examples include the young person's frequency of contact with the father, acceptance of the father's gay identity, the father's response to the young person's partners, and the quality of the young person's relationship with the father. These possible influences were found to be unrelated to the young people's sexual orientation, suggesting that family environment factors do not explain the greater same-gender sexual interest shown by the adult offspring of gay fathers. The lack of influence of family environment factors in their study led Bailey et al. to argue that genetic factors may be involved. Nevertheless, the significant association between same-gender relationships and a more positive response by fathers to the young person's partners found in Tasker and Barrett's study is in line with Golombok and Tasker's (1996) conclusion that children who grow up in lesbian-mother families may be more likely to engage in same-sex relationships because they are not subject to the disapproval experienced by their peers from heterosexual homes. Research on the sexual orientation of children of same-sex parents is in its infancy, and no conclusions can be drawn about the relative influence of family environment and genetic factors. As with other aspects of human development and behavior, the answer is likely to involve a complex interplay between the two (Rutter, 2005), with different individuals following different

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pathways from conception to adult life. What is more certain, however, is that the majority of children of gay fathers identify as heterosexual, indicating that the sexual orientation of parents is, at most, a minor influence on the sexual orientation of their daughters and sons.

As described above, only one controlled study has been conducted of the development of young children who are actually living in gay-father families (Farr & Patterson, 2009). In this study, no difference was identified in the sex-typed behavior of boys or girls in comparison with their counterparts from matched groups of lesbian and heterosexual families as measured by the Pre-School Activities Inventory (Golombok & Rust, 2009). Thus, the commonly held assumption that children raised by gay fathers would show atypical gender role behavior was not supported by the findings of this study.

### LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In spite of the pioneering studies of a small group of researchers in the 1970s and 1980s, studies of gay fathers and their children lag well behind those of families headed by lesbian mothers. Whereas much is known about children in lesbian-mother families, there is currently only one controlled study of children who live with gay fathers (Farr & Patterson, 2009). This is largely because children with gay fathers have generally been raised by their heterosexual mothers. It is only in recent years, through adoption, surrogacy, and a variety of parenting arrangements between gay fathers and heterosexual or lesbian mothers that children have begun to reside with gay fathers. Research on gay-father families is currently at the same place as research on lesbian-mother families was in the 1970s.

Although little is known about children who grow up with their gay fathers, the body of research that does exist has begun to shed light on the experiences of gay fathers and their children who live apart. These studies are not without their problems. Most are qualitative studies of small samples. Moreover, reliance on volunteers means that the samples may be biased. The nature of such bias is unknown and can be overcome only through the recruitment of representative samples. It is conceivable, however, that fathers whose children were experiencing problems may have been less likely to take part in research on children's psychological well-being. A further limitation is the absence of comparison groups of lesbian or heterosexual families in the majority of studies conducted so far. As a result, it is not known whether the findings regarding gay-father families also apply to other family types, or whether they arise from confounding factors such as age of the children, socioeconomic status, or route to parenthood. For example, until demographically matched comparison groups of lesbian-mother families are assessed using identical measures, we shall not know whether children of gay fathers are more or less likely to experience homophobia than are children of lesbian mothers. It should also be noted that the majority of gay fathers who have participated in research are white, college-educated, and "out" about their sexuality. They also tend to live in cities or areas that are tolerant of diversity, and thus their experiences may not be generalizable to less accepting communities.

Research on lesbian-mother families has helped dispel myths about the problems that were widely assumed to arise for children. The findings of the studies initiated in the 1970s and continuing to this day have contributed to policy making and legislation in relation to same-sex parenting; not just for lesbian women but also for gay men. Many changes have taken place over the past 30 years; it is now rare for lesbian mothers to lose custody of their children following divorce on the grounds of their sexual orientation; in some countries and some states of the United States, lesbian and gay individuals can adopt children, sometimes jointly; and an increasing number of fertility clinics are offering assisted reproductive technologies not only to lesbian women but also to gay men. Although gay men experience many more obstacles to parenthood than do lesbian women, there is a slow shift toward acceptance of gay men as fathers. This was highlighted in November 2008 when Florida's 30-year-old ban on gay adoption was declared unconstitutional. In her ruling, the judge stated:

Based on evidence presented from experts from all over this country and abroad, it is clear that sexual orientation is not a predictor of a person's ability to parent. . . . The most important factor in ensuring a well-adjusted child is the quality of parenting.

The move toward same-sex marriage and other forms of legal recognition of same-sex relationships (Herek, 2006; Wintemute, 2004, 2005, 2006), as well as the greater openness of adoption agencies (Brodzinsky et al., 2002) and fertility clinics to offer treatment to gay men (Ethics Committee of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, 2006), is likely to produce an increase in, and greater acceptance of, gay-father families in the years to come.

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