

# Lesbians of Mass Destruction

## THE EMPTY CASE AGAINST MARY CHENEY.

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*Mary Cheney*

Poor Dick Cheney. He was sure we'd find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. We searched and searched, but he refused to give up. Now he's discovering what it's like to be on the other end of such obtuse certainty. The conservative jihad has turned from Saddam to Sodom. Moralists are denouncing Cheney's pregnant daughter, Mary, for disclosing that she and her lesbian partner will raise the baby together. The moralists are confident that having two mommies is bad for kids. And no evidence to the contrary can dissuade them.

The 30-year search for proof that gay parents are destructive looks a lot like the hunt for WMD. The American Psychological Association has compiled [abstracts of 67 studies](#). Some are plainly biased, and only the latest [two or three](#) have avoided the methodological flaws of earlier investigations. But after 67 tries, you'd expect the harm of gay parenting to show up somewhere. Yet in study after study, on measure after measure, kids turn out the same.

One study found that straight parents "made a greater effort to provide an opposite-sex role model for their children," but it doesn't say whether this affected the kids. Another says children raised by lesbian couples "were more likely to explore same-sex relationships," but it doesn't say they turned out gay. Other studies say they seldom do. That's it. That's the evidence against gay parenthood. On the other hand, three studies say lesbians share child care more equally than straight couples do. Others conclude that lesbians are more satisfied with their relationships, that they show more "parenting awareness skills," that nonbiological lesbian moms "played a more active role in daily

caretaking than did most fathers," and that their kids are less domineering and experience "greater warmth and interaction with their mother."

Such unwelcome findings haven't chastened the antigay lobby any more than they've chastened the Bush administration. If the direct evidence doesn't bear you out, look for indirect evidence. So conservatives have developed a subtler argument: On average, children do best when raised by their [two married, biological parents](#).

Let's take this argument a piece at a time. It's true that two parents are better than one. It's also true that married parents are better than unmarried ones. But those aren't arguments against gay parenthood. They're arguments for gay marriage.

The biological part of the argument is more serious. On average, kids do better with parents than with stepparents. Focus on the Family, a leading moralist group, [concludes](#) that gay parenthood is unhealthy because "it is biologically impossible for a child living in a same-sex home to be living with both natural parents." [This argument applies equally to adoption, but no one wants to end adoption, only prevent homosexual couples from adopting.] ...Scientists recently produced a fertile adult mouse by combining, in one embryo, [DNA from two females](#). But a lesbian who wants a genetic bond to her partner's baby doesn't have to wait for such technology. She can simply ask her brother to donate the sperm.

If you believe, as Focus on the Family does, that we should [stop creating families](#) in which one parent is biologically unrelated to the child, then gays are the least of your worries. By professional estimates, 40,000 babies are born each year from donated [eggs](#) or [sperm](#). You want to stop nonbiological parenthood? Go chain yourself to a sperm bank. For that matter, if you want every child to have the benefit of two parents, you're picking on the wrong Cheney. Mary's sister, Liz, just had her fifth kid. All things being equal, Liz's baby will get one-fifth as much parental attention as Mary's will get. But nobody complains about that.

And let's not forget that the case against nonbiological parenthood is based on averages. Averages make bad law. The best critique of gay parenting studies is that because many homosexuals are closeted, those who are found by researchers and who agree to participate are disproportionately [white, well-educated, and female](#). But that's exactly what Mary Cheney is. She's a vice president of AOL. Her partner's current occupation is renovating their home. Should they abstain from motherhood because they're above average?

