Constitutional Court, Republic of Colombia

Turandot, Fedora y la Niña Lakme v. Defensor Segundo de Familia de Rionegro,
Expediente No. T-2597191

FRIENDS OF THE COURT INTERVENTION ON PARENTING BY LESBIANS, GAY MEN, AND BISEXUALS

Submitted on this 4th of August, 2014 by:

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THE FRIENDS OF THE COURT

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Gary Gates, PhD, is a Williams Distinguished Scholar at the Williams Institute at University of California Los Angeles School of Law. He is a recognized expert on the demography of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) population. He co-authored *The Gay and Lesbian Atlas* and publishes extensively on the demographic, geographic, and economic characteristics of the LGBT population. Gates regularly consults with federal and state governments and non-governmental organizations on data collection issues regarding LGBT populations. In *DeBoer v. Snyder*, he provided "highly credible" expert testimony relied upon by the court in holding unconstitutional the state of Michigan's prohibition on marriage for same-sex couples. 973 F. Supp. 2d 757, 763-64 (E.D. Mich. 2014). He holds a PhD in Public Policy from the Heinz College of Public Policy and Management at Carnegie Mellon University, a Master of Divinity degree from St. Vincent College, and a BS in Computer Science from the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown.

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

Parenting by lesbians, gay men, and bisexual men and women (LGB) has grown more visible internationally over the past few decades. Research on LGB parents and their children has proliferated alongside this increasing visibility. This friend-of-the-court brief reviews that research, with a particular focus on scholarship that has been subjected to rigorous peer review. While the research discussed herein largely concerns LGB parenting in the United States and Europe, this body of research nonetheless can assist the Court to better understand LGB parenting in Colombia as well as the issues presented in this case.

More specifically, this brief explains that: (1) many LGB people become parents in a variety of ways; (2) lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parents show little differences in regard to mental health, parenting stress, and parenting competence; (3) there are few differences between children raised by same-sex parents and heterosexual parents in terms of self-esteem, quality of life, psychological adjustment, or social functioning; (4) the relationship between a child and his or her LGB parents has not been found to differ with that of children raised by heterosexual couples in terms of parental warmth, emotional involvement, and quality of relationship; and (5) the lack of legal recognition of the second parent in a same-sex relationship may threaten the parent-child relationship after the dissolution of the parent's relationship.

ARGUMENT

This brief addresses, first, family building by LGB people, then functioning and experiences of LGB parents and their children, and then the relationships between LGB parents and their children.

I. Family Building

LGB men and women build families in a variety of ways. In the United States, approximately 37% of LGB identified individuals have had a child (Gates, 2013). The majority of LGB parents likely have their children in the context of heterosexual

relationships or marriages, as opposed to conceiving or adopting in the context of same-sex relationships (Gates, 2011, 2013; Tasker, 2013). Some of these individuals may enter same-sex relationships once their children are born or adopted, and their children may ultimately be raised in LGB stepfamilies (Tasker, 2013). Such LGB stepfamily arrangements likely represent the dominant family arrangement for LGB parents (Gates, 2011; 2013).

Other LGB people become parents in the context of same-sex committed relationships, a phenomenon that has increased due in part to advancements in reproductive technology and increased acceptance of LGB parenting (Goldberg, 2010; Savin-Williams, 2008). Families that are initiated in the context of same-sex committed relationships are often referred to as intentional or planned LGB-parent families. LGB individuals and same-sex couples typically choose one of several potential routes to parenthood: donor insemination (for women); adoption; or surrogacy. Female same-sex couples that choose donor insemination must decide who will carry the child, a decision that may have significant legal implications with respect to who will have legal rights and responsibilities over the resulting child. In addition to donor insemination, both female and male same-sex couples may seek to adopt as a means of becoming parents. In fact, same-sex couples are more likely to pursue adoption than different-sex couples (Gates, 2013). Finally, some LGB-parent families are formed through surrogacy; for example, when a woman gives birth to a child of a male same-sex couple and where one of the men is the biological farther.

For many same-sex couples, there is only one legal parent even though both members of the couple may equally parent the child. This is because the status as a legal parent is automatically conveyed to the parent who has a biological connection to a child. Similarly, while some couples raise an adopted child together, only one of them may have officially been the adoptive parent. Therefore, second-parent adoption is important because it allows both members of the same-sex couple to become the legal parent of the child, bestowing important rights and responsibilities on each parent, as well as affording greater protection and security to the child.

