

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN  
SOUTHERN DIVISION

APRIL DEBOER, *et al.*,

Plaintiffs,

Civil Action No. 12-cv-10285  
HON. BERNARD A. FRIEDMAN

vs.

RICHARD SNYDER, *et al.*,

Defendants.

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**PLAINTIFFS' MOTION *IN LIMINE* TO EXCLUDE  
TESTIMONY OF MARK REGNERUS**

NOW COME THE PLAINTIFFS, by and through their attorneys, and pursuant to Fed. R. Evid. 104, 403, and 702, move this Court for an Order excluding testimony of Mark Regnerus in this matter for the reasons stated in the attached supporting Brief.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: February 5, 2014

**BRIEF IN SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFFS' MOTION IN LIMINE TO  
EXCLUDE TESTIMONY OF MARK REGNERUS**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Mark Regnerus, Defendants' purported expert, fails to meet the minimum requirements imposed by the Federal Rules of Evidence. His flawed methodology and generic conclusions, untethered to any of the specific factual issues in this case, render his opinion unreliable and irrelevant under Federal Rules of Evidence 104, 403, and 702. For the reasons explained herein, the Court should exclude Regnerus's testimony in advance of trial. However, if the Court permits Regnerus to testify, Plaintiffs ask the Court to exclude his testimony from evidence or accord it little to no weight.

**II. THE LEGAL STANDARD GOVERNING EXPERT TESTIMONY**

Federal Rule of Evidence 702 provides that expert testimony relating to "scientific, technical, or other specialized knowledge" is admissible only if it "will help the trier of fact to understand the evidence or to determine a fact in issue." Fed. R. Evid. 702(a); *see Pride v. BIC Corp.*, 218 F.3d 566, 578 (6th Cir. 2000) (citing *Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals, Inc.*, 509 U.S. 579, 592 n.10 (1993)) (explaining that an expert must "testify to scientific knowledge that will assist the

trier of fact in understanding and disposing of issues relevant to the case”). A witness qualified as an expert may only offer testimony if “the testimony is based upon sufficient facts or data; the testimony is the product of reliable principles and methods; and the expert has reliably applied the principles and methods to the facts of the case.” Fed. R. Evid. 702(b)-(d). Additionally, expert testimony is subject to general evidentiary rules, such as Federal Rules of Evidence 401 and 403. *See United States v. LeBlanc*, 45 Fed. App’x 393, 400 (6th Cir. 2002) (“Obviously, expert testimony is subject to the same relevancy constraints as all other kinds of evidence.”); *Moisenko v. Volkswagenwerk Aktiengesellschaft*, 198 F.3d 246 (6th Cir. 1999) (applying Fed. R. Evid. 403 balancing test to expert testimony).

**A. Expert Witness Testimony Must Be Based on Scientific, Technical, or “Other Specialized” Knowledge and Must Concern a Matter Beyond a Layperson’s Common Knowledge**

An expert’s testimony must be based on “scientific, technical, or other specialized knowledge [that] will help the trier of fact.” Fed. R. Evid. 702(a). A witness may not testify as an expert unless he or she testifies about matters that are beyond the ability and experience of the average layperson. *See, e.g., Berry v. City of Detroit*, 25 F.3d 1342, 1349-50 (6th Cir. 1994) (“If everyone knows [the knowledge in question], then we do not need an expert because the testimony will not ‘assist the trier of fact to understand the evidence or to determine a fact in issue’ . . . .” (quoting Fed. R. Evid. 702)).

## **B. Expert Witness Testimony Must be Relevant and Reliable**

Under Federal Rule of Evidence 702, the trial judge is charged with the task of ensuring an expert's testimony is relevant to the task at hand and rests on a reliable foundation. *Daubert*, 509 U.S. at 591-92; *Zuzula v. ABB Power T & D Co., Inc.*, 267 F. Supp. 2d 703, 711 (E.D. Mich. 2003) (“[T]estimony is unhelpful when it is unreliable or irrelevant.”). Accordingly, Defendants bear the burden of establishing by a preponderance of the evidence that Regnerus's testimony, opinion, and reports are relevant and reliable. *See* Fed. R. Evid. 104(a); *Daubert*, 509 U.S. at 589-93; *Nelson v. Tennessee Gas Pipeline Co.*, 243 F.3d 244, 251 (6th Cir. 2001) (“It is the proponent of the testimony that must establish its admissibility by a preponderance of proof.”).

### **1. Relevance**

To be relevant, the proffered expert testimony must be sufficiently tied to the facts of the case such that it will “assist the trier of fact to understand the evidence or to determine a fact in issue.” *Daubert*, 509 U.S. at 591 (citing Fed. R. Evid. 702). A “fit” or valid connection must exist between the expert's reasoning or methodology and the facts at issue before the Court. *Id.* at 591-93. The necessary connection between the expert's methodology and ultimate conclusion may not be established on speculation alone. *General Electric v. Joiner*, 522 U.S. 136, 146 (1997) (“[N]othing in either *Daubert* or the Federal Rules of Evidence requires a

district court to admit opinion evidence that is connected to existing data only be the *ipse dixit* of the expert.”).

In this case, the Court identified the relevant area of factual dispute as whether “only heterosexual marriages can provide children with the appropriate gender role-modeling required for healthy psychological development.” R 89, Opinion Denying Cross Motions for Summary Judgment, p 6.<sup>1</sup> To be admissible expert testimony, Regnerus’s testimony, opinion, and reports must evince “a valid scientific connection” to that particular inquiry “as a precondition for admissibility.” *Jahn v. Equine Servs., PSC*, 233 F.3d 382, 388 (6th Cir. 2000).

## **2. Reliability**

In addition to being relevant, an expert’s testimony must also be reliable. Reliability of an expert’s conclusions is based on the expert’s knowledge or experience in his or her discipline, rather than on subjective belief or unsupported speculation. *See, e.g., Kuhmo Tire*, 526 U.S. at 148; *Daubert*, 509 U.S. at 589-90. The Court must ensure that the expert employs “the same level of intellectual rigor that characterizes the practice of an expert in the relevant field.” *Newell Rubbermaid, Inc. v. Raymond Corp.*, 676 F.3d 521, 527 (6th Cir. 2012) (internal quotation marks

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<sup>1</sup> On its face, Regnerus’s expected testimony fails to address defendants’ three other asserted justifications for the Michigan Marriage Amendment (“MMA”) because he does not discuss (1) the effects of redefining marriage, (2) the tradition or morality of marriage, or (3) transitioning “naturally procreative relationships into stable unions.” *See id.*

omitted). In cases of scientific testimony, this means that an expert's testimony not only must reflect scientific knowledge, but also must be "derived by the scientific method" and amount to "good science." See *Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals*, 43 F.3d 1311, 1315 (9th Cir. 1995) ("*Daubert II*"). In essence, the Court must "be on guard against all forms of junk science that may creep into the courtroom." *Greenwell v. Boatwright*, 184 F.3d 492, 501 (6th Cir. 1999).

*Daubert* suggested four non-exclusive criteria "against which to measure the validity of the underlying principles and methods which undergird an expert's opinion: [1] whether the technique or theory is capable of being tested; [2] whether it has been published and reviewed by peers in the relevant technical community; [3] the potential or known rate of error yielded by the methodology; and [4] whether the principle or theory has been generally accepted or shunned by the community of experts in the field." *Zuzula*, 267 F. Supp. 2d at 712. The Sixth Circuit has identified several "red flags" that "caution against certifying an expert," including (1) reliance on anecdotal evidence, (2) improper extrapolation, (3) failure to consider other possible causes, (4) lack of testing, and (5) subjectivity. *Newell Rubbermaid, Inc.*, 676 F.3d at 527.

### **C. The Probative Value of Expert Witness Testimony Must Outweigh its Prejudicial Effect**

Finally, as with all evidence, the Court may exclude expert testimony if its probative value is substantially outweighed by unfair prejudice, confusion of the

issues, waste of time, undue delay, or needless presentation of cumulative evidence. *See* Fed. R. Evid. 403; *Moisenko*, 198 F.3d 246 (6th Cir. 1999) (applying Fed. R. Evid. 403 balancing test to expert testimony); *Flanagan v. Altria Grp., Inc.*, 423 F. Supp. 2d 697, 699 (E.D. Mich. 2005) (“Even if the Court finds the evidence reliable and relevant, it must also determine whether its probative value is outweighed by its prejudicial effect.”).

### **III. REGNERUS’S REPORT, OPINION, AND TESTIMONY LACK RELEVANCE TO THE FACTUAL ISSUES OF THIS CASE**

Regnerus’s expert report, opinion, and testimony should be excluded because they are irrelevant to this litigation. To be admissible, an expert opinion must be “sufficiently tied to the facts of the case that it will aid the [trier of fact] in resolving a factual dispute.” *Daubert*, 509 U.S. at 591; *see U.S. v. LeBlanc*, 45 Fed. App’x 393, 400 (6th Cir. 2002) (“Obviously, expert testimony is subject to the same relevancy constraints as all other kinds of evidence.”). Defendants have proffered Regnerus’s testimony solely to demonstrate that “only heterosexual marriages can provide children with the appropriate gender role-modeling required for healthy psychological development.” R 89, Opinion, p 6. However, Regnerus’s testimony does not assist in answering this question because he fails to address whether parents’ sexual orientation affects their children’s adult outcomes. Specifically, Regnerus’s expected testimony is irrelevant because (A) it relies on misleading comparisons between children continuously raised by married parents and children

who struggled with family instability, and (B) any purported association between parental same-sex romantic behavior and family instability is immaterial to Defendants' justification for the MMA. As a result of these flaws, Regnerus's testimony lacks a "valid scientific connection" to the "pertinent inquiry." *See Jahn v. Equine Servs., PSC*, 233 F.3d 382, 388 (6th Cir. 2000).

**A. Regnerus relies on misleading and irrelevant comparisons in his attempt to contradict the scientific consensus that no observable difference exists between the children of heterosexual parents and gay and lesbian parents**

Regnerus's expected testimony is based on the New Family Structures Study ("NFSS"). *See* Dep. Ex. 5, Regnerus, Findings from NFSS, attached. However, the results of the NFSS are irrelevant and misleading. The study divides survey respondents into categories that are designed to show dissimilar results between children of heterosexual parents<sup>2</sup> and children of parents who engaged in same-sex romantic behavior. The NFSS divides respondents with heterosexual parents into six different groups, distilling those respondents who "lived in [an] intact biological family . . . from [years] 0 to 18, and [whose] parents are still married" into a specific group labeled "IBF." *Id.* at 757-58. Regnerus refers to stably-coupled heterosexual households, like those in the IBF group, as the "gold standard." Dep. Ex. 1, Regnerus Expert Report, ¶ 66, attached; Dep. Ex. 6, Regnerus, NFSS Additional Analyses, p

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<sup>2</sup> In keeping with the NFSS, the term "heterosexual parents" here is defined as the parents of respondents who did not report their parents ever engaging in same-sex romantic behavior.



1377, attached. The majority of NFSS respondents with heterosexual parents do not fall into this IBF group and are instead classified into one of the remaining five heterosexual-parent groups, such as “stepfamily” or “single parent” if their parents “were either never married or else divorced.” Dep. Ex. 5, at 758. The NSFF takes a different approach to respondents who reported parental same-sex romantic behavior. It groups them into only two categories: children of “lesbian mothers” (“LM”) and “gay fathers” (“GF”). *Id.* at 757. All six of the heterosexual parent categories are collapsed into these two groups, allowing the study to obscure the effects of divorce or similar factors behind a gay or lesbian label.

Despite the fact that the IBF group is designed to contain only the “gold standard” of heterosexual family arrangements, Regnerus repeatedly uses it as the baseline to which he compares the LM and GF groups. *E.g.*, Dep. Ex. 1, ¶¶ 14-15. By engaging in this “apples-to-oranges” comparison, Regnerus conflates the effects of divorce, adoption, and single parenthood with the status of same-sex couples. As a result, he fails to address the relevant issue at hand—whether the MMA is justified because “only heterosexual marriages can provide children with the appropriate gender role-modeling required for healthy psychological development.” R 89, Opinion, p 6. If the NFSS made an “apples-to-apples” comparison between children of stable heterosexual couples and children of stable gay and lesbian couples, exactly two respondents would fall into the gay and lesbian analogue of the IBF group. The

remaining respondents in the gay and lesbian parent groups struggled with factors like divorce that would disqualify the child of heterosexual parents from membership in the IBF group. Regnerus himself concedes that the two respondents raised by lesbian parents since birth are well-adjusted and compare favorably to the other respondents. Dep. Ex. 1, ¶ 42. Thus, in the only two instances where Regnerus could offer comparisons potentially relevant to the question of whether gay and lesbian couples parent as well as heterosexual couples, his study supports Plaintiffs' claim that gay and lesbian parents can raise happy and healthy children.

**B. Regnerus's other claims are irrelevant to Defendants' asserted justifications for the MMA**

The elements of Regnerus's expert report that do not address whether gay and lesbian parents are capable of raising children as well as heterosexual parents are irrelevant to Defendants' asserted justification for the MMA as framed by this Court. *See* R 89, Opinion, p 6. For example, Regnerus's expert report includes claims that non-biological parents are more likely to murder their children, Dep. Ex. 1, ¶ 9, and that same-sex romantic behavior by parents is associated with family instability, *id.* ¶ 43. None of these claims pertain to whether "biologically connected" opposite-gender role models are, in fact, necessary for healthy development. Moreover, none of these assertions bear on how marriage between same-sex couples might affect the proportion of children raised by biological parents. Extremely rare cases of child

murder are immaterial to whether marriage between same-sex couples will lead to fewer children being raised by biological parents.

For the family instability observed in the NFSS to be relevant, defendants must establish a connection between their purported justification for the MMA and family instability. Expert testimony is properly excluded as irrelevant when it depends on a missing offer of proof to make a fact at issue more or less likely. *See U.S. v. Geiger*, 303 Fed. App'x. 327, 331 (6th Cir. 2008) (citing *United States v. Blackwell*, 459 F.3d 739, 753-54 (6th Cir. 2006)) (holding that district court did not err in excluding expert's proffered testimony as irrelevant because the testimony was merely conjecture). Defendants have offered no proof of the effect of marriage between same-sex couples on family stability. Regnerus admits that he cannot offer an opinion on this point, rendering his testimony concerning family instability ambiguous and irrelevant. Regnerus Dep., 138:9-12, Jan. 8, 2014. However, Regnerus has begrudgingly conceded that a possible interpretation of the NFSS is that permitting marriage between same-sex couples is desirable precisely because it would improve family stability for children of gay and lesbian parents. *See id.*; Dep. Ex. 9, Paul Amato on reviewing Regnerus, p 3, attached. Because Regnerus's findings and proffered testimony are not "relevant to the task at hand" this Court should determine that they are inadmissible.

**IV. REGNERUS’S REPORT, OPINION, AND TESTIMONY  
ARE UNRELIABLE**

The Court should exclude Regnerus’s report, opinion, and expected testimony because they are unreliable under Fed. R. Evid. 702. In order to be reliable, an expert’s conclusions must be based on the expert’s knowledge or experience in his or her discipline, rather than on substantive belief or unsupported speculation. *See, e.g., Kuhmo Tire*, 526 U.S. at 148; *Daubert*, 509 U.S. at 589-590. Regnerus’s testimony is unreliable because (A) he fails to consider “other possible causes” for his results, (B) his NFSS report is not generally accepted by the social science community, and (C) his testimony was prepared for instrumental purposes. Each of these flaws is a “red flag” that “caution[s] against certifying an expert.” *Newell Rubbermaid, Inc. v. Raymond Corp.*, 676 F.3d 521, 527 (6th Cir. 2012).

**A. Regnerus’s testimony is unreliable because he fails to adequately consider alternative explanations for his findings**

Regnerus’s expert report, opinion, and testimony are unreliable because he fails to adequately consider alternative explanations for his findings. *See Newell Rubbermaid, Inc.*, 676 F.3d at 527 (declaring “failure to consider other possible causes” a “red flag” when evaluating the reliability of evidence). Unlike the expert witness in *Conwood Co., L.P. v. U.S. Tobacco Co.*, Regnerus failed to “rule[] out all plausible alternatives for which he had data.” 290 F.3d 768, 794 (6th Cir. 2002)

(holding that the district court did not abuse its discretion in concluding that the expert satisfied *Daubert*).

In his report, Regnerus fails to account for several alternative explanations for the outcomes of the respondents in the “lesbian mother” and “gay father” groups, including rates of divorce, varying durations of parental romantic relationships, and whether parents’ romantic partners resided with respondents. Regnerus conceded that the results of the NFSS would have been different had he controlled for such factors. Regnerus Dep. at 100:3-4. Plaintiffs’ expert witness, Michael Rosenfeld, found that controlling for family transition removed the disparities between the IBF and gay and lesbian parent groups. Regnerus also conceded that controlling for family transitions “explains the disparities” observed in the NFSS. *Id.* at 100:25. In light of the substantial social science research establishing that children of divorced or single parents fare less well than children of married parents, the Court should exclude Regnerus’s report because he failed to adequately consider alternative explanations.

**B. Regnerus’s testimony is unreliable because it is not generally accepted by the social science community**

Given Regnerus’s failure to account for alternative explanations for his findings, his methods have not gained general acceptance in the relevant scientific community. *See Kumho Tire*, 526 U.S. at 149-50; *Daubert*, 509 U.S. at 591, 593-94. An expert’s reliability hinges on “whether the principle or theory has been generally

accepted or shunned by the community of experts in the field.” *Zuzula v. ABB Power T & D Co., Inc.*, 267 F. Supp. 2d 703, 712 (E.D. Mich. 2003). Like the expert in *Lawrence v. Raymond Corp.*, Regnerus’s methodology “is almost universally rejected by the relevant scientific community.” 501 F. App’x 515, 519 (6th Cir. 2012) (affirming district court’s exclusion of expert testimony because, among other reasons, it was “almost unanimously rejected” by the national standards institute). In fact, the same journal that originally published Regnerus’s study published a letter signed by over one hundred social scientists faulting the Regnerus study for failing to follow standard peer-review requirements and for failing to take account of family structure and family instability.<sup>3</sup>

Regnerus’s attempt to respond to this critique was insufficient. *See* Dep. Ex. 6, at 1369. As in *Pride v. BIC Corp.*, both Regnerus’s study and his response are unreliable because he failed to use “generally accepted scientific principles as applied to the facts of this case.” 218 F.3d 566, 578 (6th Cir. 2000) (excluding testimony when expert failed to apply accepted scientific principles to the facts of the case). The American Sociological Association (“ASA”), a national professional and scholarly association of over 14,000 sociologists, outlined several critical errors with Regnerus’s analysis, including an extremely broad definition of “lesbian” and

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<sup>3</sup> Gary J. Gates et al., *Letter to the Editor and Advisory Editors of Social Science Research*, 41 *Social Science Research* 1350 (2012).

“gay,” failing to take account of stability as a factor in child outcomes, failing to take account of duration of time spent with a mother who was romantically involved with a same-sex partner, and failing to isolate whether the recorded experiences occurred during the time the child lived with his or her mothers’ same-sex partner or during another childhood time period. *See* Dep. Ex. 10, Brief of Amicus Curiae American Sociological Association, 21-22, attached. According to the ASA, the only plausible conclusion from Regnerus’s study is that “family stability is predictive of child wellbeing.” *Id.* at 21. The evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that the social science community has not generally accepted Regnerus’s methods and conclusions.

The journal that initially published Regnerus’s study later conducted an internal audit that discredited his work.<sup>4</sup> The audit concluded that the study was non-scientific, had “serious flaws and distortions,” and should never have been published. *Id.* at 1346-49. Aware of the resounding repudiation of his study, Regnerus stated that he heard rumors about “efforts to retract [his article].” Regnerus Dep. at 133:1-2. The response of the social science community undermines the peer-review status of the NFSS. The evidence clearly demonstrates that the expert community has “shunned” Regnerus’s theory and methodology. *See Zuzula*, 267 F.

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<sup>4</sup> *See* Darren E. Sherkat, *The Editorial Process and Politicized Scholarship: Monday Morning Editorial Quarterbacking and a Call for Scientific Vigilance*, 41 *Social Science Research* 1346 (2012).

Supp. 2d at 712. Therefore, his testimony should be excluded under Fed. R. Evid. 702.

**C. The Court should apply the *Daubert* factors with greater rigor because Regnerus's testimony was prepared for instrumental purposes**

The Court should apply the *Daubert* factors with greater rigor because (1) the NFSS was prepared for litigation purposes, (2) Regnerus was not as careful as he would have been in his regular professional work, and (3) Regnerus's personal beliefs evince a lack of objectivity. *See* Fed. R. Evid. 702 advisory committee's note; *Johnson v. Manitowoc Boom Trucks, Inc.*, 484 F.3d 426, 435 (6th Cir. 2007) (holding that it is within the district court's "discretion to apply the *Daubert* factors with greater rigor"). The Sixth Circuit has noted that applying "close judicial analysis" to expert opinions potentially influenced by non-scientific factors is necessary "because expert witnesses are not necessarily always 'unbiased scientists.'" *Nelson v. Tennessee Gas Pipeline Co.*, 243 F.3d 244, 252 (6th Cir. 2001) (citation omitted) (internal quotation marks omitted) (holding that the magistrate judge did not abuse his discretion by concluding "the fact that the study was performed in connection with litigation" militates against admitting the expert's testimony).

First, Regnerus's study was prepared to bolster the litigation strategy for opponents of marriage between same-sex couples. A proposed expert's opinion is prepared for litigation when the expert is "testify[ing] about matters [that do not]



grow[] naturally and directly out of research [he] ha[s] conducted independent of litigation.” *Johnson*, 484 F.3d at 434. Regnerus is a “quintessential expert for hire.” *Id.* at 435. The Witherspoon Institute organized funding for Regnerus to complete the NFSS report. Luis Tellez, the President of the Witherspoon Institute, informed Regnerus via email that “[n]aturally we would like to move along as expeditiously as possible.” Dep. Ex. 11, E-mails between Tellez, Brad Wilcox and Regnerus, attached. Tellez emphasized that “[i]t would be great to have this before major decisions of the Supreme Court.” *Id.* Seven months later, in a request for funding to the Bradley Foundation, Tellez again underscored that “time is of the essence” because “the future of the institution of marriage at this moment is very uncertain.” *See* Dep. Ex. 14, Request for Funding, 2-3, attached. Regnerus echoed this sentiment when requesting a “speedy” peer-review from Jim Wright. Dep. Ex. 13, E-mails between Paul Amato and Regnerus, February, 2012, pp 1-2, attached.<sup>5</sup>

Second, Regnerus’s rush to publish reveals that he was not “being as careful as he would be in his regular professional work.” *See Kumho Tire Co. v. Carmichael*, 526 U.S. 137, 152 (1999) (holding that *Daubert* requires the trial court to assure itself that the expert “employs in the courtroom the same level of intellectual rigor

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<sup>5</sup> Regnerus claimed that his time sensitivity was self-imposed because he wanted to complete the study by his own personal deadline of March or May 2012. *See* Regnerus Dep. at 180:4-17. In fact, the Ninth Circuit had recently issued a widely publicized decision, *Perry v. Brown*, upholding marriage between same-sex couples in California. 671 F.3d 1052 (9th Cir. 2012) (issued Feb 7th, 2012).

that characterizes the practice of an expert in the relevant field”). Regnerus submitted the NFSS report for publication before his data collection was complete. Regnerus Dep. at 182:5-10. Prior to this report, Regnerus had never submitted an article before compiling all of the relevant data. *Id.*

Third, Regnerus’s personal views toward homosexual relationships also undermine the objectivity, and thus reliability, of his conclusions. The Sixth Circuit has explained that subjectivity is a “red flag” when evaluating the reliability of an expert’s testimony. *See, e.g., Newell Rubbermaid, Inc.*, 676 F.3d at 527; *Best v. Lowe’s Home Centers, Inc.*, 563 F.3d 171, 177 (6th Cir. 2009).

