

Homosexual Women and Men fragmenting Parenthood

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Fertility intentions (the desire to have a child)

- New concept since fertility can be regulated and reproduction can be detached from sexuality → active pursuit of parenthood
- Fertility intentions changed in connection with socio-cultural developments
- Fertility intentions are nowadays more individualized and intrinsically motivated
- Shift from production and security functions of children towards immaterial motives
- Children are more and more seen as giving purpose to the life of their parents than contributing to the economic survival of the family
- Parenthood is a long-term and irreversible biographic fact in people's life-courses and involves many costs
- The value of children is in ever more competition to modern lifestyles that are not child-centred

Intentions of homosexual women and men

- Fertility intentions seen as incompatible with homosexuality
- Growing acceptance of homosexuality and increasing legitimation of homosexual unions through registered unions/marriage
- Why should gays and lesbians not wish to parent?
- Existing research almost exclusively restricted to the capability for proper parenting

Data

- **ifb**-dataset: N=1,697: ♂ 56 %, ♀ 44 %
- Study on homosexual families and individuals in Germany
- Data-collection: Winter 2009/2010 via CATI and online-questionnaire

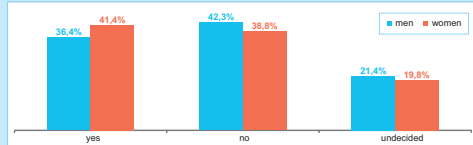
Subsample: childless women and men

- n=1,495: ♂ 56%, ♀ 44%
- Age of respondents: min: 14, max: 80, median: 34
- 62% between 25 and 44 years old
- 78% in relationship
- Registered partnership (civil union): ♂ 35%, ♀ 31%
- 67% gainfully employed
- 49% ♂ and 53% ♀ highly educated (CASMIN)

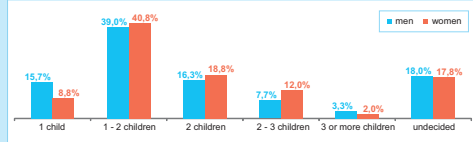
Research Questions

- Do homosexual women and men wish to parent at all?
- How do homosexual youths think about parenting?
- In which way is the realisation of parenthood intended?
- What are the intentions for parental participation, especially if a third person is involved in the realisation of parenthood?

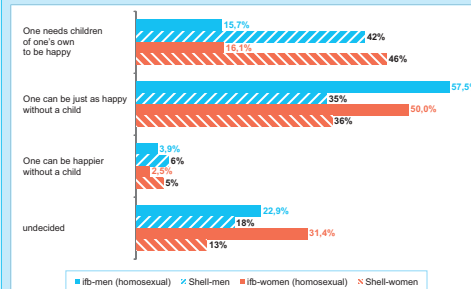
Do they wish to have a child?



... or maybe two, or three?