II. LGB-Parent Families' Functioning and Experiences

What happens after family formation for LGB couples and families? A growing body of research has addressed this question, by focusing on parent, child, and family functioning within LGB-parent households. Initially, research in this field was motivated (and has served) to dispel concerns about the potentially negative impact of growing up with LGB parents (see Goldberg, 2010) by comparing children raised by LGB parents to their counterparts raised by heterosexual parents. More recent research has examined more deeply the lived experiences and dynamics within LGB-parent families, as well as the strengths of LGB parents from which all families can learn (e.g., Bos & Gartrell, 2010a; Bos, Gartrell, Peyser, & van Balen, 2008; Dempsey, 2010; Gartrell et al., 1996; 1999; 2000; Gartrell, Deck, Rodas, Peyser, & Banks, 2005; Goldberg, 2007a; Goldberg & Allen, 2013a; van Gelderen, Gartrell, Bos, van Rooij, & Hermanns, 2012a). Thus, in

the following sections, we review the comparative research that has been done, emphasizing studies that examine processes and dynamics within LGB-parent families.

A. LGB Parents: Functioning and Experiences

Despite concerns that the sexual orientation of LGB parents will negatively affect children in both indirect and direct ways, research is consistent in indicating that sexuality is not relevant to adults' mental health or parenting capacities. Specifically, studies that have compared lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parents in terms of mental health (e.g., psychological distress or depression), perceived parenting stress, and parenting competence have found few differences based on family structure (Bos, van Balen, & van den Boom, 2004; Goldberg & Smith, 2009; Golombok et al., 2003; Leung, Erich, & Kanenberg, 2005; Shechner, Slone, Lobel, & Schecter, 2013).

That LGB parents demonstrate such positive outcomes suggests remarkable resilience, given that they develop in a heterosexist society and are exposed to stigma in multiple contexts. Specifically, LGB parents are vulnerable to nonsupport and alienation from their families of origin (Goldberg, 2010). They also confront lack of recognition and support in the legal sphere (Goldberg, 2010). Consistent with this, research has found that lesbian and gay parents who perceive less support from their families, and who live in less supportive legal contexts, tend to report poorer mental health (Goldberg & Smith, 2011; Shechner et al., 2013; Shapiro, Peterson, & Stewart, 2009). Other conditions that have been linked to poorer well-being within lesbian-mother and gay-father samples include: higher levels of internalized homophobia (Goldberg & Smith, 2011), child behavior problems (Goldberg & Smith, 2008b), and low levels of supervisor support (Goldberg & Smith, 2013b). Qualitative research has highlighted the ways in which multiple system-level stressors (i.e., adopting via the child welfare system; encountering stigma in the adoption process) may combine together to place stress on newly adoptive lesbian and gay parents (Goldberg, Moyer, Kinkler, & Richardson, 2012).

B. Children of LGB Parents: Functioning and Experiences

Insomuch as homosexuality continues to be stigmatized in society, research has often focused on determining whether the psychological, social, emotional, and educational outcomes of children with same-sex parents appear to differ from those of children with different-sex parents. Studies have also examined the gender development and sexual attraction/orientation of children in LGB-parent families. Thus, much of the research on children's experiences in LGB-parent families has been comparative: that is, children in same-sex parent families are compared to children in different-sex-parent families.

1. Psychological Adjustment

Research has documented few differences in psychological adjustment outcomes in children and adolescents as a function of family structure (Goldberg, 2010). Specifically, studies have found few differences between children raised by lesbian parents and children raised by heterosexual parents in terms of self-esteem, quality of

life, internalizing problems (e.g., depression), externalizing problems (e.g., behavioral problems), or social functioning (Farr, Forssell, & Patterson, 2010; Gartrell & Bos, 2010; Goldberg & Smith, 2013a; Golombok et al., 2003; Shechner et al., 2013; Tasker & Golombok, 1997; Wainright & Patterson, 2006; Wainright, Russell, & Patterson, 2004; van Gelderen, Bos, Gartrell, Hermanns, & Perrin, 2012b).