Regnerus admitted that his personal beliefs shaped his interest in conducting the NFSS. Regnerus Dep. at 209:7-20. In fact, as a “matter of affiliation [with the Catholic Church],” Regnerus believes that sexual relationships outside of heterosexual marriages are wrong. *Id.* at 204:9-21. He stated that he is “not a fan” of marriage between same-sex couples. *Id.* at 17:14-18. This personal belief was developed *before* Regnerus began the NFSS report. *Id.* Regnerus’s lack of objectivity demonstrates the unreliability of his proffered testimony and report. Given Regnerus’s failure to consider other possible causes for his results, the lack of general acceptance of his methodology, and the fact that his testimony was prepared for instrumental purposes, Regnerus’s testimony should be excluded as unreliable. *See Fed. R. Evid. 702.*

**V. REGNERUS’S REPORT, OPINION, AND TESTIMONY ARE INADMISSIBLE UNDER FEDERAL RULE OF EVIDENCE 403**

Regnerus’s conclusions lack probative value because they are irrelevant and unreliable. Inclusion of his testimony would provide no benefit and will waste time and confuse the issues in this case. *See* Fed. R. Evid. 403. Moreover, any possible probative value of Regnerus’s report is substantially outweighed by unfair prejudice. For instance, his discussion of non-biological parents murdering children, Regnerus Expert Report ¶ 9, has nothing to do with the facts of the case and is needlessly emotionally inflammatory. The purpose of this reference is to instill “purely emotional bias” against Plaintiffs. *See* Fed. R. Evid. 403 advisory committee’s note. Thus, Regnerus’s report, opinion, and testimony are inadmissible under Fed. R. Evid. 403.

**VII. CONCLUSION**

For the reasons set forth above, Plaintiffs request that the Court rule Regnerus’s testimony inadmissible at trial or accord such testimony little or no weight.

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INDEX TO EXHIBITS IN SUPPORT OF MOTION TO EXCLUDE  
TESTIMONY OF DR. MARK REGNERUS UNDER *DAUBERT*

1. Excerpts of Regnerus deposition 1/8/14 in DeBoer case
2. Regnerus report in DeBoer case, 12/20/13, Dep. Ex. 1
3. Regnerus, “How Different Are the Adult Children of Parents Who Have Same-Sex Relationships? Findings from the National Family Structure Study, March, 2012, Dep. Ex. 5
4. Regnerus, “Parental Same-Sex Relationships: Answering Critics of the New Family Structures Study With Additional Analyses”, 8/15/12, Dep. Ex. 6
5. Paul Amato, “Paul Amato on Reviewing Regnerus”, Family Inequality, 7/20/13, Dep. Ex. 9
6. Amicus Brief of American Sociological Association, filed in *Hollingsworth v Perry*, U.S.S.Ct. No. 12-144, Dep. Ex. 10
7. E-mails between Luis Tellez, Brad Wilcox and Regnerus, 9/21/10, Dep. Ex. 11
8. E-mails between Regnerus and Paul Amato re: Jim Wright, “speedy” review, NFSS, Dep. Ex. 13
9. Request for Funding for NFSS, University of Texas at Austin, 4/5/11, Luis Tellez, Witherspoon Institute, Dep. Ex. 14

**In The Matter Of:**

*Deboer, et al vs.*

*Snyder, et al*

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*Mark D. Regnerus, Ph.D.*

*January 8, 2014*

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN  
SOUTHERN DIVISION

APRIL DEBOER, et al,  
Plaintiffs,

vs.

Civil Action No. 12-cv-10285  
Hon. Bernard A. Friedman  
Mag. Michael J. Hluchaniuk

RICHARD SNYDER, et al,  
Defendants.

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The Deposition of MARK D. REGNERUS, PH.D.,  
Taken at 525 W. Ottawa Street,  
Lansing, Michigan,  
Commencing at 9:08 a.m.,  
Wednesday, January 8, 2014,  
Before Patricia A. Way, CSR-1201

1 Social Science Research that given how profound the  
2 instability was, that I presumed that it would -- you  
3 know, that the results would be different if you had  
4 controlled for such profound instability. Now, I said  
5 there I wondered whether that was the intelligent  
6 thing to do given that instability was so common among  
7 them.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. I also said that -- yeah. I'll leave it at that.

10 Q. Okay. Have you reviewed Michael Rosenfeld's expert  
11 report submitted in this case?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And did you see his discussion of his analysis of the  
14 NFSS data where he controlled for family transition?

15 A. I did.

16 Q. Yeah. Did you agree with his analysis?

17 A. I suspect he's accurate in saying that controlling for  
18 instability makes a big difference.

19 Q. Uh-huh. And he found, right, that controlling for  
20 family transition removed the disparities between the  
21 gay mother -- I'm sorry -- gay mother and lesbian  
22 mother groups on the one hand and the intact  
23 biological families on the other?

24 A. I don't know that it removes the disparities but it  
25 explains the disparities.



1           there were rumors in the past and there were efforts  
2           to retract it. I'm unaware of any current efforts.

3   Q.    Gotcha. So Paul Amato was one of the consultants on  
4           your study; is that right?

5   A.    Yes.

6   Q.    You -- you asked him to be a consultant?

7   A.    I did.

8   Q.    Uh-huh. He's a sociologist; is that right?

9   A.    Yes.

10  Q.    He's at Penn State?

11  A.    Correct.

12  Q.    You consider him a scholar who is well-regarded in  
13           family-structure studies?

14  A.    Especially with respect to divorce, yes.

15  Q.    Uh-huh. And do you consider him a scholar who's right  
16           down the middle politically, neither liberal nor  
17           conservative?

18  A.    Insofar as I understood him, yes, that's what I  
19           perceived.

20  Q.    Is that -- is that still your perception?

21  A.    That is.

22  Q.    Uh-huh. And you consider him to be a fare and  
23           level-headed scholar in this area?

24  A.    I generally do.

25  Q.    Uh-huh. Are you aware of the statement that

1 he's making some leaps, which is not uncommon, I  
2 suspect, but -- but he's correct that, you know, a  
3 generation ago things were different and the unions,  
4 as we can see in NFSS, tended to be unstable and then  
5 he says, "Presumably, as our society becomes more  
6 accepting . . . unfortunate circumstances will become  
7 less common." That's an empirical question I don't  
8 believe has been answered yet.

9 And his statement about "The freedom to  
10 marry . . . should increase stability," is also, you  
11 know, a speculative thing about the future. He may be  
12 right. I don't know.

13 Q. Right. Do you agree that marriage promotes family  
14 stability in heterosexual couples' families?

15 A. In some ways marriage denotes, you know, a -- a more  
16 legally stable union because it provides for --  
17 ensures legally, sort of, that things are not as  
18 simple to break apart.

19 Q. And -- and I'm sorry. You -- I didn't hear you  
20 clearly. If -- if the court reporter could read back  
21 that answer to save you the breath.

22 (The requested portion of the record was  
23 read by the reporter at 12:42 p.m.:

24 "Answer: In some ways marriage denotes, you  
25 know, a -- a more legally stable union

1 Q. -- that you wanted --

2 A. I'm sorry. I interrupted you. Could you repeat that  
3 question?

4 Q. Yes. It says here you asked Jim Wright to be speedy  
5 about it. It -- it sounds like you -- I understand  
6 that you're saying you wanted to get the peer-reviewed  
7 journal published, if possible, before the report.  
8 Was there a deadline for the report looming that you  
9 were trying to beat?

10 A. My own deadline.

11 Q. Uh-huh.

12 A. Which at that --

13 Q. What was that?

14 A. -- point was probably March or May, I suspect, but,  
15 yeah --

16 Q. Of what year?

17 A. That would have been of 2012.

18 Q. Yeah, okay. So Witherspoon didn't give you a  
19 deadline?

20 A. No. I had given them a deadline and then I kept  
21 moving it, but I wanted to keep my deadlines, and I  
22 don't like when I don't make my deadlines, but I kept  
23 pushing it back a little bit.

24 Q. Uh-huh. So did you -- you spoke to Jim Wright at  
25 Social Science Research directly about this?

1 for publication at a journal?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And that was Social Science Research?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. That was the journal. So you put this in -- submitted  
6 it for publication before the data collection was  
7 complete?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Is that something that is -- that you've done before?

10 A. I don't know if I've done it before. I know it is not  
11 uncommon because some data collection projects are  
12 ongoing. One example is the Online College Social  
13 Life Survey collected by Paula England, or she adds to  
14 the data insofar as people submit new cases to her.  
15 She's closed it now, but some data collection projects  
16 are ongoing, and in this case the nationals were  
17 pretty robust and I knew the rate at which new cases  
18 were coming in, and it was pretty slow at the end and  
19 so I had already worked on the -- the paper and done  
20 the initial results.

21 There were not that many more cases that  
22 came in afterwards, and the key -- key groups, namely  
23 the respondents who have the same-sex relationship --  
24 their parents have the same-sex relationship with a  
25 member of the opposite sex -- I'm sorry -- of the same

1 Q. All right. Other than that, you can't specify the  
2 time frame?

3 A. It just sounds like it's closer to 2002 than recent.

4 Q. Okay. Just based on the -- on the statements you  
5 made, you mean?

6 A. The language use, yeah.

7 Q. Okay. So nowadays do you still see a connection  
8 between your faith and your work?

9 A. It shapes what I'm interested in for sure. It's  
10 always --

11 Q. Uh-huh.

12 A. -- as I said just a minute ago, it -- it shaped my  
13 interest in religion, it shaped my interest in sexual  
14 decision-making, family, relationship formation.

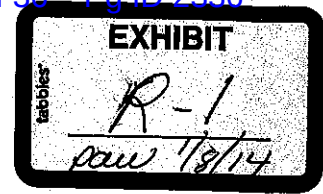
15 Q. And -- and did your faith, in part, at all shape your  
16 interest in doing the NFSS study?

17 A. It was not a -- I was -- it's -- it's an extension  
18 because it's on the subject of sexual relationships of  
19 parents and relationship formation and cessation, so  
20 it's within the same orbit of things that I was  
21 interested in already.

22 Q. Okay. Do you know what the Austin Institute is?

23 A. I do.

24 Q. Can you -- can you tell me what it -- what its mission  
25 is?



UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN  
SOUTHERN DIVISION

APRIL DEBOER, *et al*,

Civil Action No. 12-cv-10285

Plaintiffs,

HON. BERNARD A.  
FRIEDMAN

v

RICHARD SNYDER, *et al*

MAG. MICHAEL J.  
HLUCHANIUK

Defendants.

**Expert Report of Mark D. Regnerus, Ph. D.**

**I. Assignment**

1. I have been asked to provide an assessment of adult outcomes among children whose parents were reported to have had same-sex romantic relationships, based on my survey data collection project entitled the New Family Structures Study, and its accompanying publications.

**II. Qualifications**

2. I am an associate professor of sociology at the University of Texas at Austin, where I am also a research associate at the university's Population Research Center. I am also a senior fellow at the Austin Institute for the Study of Family and Culture.
3. All of my degrees are in sociology, including my Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I was an assistant professor of sociology at Calvin College from 2001-2002, and director of its Center for Social Research, after which I joined the sociology department at the University of Texas at Austin. In 2007 I was promoted to the rank of associate professor, with tenure.

4. I have published on romantic relationship behavior and sexual decision-making since 2006, including two books,<sup>1</sup> both of which earned numerous positive published reviews by peers.
5. I am being compensated \$250 per hour for my time spent preparing this report. My compensation does not depend on the outcome of the case or the opinions or testimony that I provide. I have not previously testified as an expert at trial or by deposition.
6. I was the principal investigator of the New Family Structures Study ("NFSS"), a survey data collection project that screened over 15,000 young adults about their childhood household structure, and collected complete surveys from just under 3,000 of them, including 248 respondents who reported a parental same-sex romantic relationship.

### III. Summary of Findings

7. A persistent claim by those supporting same-sex marriage is that there is "no difference" in the outcomes of children raised by a biological mother and father and those who have been raised by two women or two men. That claim has been made by associations like the American Psychological Association ("APA"), although the APA report on same-sex parenting was largely written by only one scholar, Dr. Charlotte Patterson of the University of Virginia.<sup>2</sup> Such a claim, however, has been based largely on studies involving non-random, non-representative samples, often with relatively few participants, or employs comparison groups of reduced kinship, such as stepfamilies. Comparisons have seldom been made with children growing up in stably-intact households consisting of a married mother and father, long understood to constitute an optimal child development setting.<sup>3</sup>
8. So the claim that another parenting relationship—one consisting of both a solitary gender of parent and at least one source of diminished kinship—produces child outcomes just as good as (or even better than) intact biological parents is a surprising proposition,<sup>4</sup> one that must be rigorously tested, and until then, viewed with healthy skepticism.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Regnerus, *Forbidden Fruit: Sex and Religion in the Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford University Press, 2007); Mark Regnerus and Jeremy Uecker, *Premarital Sex in America: How Young Americans Meet, Mate, and Think about Marrying* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Charlotte J. Patterson, *Lesbian and Gay Parents and their Children: Summary of Research Findings*. Lesbian and Gay Parenting: American Psychological Association, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> McLanahan, Sara, Sandefur, Gary. *Growing Up with a Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA. 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Timothy J. Biblarz and Judith Stacey, "How does the Gender of Parents Matter?" *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72 (1), 3–22, 2010.

9. After all, kinship reduction has long been associated with less-optimal outcomes among children. A recent examination of the benefits of monogamous unions noted, among other things, that, "(l)iving in the same household with genetically unrelated adults is the single biggest risk factor for abuse, neglect and homicide of children. Stepmothers are 2.4 times more likely to kill their stepchildren than birth mothers, and children living with an unrelated parent are between 15 and 77 times more likely to die 'accidentally.'"<sup>5</sup> One should not read such statements as a blanket indictment of step-parenting or adoption, whether gay or straight, since most such arrangements are and remain peaceable. Nevertheless, on average genetically-related parents pose a lower risk to their children than those parents or guardians who are not genetically related to the children in their care.
10. Conducting high-quality empirical studies on this topic, however, is challenging for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the comparatively small population we seek to locate (randomly) and study, and the lack of settled protocols about how to identify parental sexual orientation. In large, population-based datasets, the share of Americans who identify as experiencing same-sex attractions is larger than that share that has reported same-sex sexual behavior, which is in turn larger than that share which identifies as gay, lesbian, or bisexual.
11. Research in this area is further complicated by the political climate surrounding this subject matter. The late family sociologist Dr. Norval Glenn remarked, "Given the widespread support for same-sex marriage among social and behavioral scientists, it is becoming politically incorrect in academic circles even to suggest that arguments being used in support of same-sex marriage might be wrong."<sup>6</sup> In other words, few scholars dare to tread here, and those who do risk professional hostility if they raise standard methodological concerns. Editors publish critical research at their peril. It is not an optimal environment for the conduct of science.
12. Despite the challenges noted above, the hallmark of a rigorous study is a large, representative pool of participants drawn from a population-based random sample. I conducted a large, population-based study of

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<sup>5</sup> Joseph Henrich, Robert Boyd, and Peter J. Richerson, "The Puzzle of Monogamous Marriage." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society: Biological Sciences* 367: 657-669, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Norval D. Glenn, "The Struggle for Same-Sex Marriage." *Society* 41 (6): 25-28, 2004.



young adults called the New Family Structures Study (“NFSS”), which included survey information from 248 respondents who reported that a parent of theirs had been in a romantic relationship with someone of the same sex while they (the children) were growing up. A total of 2,988 young adults completed the survey, providing ample opportunity for comparisons.

13. The initial published study based on the NFSS data looked at social behaviors, health behaviors, and relationships comparing 40 different outcomes (as reported by the adult children in the study rather than by those who raised them) across various groups, including respondents who spent their childhood with their married biological parents, those who spent most time in step-parenting arrangements, with single parents, as well those respondents who reported that a parent had been in a same-sex romantic relationship (among other types of household arrangements and experiences).
14. When compared with children who grew up in biologically (still) intact, mother-father families, the children of women who reported a same-sex relationship—and spent time living with her mother’s partner—report markedly different outcomes across a variety of domains (19 out of 40 outcomes are statistically significantly different, after controls). The latter attained less education, are less apt to be employed full-time, more apt to be currently unemployed and on public assistance, more likely to have experienced sexual violence against them, more apt to have had an affair, and more likely to smoke and to have been arrested, among other outcomes. Some specific examples of the differences between the two groups are:
  - Received public assistance (i.e., welfare) while growing up: 17% vs. 70%
  - Currently receiving public assistance: 10% vs. 49%
  - Currently employed full-time: 49% vs. 17%
  - Currently unemployed: 8% vs. 40%
  - Had been forced to have sex against their will: 8% vs. 27%
  - Had an affair while married or cohabiting: 13% vs. 38%

Perhaps because of the smaller sample size for fathers who have had gay relationships, there were not as many significant findings as compared to mothers who have had lesbian relationships. However, adult children of fathers who are or have been in a same-sex relationship are more apt (than adult children raised by intact biological parents) to smoke, have been arrested, pled guilty to non-minor offenses, and report more numerous sex partners.

15. Those children who identified a parent as having had a same-sex relationship self-reported outcomes that were consistently less optimal than those respondents whose biological parents were—and remain—married. The outcome patterns among those children who lived for some duration with their mother in a residential relationship that included her same-sex partner compare most favorably with never-married single mothers. This may be due in part to the comparative brevity of their mother's (residential) relationship with her partner.
16. The NFSS data is not longitudinal, and not conducive to making strong claims about direct influences of parenting. As a result, I did not make claims about causation in the study. My analytic intention was more modest than this: to test for the presence of simple group differences, and—with the addition of several control variables—to assess just how robust any between-group differences were. Thus any suboptimal outcomes may not be due to the sexual orientation of the parent, which was not measured. The exact sources of group differences would be difficult if not impossible to adequately sequester.
17. In fact, no existing study yet bears the ability to randomly locate, track, and compare large numbers of children—thousands, or even hundreds—raised continuously by gay couples with the same among heterosexual couples over many years. The science here remains young.
18. The publication of this study in the July 2012 issue of *Social Science Research*<sup>7</sup> was met with considerable hostility, primarily located in gay and lesbian interest groups. An effort led by Dr. Gary Gates, expert witness for the plaintiff in this case, called for the journal to retract the study. Retractions, however, are historically appropriate only when egregious errors or outright fabrication has occurred. Neither is true with respect to this study, and the original article remains in print. The ad hominem attacks aimed at me, as well as the editor of the journal *Social Science Research*, continue unabated.
19. The NFSS enjoys a variety of strengths as well as important limitations, the latter of which skeptics and critics have focused on since the publication of the study. Nevertheless, there is much that scholars can learn from it, regardless of their sentiments on the subject matter of same-sex parents or same-sex marriage.

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<sup>7</sup> Mark Regnerus, "How Different are the Adult Children of Parents who have Same-Sex Relationships? Findings from the New Family Structures Study." *Social Science Research* 41: 752-770, 2012.

20. How was the NFSS conducted, and how and why are the findings from my NFSS-based study distinctive from so much research on same-sex parenting? The NFSS survey data collection, which screened over 15,000 Americans between ages 18 and 39 about their childhood household structure and experiences, and then completed full interviews with 3,000 of them, was underwritten by two private organizations—the Witherspoon Institute and (joined later by) the Bradley Foundation—known for their political conservatism. Witherspoon’s support was declared to potential consultants (including two of plaintiff’s expert witnesses, Gary Gates and Michael Rosenfeld, who each declined), as well as in the study text itself.
21. The data collection was undertaken by the research firm Knowledge Networks (“KN”), with whom the University of Texas at Austin subcontracted. KN maintains an active panel of around 50,000 adults whom interested researchers can contract to survey.<sup>8</sup> Plaintiff’s expert witness Michael Rosenfeld has conducted his own survey project using KN’s KnowledgePanel®, as have hundreds of other academic and government survey researchers.
22. I uploaded the NFSS survey data to a data repository at the University of Michigan in November 2012<sup>9</sup>, thus freely opening it to re-analyses and criticism. The same practice, however, has not been displayed by the National Longitudinal Lesbian Family Study (“NLLFS”) and other privately-funded datasets on sexuality (including the 2009 National Survey of Sexual Health and Behavior, or “NSSHB”) that remain securely away from public and scholarly peer scrutiny. I released the data because I said I would, and because it is a scientific value, not because of political pressure to do so.
23. It is a challenging matter to discern how best to screen a generation (ages 18-39) whose parents may not have self-identified as gay or lesbian. In coordination with several academic consultants, our project team decided to privilege the measurement of the romantic relationship behavior of the young-adult respondents’ parents rather than the respondent’s perceptions of their parent(s)’ sexual orientation (stated or otherwise).
24. The study surveyed adults ages 18-39 who reflected on their parent(s)’ past same-sex romantic relationship behavior, which conceivably occurred as recently as a few years ago or as far back as 30 or more years. The NFSS thus captures what might be called an “earlier

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/knpanel/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/34392?q=nfss&searchSource=icpsr-landing>

generation” of children of same-sex parents, and includes among them many who witnessed a failed heterosexual union. We screened over 15,000 Americans with a short sequence of questions about their households while growing up. Among that sample, 175 people reported that their mother had had a same-sex romantic relationship at some point in their growing-up years; 73 reported the same about their father.

