
A Boy, His Two Mothers, And Psychosexual Development

Heterosexuality and two-parent families should not be implied to be the norm, says psychologist

A California clinical psychologist is urging mental health professionals to begin developing new therapies to aid children who are brought up in gay households.

Toni Vaughn Heineman, DMH, put forth her theories in *Psychoanalytic Psychology* (2004, Vol. 21, No. 1, 99-115). She stressed that children of gay parents should not be compared to those of heterosexual parents in a way that implies that heterosexuality is the norm.

According to Heineman, "Children of gay and lesbian parents must be offered theories of healthy development that include them." She observes that Freudian theories of sexual development were based upon the heterosexual family as the norm, and that "homophobia" has been institutionalized within psychoanalysis.

In addition, she believes that the internalized, anti-homosexual attitudes of the gay parents themselves have "contributed to our lack of theoretical attention to the psychosexual development of children living and growing up in these families."

The author says research comparing different family structures is counterproductive.

"Research on the children of gay and lesbian parents that

focuses on comparisons with the children of heterosexual parents, including comparisons with children of single heterosexual mothers, runs the danger of perpetuating the hetero-centric assumptions of our current developmental theories."

For Some Children, Having Three Parents is "Normal"

In discussing children growing up in gay households, she targets the developmental challenges of boys who are reared in lesbian homes. She suggests that a boy in a lesbian household must move from viewing his parents as a dyadic relationship to a triadic relationship. In this new relationship, the boy not only has two mothers, but must cope with the reality of an absent father.

Will children in homosexual households become homosexuals themselves? She writes: "Although most children of homosexual parents identify themselves as heterosexual, it is not surprising that they report more homosexual experimentation than the children of heterosexual parents. Lesbian parents may offer their children a range of identificatory possibilities, at least in the area of sexual object choice—perhaps wishing for their children to be different from them, while being open to their being like them, in this regard." ■