Further, some studies point to potential strengths associated with growing up in a planned lesbian-parent family. In a study of 17-year-olds raised by lesbian mothers from birth, for example, adolescents were rated significantly higher in social competence, and significantly lower in social problems, rule-breaking, and aggressive behavior, as compared to an age- and gender-matched group of adolescents with heterosexual parents (Gartrell & Bos, 2010). Likewise, other studies have found that young adults and adults cite various strengths associated with growing up with LGB parents, including resilience and empathy toward diverse and marginalized groups (Goldberg, 2007a; Saffron, 1998).

2. Academic Adjustment

A few studies have examined the academic achievement outcomes of children with LGB parents. These studies provide no evidence that children with same-sex parents demonstrate problems with respect to their academic and educational outcomes (Gartrell & Bos, 2010; Potter, 2012; Rosenfeld, 2010; Wainright et al., 2004). Growing up in a same-sex parent family is not related to delayed progression through elementary school (Rosenfeld, 2010), or to children's academic achievement (i.e., grades; Gartrell & Bos, 2010; Wainright et al., 2004). After controlling for family transitions, a large random sample study of Canadian families also found that the gender composition of parents was not a significant factor in predicting high school graduation (Allen, 2013). Further, Gartrell, Bos, Peyser, Deck, and Rodas (2012) presented data on 17-year-old adolescents raised by lesbian mothers from birth that showed that the sample's overall high school grade point averages typically fell in the A- to B+ range, illustrating higher than average academic performance.

3. Social Functioning

Studies have also found that the social functioning of children and adolescents with same-sex parents is similar to that of children and adolescents with different-sex parents (Gartrell et al., 2005; Gartrell & Bos, 2010; Goldberg, 2010; Golombok et al., 2003; Wainright & Patterson, 2008). That is, according to self-, peer-, and parent-reports, these two groups do not appear to differ in their social competence or relationships with peers. For example, a sample of intentional lesbian-mother households, Gartrell et al. (2005) found that parents' ratings of their 10-year-old children's social competence were in the normal range, as compared to national age and gender norms. Further, according to the parents, 81% of children related well to their peers (Gartrell et al., 2005). By the time that these children were 17, they indicated that they had active social networks, as evidenced by many close and long-term friendships (Gartrell et al., 2012).

There is evidence that family process variables (i.e., what happens within the family) are more important in predicting social competence than either family structure or

parental sexual orientation (Goldberg, 2010). For example, adolescents with female same-sex parents and adolescents with heterosexual parents do not differ in their self-reported quality of relationships with peers (Goldberg, 2010; Wainright & Patterson, 2008). Rather, regardless of family type, adolescents whose parents describe closer relationships with them report having more friends and higher quality relationships with their peers (Wainright & Patterson, 2008).

4. Teasing and Bullying

Some studies have examined teasing and bullying experiences, specifically, in school-age children (MacCallum & Golombok, 2004; Rivers, Poteat, & Noret, 2008; van Gelderen et al., 2012a). Studies that compare the teasing/bullying experiences of children with LGB parents with those of children with heterosexual parents are conflicting, with some suggesting higher rates of reported bullying among children with LGB parents (Kosciw & Diaz, 2008) and others finding no differences in rates of reported bullying experiences, according to self- and parent-report (MacCallum & Golombok, 2004; Rivers et al., 2008). Of note is that even if rates of teasing do not differ, the content of teasing – what children are teased about – may differ for children of LGB versus heterosexual parents. Vanfraussen, Ponjaert-Kristoffersen, and Brewaeys (2002) found that the some children of lesbians, unlike the children of heterosexual parents, were teased related to their families.

There is some evidence that children with LGB parents may be particularly likely to experience teasing at certain developmental stages (Gartrell et al., 2000, 2005; Kuvalanka, Leslie, & Radina, 2013; Leddy, Gartrell, & Bos, 2012; Ray & Gregory, 2001). Namely, there is evidence that while teasing and discrimination related to their parents' sexual orientation is rare among preschool-age children (Gartrell et al., 2000), such experiences become more common by the time children enter formal schooling, particularly middle school (Gartrell et al., 2005; Kosciw & Diaz, 2008). Interestingly, some research shows that by young adulthood, some individuals with LGB parents find that rather than being a source of stigma, their parents' sexuality is met with positive reactions (e.g., their peers think that it is "cool" that they have lesbian moms/gay dads; Goldberg, Kinkler, Richardson, & Downing, 2012; Leddy et al., 2012). More accepting peer attitudes are typically attributed by participants to their peers' increasing maturity, such that they "became less outwardly heteronormative over time" (Kuvalanka et al., 2013, p. 19).