25. I noted in my November 2012 response to critics that my use of the acronyms “LM” (lesbian mother, for those respondents whose mother had a same-sex relationship) and “GF” (gay father, for those whose father had a same-sex relationship) were unfortunately prone to conflating sexual orientation—which the NFSS did not measure—with same-sex relationship behavior, which it did measure. The original study, indeed the entire data collection effort, was always focused on the respondents’ awareness of parental same-sex relationship behavior rather than their own assessment of parental sexual orientation, which may have differed from how their parent would describe it.
26. This measurement approach was intended to capture a combination of same-sex households, ones in which two men or two women had (1) adopted a child (that is, the survey respondent), (2) conceived via artificial reproductive technology (ART), or (3) brought with them into a same-sex relationship a child conceived in a heterosexual union. We found the latter of these, a failed heterosexual union, to constitute around 55 percent of such respondents’ origins. Another 30 percent reported no father or mother’s same-sex partner in the first year of their life.
27. In other words, few young-adult children in the NFSS appear to be the product of what might be labeled the “ideal type” same-sex couple portrayed in media narratives and that scholars have privileged as an optimal comparison group: two men or two women in a stable relationship who agree to pursue a child by ART. Just how much more commonly children conceived by ART are today among same-sex households is unknown. (In the United States, however, just about one percent of all successful pregnancies begin by ART, and statistically the majority of them are believed to be infertile opposite-sex couples.) Given its costs, however, ART is out of reach of couples—gay or straight—who lack the resources to afford it.
28. Yet every child born to a couple via ART (a “planned” gay or lesbian family) retains at least one non-biological “step” parent, suggesting the

more favorable comparison group would not be the biologically-intact, mother-father households but heterosexual stepfamilies.

29. On the other hand, half of all US pregnancies are unplanned. No ART birth is unplanned.
30. The demographic characteristics (e.g., race, income) of the NFSS's sample of children of men and women who have had same-sex relationships are very similar to estimates of those same-sex couples in the 2000 US Census's 5% Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS). Plaintiff's expert witness Rosenfeld reported that 37% and 42% of children from female and male same-sex (coupled) households in the PUMS sample are Black and Hispanic, respectively.<sup>10</sup> Rosenfeld also noted that same-sex couples with children have, on average, less education and lower household incomes than both heterosexual couples with children and same-sex couples without children. Plaintiff's expert witness Gary Gates notes the same—that African American and Latino same-sex couples are more likely than white same-sex couples to be raising children.<sup>11</sup> The NFSS found similarly: 43% of respondents who reported a maternal same-sex relationship were either Black or Hispanic. In a recent publication based on the NLLFS, however, only 12% of the NLLFS sample is nonwhite.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, 94% reported college-educated parents, a figure dramatically higher than the national average (which is just over 30%).<sup>13</sup>
31. This means that the sample-selection bias problem in many studies of gay and lesbian parenting—including the 19 published NLLFS-based studies—is not minor or incidental, but likely profound, rendering the ability of non-population-based research to offer valid interpretations of average household experiences of children with a lesbian or gay parent suspect. In other words, most snowball-sample-based research has shed light only on above-average or privileged gay and lesbian households. What it cannot do is tell us much about the lives of lesbian parents across the country, because it is decidedly not a population-based data collection effort, but has been widely interpreted as such in

<sup>10</sup> Michael J. Rosenfeld, "Nontraditional Families and Childhood Progress through School," *Demography* 47: 765–776, 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Gary J. Gates and Adam P. Romero. "Parenting by Gay Men and Lesbians: Beyond the Current Research," in Elizabeth Peters and Claire M. Kamp Dush, eds., *Marriage and Family: Perspectives and Complexities*, pp. 227-243, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Loes van Geldern, Henny M.W. Bos, Nanette Gartrell, Jo Hermanns, and Ellen C. Perrin, "Quality of Life of Adolescents Raised from Birth by Lesbian Mothers: The US National Longitudinal Family Study," *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics* 33 (1): 1-7, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/data/cps/2012/tables.html>

scholarly and media outlets. It is not.

32. Gay and lesbian parents are, in reality, economically, racially, and socially far more diverse than data collection efforts like the NLLFS imply. Dr. Charlotte Patterson, author of the APA report on same-sex parenting, notes this decided lack of diversity in studies: “Despite the diversity of gay and lesbian communities, both in the United States and abroad, samples of children [and parents] have been relatively homogenous....Samples for which demographic information was reported have been described as predominantly Caucasian, well-educated, and middle to upper class.”<sup>14</sup>
33. What the social science of gay parenting based on nonprobability samples has taught us is that it is possible for children raised in same-sex households to develop normally and competently across a variety of domains, but not whether it is probable that they will. Only studies based on probability samples can do that. Very few data collection efforts employing probability samples are able to address this subject. Indeed, publications featuring the three largest North American probability samples on this topic—Census-based studies in the US and Canada, and the NFSS—have emerged only in the past three years.
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34. Other published research—including those based on the NLLFS—featured sample sizes too small to provide ample statistical power to detect genuine between-group differences that exist in social reality (i.e., making a Type II error). That is, the sample may be too small for inferential statistics to detect differences that actually exist in the population. But that shortcoming did not curb the publication of numerous such studies making claims about “no differences” employing inferential statistics on samples whose underlying biases cannot be discerned.
35. Source bias is also a common problem in many comparative studies. One scholar notes that “parental self-report, of course, may be biased. It is plausible to argue that, in a prejudiced social climate, lesbian and gay parents may have more at stake in presenting a positive picture,” such that “future studies need to consider using additional sophisticated measures to rule out potential biases.”<sup>15</sup> The NFSS avoids source bias by asking young adults ages 18-39 to report on their own life situations as well as their reflections on their childhood,

<sup>14</sup> Charlotte J. Patterson, “Children of Lesbian and Gay Parents.” *Child Development* 63: 1025-1029, 1992.

<sup>15</sup> Fiona Tasker, “Same-sex Parenting and Child Development: Reviewing the Contribution of Parental Gender.” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72, 35-40, 2010

rather than parents talking about their children, bringing needed source diversity to studies in this area.

36. As noted above, scholars have leveled numerous criticisms at my published study based on the NFSS. Some of the questions directed at my study based on the NFSS are fair and legitimate, and were welcomed and addressed in a follow-up response to critics in the November 2012 issue of *Social Science Research*.<sup>16</sup>
37. One likely reason for the heightened criticism of my NFSS-based study is its emphasis on general description rather than skipping description and moving rapidly toward explanation. Indeed, the study's analyses present average between-group differences across 40 different outcomes, assessing first their simple statistical differences and then whether between-group differences remain statistically significant after controlling for the respondent's current age, race/ethnicity, gender, their mother's level of education, and their perceptions of family-of-origin income while growing up. I also controlled for a retrospective measure of having experienced bullying—something believed to be a common experience among children with gay or lesbian parents—and a measure of the gay-friendliness of the respondent's current state of residence, a measure thought to be positively correlated with better outcomes among gay and lesbian adults and their children.
38. A common approach in studies of gay parenting outcomes is to avoid the display of—and any discussion around—average differences between groups, and instead to move immediately to more complex, regression-based analyses where simple differences are not noted. This is not inherently a problem, but rather a different approach to analyses. I elected to privilege the description of social reality rather than skipping quickly to explaining, since explanations seem best as following mapping and description rather than preceding or replacing them. Description is also a plausible, reasonable goal for a new data collection project's first publication: such has been the case in the past with other nationally-representative studies.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Mark Regnerus. "Parental Same-Sex Relationships, Family Instability, and Subsequent Life Outcomes for Adult Children: Answering Critics of the New Family Structures Study with Additional Analyses." *Social Science Research* 41: 1367-1377, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Michael D. Resnick, Peter S. Bearman, Robert W. Blum, Karl E. Bauman, Kathleen M. Harris, Jo Jones, Joyce Tabor, Trish Beuhring, Renee E. Sieving, Marcia Shew, Marjorie Ireland, Linda H. Bearinger, J.R. Udry, "Protecting Adolescents from Harm: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 278 (10), 823-832, 1997.

39. My study did not seek to assess the magnitude of effects (of having a parent in a same-sex relationship). Its stated purpose was more narrow: to test for between-group differences, and in so doing evaluate the popular claims being made about their being “no differences” among those raised in same-sex households (however measured).
40. Some criticisms concern my subjective measurement decisions made possible by the very comprehensive information that the NFSS afforded to scholars, including household “calendars” that asked respondents to document who lived in their household each year from the time the respondent was born until the present. This enables analysts to document the arrival and departure of parental romantic partners, including those of the same sex. However, the calendars revealed that household histories are often messy, meaning that respondents noted that some parental (residential) romantic relationships were brief and/or numerous. This reality of many American households, however, creates a challenge for NFSS data analysts with respect to parental same-sex relationships.
41. According to the household calendar data, just over half (90) of the 175 respondents whose mother had a lesbian relationship reported that they did not live with both their mother and her same-sex partner at the same time. How long those same-sex relationships lasted is indiscernible. Do such maternal same-sex relationships matter, given the respondent didn’t live with the mother’s partner? Should analysts only pay attention to those 51 children whose mothers spent only a year or two in a residential same-sex relationship, or stick to the even smaller minority of respondents whose mothers appeared to be in more stable relationships, who spent 5, 10, or 15 years in such a relationship? (This would create a statistical power problem—too few cases to analyze with confidence that one could detect statistical differences that in fact existed.)
42. The two respondents who lived with their mother and her partner for all 18 years of their childhood did indeed appear comparatively well-adjusted on most developmental and contemporary outcomes. But two out of 175 respondents—or out of 248 if you also include those respondents whose fathers had a same-sex relationship—suggests very tall odds against enjoying a stable same-sex household for the duration of one’s childhood in the NFSS. And what about those children who did not live in the same household with the parent who was in a same-sex relationship (a far more common scenario where fathers were in such relationships)? Does a non-residential parent still influence a child?



Unless they play no part in their lives—which we do not know—it is rational to assert that non-residential parents may still influence their children, as they do in very many stepfamily and single-parent situations.

43. Simply put, those NFSS respondents who reported a parental same-sex relationship were far more likely to also report household instability and parental relationship “dynamism.” One can “control for” such instability in evaluating between-group differences, but it was a very common experience among such respondents in the NFSS. Whether such household instability and parental relationship upheaval remains true today is not clear.
44. The tendency to overlook “pathways” in favor of control variables more broadly reflects a common pattern in social science research to search for “independent” effects of variables, thereby missing the ability to explain how social phenomena actually operate in the real world. If, for example, most men smoked, but few women did, it is entirely unhelpful to declare that—controlling for smoking—there is no effect of gender on lung cancer. In that case, men’s predilection for smoking would merit close scrutiny and concern. In the same way, parental same-sex relationships, household instability, and more problematic young-adult life outcomes are quite possibly connected, and a key purpose of social science here is not only to document such pathways but to figure out why they exist.
45. If stability was comparatively rarer in the parents who had same-sex relationships decades ago when stigma was more pronounced and social support for lesbian and gay parents far more modest than it is today, is it a safe assumption that the NFSS study is a “dated” one by definition? That is, if the study could be replicated among same-sex parents of younger children today that the troubling outcomes that were more likely to appear among them in the NFSS would very likely disappear or fail to materialize? Perhaps, but this conclusion is hardly certain. What is known about the comparative relationship stability of gay and lesbian adults in general?
46. Other research on gay and lesbian adults—including but not limited to parents—has noted the comparative volatility of lesbian relationships. A study of Norwegian and Swedish same-sex relationships notes that divorce risk is higher in same-sex marriages and that the “risk of divorce for female partnerships actually is more than twice that for

male unions.”<sup>18</sup> Moreover, early same-sex marriages—those occurring shortly after a shift in marriage law—exhibited a similar risk of divorce as did more recent marriages, suggesting no notable variation in instability over time as a function of new law or pent-up demand among more stable, longstanding relationships. The study authors estimate that in Sweden, 30% of female marriages are likely to end in divorce within 6 years of formation, compared with 20% for male marriages and 13% for heterosexual ones.

47. A follow-up assessment of more recent Norwegian statistics, presented at the 2012 annual meeting of the Population Association of America (PAA), found no evidence that the gender gap in same-sex divorce has closed.<sup>19</sup> An October 2013 release from the UK’s Office for National Statistics revealed that in the seven years since civil unions were recognized in Britain, the lesbian break-up rate was nearly twice that seen among gay male couples.<sup>20</sup>

48. Michael Rosenfeld, expert witness for the plaintiff in this case, detected the same pattern in a study of nationally-representative data on American relationships presented at the 2012 annual meeting of the American Sociological Association.<sup>21</sup> Lesbian couples reported higher relationship satisfaction alongside higher break-up rates. The data source for Rosenfeld’s study is the same as that for the NFSS: KN’s KnowledgePanel®.

49. In that study, the highest stability rates appear among heterosexual married couples, while notably better stability is located among married gay and lesbian couples than among those in civil unions (as would be expected). Yet Rosenfeld’s analysis also detects greater instability among lesbian couples in general, a finding that persists even after a lengthy series of control variables are included. While lesbian couples in the study are more apt to be raising children, the presence of children does not appear to be a factor in the diminished relationship stability evident among them.

<sup>18</sup> Gunnar Andersson, Turid Noack, Ane Seierstad, Harald Weedon-Fekjaer, “The demographics of same-sex marriages in Norway and Sweden.” *Demography* 43, 79–98, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Turid Noack, Ane Seierstad, and Kenneth Aarskaug Wiik. “Divorce Risk in Norwegian Same-Sex Marriages, 1993-2010.” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America, San Francisco, May 2012.

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778\\_329457.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_329457.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> Michael J. Rosenfeld, “Couple Longevity and Formal Unions in the era of Same-Sex Marriage in the U.S.” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Denver, August 2012.

50. While gay men's relationships appear more stable than lesbian relationships, but are less likely to be sexually monogamous when compared with lesbian or heterosexual relationships, as attested to in analyses of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health's Wave IV data, collected during respondents' mid-20s and early 30s.<sup>22</sup> While the effect of relationship stability on child health and development is well-documented, the effect on children of parental nonmonogamy is not well understood.
51. Respondents from stably-coupled same-sex households were simply rare in the NFSS. Some critics have suggested that stable same-sex households were genuinely undercounted in the study. The study's screening protocol, however, did not prevent stably-coupled same-sex households from appearing. They were simply uncommon in the experience of respondents in an earlier era.
52. If stability is a key asset for households with children, then it is sensible to use stably-intact biological families in any comparative assessment, as my NFSS-based study did.
53. An argument for "no differences" or "few differences" in the NFSS could more readily be made when the children of parents who've had same-sex relationships are compared with the children of opposite-sex parents who display a notable degree of genetic dissimilarity, such as children who largely grew up in stepfamilies or with single mothers.
54. My study joins two other peer-reviewed publications in the past two years in which child outcomes are assessed and compared using data from large, population-based probability samples, revealing suboptimal outcomes of children from same-sex relationships when contrasted with biologically-intact households. One was a re-analysis of US Census data conclusions first reached by plaintiff's expert witness Rosenfeld<sup>23</sup> and the other an analysis of Canadian census data.<sup>24</sup> Each of the three datasets measures parental same-sex experience differently. The US Census estimates same-sex parental households by gender, without any knowledge of parents' sexual identity, orientation, or behavior, while the Canadian census asked young-adult children living at home whether their parents were currently in a same-sex

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<sup>22</sup> Kara Joyner, Wendy Manning, and Ryan Bogle. "The Stability and Qualities of Same-Sex and Different-Sex Couples in Young Adulthood." Working Paper, Bowling Green State University Center for Family and Demographic Research, 2013.

<sup>23</sup> Douglas W. Allen, Joseph Price, Catherine Pakaluk. "Nontraditional Families and Childhood Progress Through School: A Comment on Rosenfeld." *Demography* 50 (3): 955-961, 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Douglas W. Allen, "High School Graduation Rates among Children of Same-Sex Households." *Review of the Economics of the Household* 11: 635-658, 2013.

relationship. In other words, there is no established social science norm concerning how exactly to measure same-sex households with children.

55. Nevertheless, a probability sample like these—including the NFSS—is required whenever a researcher wishes to make claims about the larger population from which the sample was drawn. If one of the goals of social-science research on same-sex households is to make claims about children living, or who have lived, in such households, then a probability sample must be drawn from the larger population of same-sex parents, couples, or households with children. Without a probability sample, there is no way to discern just how biased or unbiased a sample of respondents is; that is, how “unusual” or “normal” the sample of a particular population is. Without a probability sample, inferential statistics make little sense to employ, since the employment of inferential statistics assumes a real-world population “behind” a sample, and it is those real-world population “parameters” that we are estimating when employing statistics.

56. There is no alternative to using a probability sample if the goal is to generalize from a sample to a larger population, which is a very sensible goal when analyzing data whose results may have significant consequences for social policy debates such as this one.

57. Much published research on same-sex parenting, however, has not employed probability samples. Indeed, 19 peer-reviewed publications have emerged from just one nonprobability “snowball” study—the National Longitudinal Lesbian Family Study.<sup>25</sup> Thus it is possible (and even correct) to state that the vast majority of social science until very recently has confirmed the “no differences” (or very few differences) conclusion. Unfortunately, the NLLFS subjects were allowed to select themselves into the study, creating bias of unknowable magnitudes and disabling the ability of scholars to generalize from its sample to the population of lesbian families as a whole. I don’t wish to impugn smaller studies simply because their research methods involved small or nonrandom samples. Such is often the case in exploratory studies of small populations. My criticism rather concerns the confident declarations about “no differences” often made based upon them. It ought to raise concern when they are used to support broad public policy changes, like those at issue in this case. In short, it is faulty to credibly, much less confidently, claim “no difference” with such thin support.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.nllfs.org/publications/>

#### IV. Conclusions

58. The NFSS, which cannot definitively assess causation but rather simply documents associations, reveals that to be stably rooted in your married mother and father's household is to foster the greatest chance at lifelong flourishing. It is neither necessary nor is it a guarantee. It just displays the best odds. Adoption commonly remains a next-best option for many children, though it too is understood as a concession, an accommodation to circumstances in which a child is unable to remain in the custody of his/her biological parents.
59. Of course, such kinship ties are often broken, sometimes with intention (by mutual divorce, sperm donation, and some instances of surrogacy), sometimes by accident (as through the death of a parent), and sometimes by necessity (in the case of seeking protection from domestic violence). Prudent government seeks to discourage broken kinship ties, and to wrestle over how to manage situations in which brokenness seems unavoidable, but they should not respond by declaring biological bonds to be irrelevant or such brokenness and its consequences only imagined.
60. Certainly same-sex couples, like other parenting structures, can make quality and successful efforts in raising children. That is not in question. In social reality there may genuinely be two "gold standards" of family stability and context for children's flourishing—a stably-coupled heterosexual household and a stably-coupled homosexual household, but no population-based sample analyses have yet been able to consistently confirm wide evidence of the latter.
61. No existing study yet bears the ability to randomly compare large numbers of children raised by gay couples with the same among heterosexual couples over a long period of time. The social science of same-sex parenting structures remains young, and subject to significant limitations about what can be known, given that the influence of household structures and experiences on child outcomes is not a topic for experimental research design.
62. As a result, social scientists are unable to document with any degree of certainty that no developmental harm is done to children growing up in households wherein parents are in (or have been in) same-sex relationships. Additionally, the past three years have witnessed the publication of three peer-reviewed studies that assess children's outcomes of having lived in a same-sex household or having witnessed the same-sex romantic relationship of a parent using data from large,

population-based samples: my NFSS-based study, a re-analysis of US Census data, and an analysis of Canadian census data. All three raise concerns, suggesting that any consensus about “no differences” is premature at best, and may well be inaccurate.

63. With so many significant outstanding questions about whether children develop as well in same-sex households as in opposite-sex households, it remains prudent for government to continue to recognize marriage as a union of a man and a woman, thereby promoting what is known to be an ideal environment for raising children.

Date: December 20, 2013

By: /s/ Mark D. Regnerus, Ph. D.

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(December 2013)

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**EDUCATION**

Ph.D., Sociology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2000.

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**ACADEMIC POSITIONS**

2007-present: Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Texas at Austin.

2002-present: Faculty Research Associate, Population Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.

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**PUBLICATIONS**

**Books**

Regnerus, Mark and Jeremy Uecker. 2011. *Premarital Sex in America: How Young Americans Meet, Mate, and Think about Marriage*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Reviewed in *Contemporary Sociology*, *American Journal of Sociology*, *Sex Roles*, *The New Republic*, *Commentary*, and *First Things*.

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#### **Book Chapters**

- Regnerus, Mark D. 2013. "The Family as First Building Block." In *What Makes for a Thriving Society*.

[Chapter in preparation for submission.]

Regnerus, Mark D. 2010. "Religion and Adolescent Sexual Behavior." In *Religion, Families, and Health* (Christopher Ellison and Robert Hummer, editors). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

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#### Select Other Publications

Regnerus, Mark. "Right Side of History or Primed to Say Yes?" *National Review*, August 20, 2013.

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- Reprinted in *Opposing Viewpoints: America's Youth*. 2007. Edited by Jamuna Carroll. Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press.

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Regnerus, Mark D. "Living up to Expectations." Report, Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, University of Pennsylvania, 2003.

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Regnerus, Mark. "Challenges to Liberal Protestant Identity and Diversity Work: a Qualitative Study." *Sociological Analysis* 1998, 1: 139-149.

#### **BOOK REVIEWS**

Review of: *Charitable Choices: Religion, Race, and Poverty in the Post-Welfare Era*, John P. Bartkowski and Helen A. Regis, New York: NYU press. In *Social Forces* 82: 861-863 (2003).

Review of: *They Still Pick Me Up when I Fall: The Role of Youth Development and Community Life*, Diana Mendley Rauner, New York: Columbia University Press. In *Social Forces* 79: 1545-1547 (2001).

#### **FUNDING AND GRANTS**

Principal Investigator, "The New Family Structures Study." \$640,000 grant from the Witherspoon Institute, May 2011-August 2013. (Approved, 100% under PI's supervision)

Principal Investigator, "The New Family Structures Study (supplementary assistance)." \$90,000 grant from the Bradley Foundation, Nov 2011-Nov 2012. (Approved, 100% under PI's supervision)

Principal Investigator, "The New Family Structures Study." \$55,000 planning grant from the Witherspoon Institute, Oct 2010- June 2011. (Approved, 100% under PI's supervision)

Principal Investigator, "The New Pentecostals and Political and Social Activism." \$9,565 grant from the National Science Foundation (Dissertation Improvement Grant, for Nicolette Manglos), 2010-11.  
(Approved but returned).

Principal Investigator, "Testing Differences: The Transfer and Transformation of HIV Testing from the West to Sub-Saharan Africa." \$7,500 grant from the National Science Foundation (Dissertation Improvement Grant, for Nicole Angotti), 2008-2009.

Seed grant for "Sex and Emotional Health in Emerging Adulthood." \$4,000 grant from the Population Research Center and \$2,000 grant from the College of Liberal Arts, University of Texas at Austin, 2007.

