Harrison, "Child Custody and Parental Sexuality: Just Another Factor?" Refractory Girl, no. 20-21 (October 1980), 7-14; and Robyn Plaister, Lesbian Mothers, Campaign, no. 42 (April 1979), 13-14.

Summarizes the major reported cases, discussing misconceptions and how they can be dispelled by scientific research findings.

Lesbian mother cases and gay father visitation cases are increasingly successful in the courts. The main hurdle continues to be the lack of objective legal standards that could make the outcome of these cases predictable.

On the value of expert testimony in rebutting commonly held misconceptions about the consequences of raising children in a lesbian household.

Summarizing current law, argues that advocates should work toward establishing a requirement that a specific logical nexus be shown between a mother's lesbianism and her ostensible unfitness as a parent before she can be denied custody based on her homosexuality.


Even though societal tolerance for alternative lifestyles seems to be growing, the courts still tend to feel justified in restricting the amount of exposure a child may have to an overt homosexual relationship on the part of the mother.

Offers a comparative analysis, including elements of subjectivity and bias that often enter into legal proceedings and decisions in these spheres.


Provides a detailed exposition of the constitutional arguments against allowing a mother's lesbianism to influence custody cases when no specific nexus of harm can be demonstrated. Reviews professional literature on sexual orientation as it serves to buttress the argument.


Discusses a Massachusetts case in which a lesbian mother sought to regain custody of her two children from a female friend. The mother was successful on appeal in a decision that set limits on the trial judge's discretion.


Gay and lesbian parents seeking custody of their children have met with increasing success in American courts since the California Court of Appeal instructed a trial court that it could not rule that a mother's homosexual orientation made her unfit to have custody of her child. See also: Catherine Rand et al., "Psychological Health and Factors Court Seeks to Control in Lesbian Mother Trials," JMH, 8 (1982-83), 27-39.


Although a specific incident will often trigger a legal battle, its course may be determined by societal attitudes (including homophobia) and the kind of research evidence that is brought to bear.

E. CHILDREN OF LESBIANS AND GAY MEN

The increasing visibility of households headed by lesbian and homosexual single or coupled parents has evoked fears that the children's psychological health might be adversely affected. Little if any support has been found for this assumption of environmental determinism.
Concerns five American families raising children in openly gay homes. "Written from the perspective of the children, who range in age from seven to seventeen."

Concludes that rearing in a lesbian household per se does not lead to atypical psychosexual development or constitute a psychiatric risk factor.

Concludes that difficulties experienced by children in lesbian mother households stem from reaction to divorce and not from the mother's lesbianism. See also his: "Sexual Identity of 37 Children Raised by Homosexual or Transsexual Parents," American Journal of Psychiatry, 135 (1978), 692-97.

Using Block's Toy Preference Test no differences were found between children of lesbian and single heterosexual mothers. The writer suggests that children's peers have the greatest influence on their development.

Examines several areas of research, including impact of divorce, father absence, and children's adjustment.

In this study of 40 children raised by lesbian and single parent mothers, no significant differences were found in sexual or gender identity between the groups. The lesbian mothers were more concerned with providing male figures for their children than were the heterosexual mothers.

3918. KWEISKIN, SALLY L., and ALICIA S. COOK. "Heterosexual and Homosexual Mothers' Self-Described Sex-role Behavior and Idea Sex-Role Behavior in Children," Sex Roles, 8 (1982), 967-75.
Similarities in sex-role behavior and attitudes of hetero-
sexual and homosexual mothers far outweigh the present subjects differences when determined by self-description and attitudes toward ideal child behavior.


3922. NUNGESSER, LONNIE G. "Theoretical Bases for Research on the Acquisition of Social Sex-Roles by Children of Lesbian Mothers," JH, 5:3 (1980), 177-87. Theories from developmental, behavioral, and social psychology are applied in order to distinguish between the acquisition of sex-typed behaviors and the actual performance of those behaviors.

F. PARENTS OF GAYS AND LESBIANS

The increasing number of gay men and lesbians who have "come out" to their parents, has led to the formation in many cities of North American of support groups for these parents. The literature being produced by these groups enables one to understand the psychic process of resistance and acceptance that these mothers and fathers undergo in confronting the child's orientation.

Advice to parents of gay men and lesbians with an account of the sex-session workshops which the author conducted before her death in 1985.