The same goes for gender averages. James Dobson, chairman of Focus on the Family, [says](#) Cheney's pregnancy is a bad idea because a father "makes unique contributions to the task of parenting that a mother cannot emulate," such as "a sense of right and wrong and its consequences." You must be kidding. Cheney's partner is a former park ranger. They met while playing collegiate hockey. If they want a night out to catch an NHL game, Grandpa Dick can drop by to read bedtime stories about detainee interrogation. If you're going to base family policy on averages, the chief problem isn't stepparents; it's men. That's what "pro-family" groups keep covering up. [According](#) to Focus on the Family, "Increased risks of physical and sexual child abuse at the hands of non-biological parents are another serious concern for same-sex families." Nope, not for lesbians. The latest study cited by the group [actually concludes](#) that the "key risk factors are living with a stepfather or the mother's boyfriend." Of 55 child deaths reviewed in the study, zero were caused by a stepmother or by a biological mother in a stepfamily or live-in relationship. Other studies show the [same pattern](#) in child abuse generally: [Stepfathers account for 24% of abuse while stepmothers account for only 6%. One in ten children live with stepparents. Ergo, divorce is more pertinent than homosexual parenting.]

The Family Research Institute [says](#) Cheney's child "will disproportionately associate with homosexuals—who are as a class considerably more apt to have STDs and a criminal history [and] be interested in sex with children." That's hilarious. Women commit [3.5 percent](#) of single-perpetrator sexual assaults and make up [7 percent](#) of the prison population.

[Men are nine times more likely to be incarcerated than women. A recent [Bureau of Justice Statistics](#) study showed that nearly 17 percent of African-American men had some prison experience, compared with 7.7 percent of Hispanic and 2.6 percent of white men. Lifetime chances of a person going to prison are higher for men (11.3%) than for women (1.8%) and by race blacks (18.6%) and Hispanics (10%) than for whites (3.4%). According to Human Rights Watch, although the proportion of drug users who are black is estimated to be from 13 to 15 percent, blacks account for 36 percent of all drug arrests and 63 percent of those convicted of drug crimes in state prisons. The [Justice Policy Institute](#) has just released a study which shows that prison spending has increased five times as fast as education spending in some battleground states. And, according to the study: "Outside the swing states, states leaning Republican saw their incarceration rates increase at nearly twice the rate of Democrat-leaning states." CDC reports that African Americans represent 13% of the total U.S. population, but account for 49% of all AIDS cases. In other words, AIDS in the African American community is 12 times greater than

the national average.<sup>1</sup> Ergo race and gender *appear* more relevant than sexual orientation.]

The Family Research Council [says](#) lesbians are dangerous parents because of their "high prevalence of life events and behaviors related to mental health problems," particularly rapes and sexual attacks. But if you look up the study cited by the council, guess who committed virtually all of the rapes and sexual attacks? [Men](#). [Family Research Council<sup>2</sup> claims that sexual abuse or incest as a child *causes* all instances of homosexuality. No credible data supports this claim. The studies they do cite in support of the claim are among the "plainly biased" studies referenced in the second paragraph. Their claim is also a [post hoc ergo propter hoc fallacy](#).]

You want to protect kids? Here's my proposed constitutional amendment: "Marriage in the United States shall consist of a union involving at least one woman."

Or you could just let Mary Cheney raise her child in peace.

*A version of this article also appears in the [Outlook section](#) of the Sunday Washington Post.*

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<sup>1</sup> Other Sources: [Bureau of Justice Statistics](#); [International Centre for Prison Studies](#); [American Civil Liberties Union: Prison Issues](#); [Federal Bureau of Prisons](#); [Drug Policy Alliance](#); [Centre for Crime and Justice Statistics](#); "Why Do Prisons Grow?" [SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN](#), December 2001; "The Punishing Decade: Prison and Jail Estimates at the Millennium;" [Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice](#); [National Center for Victims of Crime - Drug-Related Crime](#); [The Sentencing Project](#)  
<http://www.pbs.org/now/society/prisons3.html>

<sup>2</sup> Family Research Council also opposes the HPV vaccine that can prevent a common type ovarian cancer, endorses abstinence-only education, and is registered with the Southern Poverty Law Center as a racist organization (they share their subscriber list with registered racist hate groups).