Co-Investigator, "Developing Health Behaviors in Middle Adolescence" (Lynn Rew, PI, University of Texas School of Nursing). National Institute of Nursing Research, 2006-2011.  
(Approved, <5% under my supervision)

Research Internship (Mentor), \$22,333. Office of Graduate Studies, University of Texas at Austin; 2006-2007 (for graduate student Nicolette Manglos).

Dean's Fellowship, College of Liberal Arts, University of Texas at Austin, Spring 2006.

Co-Investigator, "Religious Organizations, Local Norms, and HIV in Africa" (Susan Watkins, PI, University of Pennsylvania). \$864,000 grant from the National Institute of Child Health & Human Development; June 2005 – May 2008; (Regnerus is PI of \$279,000 sub-contract to UT-Austin). R01-HD050142-01.

Principal Investigator, "Race, Religion, and Adolescent Sexual Norms and Conduct." \$148,650 grant from the National Institute of Child Health & Human Development; December 2004 – November 2006. R03-HD048899-01.

Co-Investigator, "Project on Religion and Economic Change" (Robert D. Woodberry, PI). \$500,000 grant from the Metanexus Institute (with the support of the John Templeton Foundation). March 2005-

**September 2007 (<5% under my supervision)**

Principal Investigator, "Religious Organizations, Local Norms, and HIV in Africa."  
\$6,000 grant from UT-  
Austin, Office of the Vice President for Research. September 2004 – August 2005.

Principal Investigator, "Contexts and Consequences of Spiritual Transformation."  
\$131,206 grant from the  
Metanexus Institute (with the support the John Templeton Foundation). May  
2003-April 2005.

Principal Investigator, "Religious Influences in the Lives of Youth." \$24,478 grant  
from the National Study  
of Youth and Religion, UNC-Chapel Hill. January-December 2004.

Seed Grant for participation in the Malawi Diffusion and Ideational Change Project  
Survey Wave III,  
March-April 2004. \$2,000 grant from the PRC Mellon Center Grant on  
Urbanization and Internal  
Migration in Developing Countries.

Principal Investigator, "Family Health and Well-Being: Understanding Positive and  
Negative Pathways  
from Religion." \$13,300 grant from UT-Austin, Summer Research Assignment.  
June-August, 2003.

Principal Investigator, "Mapping Austin Social Indicators." \$12,700 from the Austin  
Bridge Builders  
Association. August-December, 2003.

Co-Investigator, "The Religious Practices of American Youth." \$3,900,000 grant  
from the Lilly  
Endowment. June 2001-August 2005 (Christian Smith, UNC-CH, Principal  
Investigator; <5% under my  
supervision).

**SELECT INVITED PRESENTATIONS**

"Premarital Sex in America," Department of Sociology, University of North Carolina  
at Chapel Hill,  
Chapel Hill, NC, January 2012.

Book discussion session on *Premarital Sex in America*, Society for the Study of  
Emerging Adulthood,  
Providence, October 2011.

"The Future of Sex and Marriage in American Evangelicalism." National Association  
of Evangelicals,  
Advisory Board. Washington, D.C., October 2011.

Heyer Lecture, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, September 2011.

Thematic Session on "The Cultural War and Red/Blue Divide: Re-Examining the Debate Demographically and Behaviorally." American Sociological Association, Las Vegas, August 2011.

"Sexual Economics: The Forces Shaping How Young Americans Meet, Mate, and Marry." Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C., May 2011.

"Marital Realities, Current Mindsets, and Possible Futures." Institute of Marriage and Family Canada, Ottawa, May 2011.

Panel on "Teen Pregnancy: What is California Doing Right?" Zócalo Public Square, Los Angeles, December 2010.

"Marriage and Parenthood in the Imagination of Young Adults." Baby Makes Three: Social Scientific Research on Successfully Combining Marriage and Parenthood, Princeton, June 2010.

---

"Saving Marriage before it Starts." Q, Lyric Opera, Chicago, April 2010.

"The Price of Sex in Contemporary Heterosexual Relationships," TEDxUT, UT-Austin, April 2010.

"Love and Marriage in the Minds of Emerging Adults." ChildTrends & Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C., October 2009.

"Forbidden Fruit? Sex and Religious Faith in the Lives of Young Americans," Baylor University, September 2007.

Introduction and Chapter 1 to "Great Expectations: Culture, Emotion, and Disenchantment in the Sexual Worlds of Young Americans," to the Bay Area Colloquium on Population, Berkeley, California, September 2007

"Sex and Religion in the Lives of American Teenagers." Department of Sociology, University of Notre Dame, April 18, 2007.

"Sex and Emotional Health in Emerging Adulthood." Department of Sociology, Penn State University, March 2007.



~~“Suboptimal Sex or Healthy Expressions? Heterosexual Practice among American Adolescents.”~~

Department of Sociology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, January 2007.

“Trends in American Adolescent Sexual Behavior.” Department of Health and Human Services Abstinence

Grantees Symposium, Arlington, Virginia, December 2006.

“An Illness or a Judgment? Interpreting the African HIV/AIDS Pandemic in Malawi and the US.”

Population Studies and Training Center, Brown University, November 2006.

“Religion and Adolescent Sexual Practice,” Conference on Religious Effects Research, jointly sponsored

by the Heritage Foundation and Child Trends, Washington, D.C., November 2005.

“New Approaches to Understanding Religious Influence.” Georgia Institute of Technology School of

Public Policy, Atlanta, Georgia, October 2005.

“Living up to Expectations: How Religion alters the Delinquent Behavior of Low-Risk Adolescents.” Sixth

Annual Spirituality Research Symposium: The Role of Religion in Understanding Risk and Protective

Factors for Adolescents.” Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, May 2003.

Invited presentation on Adult and Juvenile Crime & Delinquency to “Integrating Research on Spirituality

and Health and Well-Being into Service Delivery: A Research Conference. National Institutes of Health,

Bethesda, MD, April 2003.

“Talking and Knowing about Sex: Are Religious Parents Communicating with their Adolescent

Children?” Educational and Counseling Psychology Colloquium, University of Kentucky, February

2002.

Invited presentation to panel discussion “Can Churches save the American Family? What New

Research shows about Religion's Effect on Fatherhood and Academic Achievement.” National Press

Club, Washington, D.C., December 2001.

Invited session on Peer Influences on Adolescent Behavior. Add Health User's Conference, NIH,

Bethesda, MD, August 2001.

**CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS (SINCE 2000)**

"Gender and Heterosexual Sex." Panel discussion at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, August 2013.

"The New Family Structures Study: Introduction and Initial Results." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America, May 2012.

"Religious Distinctions in Nonmarital Romantic Relationship Formation (with Ellyn Arevalo). Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, October 2011.

"Premarital Sexual Initiation and Fertility among Pentecostal Adolescents in Brazil." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America, April 2011.

"Red Sex, Blue Sex: Distinguishing Political Culture and Religious Culture in the Sexual Decisions of

Young Americans." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, October 2009.

"Bare Market: Campus Sex Ratios and Romantic Relationships (with Jeremy Uecker). Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America, May 2009.

"Religion and Sexual Initiation in Brazil" (with Ana-Paula Verona). Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America, April 2009.

"Going Most of the Way: Religion, Pledging, and 'Sexual Substitution' among Young Americans" (with Jeremy Uecker and Nicole Angotti). Paper presented at the annual meetings of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Portland, Oregon, October 2006, and the Population Association of America, March 2007.

"Does True Love Wait? Religion, Pledging, and the Premarital Sexual Behavior of Married Adults" (with Jeremy Uecker). Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Portland, Oregon, October 2006.

"Religious Discord and Parent-Child Relations: What Happens when Faith Divides Family" (with Charles

Stokes). Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Montreal, August 2006.

"Village Sexual Norms and Links between Religion and HIV Infection Risk in Rural Malawi" (with Jenny

Trinitapoli). Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America, Los Angeles, March 2006.

"Religious Affiliation, Ethnicity, and AIDS-related Discrimination in Sub-Saharan Africa" (with Viviana

Salinas). Paper presented at the annual meetings of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Rochester, NY, November 5, 2005 and at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America, Los Angeles, March 2006.

"Finding Faith, Losing Faith: The Prevalence and Context of Religious Transformations during

Adolescence." (with Jeremy Uecker). Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Rochester, NY, November 2005.

"Religious Responses to AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa: An examination of religious congregations in rural

Malawi." (with Jenny Trinitapoli). Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Philadelphia, August 2005.

"Religion, Race, and Adolescent Sexual Behavior." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the

Population Association of America, Philadelphia, April 2005.

"Religion and HIV Risk Behaviors among Men in Rural Malawi: Initial Results from a Panel Study." Paper

presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Kansas City, October 2004, and at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America, Philadelphia, April 2005.

"The Sexual Norms and Conduct of Religious Youth." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society

for the Scientific Study of Religion, Kansas City, October 2004.

"Selection Effects and Social Desirability Bias in Studies of Religious Influences." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Kansas City, October 2004, and at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America, Philadelphia, April 2005.

"Religion and Adolescent Sexuality and Behavior." Paper presented at the Religion, Families, and Health conference, Austin, April 2004.

"Religious Experiences and Adolescent Behaviors: Evidence from the National Study of Youth and Religion." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Norfolk, October 2003.

"Religion and Adolescent Family Well-Being." (with Amy Burdette). Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Norfolk, October 2003.

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~~"Does Religion affect Asian American Adolescents' Subjective Well-Being?" (with Elisa Jiexia Zhai). Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Norfolk, October 2003.~~

"Religion and Adolescent Sexual Behavior: A Review and Program of Research." (with Christopher Ellison). Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Salt Lake City, November 2002.

"Religious and Vulnerability among Low-Risk Adolescents" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Sociology of Religion, Chicago, August 2002.

"Religious Influences on Adolescent Resilience and Vulnerability." Paper presented to the Add Health HIV Prevention Research Team, University of Kentucky, February 2002.

"The Influence of Adolescent Religion on Sex Attitudes and Sexual Debut." Poster presented (with S. Rostosky and M.L.C.Wright) at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence, New Orleans, April 2002.

"Talking and Knowing about Sex: Are Religious Parents Communicating with their Adolescent

Children?" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Columbus, October 2001, and at the American Sociological Association, Chicago, August 2002.

"Staying on Track in School: Religious Influences in High and Low-Risk Settings." Paper presented at 2001 Add Health Users Conference, NIH, Bethesda, MD, August 2001 and at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Anaheim, August 2001.

"The Overestimation of Peer Influence on Adolescent Delinquency: A Developmental Test of Peer-Reported Effects." Paper presented at 2001 Add Health Users Conference, NIH, Bethesda, MD, and at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Anaheim, August 2001.

"Moral Communities and Adolescent Delinquency: Subcultural Aspects of Social Disorganization." Paper presented at 2000 Add Health Users Conference, NIH, Bethesda, MD, August 2000 and at the annual meeting of the Association for the Sociology of Religion, Washington, D.C., August 2000.

**ADVISING**

Ph.D. Committees (\* Co-Chair/Co-Supervisor, \*\* Chair/Supervisor)

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Current	Nina Palmo
2012	Catherine McNamee
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2011	Charles Stokes
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2010	Ana Paula Verona
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2007	Jenny Trinitapoli **
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2004	Jenny Trinitapoli **
2004	Margaret Vaaler
2004	Brian Coleman
2003	Elisa Zhai
2003	Heather Powell

Undergraduate Thesis Advisor (Honors or Plan II)

2011	Mary Lingwall
2008	Hong Nguyen

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**DEPARTMENTAL AND UNIVERSITY SERVICE**

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Moderator, Plan II thesis symposium, 2011.

Member, COLA Undergraduate Research Award selection committee, 2010-12

Member, Executive committee, Sociology, 2004-06, 2009-11, 2012-13

Member, Department promotions & tenure review committee, 2010-11, 2012-13

Member, Department Graduate Steering committee, 2007-09, 2010-11

Presenter, TEDxUT, Spring 2010

Presenter, Tejas House, Fall 2009 (Sexual Health Panel), Spring 2011 (Orange Jackets' Week of Women)

Guest presenter, UT Peer Sexual Health Educator courses, 2008-12

Member, Population Research Center governing board, 2009-10

Member, Graduate admissions committee, Sociology, 2004-05; 2009-10, 2012-13

Chair, Department of Sociology religion search committee, Fall 2008

Participant and presenter, UT Faculty Fellows Program, 2007-09

Member, Department of Sociology population junior search committee, Fall 2007

Member, Department Speaker Colloquium committee, Fall 2007

Presenter, Explore UT, 2006

Supervisor, UT Sociology Undergraduate Research Assistance Program, Spring and Fall 2006

Reviewer, Award application, Office of the Vice President for Research, 2005

Faculty Overseer, Department of Sociology website, 2004-05

Member, Research Experience for Undergraduates program admissions committee, PRC, 2003-05

#### **ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE**

Editorial Board member, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 2004–2011

Editorial Board member, *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion*, 2005–2011

Nominating Committee member, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 2007–2009

Council member, ASA Section on the Sociology of Religion, 2004–2007

Distinguished Article Award Committee member, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 2009–2010.

- Committee chair, 2010

Distinguished Article Award Committee member, American Sociological Association (Religion Section), 2010–2011.

- Committee chair, 2011

Jack Shand Research Award committee member, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 2005–2007.

Ad-hoc reviewer for: National Institutes of Health, 2007; National Science Foundation, 2001 (one review), 2004 (one review), 2010 (one review); United States-Israel Binational Science Foundation, 2003 (one review); William T. Grant Foundation, 2004 (one review).

Ad-hoc journal reviewer for: *American Sociological Review*, *American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Forces*, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *Social Problems*, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *Social Science Research*, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *The Sociological Quarterly*, *Gender & Society*, *Sociological Inquiry*, *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion*, *Review of Religious*

*Research, International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, Social Service Review, Journal of Psychology and Christianity, Journal of Marriage and Family, Journal of Family Issues, Journal of Adolescent Health, Social Science & Medicine, Social Science Quarterly, Sociological Forum, Biodemography and Social Biology.*

#### **FELLOWSHIPS, HONORS, & AWARDS**

Best Article Award, ASA Religion Section, 2001, for "The Measure of American Religion: Toward Improving the State of the Art" (with Brian Steensland, Jerry Park, Lynn Robinson, Brad Wilcox, and Robert Woodberry).

Non-Resident Fellow, Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, University of Pennsylvania, 2001-2003.

Runner-up (2<sup>nd</sup> place), Best Student Paper Award, ASA Crime, Law, and Deviance Section, 2000, for "The Overestimation of Peer Group Traits and Behaviors on Adolescent Delinquency."

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Runner-up (Honorable Mention), Best Student Paper Award, ASA Religion Section, 2000, for "Moral Communities and Adolescent Delinquency: Subcultural Aspects of Social Disorganization."

Carolina Consortium on Human Development Pre-doctoral Trainee Fellow, Center for Developmental Science, UNC-CH, 1999-2000.

Best Article Award, ASA Religion Section, 1999, for "Selective Deprivatization among American Religious traditions: The Reversal of the Great Reversal."

Runner-up (Honorable Mention), Best Student Paper Award, ASA Religion Section, 1999, for "Re-Interpreting Religious Effects on Adolescent Educational Expectations and Achievement."







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## How different are the adult children of parents who have same-sex relationships? Findings from the New Family Structures Study

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### ABSTRACT

The New Family Structures Study (NFSS) is a social-science data-collection project that fielded a survey to a large, random sample of American young adults (ages 18–39) who were raised in different types of family arrangements. In this debut article of the NFSS, I compare how the young-adult children of a parent who has had a same-sex romantic relationship fare on 40 different social, emotional, and relational outcome variables when compared with six other family-of-origin types. The results reveal numerous, consistent differences, especially between the children of women who have had a lesbian relationship and those with still-married (heterosexual) biological parents. The results are typically robust in multivariate contexts as well, suggesting far greater diversity in lesbian-parent household experiences than convenience-sample studies of lesbian families have revealed. The NFSS proves to be an illuminating, versatile dataset that can assist family scholars in understanding the long reach of family structure and transitions.

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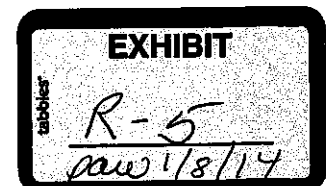
### 1. Introduction

The well-being of children has long been in the center of public policy debates about marriage and family matters in the United States. That trend continues as state legislatures, voters, and the judiciary considers the legal boundaries of marriage. Social science data remains one of the few sources of information useful in legal debates surrounding marriage and adoption rights, and has been valued both by same-sex marriage supporters and opponents. Underneath the politics about marriage and child development are concerns about family structures' possible effects on children: the number of parents present and active in children's lives, their genetic relationship to the children, parents' marital status, their gender distinctions or similarities, and the number of transitions in household composition. In this introduction to the New Family Structures Study (NFSS), I compare how young adults from a variety of different family backgrounds fare on 40 different social, emotional, and relational outcomes. In particular, I focus on how respondents who said their mother had a same-sex relationship with another woman—or their father did so with another man—compare with still-intact, two-parent heterosexual married families using nationally-representative data collected from a large probability sample of American young adults.

Social scientists of family transitions have until recently commonly noted the elevated stability and social benefits of the two-parent (heterosexual) married household, when contrasted to single mothers, cohabiting couples, adoptive parents, and ex-spouses sharing custody (Brown, 2004; Manning et al., 2004; McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994). In 2002, Child Trends—a well-regarded nonpartisan research organization—detailed the importance for children's development of growing up in “the presence of *two biological parents*” (their emphasis; Moore et al., 2002, p. 2). Unmarried motherhood, divorce, cohabitation, and step-parenting were widely perceived to fall short in significant developmental domains (like education, behavior problems, and emotional well-being), due in no small part to the comparative fragility and instability of such relationships.

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In their 2001 *American Sociological Review* article reviewing findings on sexual orientation and parenting, however, sociologists Judith Stacey and Tim Biblarz began noting that while there are some differences in outcomes between children in same-sex and heterosexual unions, there were not as many as family sociologists might expect, and differences need not necessarily be perceived as *deficits*. Since that time the conventional wisdom emerging from comparative studies of same-sex parenting is that there are very few differences of note in the child outcomes of gay and lesbian parents (Tasker, 2005; Wainright and Patterson, 2006; Rosenfeld, 2010). Moreover, a variety of possible advantages of having a lesbian couple as parents have emerged in recent studies (Crowl et al., 2008; Biblarz and Stacey, 2010; Gartrell and Bos, 2010; MacCallum and Golombok, 2004). The scholarly discourse concerning gay and lesbian parenting, then, has increasingly posed a challenge to previous assumptions about the supposed benefits of being raised in biologically-intact, two-parent heterosexual households.

### 1.1. Sampling concerns in previous surveys

Concern has arisen, however, about the methodological quality of many studies focusing on same-sex parents. In particular, most are based on non-random, non-representative data often employing small samples that do not allow for generalization to the larger population of gay and lesbian families (Nock, 2001; Perrin and Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, 2002; Redding, 2008). For instance, many published studies on the children of same-sex parents collect data from “snowball” or convenience samples (e.g., Bos et al., 2007; Brewaeys et al., 1997; Fulcher et al., 2008; Sirota, 2009; Vanfraussen et al., 2003). One notable example of this is the National Longitudinal Lesbian Family Study, analyses of which were prominently featured in the media in 2011 (e.g., *Huffington Post*, 2011). The NLLFS employs a convenience sample, recruited entirely by self-selection from announcements posted “at lesbian events, in women’s bookstores, and in lesbian newspapers” in Boston, Washington, and San Francisco. While I do not wish to downplay the significance of such a longitudinal study—it is itself quite a feat—this sampling approach is a problem when the goal (or in this case, the practical result and conventional use of its findings) is to generalize to a population. All such samples are biased, often in unknown ways. As a formal sampling method, “snowball sampling is known to have some serious problems,” one expert asserts (Snijders, 1992, p. 59). Indeed, such samples are likely biased toward “inclusion of those who have many interrelationships with, or are coupled to, a large number of other individuals” (Berg, 1988, p. 531). But apart from the knowledge of individuals’ inclusion probability, unbiased estimation is not possible.

Further, as Nock (2001) entreated, consider the convenience sample recruited from within organizations devoted to seeking rights for gays and lesbians, like the NLLFS sampling strategy. Suppose, for example, that the respondents have higher levels of education than comparable lesbians who do not frequent such events or bookstores, or who live elsewhere. If such a sample is used for research purposes, then anything that is correlated with educational attainment—like better health, more deliberative parenting, and greater access to social capital and educational opportunities for children—will be biased. Any claims about a population based on a group that does not represent it will be distorted, since its sample of lesbian parents is less diverse (given what is known about it) than a representative sample would reveal (Baumle et al., 2009).

To compound the problem, results from nonprobability samples—from which meaningful statistics cannot be generated—are regularly compared with population-level samples of heterosexual parents, which no doubt are comprised of a blend of higher and lower quality parents. For example, Gartrell et al. (2011a,b) inquired about the sexual orientation and behavior of adolescents by comparing data from the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) with those in the snowball sample of youth in the NLLFS. Comparing a population-based sample (the NSFG) to a select sample of youth from same-sex parents does not provide the statistical confidence demanded of good social science. Until now, this has been a primary way in which scholars have collected and evaluated data on same-sex parents. This is not to suggest that snowball samples are *inherently* problematic as data-collection techniques, only that they are not adequate for making useful comparisons with samples that are entirely different with regard to selection characteristics. Snowball and various other types of convenience sampling are simply not widely generalizable or comparable to the population of interest as a whole. While researchers themselves commonly note this important limitation, it is often entirely lost in the translation and transmission of findings by the media to the public.

### 1.2. Are there notable differences?

The “no differences” paradigm suggests that children from same-sex families display no notable disadvantages when compared to children from other family forms. This suggestion has increasingly come to include even comparisons with intact biological, two-parent families, the form most associated with stability and developmental benefits for children (McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994; Moore et al., 2002).

Answering questions about notable between-group differences has nevertheless typically depended on with whom comparisons are being made, what outcomes the researchers explored, and whether the outcomes evaluated are considered substantial or superficial, or portents of future risk. Some outcomes—like sexual behavior, gender roles, and democratic parenting, for example—have come to be valued differently in American society over time.

For the sake of brevity—and to give ample space here to describing the NFSS—I will avoid spending too much time describing previous studies, many of whose methodological challenges are addressed by the NFSS. Several review articles,

and at least one book, have sought to provide a more thorough assessment of the literature (Anderssen et al., 2002; Biblarz and Stacey, 2010; Goldberg, 2010; Patterson, 2000; Stacey and Biblarz, 2001a). Suffice it to say that versions of the phrase "no differences" have been employed in a wide variety of studies, reports, depositions, books, and articles since 2000 (e.g., Crowl et al., 2008; Movement Advancement Project, 2011; Rosenfeld, 2010; Tasker, 2005; Stacey and Biblarz, 2001a,b; Veldorale-Brogan and Cooley, 2011; Wainright et al., 2004).

