

Education is key to equal parenting rights for same-sex couples

March 11 2020, by Candy Gibson



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Same-sex marriage may have been given the green (or rainbow) light in Australia in 2017, but it appears there are still some entrenched attitudes in society when it comes to same-sex parenting.

Misconceptions about the impact on [children](#) raised by same-sex [parents](#) are harmful both in a social and legal sense, says University of South Australia psychologist Dr. Stephanie Webb.

Same-sex couples are still struggling to gain equal rights to [biological parents](#)—particularly in the event of separation—and on a social level they want to address the fallacies about the impact of children growing up with parents of the same gender.

"The most common myths are that children will be confused about their own sexuality, be less resilient, experience conflict, and suffer other issues as a result of growing up in a same-sex [family](#)," Dr. Webb says.

"The reality is, children raised in a same-sex family environment are no different to children raised by [heterosexual couples](#). In some cases, they are far more resilient, tolerant and open-minded because they have seen their parents' own struggle for acceptance and equality."

To counter the misconceptions, Dr. Webb and colleagues from the University of Canberra and Boise State University in the United States carried out an [online survey](#) to assess the impact of an educational campaign on people's attitudes.

A total of 629 people—including 74 percent who identified as heterosexual and 23 percent bisexual or homosexual—were split into two groups and presented with fact sheets about smoking (control group) and same-sex parenting.

Before completing the survey, they were asked about their attitudes to same-sex marriage and same-sex parenting.

The fact sheets dispelled many of the concerns that people had over the perceived negative developmental impacts on children with same-sex

parents.

"Our study showed a significant reduction in prejudices held after reading the fact sheets," Dr. Webb says.

However, the sticking point is that many people believe the central purpose of marriage is to procreate. Since biological children cannot be produced by a same-sex couple, the role of marital equality is not seen as important by some.

This creates legal issues for same-sex couples in the event of separation involving children, where a third party (a biological parent) has legal rights that supersede that of the parent whose genes are not involved.

"Legal rights for same-sex parents are ignored by policymakers and the public alike," Dr. Webb says. "By making marriage policies inclusive, regardless of sexuality, it would validate same-sex families and protect them against discrimination."

Dr. Webb says education is a crucial step towards achieving legal equality for same-sex families.

Her findings have recently been published in the *Australian Journal of Psychology*. The survey is a follow up to a [2018 paper](#) which examined the connection between gender role beliefs and support for same-gender family rights.

More information: Stephanie N. Webb et al. Attitudes toward same-sex family rights: Education facilitating progressive attitude change, *Australian Journal of Psychology* (2020). [DOI: 10.1111/ajpy.12282](https://doi.org/10.1111/ajpy.12282)

Provided by University of South Australia

Citation: Education is key to equal parenting rights for same-sex couples (2020, March 11)
retrieved 27 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2020-03-key-equal-parenting-rights-same-sex.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.