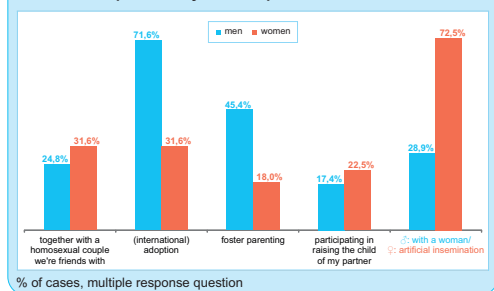


Youths rate the importance of parenthood



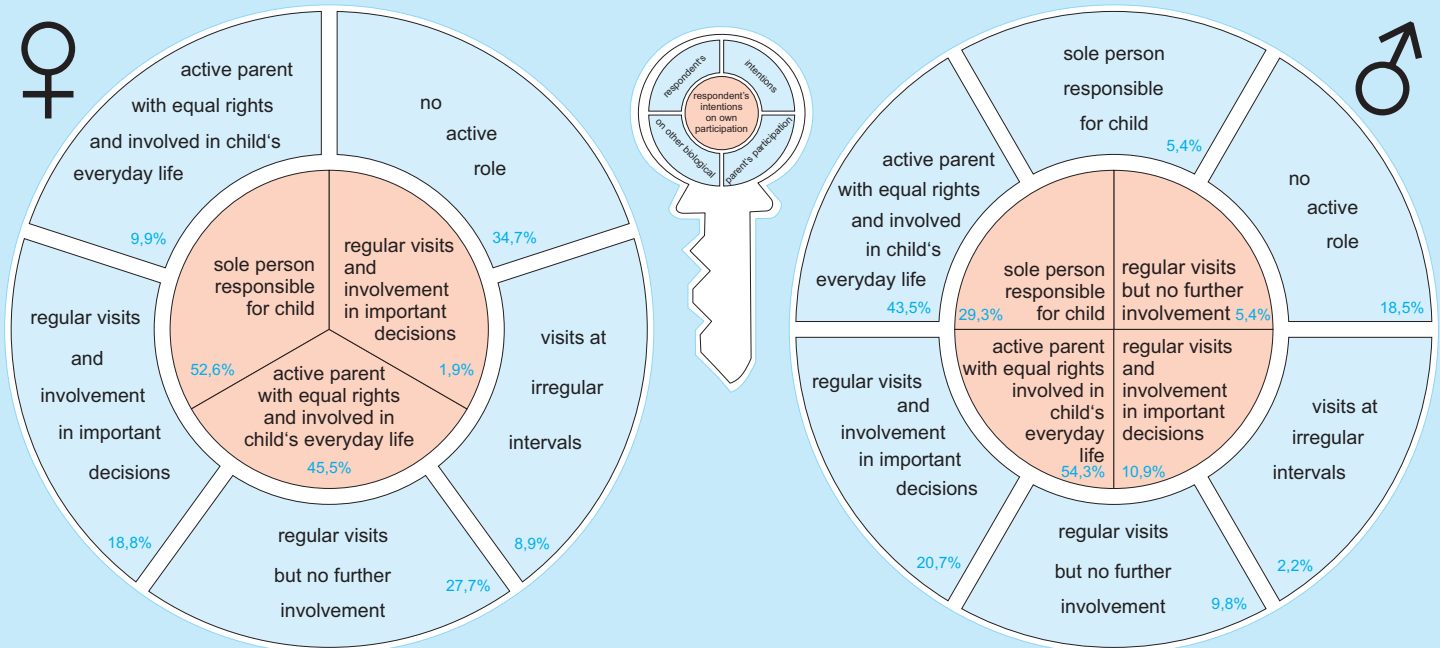
Respondents below age 25 in comparison with Shell Youth Study¹

Gays adopt, lesbians inseminate: Intended pathways into parenthood



% of cases, multiple response question

Desired parental participation of respondent and other biological parent when realisation of parenthood is intended with another person or couple



Most popular patterns as intended by ...

Homosexual women:

1. Respondent is the sole person responsible for the child, the other biological parent has no active role whatsoever (25,8%)
2. Respondent is the sole person responsible for the child, but while the other biological parent pays regular visits he will not be involved any further (14,6%)
3. Respondent is active parent with equal rights and involved in the child's everyday life while the other biological parent pays regular visits and is involved in important decisions (13,1%)

Homosexual men:

1. Respondent and the other biological parent are active parents with equal rights and involved in the child's everyday life (34,8%)
2. Respondent is the sole person responsible for the child while the other biological parent has no active role at all (14,1%)
3. Respondent is active parent with equal rights and involved in the child's everyday life, the other biological parent pays regular visits and is involved in important decisions (12,0%)

Conclusions

- Differences between the intentions of homosexual women and men may be an expression of the mere biological advantages and disadvantages of becoming a parent within the frame of a homosexual relationship
- Parenthood in homosexual couples is split into segments: biological, genetic, legal & social parenthood²
- The intentions on the parental participation hint towards a further fragmentation within these segments
- Social parenthood can be further divided according to formal or informal 'custodial arrangements'
- Furthermore, the segmentation caused by the intended parental involvement is derived from a conscious and deliberate decision-making process
- Homosexual couples who become parents challenge the traditional understanding of parenthood while heterosexual couples who have children via help of new reproductive techniques may practise such fragmentation invisibly
- Intentions as articulated by the respondents do not always comply with the legal framework

Outlook

- Ongoing research and analyses for PhD thesis on the fertility intentions of homosexual women and men
- Describing and understanding the process towards the realisation of parenthood in detail. Special focus lies on the motivations for choosing the way towards parenthood, the negotiations and the plans for co-operation with other individuals
- Further analyses of the motivations for parenthood (VoC)
- Relevance of the legal framework: How are restrictions being dealt with?

Literature

- 1 Langness, Anja / Leven, Ingo / Hurrelmann, Klaus (2006) „Jugendliche Lebenswelten: Familie, Schule, Freizeit“ in: Shell Deutschland Holding (Hrsg.): 15. Shell Jugendstudie. Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer, 49-102.
- 2 Vaskovics, Laszlo A. (2011) „Segmentierung und Multiplikation von Elternschaft. Konzept zur Analyse von Elternschafts- und Elternkonstellationen“ in: Dieter Schwab und Laszlo A. Vaskovics (Hrsg.) Pluralisierung von Elternschaft und Kindschaft. Familienrecht, -soziologie und -psychologie im Dialog, Sonderheft 8 der Zeitschrift für Familienforschung, Opladen & Farmington Hills: Barbara Budrich, 11-40.