Much early research on gay parents typically compared the child development outcomes of divorced lesbian mothers with those of divorced heterosexual mothers (Patterson, 1997). This was also the strategy employed by psychologist Fiona Tasker (2005), who compared lesbian mothers with single, divorced heterosexual mothers and found "no systematic differences between the quality of family relationships" therein. Wainright et al. (2004), using 44 cases in the nationally-representative Add Health data, reported that teenagers living with female same-sex parents displayed comparable self-esteem, psychological adjustment, academic achievement, delinquency, substance use, and family relationship quality to 44 demographically "matched" cases of adolescents with opposite-sex parents, suggesting that here too the comparisons were not likely made with respondents from stable, biologically-intact, married families.

However, small sample sizes can contribute to "no differences" conclusions. It is not surprising that statistically-significant differences would *not* emerge in studies employing as few as 18 or 33 or 44 cases of respondents with same-sex parents, respectively (Fulcher et al., 2008; Golombok et al., 2003; Wainright and Patterson, 2006). Even analyzing matched samples, as a variety of studies have done, fails to mitigate the challenge of locating statistically-significant differences when the sample size is small. This is a concern in all of social science, but one that is doubly important when there may be motivation to confirm the null hypothesis (that is, that there are in fact no statistically-significant differences between groups). Therefore, one important issue in such studies is the simple matter of if there is enough statistical power to detect meaningful differences should they exist. Rosenfeld (2010) is the first scholar to employ a large, random sample of the population in order to compare outcomes among children of same-sex parents with those of heterosexual married parents. He concluded—after controlling for parents' education and income and electing to limit the sample to households exhibiting at least 5 years of co-residential stability—that there were no statistically-significant differences between the two groups in a pair of measures assessing children's progress through primary school.

Sex-related outcomes have more consistently revealed distinctions, although the tone of concern about them has diminished over time. For example, while the daughters of lesbian mothers are now widely understood to be more apt to explore same-sex sexual identity and behavior, concern about this finding has faded as scholars and the general public have become more accepting of GLB identities (Goldberg, 2010). Tasker and Golombok (1997) noted that girls raised by lesbian mothers reported a higher number of sexual partners in young adulthood than daughters of heterosexual mothers. Boys with lesbian mothers, on the other hand, appear to display the opposite trend—fewer partners than the sons of heterosexual mothers.

More recently, however, the tone about "no differences" has shifted some toward the assertion of differences, and that same-sex parents appear to be *more* competent than heterosexual parents (Biblarz and Stacey, 2010; Crowl et al., 2008). Even their romantic relationships may be better: a comparative study of Vermont gay civil unions and heterosexual marriages revealed that same-sex couples report higher relationship quality, compatibility, and intimacy, and less conflict than did married heterosexual couples (Balsam et al., 2008). Biblarz and Stacey's (2010) review article on gender and parenting asserts that,

based strictly on the published science, one could argue that two women parent better on average than a woman and a man, or at least than a woman and man with a traditional division of labor. Lesbian coparents seem to outperform comparable married heterosexual, biological parents on several measures, even while being denied the substantial privileges of marriage (p. 17).

Even here, however, the authors note that lesbian parents face a "somewhat greater risk of splitting up," due, they suggest, to their "asymmetrical biological and legal statuses and their high standards of equality" (2010, p. 17).

Another meta-analysis asserts that non-heterosexual parents, on average, enjoy significantly better relationships with their children than do heterosexual parents, together with no differences in the domains of cognitive development, psychological adjustment, gender identity, and sexual partner preference (Crowl et al., 2008).

However, the meta-analysis reinforces the profound importance of *who* is doing the reporting—nearly always volunteers for small studies on a group whose claims about documentable parenting successes are very relevant in recent legislative and judicial debates over rights and legal statuses. Tasker (2010, p. 36) suggests caution:

Parental self-report, of course, may be biased. It is plausible to argue that, in a prejudiced social climate, lesbian and gay parents may have more at stake in presenting a positive picture. . . . Future studies need to consider using additional sophisticated measures to rule out potential biases. . .

Suffice it to say that the pace at which the overall academic discourse surrounding gay and lesbian parents' comparative competence has shifted—from slightly-less adept to virtually identical to more adept—is notable, and rapid. By comparison, studies of adoption—a common method by which many same-sex couples (but more heterosexual ones) become parents—have repeatedly and consistently revealed important and wide-ranging differences, on average, between adopted children and biological ones. In fact, these differences have been so pervasive and consistent that adoption experts now emphasize that "acknowledgement of difference" is critical for both parents and clinicians when working with adopted children and

teens (Miller et al., 2000). This ought to give social scientists studying gay parenting outcomes pause, especially in light of concerns noted above about small sample sizes and the absence of a comparable recent, documented improvement in outcomes from youth in adopted families and stepfamilies.

Far more, too, is known about the children of lesbian mothers than about those of gay fathers (Biblarz and Stacey, 2010; Patterson, 2006; Veldorale-Brogan and Cooley, 2011). Biblarz and Stacey (2010, p. 17) note that while gay-male families remain understudied, “their daunting routes to parenthood seem likely to select more for strengths than limitations.” Others are not so optimistic. One veteran of a study of the daughters of gay fathers warns scholars to avoid overlooking the family dynamics of “emergent” gay parents, who likely outnumber planned ones: “Children born into heterosexually organized marriages where fathers come out as gay or bisexual also face having to deal with maternal bitterness, marital conflict, possible divorce, custody issues, and father’s absence” (Sirota, 2009, p. 291).

Regardless of sampling strategy, scholars also know much less about the lives of *young-adult* children of gay and lesbian parents, or how their experiences and accomplishments as adults compare with others who experienced different sorts of household arrangements during their youth. Most contemporary studies of gay parenting processes have focused on the present—what is going on inside the household when children are still under parental care (Tasker, 2005; Bos and Sandfort, 2010; Brewaeys et al., 1997). Moreover, such research tends to emphasize *parent-reported* outcomes like parental divisions of labor, parent-child closeness, daily interaction patterns, gender roles, and disciplinary habits. While such information is important to learn, it means we know far more about the *current* experience of *parents* in households with children than we do about young adults who have already moved through their childhood and now speak for themselves. Studies on family structure, however, serve scholars and family practitioners best when they span into adulthood. Do the children of gay and lesbian parents look comparable to those of their heterosexual counterparts? The NFSS is poised to address this question about the lives of young adults between the ages of 18 and 39, but not about children or adolescents. While the NFSS is not the answer to all of this domain’s methodological challenges, it is a notable contribution in important ways.

### 1.3. The New Family Structures Study

Besides being brand-new data, several other aspects about the NFSS are novel and noteworthy. First, it is a study of young adults rather than children or adolescents, with particular attention paid to reaching ample numbers of respondents who were raised by parents that had a same-sex relationship. Second, it is a much larger study than nearly all of its peers. The NFSS interviewed just under 3000 respondents, including 175 who reported their mother having had a same-sex romantic relationship and 73 who said the same about their father. Third, it is a weighted probability sample, from which meaningful statistical inferences and interpretations can be drawn. While the 2000 (and presumably, the 2010) US Census Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) offers the largest nationally-representative sample-based information about youth in same-sex households, the Census collects much less outcome information of interest. The NFSS, however, asked numerous questions about respondents’ social behaviors, health behaviors, and relationships. This manuscript provides the first glimpse into those outcomes by offering statistical comparisons of them among eight different family structures/experiences of origin. Accordingly, there is much that the NFSS offers, and not just about the particular research questions of this study.

There are several things the NFSS is not. The NFSS is not a longitudinal study, and therefore cannot attempt to broach questions of causation. It is a cross-sectional study, and collected data from respondents at only one point in time, when they were between the ages of 18 and 39. It does not evaluate the offspring of gay marriages, since the vast majority of its respondents came of age prior to the legalization of gay marriage in several states. This study cannot answer political questions about same-sex relationships and their legal legitimacy. Nevertheless, social science is a resource that offers insight to political and legal decision-makers, and there have been enough competing claims about “what the data says” about the children of same-sex parents—including legal depositions of social scientists in important cases—that a study with the methodological strengths of this one deserves scholarly attention and scrutiny.

## 2. Data collection, measures, and analytic approach

The NFSS data collection project is based at the University of Texas at Austin’s Population Research Center. A survey design team consisting of several leading family researchers in sociology, demography, and human development—from Penn State University, Brigham Young University, San Diego State University, the University of Virginia, and several from the University of Texas at Austin—met over 2 days in January 2011 to discuss the project’s sampling strategy and scope, and continued to offer advice as questions arose over the course of the data collection process. The team was designed to merge scholars across disciplines and ideological lines in a spirit of civility and reasoned inquiry. Several additional external consultants also gave close scrutiny to the survey instrument, and advised on how best to measure diverse topics. Both the study protocol and the questionnaire were approved by the University of Texas at Austin’s Institutional Review Board. The NFSS data is intended to be publicly accessible and will thus be made so with minimal requirements by mid-late 2012. The NFSS was supported in part by grants from the Witherspoon Institute and the Bradley Foundation. While both of these are commonly known for their support of conservative causes—just as other private foundations are known for supporting more liberal causes—the funding sources played no role at all in the design or conduct of the study, the analyses, the interpretations of the data, or in the preparation of this manuscript.

### 2.1. The data collection process

The data collection was conducted by Knowledge Networks (or KN), a research firm with a very strong record of generating high-quality data for academic projects. Knowledge Networks recruited the first online research panel, dubbed the KnowledgePanel<sup>®</sup>, that is representative of the US population. Members of the KnowledgePanel<sup>®</sup> are randomly recruited by telephone and mail surveys, and households are provided with access to the Internet and computer hardware if needed. Unlike other Internet research panels sampling only individuals with Internet access who volunteer for research, the KnowledgePanel<sup>®</sup> is based on a sampling frame which includes both listed and unlisted numbers, those without a landline telephone and is not limited to current Internet users or computer owners, and does not accept self-selected volunteers. As a result, it is a random, nationally-representative sample of the American population. At last count, over 350 working papers, conference presentations, published articles, and books have used Knowledge Networks' panels, including the 2009 National Survey of Sexual Health and Behavior, whose extensive results were featured in an entire volume of the *Journal of Sexual Medicine*—and prominently in the media—in 2010 (Herbenick et al., 2010). More information about KN and the KnowledgePanel<sup>®</sup>, including panel recruitment, connection, retention, completion, and total response rates, are available from KN. The typical within survey response rate for a KnowledgePanel<sup>®</sup> survey is 65%. Appendix A presents a comparison of age-appropriate summary statistics from a variety of socio-demographic variables in the NFSS, alongside the most recent iterations of the Current Population Survey, the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), the National Survey of Family Growth, and the National Study of Youth and Religion—all recent nationally-representative survey efforts. The estimates reported there suggest the NFSS compares very favorably with other nationally-representative datasets.

### 2.2. The screening process

Particularly relevant for the NFSS is the fact that key populations—gay and lesbian parents, as well as heterosexual adoptive parents—can be challenging to identify and locate. The National Center for Marriage and Family Research (2010) estimates that there are approximately 580,000 same-sex households in the United States. Among them, about 17%—or 98,600—are thought to have children present. While that may seem like a substantial number, in population-based sampling strategies it is not. Locating minority populations requires a search for a probability sample of the general population, typically by way of screening the general population to identify members of rarer groups. Thus in order to boost the number of respondents who reported being adopted or whose parent had a same-sex romantic relationship, the screener survey (which distinguished such respondents) was left in the field for several months between July 2011 and February 2012, enabling existing panelists more time to be screened and new panelists to be added. Additionally, in late Fall 2011, former members of the KnowledgePanel<sup>®</sup> were re-contacted by mail, phone, and email to encourage their screening. A total of 15,058 current and former members of KN's KnowledgePanel<sup>®</sup> were screened and asked, among several other questions, "From when you were born until age 18 (or until you left home to be on your own), did either of your parents ever have a romantic relationship with someone of the same sex?" Response choices were "Yes, my mother had a romantic relationship with another woman," "Yes, my father had a romantic relationship with another man," or "no." (Respondents were also able to select both of the first two choices.) If they selected either of the first two, they were asked about whether they had ever lived with that parent while they were in a same-sex romantic relationship. The NFSS completed full surveys with 2988 Americans between the ages of 18 and 39. The screener and full survey instrument is available at the NFSS homepage, located at: [www.prc.utexas.edu/nfss](http://www.prc.utexas.edu/nfss).

### 2.3. What does a representative sample of gay and lesbian parents (of young adults) look like?

The weighted screener data—a nationally-representative sample—reveal that 1.7% of all Americans between the ages of 18 and 39 report that their father or mother has had a same-sex relationship, a figure comparable to other estimates of children in gay and lesbian households (e.g., Stacey and Biblarz (2001a,b) report a plausible range from 1% to 12%). Over twice as many respondents report that their mother has had a lesbian relationship as report that their fathers have had a gay relationship. (A total of 58% of the 15,058 persons screened report spending their entire youth—up until they turned 18 or left the house—with their biological mother and father.)

While gay and lesbian Americans typically become parents today in four ways—through one partner's previous participation in a heterosexual union, through adoption, in-vitro fertilization, or by a surrogate—the NFSS is more likely to be comprised of respondents from the first two of these arrangements than from the last two. Today's children of gay men and lesbian women are more apt to be "planned" (that is, by using adoption, IVF, or surrogacy) than as little as 15–20 years ago, when such children were more typically the products of heterosexual unions. The youngest NFSS respondents turned 18 in 2011, while the oldest did so in 1990. Given that unintended pregnancy is impossible among gay men and a rarity among lesbian couples, it stands to reason that gay and lesbian parents today are far more selective about parenting than the heterosexual population, among whom unintended pregnancies remain very common, around 50% of total (Finer and Henshaw, 2006). The share of all same-sex parenting arrangements that is planned, however, remains unknown. Although the NFSS did not directly ask those respondents whose parent has had a same-sex romantic relationship about the manner of

their own birth, a failed heterosexual union is clearly the modal method: just under half of such respondents reported that their biological parents were once married. This distinguishes the NFSS from numerous studies that have been entirely concerned with “planned” gay and lesbian families, like the NLLFS.

Among those who said their mother had a same-sex relationship, 91% reported living with their mother while she was in the romantic relationship, and 57% said they had lived with their mother and her partner for at least 4 months at some point prior to age 18. A smaller share (23%) said they had spent at least 3 years living in the same household with a romantic partner of their mother's.

Among those who said their father had a same-sex relationship, however, 42% reported living with him while he was in a same-sex romantic relationship, and 23% reported living with him and his partner for at least 4 months (but less than 2% said they had spent at least 3 years together in the same household), a trend similarly noted in Tasker's (2005) review article on gay and lesbian parenting.

Fifty-eight (58) percent of those whose biological mothers had a same-sex relationship also reported that their biological mother exited the respondent's household at some point during their youth, and just under 14% of them reported spending time in the foster care system, indicating greater-than-average household instability. Ancillary analyses of the NFSS suggests a likely “planned” lesbian origin of between 17% and 26% of such respondents, a range estimated from the share of such respondents who claimed that (1) their biological parents were never married or lived together, and that (2) they never lived with a parental opposite-sex partner or with their biological father. The share of respondents (whose fathers had a same-sex relationship) that likely came from “planned” gay families in the NFSS is under 1%.

These distinctions between the NFSS—a population-based sample—and small studies of planned gay and lesbian families nevertheless raise again the question of just how unrepresentative convenience samples of gay and lesbian parents actually are. The use of a probability sample reveals that the young-adult children of parents who have had same-sex relationships (in the NFSS) look less like the children of today's stereotypic gay and lesbian couples—white, upper-middle class, well-educated, employed, and prosperous—than many studies have tacitly or explicitly portrayed. Goldberg (2010, pp. 12–13) aptly notes that existing studies of lesbian and gay couples and their families have largely included “white, middle-class persons who are relatively ‘out’ in the gay community and who are living in urban areas,” while “working-class sexual minorities, racial or ethnic sexual minorities, sexual minorities who live in rural or isolated geographical areas” have been overlooked, understudied, and difficult to reach. Rosenfeld's (2010) analysis of Census data suggests that 37% of children in lesbian cohabiting households are Black or Hispanic. Among respondents in the NFSS who said their mother had a same-sex relationship, 43% are Black or Hispanic. In the NLLFS, by contrast, only 6% are Black or Hispanic.

This is an important oversight: demographic indicators of where gay parents live today point less toward stereotypic places like New York and San Francisco and increasingly toward locales where families are more numerous and overall fertility is higher, like San Antonio and Memphis. In their comprehensive demographic look at the American gay and lesbian population, Gates and Ost (2004, p. 47) report, “States and large metropolitan areas with relatively low concentrations of gay and lesbian couples in the population tend to be areas where same-sex couples are more likely to have children in the household.” A recent updated brief by Gates (2011, p. F3) reinforces this: “Geographically, same-sex couples are most likely to have children in many of the most socially conservative parts of the country.” Moreover, Gates notes that racial minorities are disproportionately more likely (among same-sex households) to report having children; whites, on the other hand, are disproportionately less likely to have children. The NFSS sample reveals the same. Gates' Census-based assessments further raise questions about the sampling strategies of—and the popular use of conclusions from—studies based entirely on convenience samples derived from parents living in progressive metropolitan locales.

#### 2.4. The structure and experience of respondents' families of origin

The NFSS sought to provide as clear a vision as possible of the respondents' household composition during their childhood and adolescence. The survey asked respondents about the marital status of their biological parents both in the past and present. The NFSS also collected “calendar” data from each respondent about their relationship to people who lived with them in their household (for more than 4 months) from birth to age 18, as well as who has lived with them from age 18—after they have left home—to the present. While the calendar data is utilized only sparingly in this study, such rich data enables researchers to document who else has lived with the respondent for virtually their entire life up to the present.

For this particular study, I compare outcomes across eight different types of family-of-origin structure and/or experience. They were constructed from the answers to several questions both in the screener survey and the full survey. It should be noted, however, that their construction reflects an unusual combination of interests—the same-sex romantic behavior of parents, and the experience of household stability or disruption. The eight groups or household settings (with an acronym or short descriptive title) evaluated here, followed by their maximum unweighted analytic sample size, are:

1. IBF: Lived in intact biological family (with mother and father) from 0 to 18, and parents are still married at present ( $N = 919$ ).
2. LM: R reported R's mother had a same-sex romantic (lesbian) relationship with a woman, regardless of any other household transitions ( $N = 163$ ).
3. GF: R reported R's father had a same-sex romantic (gay) relationship with a man, regardless of any other household transitions ( $N = 73$ ).

4. Adopted: R was adopted by one or two strangers at birth or before age 2 ( $N = 101$ ).
5. Divorced later or had joint custody: R reported living with biological mother and father from birth to age 18, but parents are not married at present ( $N = 116$ ).
6. Stepfamily: Biological parents were either never married or else divorced, and R's primary custodial parent was married to someone else before R turned 18 ( $N = 394$ ).
7. Single parent: Biological parents were either never married or else divorced, and R's primary custodial parent did not marry (or remarry) before R turned 18 ( $N = 816$ ).
8. All others: Includes all other family structure/event combinations, such as respondents with a deceased parent ( $N = 406$ ).

Together these eight groups account for the entire NFSS sample. These eight groups are largely, but not entirely, mutually exclusive in reality. That is, a small minority of respondents might fit more than one group. I have, however, forced their mutual exclusivity here for analytic purposes. For example, a respondent whose mother had a same-sex relationship might also qualify in Group 5 or Group 7, but in this case my analytical interest is in maximizing the sample size of Groups 2 and 3 so the respondent would be placed in Group 2 (LMs). Since Group 3 (GFs) is the smallest and most difficult to locate randomly in the population, its composition trumped that of others, even LMs. (There were 12 cases of respondents who reported both a mother and a father having a same-sex relationship; all are analyzed here as GFs, after ancillary analyses revealed comparable exposure to both their mother and father).

Obviously, different grouping decisions may affect the results. The NFSS, which sought to learn a great deal of information about respondents' families of origin, is well-poised to accommodate alternative grouping strategies, including distinguishing those respondents who lived with their lesbian mother's partner for several years (vs. sparingly or not at all), or early in their childhood (compared to later). Small sample sizes (and thus reduced statistical power) may nevertheless hinder some strategies.

In the results section, for maximal ease, I often make use of the acronyms IBF (child of a still-intact biological family), LM (child of a lesbian mother), and GF (child of a gay father). It is, however, very possible that the same-sex romantic relationships about which the respondents report were *not* framed by those respondents as indicating their own (or their parent's own) understanding of their parent as gay or lesbian or bisexual in sexual *orientation*. Indeed, this is more a study of the children of parents who have had (and in some cases, are still in) same-sex relationships than it is one of children whose parents have self-identified or are "out" as gay or lesbian or bisexual. The particular parental relationships the respondents were queried about are, however, gay or lesbian in content. For the sake of brevity and to avoid entanglement in interminable debates about fixed or fluid orientations, I will regularly refer to these groups as respondents with a gay father or lesbian mother.

## 2.5. Outcomes of interest

This study presents an overview of 40 outcome measures available in the NFSS. Table 1 presents summary statistics for all variables. Why *these* outcomes? While the survey questionnaire (available online) contains several dozen outcome questions of interest, I elected to report here an overview of those outcomes, seeking to include common and oft-studied variables of interest from a variety of different domains. I include all of the particular indexes we sought to evaluate, and a broad list of outcomes from the emotional, relational, and social domains. Subsequent analyses of the NFSS will no doubt examine other outcomes, as well as examine the same outcomes in different ways.

The dichotomous outcome variables summarized in Table 1 are the following: relationship status, employment status, whether they voted in the last presidential election, and use of public assistance (both currently and while growing up), the latter of which was asked as "Before you were 18 years old, did anyone in your immediate family (that is, in your household) ever receive public assistance (such as welfare payments, food stamps, Medicaid, WIC, or free lunch)?" Respondents were also asked about whether they had ever seriously thought about committing suicide in the past 12 months, and about their utilization of counseling or psychotherapy for treatment of "any problem connected with anxiety, depression, relationships, etc."

The Kinsey scale of sexual behavior was employed, but modified to allow respondents to select the best description of their sexual orientation (rather than behavior). Respondents were asked to choose the description that best fits how they think about themselves: 100% heterosexual, mostly heterosexual but somewhat attracted to people of your own sex, bisexual (that is, attracted to men and women equally), mostly homosexual but somewhat attracted to people of the opposite sex, 100% homosexual, or not sexually attracted to either males or females. For simplicity of presentation, I create a dichotomous measure indicating 100% heterosexual (vs. anything else). Additionally, unmarried respondents who are currently in a relationship were asked if their romantic partner is a man or a woman, allowing construction of a measure of "currently in a same-sex romantic relationship."

