

Gay parenting in the media



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Gay Parenting in the Media Same-sex parenting is an issue that many people worldwide have come to either totally accept or totally dis-approve of.

Although the number of individuals that are for it is a minority, the issue still causes various heated debates. People who are in favor of Gay and Lesbian parenting rights claim that as long as there is a pledge to parenthood then successful parenting is possible as a homosexual individual. One main argument for same-sex parenting is the fact that within a gay couple there is no chance for accidental pregnancy therefore the couple must make a conscious decision to become a parent. People opposed to homosexual parenting argue that homosexual couples are not capable of having long stable relationships mandatory for the successful upbringing of children. They claim it is in the child's best interest to be raised by one female and one male. Such a family would provide the best environment for healthy intellectual and emotional growth and anything else is simply a mockery of the institution of family. Obviously the debate over homosexual parenting brings for concepts of individual rights and the definition of family. What the argument boils down to is the definition of a family. With the term family given such a socially constructed meaning, it leaves little room for any sort of exception to the " rule". When television first appeared back in the 1940's, times were very different. What one would consider completely acceptable in today's society would have seemed the exact opposite just a few decades ago. For example, in 1953, Lucille Ball was not allowed to say the word " pregnant" while she was expecting baby Ricky and it wasn't until the 1960's show Bewitched, that we saw a married couple actually sharing the same bed (Smith 2010). Considering how conservative the television networks were during those years, it is not hard to deduce that something as

controversial as homosexuality would be far from discussed or represented at any level. It was only in 1973 that television premiered its first homosexual character (Smith 2010). Over the next three decades the appearance of gay and lesbian characters in television has both increased and decreased as the times have changed. Due to the reappearance of conservative ideals that many have adopted again, homosexual topics were again reduced to a minimum. Since that time though there has been a rise of gay and lesbian characters on television. One might think after a first glance that this means that there has been progress among gay and lesbian communities to have a fair representation in the media. However, if one looks at the circumstances surrounding the homosexual families in the media portrayal, many people may start to acknowledge the fact that if there has been any progress then it has been quite minimal. Media publications can manipulate the news using a variety of strategies that can alter the readers' perception. Publications can navigate their audience through what it feels is persuasive and feasible regarding a specific topic. The factors that can contribute toward an altered point of view can include the publication's audience, their lifestyle, interests, and its level of complexity. At the same time there are more conditional factors that can create a different representation of such impartial truth. Such things include the manipulation of the text through diction, tone and the articles' actual credibility (Landau 2009). Through this, the media has the power to persuade its audience's point of view. There are two articles that can serve as an archetype for this notion. Both The Miami Herald and The Tampa Bay Times discuss a recent controversial issue concerning gay adoption in the state of Florida. In 1977 the state passed a statute prohibiting homosexual

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men and women from adopting children. Florida, Mississippi and Utah are currently the only states that do not legalize any form of adoption by same sex coupled parents. After years of both segregation and discrimination, lawsuits were filed by the American Civil Liberties Union in the interest of various gay couples who wished to become adoptive parents but were restricted by law. After months of heated debates in Florida's U. S. District court, Judge James Lawrence King ruled in favor of the state's ban on homosexual adoption (Ruggeri 2008). The decision caused a variety of feelings. These contrasting sentiments are evident in the press' misappropriation of the news in both articles. After inspecting "The Miami Herald" article, one can note that the article pleads to the reader's emotions by conveying a message that men and women with homosexual lifestyles are being unjustly discriminated against. It is clear that this article speaks to a somewhat liberal audience, which includes a very active gay community. Due to the fact that Miami has a diverse population, it is no surprise that the city's major publication would take such a supportive position in alliance with the gay community. In discussing specific individuals, such as Judge Lawrence, and their views, the journalist used phrases such as, "the now apologetic lawmaker"; statements such as these portray the publications intent to convince the reader that these authority figures sympathize with their cause (Ruggeri 2008). The article goes as far as to say that the judge was "handcuffed by the law," which insinuates that his decision was not the right one but the only one. Although the articles content is fairly controversial because it pleads to a general audience for support, its choice of wording is likely used for an uneducated individual. Throughout the article from The Miami Herald, Ruggeri, the creator of this work, enables the reader