Children with LGB parents who do not encounter peer discrimination sometimes attribute it to the geographic region or community in which they reside, and the type of school that they attend (e.g., progressive or private schools) (Leddy et al., 2012; Ray & Gregory, 2001). Indeed, there is some evidence that middle- and upper middle-class LGB parents may be at an advantage with regard to protecting their children from bullying (Casper & Schultz, 1999; Kosciw & Diaz, 2008). Having more economic resources may enable these parents to choose places to live that are safe from sexual orientation-related discrimination and to send their children to school where harassment related to their family structure is less likely to occur.

Recent research has begun to examine the linkages between experiences of stigma/bullying and psychosocial outcomes in children of LGB parents. Several studies suggest that perceived stigmatization by peers is related to higher rates of absenteeism at school (due to lower perceived safety; Kosciw & Diaz, 2008) as well as compromised well-being in children of LGB parents (Bos & van Balen, 2008; Gartrell et al., 2005). Notably, some studies found that although perceived stigmatization and homophobia by peers had a negative impact on children's well-being overall, attending schools with LGBT curricula, and having strong parent-child relationships, buffered the negative impact of stigma on well-being (Bos & Gartrell, 2010a; Bos, et al., 2008). Thus, both the broader school context and family processes may have important implications for children's adjustment, even offsetting the negative impact of peer stigmatization.

5. Gender-Typed Play, Behavior, and Attitudes

Because children who grow up in same-sex parent families from birth typically lack either a male or female live-in parent, attention has been paid to whether these children demonstrate gender-typed play, behaviors, and attitudes that differ from those of children with different-sex parents (see Goldberg, 2010). In one of the few studies to include lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parents, Farr and colleagues (2010) examined the gender-typed play behavior of preschool-age adopted children and found no differences in gender-typed play behavior by family structure (i.e., lesbian-, gay-, and heterosexual-parent status). Similar findings were documented by Golombok et al. (2003), who studied school-age children in lesbian-mother and heterosexual-mother families.

However, a study of preschool-age adopted children with lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parents found that the behavior of boys and girls in lesbian- and gay-parent families were less gender-stereotyped than the play behavior of boys and girls in heterosexual-parent families, according to parent reports, and the sons of lesbian mothers were less masculine in their play behavior than sons of gay fathers and sons of heterosexual parents (Goldberg, Kashy, & Smith, 2012). Regardless of the reasons for these differences in play behavior, it is important not to view them as necessarily negative. There is increasing awareness by both educators and parents that the socialization of strict adherence to traditional gender roles limits boys' and girls' development, insomuch as different activities, toys, and types of play facilitate different types of learning and skill-building (Eisenberg, Martin, & Fabes, 1996). Consistent with this notion, Bos and Sandfort (2010) compared children in heterosexual-parent families and children in lesbian-mother families. Children's psychosocial adjustment did not differ by family type, but children with lesbian parents perceived less parental pressure to conform to gender stereotypes and were less likely to view their own gender as superior as compared to children with heterosexual parents. Similarly, Goldberg (2007a) found that adults raised by LGB parents often voiced their perspective that growing up with LGB parents had benefited their growth and development, insomuch as they were not raised with rigid stereotypes of what "boys do" and what "girls do," enabling them to develop interests and abilities outside of the gender box.

Importantly, research on adolescents raised by lesbian mothers from birth has found that youth with male role models were similar in psychological adjustment to adolescents without male role models (Bos, Goldberg, van Gelderen, & Gartrell, 2012), suggesting that the presence or absence of male or female role models should not be viewed as a central factor influencing child well-being in LGB-parent families. Moreover, as other authors have pointed out (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Goldberg, 2010), it may be inappropriate and short-sighted to place so much emphasis on the significance of male and female role models in these families, when children in general tend to be exposed to a wide range of adults – male and female – in their daily lives (e.g., teachers, coaches, babysitters, family members, parents' friends) (see Goldberg and Allen, 2007).