All respondents were asked if "a parent or other adult caregiver ever touched you in a sexual way, forced you to touch him or her in a sexual way, or forced you to have sexual relations?" Possible answers were: no, never; yes, once; yes, more than once; or not sure. A broader measure about forced sex was asked before it, and read as follows: "Have you ever been physically forced to have any type of sexual activity against your will?" It employs identical possible answers; both have been dichotomized for the analyses (respondents who were "not sure" were not included). Respondents were also asked if they



Table 1

Weighted summary statistics of measures, NFSS

NFSS variables	Range	Mean	SD	N
Currently married	0,1	0.41	0.49	2988
Currently cohabiting	0,1	0.15	0.36	2988
Family received welfare growing up	0,1	0.34	0.47	2669
Currently on public assistance	0,1	0.21	0.41	2952
Currently employed full-time	0,1	0.45	0.50	2988
Currently unemployed	0,1	0.12	0.32	2988
Voted in last presidential election	0,1	0.55	0.50	2960
Bullied while growing up	0,1	0.36	0.48	2961
Ever suicidal during past year	0,1	0.07	0.25	2953
Recently or currently in therapy	0,1	0.11	0.32	2934
Identifies as entirely heterosexual	0,1	0.85	0.36	2946
Is in a same-sex romantic relationship	0,1	0.06	0.23	1056
Had affair while married/cohabiting	0,1	0.19	0.39	1869
Has ever had an STI	0,1	0.11	0.32	2911
Ever touched sexually by parent/adult	0,1	0.07	0.26	2877
Ever forced to have sex against will	0,1	0.13	0.33	2874
Educational attainment	1-5	2.86	1.11	2988
Family-of-origin safety/security	1-5	3.81	0.97	2917
Family-of-origin negative impact	1-5	2.58	0.98	2919
Closeness to biological mother	1-5	4.05	0.87	2249
Closeness to biological father	1-5	3.74	0.98	1346
Self-reported physical health	1-5	3.57	0.94	2964
Self-reported overall happiness	1-5	4.00	1.05	2957
CBS-D depression index	1-4	1.89	0.62	2815
Attachment scale (depend)	1-5	2.97	0.84	2848
Attachment scale (anxiety)	1-5	2.51	0.77	2830
Impulsivity scale	1-4	1.88	0.59	2861
Level of household income	1-13	7.42	3.17	2635
Current relationship quality index	1-5	3.98	0.98	2218
Current relationship is in trouble	1-4	2.19	0.96	2274
Frequency of marijuana use	1-6	1.50	1.23	2918
Frequency of alcohol use	1-6	2.61	1.36	2922
Frequency of drinking to get drunk	1-6	1.70	1.09	2922
Frequency of smoking	1-6	2.03	1.85	2922
Frequency of watching TV	1-6	3.15	1.60	2919
Frequency of having been arrested	1-4	1.29	0.63	2951
Frequency pled guilty to non-minor offense	1-4	1.16	0.46	2947
N of female sex partners (among women)	0-11	0.40	1.10	1975
N of female sex partners (among men)	0-11	3.16	2.68	937
N of male sex partners (among women)	0-11	3.50	2.52	1951
N of male sex partners (among men)	0-11	0.40	1.60	944
Age	18-39	28.21	6.37	2988
Female	0,1	0.51	0.50	2988
White	0,1	0.57	0.49	2988
Gay-friendliness of state of residence	1-5	2.58	1.78	2988
<i>Family-of-origin structure groups</i>				
Intact biological family (IBF)	0,1	0.40	0.49	2988
Mother had same-sex relationship (LM)	0,1	0.01	0.10	2988
Father had same-sex relationship (GF)	0,1	0.01	0.75	2988
Adopted age 0-2	0,1	0.01	0.75	2988
Divorced later/joint custody	0,1	0.06	0.23	2988
Stepfamily	0,1	0.17	0.38	2988
Single parent	0,1	0.19	0.40	2988
All others	0,1	0.15	0.36	2988
<i>Mother's education</i>				
Less than high school	0,1	0.15	0.35	2988
Received high school diploma	0,1	0.28	0.45	2988
Some college/associate's degree	0,1	0.26	0.44	2988
Bachelor's degrees	0,1	0.15	0.36	2988
More than bachelor's	0,1	0.08	0.28	2988
Do not know/missing	0,1	0.08	0.28	2988
<i>Family-of-origin income</i>				
\$0-20,000	0,1	0.13	0.34	2988
\$20,001-40,000	0,1	0.19	0.39	2988
\$40,001-75,000	0,1	0.25	0.43	2988
\$75,001-100,000	0,1	0.14	0.34	2988
\$100,001-150,000	0,1	0.05	0.22	2988

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

NFSS variables	Range	Mean	SD	N
\$150,001–200,000	0,1	0.01	0.11	2988
Above \$200,000	0,1	0.01	0.10	2988
Do not know/missing	0,1	0.22	0.42	2988

had ever had a sexually-transmitted infection, and if they had ever had a sexual relationship with someone else while they (the respondent) were married or cohabiting.

Among continuous variables, I included a five-category educational achievement measure, a standard five-point self-reported measure of general physical health, a five-point measure of overall happiness, a 13-category measure of total household income before taxes and deductions last year, and a four-point (frequency) measure of how often the respondent thought their current relationship “might be in trouble” (never once, once or twice, several times, or numerous times). Several continuous variables were constructed from multiple measures, including an eight-measure modified version of the CES-D depression scale, an index of the respondent’s reported current (romantic) relationship quality, closeness to the respondent’s biological mother and father, and a pair of attachment scales—one assessing dependability and the other anxiety. Finally, a pair of indexes captures (1) the overall safety and security in their family while growing up, and (2) respondents’ impressions of negative family-of-origin experiences that continue to affect them. These are part of a multidimensional relationship assessment instrument (dubbed RELATE) designed with the perspective that aspects of family life, such as the quality of the parent’s relationship with their children, create a family tone that can be mapped on a continuum from safe/predictable/rewarding to unsafe/chaotic/punishing (Busby et al., 2001). Each of the scales and their component measures are detailed in Appendix B.

Finally, I evaluate nine count outcomes, seven of which are frequency measures, and the other two counts of gender-specific sexual partners. Respondents were asked, “During the past year, how often did you... watch more than 3 h of television in a row, use marijuana, smoke, drink alcohol, and drink with the intent to get drunk. Responses (0–5) ranged from “never” to “every day or almost every day.” Respondents were also asked if they have ever been arrested, and if they had ever been convicted of or pled guilty to any charges other than a minor traffic violation. Answers to these two ranged from 0 (no, never) to 3 (yes, numerous times). Two questions about respondents’ number of sex partners were asked (of both men and women) in this way: “How many different women have you ever had a sexual relationship with? This includes any female you had sex with, even if it was only once or if you did not know her well.” The same question was asked about sexual relationships with men. Twelve responses were possible: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4–6, 7–9, 10–15, 16–20, 21–30, 31–50, 51–99, and 100+.

## 2.6. Analytic approach

My analytic strategy is to highlight distinctions between the eight family structure/experience groups on the 40 outcome variables, both in a bivariate manner (using a simple *T*-test) and in a multivariate manner using appropriate variable-specific regression techniques—logistic, OLS, Poisson, or negative binomial—and employing controls for respondent’s age, race/ethnicity, gender, mother’s education, and perceived family-of-origin income, an approach comparable to Rosenfeld’s (2010) analysis of differences in children making normal progress through school and the overview article highlighting the findings of the first wave of the Add Health study (Resnick et al., 1997). Additionally, I controlled for having been bullied, the measure for which was asked as follows: “While growing up, children and teenagers typically experience negative interactions with others. We say that someone is bullied when someone else, or a group, says or does nasty and unpleasant things to him or her. We do not consider it bullying when two people quarrel or fight, however. Do you recall ever being bullied by someone else, or by a group, such that you still have vivid, negative memories of it?”

Finally, survey respondents’ current state of residence was coded on a scale (1–5) according to how expansive or restrictive its laws are concerning gay marriage and the legal rights of same-sex couples (as of November 2011). Emerging research suggests state-level political realities about gay rights may discernibly shape the lives of GLB residents (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2009; Rostosky et al., 2009). This coding scheme was borrowed from a *Los Angeles Times* effort to map the timeline of state-level rights secured for gay unions. I modified it from a 10-point to a 5-point scale (Times Research Reporting, 2012). I classify the respondent’s current state in one of the following five ways:

- 1 = Constitutional amendment banning gay marriage and/or other legal rights.
- 2 = Legal ban on gay marriage and/or other legal rights.
- 3 = No specific laws/bans and/or domestic partnerships are legal.
- 4 = Domestic partnerships with comprehensive protections are legal and/or gay marriages performed elsewhere are recognized.
- 5 = Civil unions are legal and/or gay marriage is legal.

Each case in the NFSS sample was assigned a weight based on the sampling design and their probability of being selected, ensuring a sample that is nationally representative of American adults aged 18–39. These sample weights were used in every

statistical procedure displayed herein unless otherwise noted. The regression models exhibited few ( $N < 15$ ) missing values on the covariates.

This broad overview approach, appropriate for introducing a new dataset, provides a foundation for future, more focused analyses of the outcomes I explore here. There are, after all, far more ways to delineate family structure and experiences—and changes therein—than I have undertaken here. Others will evaluate such groupings differently, and will construct alternative approaches of testing for group differences in what is admittedly a wide diversity of outcome measures.

I would be remiss to claim causation here, since to document that having particular family-of-origin experiences—or the sexual relationships of one's parents—causes outcomes for adult children, I would need to not only document that there is a correlation between such family-of-origin experiences, but that no other plausible factors could be the common cause of any suboptimal outcomes. Rather, my analytic intention is far more modest than that: to evaluate the presence of simple group differences, and—with the addition of several control variables—to assess just how robust such group differences are.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Comparisons with still-intact, biological families (IBFs)

Table 2 displays mean scores on 15 dichotomous outcome variables which can be read as simple percentages, sorted by the eight different family structure/experience groups described earlier. As in Tables 3 and 4, numbers that appear in bold indicate that the group's estimate is statistically different from the young-adult children of IBFs, as discerned by a basic T-test ( $p < 0.05$ ). Numbers that appear with an asterisk (\*) beside it indicate that the group's dichotomous variable estimate from a logistic regression model (not shown) is statistically-significantly different from IBFs, after controlling for respondent's age, gender, race/ethnicity, level of mother's education, perceived family-of-origin's income, experience with having been bullied as a youth, and the "gay friendliness" of the respondent's current state of residence.

At a glance, the number of statistically-significant differences between respondents from IBFs and respondents from the other seven types of family structures/experiences is considerable, and in the vast majority of cases the optimal outcome—where one can be readily discerned—favors IBFs. Table 2 reveals 10 (out of 15 possible) statistically-significant differences in simple t-tests between IBFs and LMs (the pool of respondents who reported that their mother has had a lesbian relationship), one higher than the number of simple differences (9) between IBFs and respondents from both single-parent and stepfamilies. All but one of those associations is significant in logistic regression analyses contrasting LMs and IBFs (the omitted category).

Beginning at the top of Table 2, the marriage rates of LMs and GFs (those who reported that their father had a gay relationship) are statistically comparable to IBFs, while LMs' cohabitation rate is notable higher than IBFs' (24% vs. 9%, respectively). Sixty-nine (69) percent of LMs and 57% of GFs reported that their family received public assistance at some point while growing up, compared with 17% of IBFs; 38% of LMs said they are currently receiving some form of public assistance, compared with 10% of IBFs. Just under half of all IBFs reported being employed full-time at present, compared with 26% of

Table 2  
Mean scores on select dichotomous outcome variables, NFSS (can read as percentage: as in, 0.42 = 42%).

	IBF (intact bio family)	LM (lesbian mother)	GF (gay father)	Adopted by strangers	Divorced late (>18)	Stepfamily	Single-parent	All other
Currently married	0.43	0.36	0.35	0.41	0.36*	0.41	0.37	0.39
Currently cohabiting	0.09	0.24*	0.21	0.07^	0.31*	0.19*	0.19*	0.13
Family received welfare growing up	0.17	0.69*	0.57*	0.12^	0.47^	0.53^	0.48^	0.35^
Currently on public assistance	0.10	0.38*	0.23	0.27*	0.31*	0.30*	0.30*	0.23*
Currently employed full-time	0.49	0.26*	0.34	0.41	0.42	0.47^	0.43^	0.39
Currently unemployed	0.08	0.28*	0.20	0.22*	0.15	0.14	0.13^	0.15
Voted in last presidential election	0.57	0.41	0.73^	0.58	0.63^	0.57^	0.51	0.48
Thought recently about suicide	0.05	0.12	0.24*	0.07	0.08	0.10	0.05	0.09
Recently or currently in therapy	0.08	0.19*	0.19	0.22*	0.12	0.17*	0.13*	0.09
Identifies as entirely heterosexual	0.90	0.61*	0.71*	0.82^	0.83^	0.81^	0.83^	0.82^
Is in a same-sex romantic relationship	0.04	0.07	0.12	0.23	0.05	0.13*	0.03	0.02
Had affair while married/cohabiting	0.13	0.40*	0.25	0.20	0.12^	0.32*	0.19^	0.16^
Has ever had an STI	0.08	0.20*	0.25*	0.16	0.12	0.16*	0.14*	0.08
Ever touched sexually by parent/adult	0.02	0.23*	0.06*	0.03*	0.10*	0.12*	0.10*	0.08^
Ever forced to have sex against will	0.08	0.31*	0.25*	0.23*	0.24*	0.16*	0.16^	0.11^

**Bold** indicates the mean scores displayed are statistically-significantly different from IBFs (currently intact, bio mother/father household, column 1), without additional controls.

An asterisk (\*) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the group's coefficient and that of IBFs, controlling for respondent's age, gender, race/ethnicity, level of mother's education, perceived household income while growing up, experience being bullied as a youth, and state's legislative gay-friendliness, derived from logistic regression models (not shown).

A caret (^) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the group's mean and the mean of LM (column 2), without additional controls.

Table 3

Mean scores on select continuous outcome variables, NFSS.

	IBF (intact bio family)	LM (lesbian mother)	GF (gay father)	Adopted by strangers	Divorced late (>18)	Stepfamily	Single-parent	All other
Educational attainment	3.19	<b>2.39*</b>	<b>2.64*</b>	3.21 <sup>^</sup>	<b>2.88<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>2.64*</b>	<b>2.66*</b>	<b>2.54*</b>
Family-of-origin safety/security	4.13	<b>3.12*</b>	<b>3.25*</b>	<b>3.77<sup>^</sup></b>	3.52 <sup>^</sup>	<b>3.52<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>3.58<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>3.77<sup>^</sup></b>
Family-of-origin negative impact	2.30	<b>3.13*</b>	<b>2.90*</b>	<b>2.83*</b>	<b>2.96*</b>	<b>2.76*</b>	<b>2.78*</b>	<b>2.64<sup>^</sup></b>
Closeness to biological mother	4.17	4.05	<b>3.71*</b>	3.58	3.95	4.03	<b>3.85*</b>	<b>3.97</b>
Closeness to biological father	3.87	3.16	3.43	–	3.29 <sup>^</sup>	3.65	<b>3.24*</b>	3.61
Self-reported physical health	3.75	<b>3.38</b>	3.58	3.53	<b>3.46</b>	<b>3.49</b>	<b>3.43*</b>	<b>3.41</b>
Self-reported overall happiness	4.16	3.89	3.72	3.92	4.02	<b>3.87*</b>	<b>3.93</b>	<b>3.83</b>
CES-D depression index	1.83	<b>2.20*</b>	<b>2.18*</b>	1.95	2.01	1.91 <sup>^</sup>	1.89 <sup>^</sup>	1.94 <sup>^</sup>
Attachment scale (depend)	2.82	<b>3.43*</b>	3.14	<b>3.12*</b>	<b>3.08<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>3.10<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>3.05<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>3.02<sup>^</sup></b>
Attachment scale (anxiety)	2.46	2.67	2.66	<b>2.66</b>	2.71	2.53	2.51	2.56
Impulsivity scale	1.90	2.03	2.02	1.85	1.94	<b>1.86<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>1.82<sup>^</sup></b>	1.89
Level of household income	8.27	<b>6.08</b>	7.15	<b>7.93<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>7.42<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>7.04</b>	<b>6.96</b>	<b>6.19*</b>
Current relationship quality index	4.11	3.83	<b>3.63*</b>	3.79	3.95 <sup>^</sup>	<b>3.80*</b>	3.95	3.94
Current relationship is in trouble	2.04	<b>2.35</b>	<b>2.55*</b>	2.35	<b>2.43</b>	<b>2.35*</b>	<b>2.26*</b>	2.15

**Bold** indicates the mean scores displayed are statistically-significantly different from IBFs (currently intact, bio mother/father household, column 1), without additional controls.

An asterisk (\*) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the group's coefficient and that of IBFs, controlling for respondent's age, gender, race/ethnicity, level of mother's education, perceived household income while growing up, experience being bullied as a youth, and state's legislative gay-friendliness, derived from OLS regression models (not shown).

A caret (^) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the group's mean and the mean of LM (column 2), without additional controls.

Table 4

Mean scores on select event-count outcome variables, NFSS.

	IBF (intact bio family)	LM (lesbian mother)	GF (gay father)	Adopted by strangers	Divorced late (>18)	Stepfamily	Single-parent	All other
Frequency of marijuana use	1.32	<b>1.84*</b>	1.61	1.33 <sup>^</sup>	<b>2.00*</b>	1.47	<b>1.73*</b>	1.49
Frequency of alcohol use	2.70	<b>2.37</b>	2.70	2.74	2.55	2.50	2.66	2.44
Frequency of drinking to get drunk	1.68	1.77	2.14	1.73	1.90	1.68	1.74	1.64
Frequency of smoking	1.79	<b>2.76*</b>	<b>2.61*</b>	<b>2.34*</b>	<b>2.44*</b>	<b>2.31*</b>	<b>2.18*</b>	1.91 <sup>^</sup>
Frequency of watching TV	3.01	<b>3.70*</b>	3.49	3.31	3.33	<b>3.43*</b>	3.25	<b>2.95*</b>
Frequency of having been arrested	1.18	<b>1.68*</b>	<b>1.75*</b>	1.31 <sup>^</sup>	1.38	<b>1.38<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>1.35<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>1.34<sup>^</sup></b>
Frequency pled guilty to non-minor offense	1.10	<b>1.36*</b>	1.41 <sup>^</sup>	1.19	1.30	<b>1.21*</b>	<b>1.17<sup>^</sup></b>	1.17 <sup>^</sup>
N of female sex partners (among women)	0.22	<b>1.04*</b>	<b>1.47*</b>	<b>0.47<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>0.96*</b>	<b>0.47<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>0.52<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>0.33<sup>^</sup></b>
N of female sex partners (among men)	2.70	3.46	4.17	3.24	3.66	<b>3.85*</b>	3.23	3.37
N of male sex partners (among women)	2.79	<b>4.02*</b>	<b>5.92*</b>	3.49	<b>3.97*</b>	<b>4.57*</b>	<b>4.04*</b>	<b>2.91<sup>^</sup></b>
N of male sex partners (among men)	0.20	<b>1.48*</b>	1.47 <sup>^</sup>	0.27	<b>0.98*</b>	0.55	0.42	0.44

**Bold** indicates the mean scores displayed are statistically-significantly different from IBFs (currently intact, bio mother/father household, column 1), without additional controls.

An asterisk (\*) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the group's coefficient and that of IBFs, controlling for respondent's age, gender, race/ethnicity, level of mother's education, perceived household income while growing up, experience being bullied as a youth, and state's legislative gay-friendliness, derived from Poisson or negative binomial regression models (not shown).

A caret (^) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the group's mean and the mean of LM (column 2), without additional controls.

LMs. While only 8% of IBF respondents said they were currently unemployed, 28% of LM respondents said the same. LMs were statistically less likely than IBFs to have voted in the 2008 presidential election (41% vs. 57%), and more than twice as likely—19% vs. 8%—to report being currently (or within the past year) in counseling or therapy “for a problem connected with anxiety, depression, relationships, etc.,” an outcome that was significantly different after including control variables.

In concurrence with several studies of late, the NFSS reveals that the children of lesbian mothers seem more open to same-sex relationships (Biblarz and Stacey, 2010; Gartrell et al., 2011a,b; Golombok et al., 1997). Although they are not statistically different from most other groups in having a same-sex relationship *at present*, they are much less apt to identify entirely as heterosexual (61% vs. 90% of respondents from IBFs). The same was true of GF respondents—those young adults who said their father had a relationship with another man: 71% of them identified entirely as heterosexual. Other sexual differences are notable among LMs, too: a greater share of daughters of lesbian mothers report being “not sexually attracted to either males or females” than among any other family-structure groups evaluated here (4.1% of female LMs, compared to 0.5% of female IBFs, not shown in Table 2). Exactly why the young-adult children of lesbian mothers are more apt to experience same-sex attraction and behaviors, as well as self-report asexuality, is not clear, but the fact that they do seems consistent across studies. Given that lower rates of heterosexuality characterize other family structure/experience types in the

NFSS, as Table 2 clearly documents, the answer is likely located not simply in parental sexual orientation but in successful cross-sex relationship role modeling, or its absence or scarcity.

Sexual conduct within their romantic relationships is also distinctive: while 13% of IBFs reported having had a sexual relationship with someone else while they were either married or cohabiting, 40% of LMs said the same. In contrast to Gartrell et al.'s (2011a,b) recent, widely-disseminated conclusions about the absence of sexual victimization in the NLLFS data, 23% of LMs said yes when asked whether "a parent or other adult caregiver ever touched you in a sexual way, forced you to touch him or her in a sexual way, or forced you to have sexual relations," while only 2% of IBFs responded affirmatively. Since such reports are more common among women than men, I split the analyses by gender (not shown). Among female respondents, 3% of IBFs reported parental (or adult caregiver) sexual contact/victimization, dramatically below the 31% of LMs who reported the same. Just under 10% of female GFs responded affirmatively to the question, an estimate not significantly different from the IBFs.

