



# FocusFamilyINSIGHT

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**Date:** January 23, 2010  
**To:** Ever-Curious Students of the Family  
**Re:** **USATODAY: New Research on Same-Sex Parenting**

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## “Same-sex couples can be effective parents, researchers find”

This headline in *USATODAY*<sup>1</sup> this week has raised quite a few questions from those interested in family.

The story highlights a new study just published in the current *Journal of Marriage and Family* written by two respected - but renowned family revisionist - sociologists. The article seeks to challenge the very basis of - not only Focus on the Family's understanding of family but - humanity's cross-cultural and consistent historical understanding of family and parenting: *that the sustained cooperation of mothers and fathers is important for healthy child-development.*

*But fear not*, this study does nothing to under-cut this most basic and important human reality.

There are some *VERY* serious problems with their conclusions that students of the family should be aware of. It is a challenge knowing where to start, so I begin with the most egregious weaknesses.

**#1 Demonstrates Extreme Ignorance of the Current Literature** – Regarding the idea that mothers and fathers both play essential roles in proper child development, the authors have this to say in the conclusion of their article:

The entrenched conviction that children need both a mother and a father inflames culture wars...Research to date, however, does not support this claim. Contrary to popular belief, studies have not shown that 'compared to all other family forms, families headed by married, biological parents are best for children.' Research has not identified gender-exclusive parenting abilities (with the partial exception of lactation). ...At this point, no research supports the widely held conviction that the gender of parents matters for child well-being.<sup>2</sup>

In reality, there are few things in the social sciences agreed upon so widely and backed by a larger body of reliable data. Note the language used by these authors: that the importance of mom and dad to children is merely an “entrenched conviction” to inflame the culture war and lactation is the only consequential “partial” difference in mothers and fathers.

Here are just two examples from mainstream sources – unlike our authors in question here - whose only partisan interests are child well-being.

The non-partisan, widely-respected research organization *Child Trends* concludes,

An extensive body of research tells us that children do best when they grow up with both biological parents in a low-conflict marriage... Thus, it is not simply the presence of two parents, as some have assumed, but the presence of *two biological parents* that seem to support child development.<sup>3</sup> (emphasis in original)

The more liberal *Center for Law and Social Policy* examined the same question on family status and child wellbeing:

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2010-01-21-parentgender21\\_ST\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2010-01-21-parentgender21_ST_N.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Timothy J. Biblarz and Judith Stacey, “How Does The Gender of Parents Matter?” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72 (2010): 3-22, p. 16, 17.

<sup>3</sup> Kristin Anderson Moore, et al., “Marriage From a Child’s Perspective: How Does Family Structure Affect Children, and What Can We Do about It?” *Child Trends Research Brief*, June 2002, p. 1-2.





# MEMO

Over the past 20 years, a body of research has developed on how changes in patterns of family structure affect children. Most researchers now agree that together these studies support the notion that, on average, children do better when raised by two married, biological parents who have low-conflict relationships.<sup>4</sup>

But contrast these two summaries with the conclusion this study makes:

Thus, to be true to the best scientific evidence, one should say: Compared to all other family forms, families headed by (at least) two committed, compatible parents are generally best for children.<sup>5</sup>

At least two parents... and no mention of either marriage or parental sex distinction!

*Do you see where these authors are going?* Moms and dads are optional and any nice couple or group can do the job. Thus the only thing that any child *really* needs from her mother is her egg and sperm from her father. Their necessary acts as parents ends right there because anyone else can pick up the task without the slightest impact on the child we are told. But it gets better. We see next how the article indicates that men actually serve their children best by being mere sperm-donors.

**Two Moms Are Best** – This article overplays its hand by not merely saying that same-sex parented can do as well as mom/dad homes as the USATODAY headline states, but by saying two moms do better. Read it for yourself:

In fact, based strictly on the published science, one could argue that two women parent better on average than a woman and a man... Lesbian coparents seem to outperform comparable married heterosexual, biological parents on several measures even while being denied the substantial privileges of marriage.<sup>6</sup>

*Just try to take such a statement seriously.* Gay-activists are better than nature at pointing us to the family form that best supports nature's offspring. Silly nature and nature's God has made us settle for sub-par families all these millennia. The authors claim this superior value in lesbian families is because two mothers provide "a double dose of caretaking, communication, and intimacy."<sup>7</sup> Reading it twice doesn't make it sound any more intelligent.

**Greater Volatility Between Two Moms** - But this "double-dose" of mother care which is supposedly so good for children can be, the authors admit, toxic to the relationship causing these homes to break-up at disturbingly high rates.

"...a double-dose of maternal investment sometimes fostered jealousy and competition between comothers which the asymmetry of the women's genetic, reproductive, and breast-feeding ties to their infant could exacerbate."<sup>8</sup>

They cite one major comparative study between hetero and lesbian homes where, in the 5-year period of the study, 6 of the 14 lesbian-mother-headed homes had broken up compared to only 5 of the 38 mom/dad headed homes. This is explained because the "comparatively high standards lesbians bring to their intimate unions correlate with higher dissolution rates."<sup>9</sup> These moms have trouble maintaining relationships simply because, as Ray Barone's mom in *Everybody Loves Raymond* would explain her own mothering short-comings, *they are only guilty of loving too much.*

**Conclusion** – The importance of mothers and fathers for children just a bit more than an "entrenched conviction" to stir up the culture war. It is a universal reality that God has put within human experience. We find it everywhere we find people.

Communities and children do better when the people who create the babies cooperate to raise them. Centuries of experience, as well as a wealth of research reveals this. This is why all cultures have this thing called marriage – the social blessing and influence that keeps two sexually-active people exclusively bound – in order to ensure that our community's next generation is raised by the people who will care for them best. And these two people are universally known as mother and father.

*And no research will ever be able prove these two distinct kinds of parents are not needed.*

<sup>4</sup> Mary Parke, "Are Married Parents Really Better for Children?" *Center for Law and Social Policy Policy Brief*, May 2003, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Biblarz and Stacey, 2010, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Biblarz and Stacey, 2010, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> Biblarz and Stacey, 2010, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> Biblarz and Stacey, 2010, p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> Biblarz and Stacey, 2010, p. 12.