6. Sexuality and Sexual Orientation

In addition to gender development, sexual orientation and sexuality have also been focal outcomes of interest in research on children with sexual minority parents (Goldberg, 2010). It is possible that children with LGB parents may be more likely to engage in same-sex behavior because it is constructed as a healthy and acceptable expression of one's sexuality or because that their parents are themselves in a same-sex relationship (see Goldberg, 2007a; Tasker & Golombok, 1997). At the same time, scholars emphasize that social influences must be considered alongside evidence that genetics plays a role in determining sexual orientation, such that identical twins tend to be more similar in sexual orientation than non-identical (fraternal) twins (Kendler, Thornton, Gilman, & Kessler, 2000).

Existing research suggests that the children of LGB parents do not seem to self-identify as exclusively lesbian/gay at significantly higher rates than children of heterosexual parents (Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, & Mikach, 1995; Golombok & Tasker, 1996; Huggins, 1989; Tasker & Golombok, 1997). However, a significantly greater number of young adults with lesbian mothers reported that they had thought about the future possibility of having a same-sex relationship, and they were also more likely to have had a relationship with someone of the same sex. Further, daughters of lesbian mothers had a higher number of sexual partners in young adulthood than daughters of heterosexual mothers, while sons of lesbian mothers had fewer partners than sons of heterosexual mothers (Golombok & Tasker, 1996; Tasker & Golombok, 1997). Thus, in contrast to the children of heterosexual mothers, who tended to conform to gender-based norms, the children of lesbian mothers were more likely to challenge them.

In a more recent study, Gartrell, Bos, and Goldberg (2011) compared a sample of adolescents with lesbian mothers with a sample of age- and gender-matched adolescents with heterosexual parents, and found that 17-year-old girls and boys reared by lesbian parents were no more likely to have engaged in same-sex sexual contact than their peers reared in heterosexual-parent households. Among those reared in lesbian-parent households, nearly one in five adolescent girls with lesbian mothers self-identified as bisexual, and none as lesbian; less than one in 10 boys self-identified as gay or bisexual (Gartrell, Bos, & Goldberg, 2010). These studies, taken together, suggest the possibility that adolescents with lesbian mothers may demonstrate more expansive, less categorical

notions of sexuality. Indeed, Cohen and Kuvalanka (2011) studied 10 lesbian mothers and found that a primary goal of their sexuality-related discussions with their children was to teach them about diverse notions of sexual orientation and reproduction.

7. Regnerus Paper Is Fundamentally Flawed and Unreliable

One paper published by sociologist Mark Regnerus, utilizing data from his New Family Structures Study (NFSS), purports to call into question the substantial research showing that parental sexual orientation and the gender of parents do not negatively affect child well-being outcomes (Regnerus, 2012). Scholars have been highly critical of methodological flaws in this paper and have raised concerns about possible irregularities in the scholarly review process undertaken by *Social Science Research*, the journal that published the paper. More than 200 scholars, including sociologists, psychologists, and physicians, published a letter in *Social Science Research* stating:

> "We are very concerned about the academic integrity of the peer review process for this paper as well as its intellectual merit. We question the decision of *Social Science Research* to publish the paper, and particularly, to publish it without an extensive, rigorous peer review process and commentary from scholars with explicit expertise on LGBT family research. The methodologies used in this paper and the interpretation of the findings are inappropriate."

(Gates et al., 2012).

The American Sociological Association (ASA) also questioned the intellectual merit of the Regnerus paper, stating: "Critically, for multiple reasons and as Regnerus acknowledges, his study did not examine, and provides no conclusions regarding, the wellbeing of children who lived with and were raised by same-sex parents" (ASA, 2013). Further, the ASA explained that "the Regnerus study obscures the fact that it did not specifically examine children raised by two same-sex parents. Accordingly, it cannot speak to the impact of same-sex parenting on child outcomes" (ASA, 2013).

A statement issued by the Chair of the Department of Sociology at the University of Texas at Austin, where Regnerus serves as an Associate Professor, stated:

> "Dr. Regnerus' opinions are his own. They do not reflect the views of the Sociology Department of The University of Texas at Austin. Nor do they reflect the views of the American Sociological Association, which takes the position that the conclusions he draws from his study of gay parenting are fundamentally flawed on conceptual and methodological grounds and that findings from Dr. Regnerus' work have been cited inappropriately in efforts to diminish the civil rights and legitimacy of LBGTQ partners and their families. We encourage society as a whole to evaluate his claims."