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to feel present during the case that is being deliberated. When present in a courtroom environment, one is subjected to the arguments and views of both the prosecution and the defense. The author formatted the article to give off this same sensation, which creates a more personable atmosphere, so the reader more than likely will believe what he is being told. The use of quotes from both sides fully presents the case but nonetheless stresses the point that gay men and lesbians have the right to be suitable adoptive parents. When the article states that, "...King rejected the idea that moral disapproval of homosexuals ' serves a legitimate state interest,' " it demonstrates that regardless of personal belief homosexuals should not be held to a different standard by the law. Ruggeri stresses on the fact that the plaintiffs had no other evident choice on how to present their case, " they could either attempt to prove gay men and lesbians were good parents-which could legitimize stereotypes if only by arguing against them-or else they could lose the case in court. " The article also uses mayor, Elaine Bloom, to support its reasoning. At the time Bloom was running in the upcoming election for mayor of Miami Beach, an area that is widely known for its large inhabitation of gay couples. Like Judge King, Bloom, used to be a state representative, and contributed to the existence of the 1977 ban on gay adoptions. After many years she now recants her decision and claims she was influenced by the beliefs of those surrounding her. Bloom now has personal reasons to support homosexual adoption; because her son David is a gay resident of Miami, who raises a two-year old son with his same sex partner. Bloom's new perspective on this law is also beneficial to her political campaign since her citizens who are primarily gay men and lesbians have a strong attachment concerning this issue. The Miami Herald article will continuously make the

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statement that it is not true that homosexuals are morally unfit adoptive parents but that previous law did not allow room for a different ruling in this case. It is mentioned that this recent decision does not provide closure to this case, in fact the ACLU is still fighting for what it believes has not been proven untrue in the courts-“...that gay men and lesbians can and do provide a healthy child-rearing environment" (Ruggeri). On the contrary, an article that appeared that same week in the Tampa Bay Times takes a vastly different approach to the topic. This Florida based paper is predominantly conservative and therefore one would expect it to be openly opposed to the notion of gay adoption. From the beginning, this article makes one aware that it supports the ruling by concentrating on the fact that it is a “...a 31 year old law..." giving the impression that if the law has been able to survive this long in the current system then there is really no reason to bring about change (Miller 2008). After investigating this article, one can presume that the media manipulates what individuals say and feel. One component that it uses to make its audience see its outlook is to misconstrue the meanings of what people say. Judge King, who is quoted in the other article, is portrayed as having a different opinion and actually is acknowledged with being in favor of the ban on gay parenting. King is quoted out of context in the article saying solely, “ that the best interest of the child is to be raised by a married family. " King is not the only voice of authority that is mentioned in support of the ban. The article also mentions the remarks of Anthony Verdugo, chairman of the Christian Coalition of Miami-Dade County. He said, “ There is no evidence scientifically to indicate that homosexual homes are as stable as married, two-parent families..." The article even notes statements from officials of the Children and Families organization, which is responsible for <https://assignbuster.com/gay-parenting-in-the-media/>

adoption in Florida, "...as being pleased that the court upheld the laws that the legislature passed" (Miller 2008). According to the Tampa Bay Times article these statements are expressed by leading individuals and therefore should be considered true. Through both media sources are from Florida, a reader obtains extremely different information that creates two very contrasting views on this topic. The portrayal concerning gay adoption in the media is actually a topic that affects many people both directly and indirectly. The lack of information from these articles and many other media sources does not educate the reader on the massive problem that one is actually being faced with. Newspaper media tends to socialize its audience and therefore becomes propaganda versus actual news. Given the current hostile attitude toward gay men and lesbians, it is reasonable to be troubled about losing one's children based solely on sexual orientation, and not on the best interest of the children, largely because of how same-sex parenting is portrayed in the media.

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