It is entirely plausible, however, that sexual victimization could have been at the hands of the LM respondents' biological father, prompting the mother to leave the union and—at some point in the future—commence a same-sex relationship. Ancillary (unweighted) analyses of the NFSS, which asked respondents how old they were when the first incident occurred (and can be compared to the household structure calendar, which documents who lived in their household each year up until age 18) reveal this possibility, up to a point: 33% of those LM respondents who said they had been sexually victimized by a parent or adult caregiver reported that they were also living with their biological father in the year that the first incident occurred. Another 29% of victimized LMs reported never having lived with their biological father at all. Just under 34% of LM respondents who said they had at some point lived with their mother's same-sex partner reported a first-time incident at an age that was equal to or higher than when they first lived with their mother's partner. Approximately 13% of victimized LMs reported living with a foster parent the year when the first incident occurred. In other words, there is no obvious trend to the timing of first victimization and when the respondent may have lived with their biological father or their mother's same-sex partner, nor are we suggesting by whom the respondent was most likely victimized. Future exploration of the NFSS's detailed household structure calendar offers some possibility for clarification.

The elevated LM estimate of sexual victimization is not the only estimate of increased victimization. Another more general question about forced sex, "Have you ever been physically forced to have any type of sexual activity against your will" also displays significant differences between IBFs and LMs (and GFs). The question about forced sex was asked *before* the question about sexual contact with a parent or other adult and may include incidents of it but, by the numbers, clearly includes additional circumstances. Thirty-one percent of LMs indicated they had, at some point in their life, been forced to have sex against their will, compared with 8% of IBFs and 25% of GFs. Among female respondents, 14% of IBFs reported forced sex, compared with 46% of LMs and 52% of GFs (both of the latter estimates are statistically-significantly different from that reported by IBFs).

While I have so far noted several distinctions between IBFs and GFs—respondents who said their father had a gay relationship—there are simply fewer statistically-significant distinctions to note between IBFs and GFs than between IBFs and LMs, which may or may not be due in part to the smaller sample of respondents with gay fathers in the NFSS, and the much smaller likelihood of having lived with their gay father while he was in a same-sex relationship. Only six of 15 measures in Table 2 reveal statistically-significant differences in the regression models (but only one in a bivariate environment). After including controls, the children of a gay father were statistically more apt (than IBFs) to receive public assistance while growing up, to have voted in the last election, to have thought recently about committing suicide, to ever report a sexually-transmitted infection, have experienced forced sex, and were less likely to self-identify as entirely heterosexual. While other outcomes reported by GFs often differed from IBFs, statistically-significant differences were not as regularly detected.

Although my attention has been primarily directed at the inter-group differences between IBFs, LMs, and GFs, it is worth noting that LMs are hardly alone in displaying numerous differences with IBFs. Respondents who lived in stepfamilies or single-parent families displayed nine simple differences in Table 2. Besides GFs, adopted respondents displayed the fewest simple differences (three).

Table 3 displays mean scores on 14 continuous outcomes. As in Table 2, bold indicates simple statistically-significant outcome differences with young-adult respondents from still-intact, biological families (IBFs) and an asterisk indicates a regression coefficient (models not shown) that is significantly different from IBFs after a series of controls. Consistent with Table 2, eight of the estimates for LMs are statistically different from IBFs. Five of the eight differences are significant as regression estimates. The young-adult children of women who have had a lesbian relationship fare worse on educational attainment, family-of-origin safety/security, negative impact of family-of-origin, the CES-D (depression) index, one of two attachment scales, report worse physical health, smaller household incomes than do respondents from still-intact biological families, and think that their current romantic relationship is in trouble more frequently.

The young-adult GF respondents were likewise statistically distinct from IBF respondents on seven of 14 continuous outcomes, all of which were significantly different when evaluated in regression models. When contrasted with IBFs, GFs reported more modest educational attainment, worse scores on the family-of-origin safety/security and negative impact indexes, less closeness to their biological mother, greater depression, a lower score on the current (romantic) relationship quality index, and think their current romantic relationship is in trouble more frequently.

As in Table 2, respondents who reported living in stepfamilies or in single-parent households also exhibit numerous simple statistical differences from IBFs—on nine and 10 out of 14 outcomes, respectively—most of which remain significant in

the regression models. On only four of 14 outcomes do adopted respondents appear distinctive (three of which remain significant after introducing controls).

Table 4 displays mean scores on nine event counts, sorted by the eight family structure/experience groups. The NFSS asked all respondents about experience with male and female sexual partners, but I report them here separately by gender. LM respondents report statistically greater marijuana use, more frequent smoking, watch television more often, have been arrested more, pled guilty to non-minor offenses more, and—among women—report greater numbers of both female and male sex partners than do IBF respondents. Female LMs reported an average of just over one female sex partner in their lifetimes, as well as four male sex partners, in contrast to female IBFs (0.22 and 2.79, respectively). Male LMs report an average of 3.46 female sex partners and 1.48 male partners, compared with 2.70 and 0.20, respectively, among male IBFs. Only the number of male partners among men, however, displays significant differences (after controls are included).

Among GFs, only three bivariate distinctions appear. However, six distinctions emerge after regression controls: they are more apt than IBFs to smoke, have been arrested, pled guilty to non-minor offenses, and report more numerous sex partners (except for the number of female sex partners among male GFs). Adopted respondents display no simple differences from IBFs, while the children of stepfamilies and single parents each display six significant differences with young adults from still-intact, biological mother/father families.

Although I have paid much less attention to most of the other groups whose estimates also appear in Tables 2–4, it is worth noting how seldom the estimates of young-adult children who were adopted by strangers (before age 2) differ statistically from the children of still-intact biological families. They display the fewest simple significant differences—seven—across the 40 outcomes evaluated here. Given that such adoptions are typically the result of considerable self-selection, it should not surprise that they display fewer differences with IBFs.

To summarize, then, in 25 of 40 outcomes, there are simple statistically-significant differences between IBFs and LMs, those whose mothers had a same-sex relationship. After controls, there are 24 such differences. There are 24 simple differences between IBFs and stepfamilies, and 24 statistically-significant differences after controls. Among single (heterosexual) parents, there are 25 simple differences before controls and 21 after controls. Between GFs and IBFs, there are 11 and 19 such differences, respectively.

### 3.2. Summary of differences between LMs and other family structures/experiences

Researchers sometimes elect to evaluate the outcomes of children of gay and lesbian parents by comparing them not directly to stable heterosexual marriages but to other types of households, since it is often the case—and it is certainly true of the NFSS—that a gay or lesbian parent first formed a heterosexual union prior to “coming out of the closet,” and witnessing the dissolution of that union (Tasker, 2005). So comparing the children of such parents with those who experienced no union dissolution is arguably unfair. The NFSS, however, enables researchers to compare outcomes across a variety of other types of family-structural history. While I will not explore in-depth here all the statistically-significant differences between LMs, GFs, and other groups besides IBFs, a few overall observations are merited.

Of the 239 possible between-group differences here—not counting those differences with Group 1 (IBFs) already described earlier—the young-adult children of lesbian mothers display 57 (or 24% of total possible) that are significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level (indicated in Tables 2–4 with a caret), and 44 (or 18% of total) that are significant after controls (not shown). The majority of these differences are in suboptimal directions, meaning that LMs display worse outcomes. The young-adult children of gay men, on the other hand, display only 11 (or 5% of total possible) between-group differences that are statistically significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level, and yet 24 (or 10% of total) that are significant after controls (not shown).

In the NFSS, then, the young-adult children of a mother who has had a lesbian relationship display more significant distinctions with other respondents than do the children of a gay father. This may be the result of genuinely different experiences of their family transitions, the smaller sample size of children of gay men, or the comparatively-rarer experience of living with a gay father (only 42% of such respondents reported ever living with their father while he was in a same-sex relationship, compared with 91% who reported living with their mother while she was in a same-sex relationship).

## 4. Discussion

Just how different are the adult children of men and women who pursue same-sex romantic (i.e., gay and lesbian) relationships, when evaluated using population-based estimates from a random sample? The answer, as might be expected, depends on to whom you compare them. When compared with children who grew up in biologically (still) intact, mother-father families, the children of women who reported a same-sex relationship look markedly different on numerous outcomes, including many that are obviously suboptimal (such as education, depression, employment status, or marijuana use). On 25 of 40 outcomes (or 63%) evaluated here, there are bivariate statistically-significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) differences between children from still-intact, mother/father families and those whose mother reported a lesbian relationship. On 11 of 40 outcomes (or 28%) evaluated here, there are bivariate statistically-significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) differences between children from still-intact, mother/father families and those whose father reported a gay relationship. Hence, there are differences in both

comparisons, but there are many more differences by any method of analysis in comparisons between young-adult children of IBFs and LMs than between IBFs and GFs.

While the NFSS may best capture what might be called an "earlier generation" of children of same-sex parents, and includes among them many who witnessed a failed heterosexual union, the basic statistical comparisons between this group and those of others, especially biologically-intact, mother/father families, suggests that notable differences on many outcomes do in fact exist. This is inconsistent with claims of "no differences" generated by studies that have commonly employed far more narrow samples than this one.

Goldberg (2010) aptly asserts that many existing studies were conducted primarily comparing children of heterosexual divorced and lesbian divorced mothers, potentially leading observers to erroneously attribute to parental sexual orientation the corrosive effects of enduring parental divorce. Her warning is well-taken, and it is one that the NFSS cannot entirely mitigate. Yet when compared with other young adults who experienced household transitions and who witnessed parents forming new romantic relationships—for example, stepfamilies—the children of lesbian mothers looked (statistically) significantly different just under 25% of the time (and typically in suboptimal directions). Nevertheless, the children of mothers who have had same-sex relationships are far less apt to differ from stepfamilies and single parents than they are from still-intact biological families.

Why the divergence between the findings in this study and those from so many previous ones? The answer lies in part with the small or nonprobability samples so often relied upon in nearly all previous studies—they have very likely underestimated the number and magnitude of real differences between the children of lesbian mothers (and to a lesser extent, gay fathers) and those raised in other types of households. While the architects of such studies have commonly and appropriately acknowledged their limitations, practically—since they are often the only studies being conducted—their results are treated as providing information about gay and lesbian household experiences *in general*. But this study, based on a rare large probability sample, reveals far greater diversity in the experience of lesbian motherhood (and to a lesser extent, gay fatherhood) than has been acknowledged or understood.

Given that the characteristics of the NFSS's sample of children of LMs and GFs are close to estimates of the same offered by demographers using the American Community Study, one conclusion from the analyses herein is merited: the sample-selection bias problem in very many studies of gay and lesbian parenting is not incidental, but likely profound, rendering the ability of much past research to offer valid interpretations of *average* household experiences of children with a lesbian or gay parent suspect at best. Most snowball-sample-based research has, instead, shed light on *above-average* household experiences.

While studies of family structure often locate at least modest benefits that accrue to the children of married biological parents, some scholars attribute much of the benefit to socioeconomic-status differences between married parents and those parents in other types of relationships (Biblarz and Raftery, 1999). While this is likely true of the NFSS as well, the results presented herein controlled not only for socioeconomic status differences between families of origin, but also political-geographic distinctions, age, gender, race/ethnicity, and the experience of having been bullied (which was reported by 53% of LMs but only 35% of IBFs).

To be sure, those NFSS respondents who reported that a parent of theirs had had a romantic relationship with a member of the same sex are a very diverse group: some experienced numerous household transitions, and some did not. Some of their parents may have remained in a same-sex relationship, while others did not. Some may self-identify as lesbian or gay, while others may not. I did not explore in detail the diversity of household experiences here, given the overview nature of this study. But the richness of the NFSS—which has annual calendar data for household transitions from birth to age 18 and from age 18 to the present—allows for closer examination of many of these questions.

Nevertheless, to claim that there are few meaningful statistical differences between the different groups evaluated here would be to state something that is empirically inaccurate. Minimally, the population-based estimates presented here suggest that a good deal more attention must be paid to the real diversity among gay and lesbian parent experiences in America, just as it long has been among heterosexual households. Child outcomes in stable, "planned" GLB families and those that are the product of previous heterosexual unions are quite likely distinctive, as previous studies' conclusions would suggest. Yet as demographers of gay and lesbian America continue to note—and as the NFSS reinforces—planned GLB households only comprise a portion (and an unknown one at that) of all GLB households with children.

Even if the children in planned GLB families exhibit better outcomes than those from failed heterosexual unions, the former still exhibits a diminished context of kin altruism (like adoption, step-parenting, or nonmarital childbirth), which have typically proven to be a risk setting, on average, for raising children when compared with married, biological parenting (Miller et al., 2000). In short, if same-sex parents are able to raise children with no differences, despite the kin distinctions, it would mean that same-sex couples are able to do something that heterosexual couples in step-parenting, adoptive, and cohabiting contexts have themselves not been able to do—replicate the optimal childrearing environment of married, biological-parent homes (Moore et al., 2002). And studies focusing on parental roles or household divisions of labor in planned GLB families will fail to reveal—because they have not measured it—how their children fare as adults.

The between-group comparisons described above also suggest that those respondents with a lesbian mother and those with a gay father do not always exhibit comparable outcomes in young adulthood. While the sample size of gay fathers in the NFSS was modest, any monolithic ideas about same-sex parenting experiences in general are not supported by these analyses.

Although the NFSS offers strong support for the notion that there are significant differences among young adults that correspond closely to the parental behavior, family structures, and household experiences during their youth, I have not and will not speculate here on causality, in part because the data are not optimally designed to do so, and because the causal reckoning for so many different types of outcomes is well beyond what an overview manuscript like this one could ever purport to accomplish. Focused (and more complex) analyses of unique outcomes, drawing upon idiosyncratic, domain-specific conceptual models, is recommended for scholars who wish to more closely assess the functions that the number, gender, and sexual decision-making of parents may play in young adults' lives. I am thus not suggesting that growing up with a lesbian mother or gay father causes suboptimal outcomes *because of* the sexual orientation or sexual behavior of the parent; rather, my point is more modest: the groups display numerous, notable distinctions, especially when compared with young adults whose biological mother and father remain married.

There is more that this article does not accomplish, including closer examinations of subpopulations, consideration of more outcomes and comparisons between other groups, and stronger tests of statistical significance—such as multiple regression with more numerous independent variables, or propensity score matching. That is what the NFSS is designed to foster. This article serves as a call for such study, as well as an introduction to the data and to its sampling and measurement strengths and abilities. Future studies would optimally include a more significant share of children from planned gay families, although their relative scarcity in the NFSS suggests that their appearance in even much larger probability samples will remain infrequent for the foreseeable future. The NFSS, despite significant efforts to randomly over-sample such populations, nevertheless was more apt to survey children whose parents exhibited gay and lesbian relationship behavior *after* being in a heterosexual union. This pattern may remain more common today than many scholars suppose.

## 5. Conclusion

As scholars of same-sex parenting aptly note, same-sex couples have and will continue to raise children. American courts are finding arguments against gay marriage decreasingly persuasive (Rosenfeld, 2007). This study is intended to neither undermine nor affirm any legal rights concerning such. The tenor of the last 10 years of academic discourse about gay and lesbian parents suggests that there is little to nothing about them that might be negatively associated with child development, and a variety of things that might be uniquely positive. The results of analyzing a rare large probability sample reported herein, however, document numerous, consistent differences among young adults who reported maternal lesbian behavior (and to a lesser extent, paternal gay behavior) prior to age 18. While previous studies suggest that children in planned GLB families seem to fare comparatively well, their actual representativeness among all GLB families in the US may be more modest than research based on convenience samples has presumed.

Although the findings reported herein may be explicable in part by a variety of forces uniquely problematic for child development in lesbian and gay families—including a lack of social support for parents, stress exposure resulting from persistent stigma, and modest or absent legal security for their parental and romantic relationship statuses—the empirical claim that no notable differences exist must go. While it is certainly accurate to affirm that sexual orientation or parental sexual behavior need have nothing to do with the *ability* to be a good, effective parent, the data evaluated herein using population-based estimates drawn from a large, nationally-representative sample of young Americans suggest that it may affect the *reality* of family experiences among a significant number.

Do children need a married mother and father to turn out well as adults? No, if we observe the many anecdotal accounts with which all Americans are familiar. Moreover, there are many cases in the NFSS where respondents have proven resilient and prevailed as adults in spite of numerous transitions, be they death, divorce, additional or diverse romantic partners, or remarriage. But the NFSS also clearly reveals that children appear most apt to succeed well as adults—on multiple counts and across a variety of domains—when they spend their entire childhood with their married mother and father, and especially when the parents remain married to the present day. Insofar as the share of intact, biological mother/father families continues to shrink in the United States, as it has, this portends growing challenges within families, but also heightened dependence on public health organizations, federal and state public assistance, psychotherapeutic resources, substance use programs, and the criminal justice system.

## Appendix A. Comparison of weighted NFSS results with parallel national survey results on selected demographic and lifestyle variables, US adults (in percentages)

	NFSS 2011, N = 941 (18–23)	NSYR 2007–2008, N = 2520 (18–23)	NFSS 2011, N = 1123 (24–32)	Add Health 2007–2008, N = 15,701 (24–32)	NFSS 2011, N = 2988 (18–39)	NSFG 2006–2010, N = 16,851 (18–39)	CPS ASEC 2011, N = 58,788 (18–39)
<i>Gender</i>							
Male	52.6	48.3	47.3	50.6	49.4	49.8	50.4
Female	47.4	51.7	52.8	49.4	50.6	50.2	49.6



## Appendix A (continued)

	NFSS 2011, N = 941 (18-23)	NSYR 2007-2008, N = 2520 (18-23)	NFSS 2011, N = 1123 (24-32)	Add Health 2007-2008, N = 15,701 (24-32)	NFSS 2011, N = 2988 (18-39)	NSFG 2006-2010, N = 16,851 (18-39)	CPS ASEC 2011, N = 58,788 (18-39)
<i>Age</i>							
18-23					28.9	28.6	28.2
24-32					41.2	40.6	42.1
33-39					29.9	30.9	29.8
<i>Race/ethnicity</i>							
White, NH	54.2	68.3	60.2	69.2	57.7	61.6	59.6
Black, NH	11.0	15.0	13.0	15.9	12.6	13.3	13.2
Hispanic	24.9	11.2	20.7	10.8	20.8	18.6	19.5
Other (or multiple), NH	10.0	5.5	6.2	4.2	8.9	6.5	7.8
<i>Region</i>							
Northeast	18.9	11.8	16.5		17.6		17.5
Midwest	18.7	25.6	23.3		21.1		21.2
South	34.3	39.1	39.6		36.7		37.0
West	28.2	23.5	20.6		24.6		24.4
Mother's education (BA or above)	28.4	33.3	24.6	21.9	25.3	22.2	
Respondent's education (BA or above)	5.3	3.8	33.7	30.0	26.5	24.2	
<i>Household income (current)</i>							
Under \$10,000	21.0		9.7	5.6	11.9	9.5	5.7
\$10,000-19,999	13.3		9.1	6.9	9.2	13.1	7.4
\$20,000-29,999	11.6		10.3	10.1	10.5	13.5	9.5
\$30,000-39,999	8.0		11.0	11.1	9.6	13.4	9.4
\$40,000-49,999	6.5		12.8	11.8	9.9	8.5	9.1
\$50,000-74,999	14.9		22.3	24.3	19.2	19.5	20.3
\$75,000 or more	24.7		24.9	30.2	29.8	22.7	38.6
Ever had sex	66.5	75.6	90.6	93.9	85.6	91.2	
Never been married	89.3	92.8	45.7	50.0	51.7	52.3	54.4
Currently married	8.0	6.9	44.9	44.6	40.6	39.2	37.9
<i>Church attendance</i>							
Once a week or more	18.4	20.2	22.1	16.0	22.3	26.2	
Never	32.3	35.6	31.2	32.1	31.7	25.8	
Not religious	21.1	24.7	22.5	20.2	22.0	21.7	
<i>Self-reported health</i>							
Poor	1.8	1.5	1.0	1.2	1.5	0.7	
Fair	8.4	9.2	11.0	7.9	10.7	5.3	
Good	28.7	26.7	37.6	33.5	33.9	24.9	
Very Good	39.6	37.5	35.7	38.2	37.3	40.9	
Excellent	21.5	25.2	14.8	19.1	16.7	28.3	
Never drinks alcohol	30.5	21.9	22.4	26.1	25.4	18.7	

**Appendix B. Construction of outcome indexes****B.1. CES-D (depression) index (8 items,  $\alpha = 0.87$ )**

Respondents were asked to think about the past 7 days, and assess how often each of the following things were true about them. Answer categories ranged from "never or rarely" (0) to "most of the time or all of the time" (3). Some items were reverse-coded for the index variable (e.g., "You felt happy."):

1. You were bothered by things that usually do not bother you.
2. You could not shake off the blues, even with help from your family and your friends.
3. You felt you were just as good as other people.
4. You had trouble keeping your mind on what you were doing.
5. You felt depressed.
6. You felt happy.
7. You enjoyed life.
8. You felt sad.

**B.2. Current romantic relationship quality (6 items,  $\alpha = 0.96$ )**

Respondents were asked to assess their current romantic relationship. Answer categories ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5):

1. We have a good relationship.
2. My relationship with my partner is very healthy.
3. Our relationship is strong.
4. My relationship with my partner makes me happy.
5. I really feel like part of a team with my partner.
6. Our relationship is pretty much perfect.

**B.3. Family-of-origin relationship safety/security (4 items,  $\alpha = 0.90$ )**

Respondents were asked to evaluate the overall atmosphere in their family while growing up by responding to four statements whose answer categories ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5):

1. My family relationships were safe, secure, and a source of comfort.
2. We had a loving atmosphere in our family.
3. All things considered, my childhood years were happy.
4. My family relationships were confusing, inconsistent, and unpredictable.

**B.4. Family-of-origin negative impact (3 items,  $\alpha = 0.74$ )**

Respondents were asked to evaluate the present-day impact of their family-of-origin experiences by responding to three statements whose answer categories ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5):

1. There are matters from my family experience that I am still having trouble dealing with or coming to terms with.
2. There are matters from my family experience that negatively affect my ability to form close relationships.
3. I feel at peace about anything negative that happened to me in the family in which I grew up.

**B.5. Impulsivity (4 items,  $\alpha = 0.76$ )**

Respondents were asked to respond to four statements about their decision-making, especially as it concerns risk-taking and new experiences. Answer categories ranged from 1 (never or rarely) to 4 (most or all of the time):

1. When making a decision, I go with my 'gut feeling' and do not think much about the consequences of each alternative.
2. I like new and exciting experiences, even if I have to break the rules.
3. I am an impulsive person.
4. I like to take risks.

**B.6. Closeness to biological mother and father (6 items,  $\alpha = 0.89$  and  $0.92$ )**

Respondents were asked to evaluate their current relationship with up to four parent figures—who they reported living with for at least 3 years when they were 0–18 years old—by reporting the frequency of six parent–child interactions. For each parent figure, these six items were coded and summed into a parental closeness index. From these, I derived indices of closeness to the respondent's biological mother and biological father. Response categories ranged from never (1) to always (5):

1. How often do you talk openly with your parent about things that are important to you?
2. How often does your parent really listen to you when you want to talk?
3. How often does your parent explicitly express affection or love for you?
4. Would your parent help you if you had a problem?
5. If you needed money, would you ask your parent for it?
6. How often is your parent interested in the things you do?