(Sociology Department at the University of Texas at Austin, 2014).

The scholarly critiques regarding flaws in the Regnerus paper were found meritorious by the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. Judge Bernard A. Friedman concluded: "The Court finds Regnerus's testimony entirely unbelievable and not worthy of serious consideration" (*DeBoer v. Snyder*, 2014). The court further concluded: "[Regnerus's] NFSS is flawed on its face, as it purported to study 'a large, random sample of American young adults (ages 18-39) who were *raised* in different types of 'family arrangements' (emphasis added), but in fact it did not study this at all, as Regnerus equated being raised by a same-sex couple with having ever lived with a parent who had a 'romantic relationship with someone of the same sex' for any length of time. Whatever Regnerus may have found in this 'study,' he certainly cannot purport to have undertaken a scholarly research effort to compare the outcomes of children raised by same-sex couples with those of children raised by heterosexual couples" (*DeBoer v. Snyder*, 2014).

III. LGB Parent-Child Relationships

A small body of research has focused on parent-child relationships within LGB-parent households. Studies that have compared two-parent lesbian-, gay-, and heterosexual-parent families suggest that parent-child relationships in these different family structures are more similar than different. Parents in these family structures have not been found to differ, on average, in parental warmth, emotional involvement, and quality of relationships with their children (Bos & van Balen, 2010; Golombok et al., 2003; Golombok, Tasker, & Murray, 1997). Further, studies of lesbian-mother families formed via donor insemination indicate that children's relationships with their biological mothers appear similar in quality to their relationships with their nonbiological mothers, which researchers attribute in part to the fact that lesbian mothers tend to share coparenting (including child care and decision-making) more equally than heterosexual parents (Bos et al., 2004; Vanfraussen et al., 2003a).

However, parent-child closeness and contact may be threatened when parents break up. Several studies have examined the consequences of LGB parents' relationship dissolution for parent-child relationships and closeness. Gartrell and colleagues found that by the time the children in their sample of 73 intentional lesbian-mother households were 17, 40 couples (55% of the sample) had dissolved their unions (Gartrell, Bos, Peyser, Deck, & Rodas, 2011). Custody was shared in 25 of the 40 families, and the biological mother was the primary custodial parent in 10 of the 40 families. Custody was more likely to be shared if the nonbiological mothers had adopted the children. The percentage of adolescents who reported being close to both mothers was higher in families in which their nonbiological mothers had adopted them, and, further, adolescents whose nonbiological mothers had adopted them spent more time with their comothers. These data suggest that legal parentage may have important implications for parent-child relationships post-relationship dissolution.

Similarly, Goldberg and Allen (2013b) studied 20 young adults who had experienced their LGB parents' relationship dissolution and found that in nearly all cases, their parents had negotiated their breakups informally and without legal intervention

(e.g., lawyers, mediators). Young adults perceived both advantages and disadvantages related to their family's non-legal status, and the fact that their parents agreed on custody and child support informally, without the involvement of the court system. For example, some expressed appreciation for the fact that since their parents were never legally married, they did not get legally divorced, allowing their families to escape the headache of the legal system. Other participants, however, reported disadvantages. For example, most of the participants' nonbiological mothers lacked any legally protected relationship to them (i.e., they had not been able to legally adopt them via a second-parent adoption); in turn, some of their nonbiological mothers moved away or became less involved in their lives once their parents split up. These participants sometimes wondered whether they might have enjoyed a closer relationship with their noncustodial parents if their parents had been legally married, insomuch as a judge could have ordered their parents to stay geographically close to one another.

CONCLUSION

Studies on LGB parenting have grown in number and scope over the past several decades. Findings are consistent in suggesting that, despite confronting heterosexism in a variety of social contexts (including the health care system, the legal system, and the school system), LGB parents and their children are functioning quite well. Further, the research indicates that lack of contact between a child and his or her nonbiological parent following the dissolution of the parents' relationship, could be addressed by legal changes that permit second-parent adoptions.

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