**B.7. Attachment (depend, 6 items,  $\alpha = 0.80$ ; anxiety, 6 items,  $\alpha = 0.82$ )**

For a pair of attachment measures, respondents were asked to rate their general feelings about romantic relationships, both past and present, in response to 12 items. Response categories ranged from “not at all characteristic of me” (1) to “very characteristic of me” (5). Items 1–6 were coded and summed into a “depend” scale, with higher scores denoting greater comfort with depending upon others. Items 7–12 were coded and summed into an anxiety scale, with higher scores denoting greater anxiety in close relationships, in keeping with the original Adult Attachment Scale developed by Collins and Read (1990). The measures employed were:

1. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on others.
2. I am comfortable depending on others.
3. I find that people are never there when you need them.
4. I know that people will be there when I need them.
5. I find it difficult to trust others completely.
6. I am not sure that I can always depend on others to be there when I need them.
7. I do not worry about being abandoned.
8. In relationships, I often worry that my partner does not really love me.
9. I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like.
10. In relationships, I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me.
11. I want to merge completely with another person.
12. My desire to merge sometimes scares people away.

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EXHIBIT

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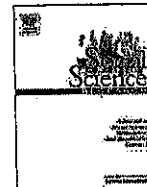
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Social Science Research xxx (2012) xxx-xxx



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# Parental same-sex relationships, family instability, and subsequent life outcomes for adult children: Answering critics of the new family structures study with additional analyses

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## ABSTRACT

The July 2012 publication of my study on the outcomes of young adults who report parental same-sex relationship behavior raised a variety of questions about the New Family Structures Study and my analyses and interpretations of it. This follow-up article seeks to address a variety of the more common criticisms that have been raised, to offer new commentary and analyses, and to pose questions for future analysts of the NFSS and other datasets that are poised to consider how household dynamics are associated with youth and young-adult outcomes. The new analyses I present here still reveal numerous differences between adult children who report maternal same-sex behavior (and residence with her partner) and those with still-married (heterosexual) biological parents. Far fewer differences appear between the former and several other groups, most notably never-married single mothers.

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## 1. Introduction

The July 2012 publication in this journal of my study on the young-adult children of parents who have had a same-sex relationship created more criticism and scrutiny than have most sociological studies. The intensity of the response can be attributed largely to the fact that the results of this study—based on a large population-based sample—differed markedly from earlier research based largely on small, nonrandom samples of same-sex families. Others would no doubt disagree. Apart from criticisms about measurement or sampling issues, concern has been expressed about all manner of minutiae, as well as details about the publication process, the funding agencies, and even the data collection firm.<sup>1</sup> Some perceive it as a tool for this or that political project, a role it was never designed to fill. It cannot answer political or legal questions, and is by definition a retrospective look at household composition and dynamics. The controversy surrounding its publication and reception has also aptly generated concern about freedom of inquiry in general. But in this manuscript I wish to get back to the basic task at hand—addressing concerns, describing the data in greater detail, and pursuing additional analyses of them.

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The audit of the publication process of the original study—a rather uncommon and disturbing experience in social science research—appears elsewhere in this issue. While its author has long harbored negative sentiment about me, the audit nevertheless ought to dispel suspicions of malfeasance in the review process. It concluded that an ideologically-balanced pool of reviewers recommended publication. Concern has been also raised about the relationship of the author to the pair of funding agencies. As noted in the study, I have always operated without strings from either organization. No funding agency representatives were consulted about research design, survey contents, analyses, or conclusions. Any allegations that the funders might have improperly influenced me are simply false. Finally, Knowledge Networks is a premier online research organization, and their data collection efforts are featured in hundreds of published articles in the social sciences, public opinion, health, and other journals—including the August 2012 issue of the *American Sociological Review* (see Rosenfeld and Thomas, 2012)—and are utilized by the American National Election Studies. Simply put, the KnowledgePanel<sup>®</sup> is a high-quality data source.

## ARTICLE IN PRESS

2

*M. Regnerus / Social Science Research xxx (2012) xxx–xxx*

While sample size issues—as well as concerns about representativeness—have long hampered the general line of inquiry into same-sex parents and child outcomes, prior to the NFSS most suppositions about possible problems with studies based on nonrandom samples were intellectual rather than data-based. That is, it was easy for scholars to admit the limitations of their study samples. What was more difficult, however, was to grasp just how nonrandom they were and how that might affect their results (Marks, 2012). Even while family scholars have long acknowledged the likelihood of demographic diversity among same-sex households, most have been unable to document the extent of this diversity in a statistically-meaningful way. National probability surveys have typically been constrained by the relatively small number of same-sex households in the general population, resulting in small sample sizes and limited statistical power to detect between-group differences. Most research has instead relied on snowball and convenience samples, which often minimize genuine racial, socioeconomic, and geographic heterogeneity (Tasker, 2005). Others have turned to the Census and the American Community Survey for more representative demographic characteristics of same-sex couples with children (Rosenfeld, 2010; Gates and Ost, 2004). However, these population-based resources are not able to tell us about gay or lesbian single parents or non-residential parents. In addition, Census data provide very little detail about the diversity of family structures experienced by children of same-sex parents over time.

Thus the original NFSS study, while subject to its own documented limitations, suggested the possibility that previous nonrandom studies were painting a rosier picture of child outcomes than would be the case were a more random sample to be employed or if the outcomes were based on the reports of young adults themselves rather than relying on parental self-reports. In other words, the original study muddied what had largely been, up to that time, a relatively consistent, positive portrait of child outcomes in gay and lesbian households (however defined).

In this article, I address six areas of concern with the original study, including an extended discussion of the challenges of dealing with household and relational instability in analyses, before briefly reporting the results of alternative approaches to presenting overview data. Throughout the article I make greater use of the NFSS's detailed family history calendar data to look at the variety of family structure experiences in the households in which young adults reported maternal same-sex relationship behavior.

## 2. Responses to criticisms

### 2.1. What constitutes an LM or GF respondent?

Concern about the use of the acronyms LM (lesbian mother) and GF (gay father) in the original study is arguably the most reasonable criticism. In hindsight, I wish I would have labeled LMs and GFs as MLRs and FGRs, that is, respondents who report a maternal (or mother's) lesbian relationship, and respondents who report a paternal (or father's) gay relationship. While in the original study's description of the LM and GF categories I carefully and accurately detailed what respondents fit the LM and GF categories, I recognize that the acronyms LM and GF are prone to conflate sexual orientation, which the NFSS did not measure, with same-sex relationship behavior, which it did measure. The original study, indeed the entire data collection effort, was always focused on the respondents' awareness of parental same-sex relationship behavior rather than their own assessment of parental sexual orientation, which may have differed from how their parent would describe it. Therefore, I will use the (albeit awkward) dual acronyms of LM/MLR and GF/FGR to provide orienting reference to the original study's acronym while capitalizing on the more appropriate acronym, which I begin using exclusively in the section on new analyses.

Some critics have correctly noted that the LM/MLR measure includes respondents who appear to have lived both with their mother and her romantic partner for many years, as well as respondents who never lived with their mother's romantic partner. The relationship(s) may or may not have been brief—the NFSS survey did not directly inquire about their number or duration. While it is possible that a one-night stand might have sufficed as a definition here, it stretches the imagination to hold that many respondents would have (a) been aware of such solitary experiences, (b) classify it/them as a "romantic relationship", and (c) list it when queried. In my own studies of heterosexual behavior, romantic relationships are typically perceived as enduring for far longer than an evening. In Wave III of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, less than three percent of all young adults' sexual relationships that were identified by respondents as "romantic" in content (rather than nonromantic) lasted for only a day (Regnerus and Uecker, 2011). However, it is a fair request to assess those LM/MLR respondents who lived with their mother and her romantic partner separately from those that did not. I do so below.

### 2.2. Comparing apples to oranges?

The most consistent criticism is that the original study's analyses "compare apples to oranges". That is, the primary comparison is between LM/MLRs, GF/FGRs, and intact biological families (IBFs), and that given prevalent instability in the NFSS sample of the former pair's households, that to compare them to IBFs is to cause the former pair to look poorly. However, if stability is a key asset for households with children, then it is sensible to use intact biological families in any comparative assessment. But this has rarely been the approach employed in past research: Rosenfeld (2010: 757) notes that of the 45

## ARTICLE IN PRESS

M. Regnerus/Social Science Research xxx (2012) xxx-xxx

3

studies listed in Tasker's (2005) review article, only two included "a more traditional family control group built into the study".

Moreover, it is inaccurate to imply that the original study did not evaluate distinctions between LM/MLRs and other categories that displayed some degree of instability. Tables 2–4 in the original study (not shown) displayed indicators of statistically-significant differences between LM/MLRs and all other groups, and I briefly describe on page 13 (Section 3.2) of the original study text the number of (and percent of possible) statistically-significant differences both before and after controls between both LM/MLR and GF/FGR categories and all non-IBF groups.

The primary concern here, I presume, is that the LM/MLR and GF/FGR categories are comprised of households that have experienced *varying* degrees of instability, and that similar experiences of instability in the one ought to be compared with similar experiences in the other. In an ideal data world, that makes sense. But this is not as simple as it might seem, since there is likewise varying degrees of instability in the groups denoted as "stepfamily" and "single parent" in the original study. The household rosters, assessed over the course of 18 years, reveal quite diverse degrees of instability in stepfamilies and single-parent households. For example, some respondents in the "single parent" category certainly witnessed their never-married mother enter and exit multiple relationships, and yet I combined them with respondents whose mother never entered another relationship after divorcing the respondent's father. Some respondents entered a stepfamily as young children, while others later in adolescence. Thus the "apples versus oranges" criticism is, upon closer inspection, not a very realistic one in social reality. Americans' households, traced over the course of respondents' first 18 years of life, reveal considerable family diversity that requires challenging—and subjective—measurement decisions from researchers, as I noted in the original text.

Many critics have focused on the small number of stably-coupled lesbian families in the NFSS data, and some have taken this as a sign of a suspect dataset. It could be an undercount, but it may not be. A closer look at the respondents who stated that their mother had a same-sex romantic relationship and that they lived with both her and her partner at some point further reveals the short-term nature of many of the relationships. Of the 85 respondents who claimed such, 31 reported living with their mother's partner for up to 1 year only.<sup>2</sup> An additional 20 reported this relationship for up to 2 years, five for 3 years, and eight for 4 years.

### 2.2.1. Relationship Instability: Control variable or pathway in analyses of child outcomes?

What should social scientists do about household (and by inference, parental relationship) instability that is nearly coterminous with a key independent variable, in this case the LM/MLR and GF/FGR categories? It is not a simple decision. Control for instability?<sup>3</sup> But what does it mean to "control for" instability in this scenario? It is quite possible that household instability—via parental romantic-relationship fragility—was a key pathway or mechanism linking the LM/MLRs with the comparatively higher emotional and social challenges they report. This tendency to overlook pathways in favor of control variables more broadly reflects a typical misguided tendency in social science research to always search for "independent" effects of variables, often missing the pathways explaining how social phenomena actually operate. In this case, parental same-sex relationships, family instability, and more problematic young-adult life outcomes are quite possibly linked. In assessing young-adult outcomes, controlling for the effect of a parent's same-sex relationship with a "family instability" variable and concluding—presumably—that there is no association could well be the wrong thing to do. This is "controlling for the pathways", a model that is unhelpful for understanding social reality. If, for example, most men smoked, but very few women ever did so, it is entirely unhelpful to declare that—controlling for smoking—there is no effect of gender on lung cancer. In that case, men's prediction for smoking would merit close scrutiny and concern. Indeed, a key purpose of social science is "to identify and understand the various underlying causal mechanisms that produce identifiable outcomes and events of interest" (Smith, 2010: 293).

### 2.2.2. Gay and lesbian relationship instability: An artifact of the past?

Since the NFSS did not select by design a group of unstable gay or lesbian parents, a key issue is whether or not the LM/MLR and GF/FGR households are more unstable than those of heterosexual couples. If stability was comparatively rarer in the lives of MLRs and FGRs growing up some decades ago when stigma was more pronounced and social support for lesbian and gay parents far more modest than today, is it a safe assumption that the NFSS study is a "dated" one by definition and that if the study could be replicated in the future that the associations here would very likely disappear? Perhaps, but hardly certain: assumptions about comparative relationship stability among gay and lesbian couples—including parents—can and have been empirically tested using other data on current relationships.

<sup>2</sup> As I note below in greater detail, I have included in the LM/MLR group the 12 cases in which the respondent indicated that both parents had had a same-sex relationship. In the previous study, I analyzed them only as GF/FGRs, given sample-size concerns.

<sup>3</sup> One option is to utilize the NFSS calendars and create a measure of the number of household transitions rather than the experience of one or more transitions (Potter, 2012). But the household calendars could well miss the exact number of transitions, since the NFSS only asked respondents to denote when someone else lived with them for at least 4 months. This also overlooks parental romantic relationships which were either brief or else not residential (yet potentially still influential). And in cases of excessive household instability, respondents may experience survey fatigue and may underreport transitions when filling out what amounts to be for them a rather complicated household calendar. Moreover, to suggest that all romantic partner dissolution creates problems for respondents is short-sighted. Indeed, some dissolutions solve problems (Amato, 2000). Such is the messy business of documenting and assessing household histories.

## ARTICLE IN PRESS

4

M. Regnerus/Social Science Research xxx (2012) xxx-xxx

A study of Norwegian and Swedish same-sex marriages notes that divorce risk is higher in same-sex marriages and that the "risk of divorce for female partnerships actually is more than twice that for male unions" (Andersson et al., 2006: 89). Moreover, early same-sex marriages—those occurring shortly after a shift in marriage law—exhibited a similar risk of divorce as did more recent marriages, suggesting no notable variation in instability over time as a function of new law or pent-up demand among more stable, longstanding relationships. The study authors estimate that in Sweden, 30% of female marriages are likely to end in divorce within 6 years of formation, compared with 20% for male marriages and 13% for heterosexual ones. Moreover, they found lesbian couples to be more "sociodemographically homogamous" than other couples, and speculate that "this situation may be conducive to a high level of dynamism in the relationship, but perhaps not to the kind of inertia that is related to marital stability" (Andersson et al., 2006: 96). Biblarz and Stacey (2010: 17) similarly note this phenomenon in their review of research on lesbian parents, asserting that they face a "somewhat greater risk of splitting up", due in part, they suggest, to their "their high standards of equality". A follow-up assessment of more recent Norwegian statistics, presented at the 2012 annual meeting of the Population Association of America (PAA), found no evidence that the gender gap in same-sex divorce has closed (Noack et al., 2012).

Michael Rosenfeld detects the same pattern in a study of nationally-representative data on American relationships presented at the 2012 annual meeting of the American Sociological Association. He finds that lesbian couples report higher relationship satisfaction *alongside* higher break-up rates. The highest stability rates appear among heterosexual married couples, while notably better stability is located among married gay and lesbian couples than among those in civil unions (as would be expected). Yet his analysis too detects greater instability among lesbian couples in general, a finding that persists even after a lengthy series of control variables are included. While lesbian couples in the study are more apt to be raising children, the presence of children does not appear to be a factor in the diminished relationship stability evident among them.

That few LM/MLR respondents reported stability in their mother and her partner's relationship (in the domicile in which the respondent lived) ought not be simply chalked up to greater stigma or insufficient social support as factors that account for the entirety of the association. In light of evidence of the same pattern among current lesbian couples in the US and Scandinavia, it remains an open question.

While the cited study authors tend to find the difference in divorce behavior between lesbians and gay men intriguing, this "lesbian effect" is anticipated in a sexual economics approach to romantic relationships (e.g., Baumeister, 2010). This perspective places no blame for instability on sexual orientation per se, but rather on stable gender differences and preferences in relationships (e.g., for women, a significantly higher bar for the relationship's quality and emotional satisfaction). Gay men's relationships thus appear predictably more stable than lesbian relationships, but are less likely to be sexually monogamous when compared with lesbian or heterosexual relationships (Hoff and Beougher, 2010). Here again, this is believed to be due not to sexual orientation but stable gender differences in relationship preferences and sex drive (Baumeister and Vohs, 2004). While the effect of relationship stability on child health and development is well-documented and apparent in the original NFSS study's findings—as well as this follow-up exploration—the effect on children of parental nonmonogamy is not well understood.

### 2.3. Is the NFSS a representative sample?

As an extension of the second concern, many critics have focused on the small number of stably-coupled lesbian families in the NFSS data. Indeed, only two cases of LM/MLRs reported living with their mother and her partner uninterrupted from age 1 to 18. Of the 85 cases (out of 175 total LM/MLRs) wherein the respondent indicated living in residence for a time with both their mother and her female partner, only 19 spent at least five consecutive years together, and six cases spent 10 or more consecutive years together. Some have taken this as a sign of a suspect and non-representative dataset. It could be an undercount, but it may well not be. Rather, readers would do well to keep in mind anachronistic expectations concerning an era in which enduring same-sex relationships *with children* were simply less common, and those that existed certainly subject to greater social scrutiny and stigma. And, as noted above, there may be stability distinctions that foster unreasonable expectations, especially following upon decades of research conclusions based on nonrandom samples.

Moreover, such expectations also tend to reveal a class bias that may hamper studies in this domain, given that families wherein same-sex couples pursue the complicated—and potentially quite expensive—process of deciding just how and when they will have a child tend to be more educated, wealthy, and white than the families of many NFSS LM/MLRs. Rosenfeld (2010: 757) notes:

... the literature on same-sex couple parenting has tended to feature studies of the kind of women who can afford ART: white, upper-middle-class women. Nationally representative data tend to paint a different picture: in the US census, same-sex couple parents tend to be more working class and are much more likely to be nonwhite compared with heterosexual married couples.

The children of such a selective group—those who conceive by ART, or assisted reproductive technology—would be expected to witness greater stability and to fare better, enjoying advantages that tend to benefit children regardless of their parents' race, age, or sexual orientation. While this selective group is hardly the only face of same-sex parents in America, they are the ones who receive the majority of popular and scholarly attention.

In his assessment of group differences in academic progress, moreover, Rosenfeld (2010) restricted his Census-based sample to the children of same-sex couples "who had been living with both parents for at least 5 years", thus raising the like-



## ARTICLE IN PRESS

M. Regnerus/Social Science Research xxx (2012) xxx-xxx

5

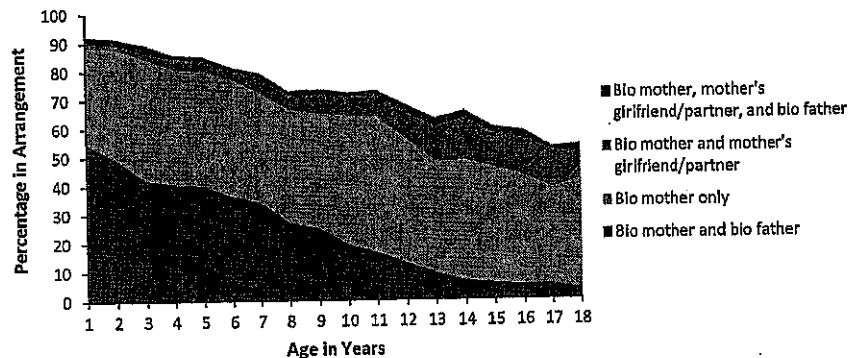


Fig. 1. Frequency of four living arrangements of young adults who reported maternal same-sex romantic relationship behavior, by age, NFSS (unweighted).

likelihood that his sample was more residentially and relationally stable than a sample that included the children of same-sex couples who had not met this threshold of inclusion. I did not restrict my sample in the same manner, though such a measurement decision is potentially quite influential on respondents' outcomes. His "no differences" conclusion may be a result of dropping more unstable households from his analytic sample.

### 2.3.1. Differences and similarities between the NFSS and the census

While no sampling strategy can compete with a genuine census in scope, it is important to note that the Census does not ask respondents about their sexual orientation or any sort of sexual behavior. It can only identify couples of the same sex who are co-residing at the time of the survey. Gay or lesbian parents who are raising children as single parents or who do not live with their children are not enumerated as such in the Census.

The NFSS, which relied on asking respondents about their parents' same-sex relationship activity, includes numerous single-parent households among its LM/MLR and GF/FGP categories, as Fig. 1 details. Given greater instability among lesbian couples, failing to account for lesbian single-parent households seems a notable limitation. The original NFSS study's sample may actually be more representative than Rosenfeld's *Demography* article, since I did not impose stability limitations and could measure single-parent gay- and lesbian-headed households.

The Census also only takes a snapshot of a household, meaning it offers few insights into the family-structure dynamics of same-sex households. Thus the Census and the NFSS may reveal quite different household arrangements. The Census has an unparalleled ability to measure the fraction of households with children that are headed by same-sex couples.<sup>4</sup> The NFSS, looking retrospectively, can document parental same-sex relationships as reported by young adults who did not spend their entire childhood living with their biological parents, and can describe the stability of household arrangements over time. What results are simply different strengths and weaknesses. And yet both exhibit comparable race and class diversity. Rosenfeld's (2010) analysis of ACS data reported that 37% and 42% of children from female and male same-sex households are Black and Hispanic, respectively. He also noted that same-sex couples with children have, on average, less education and lower household incomes than both heterosexual couples with children and same-sex couples without children.

## 2.4. Mixed-orientation marriages?

There seems to be no scholarly consensus—as may well be the case in social reality—about what exactly makes a mother a lesbian mother, and what makes a father a gay father. Some critics seem to have largely presumed that the NFSS's LM/MLR or GF/FGP parent is in fact lesbian or gay, respectively, in their sexual orientation, despite my caution against doing so in the original study. (Others appear to question whether any of them are gay or lesbian.) Some speculate that what I have largely captured in the original study's findings are the challenges facing "mixed-orientation marriages" wherein a respondent's parent elects "against their orientation" to marry someone of the opposite sex, only to witness the subsequent dissolution of their union followed by the commencement of a same-sex relationship. As I noted in the original study text, there appear to be plenty of failed heterosexual unions in the data. Fig. 1 displays the unweighted frequencies of four of the most common living arrangements among LM/MLR respondents beginning at age 1 up through age 18.<sup>5</sup> As already noted, a slight majority spend their early years with their biological mother and father, a figure that diminishes to about 5% by age 18.<sup>6</sup> A consistently large segment of LM/MLRs (~35%) reports living exclusively with their biological mother, while a much smaller segment reports

<sup>4</sup> This ability is tempered, as is the case in many data collection efforts, by other challenges. In the case of the Census, the prevalence of gender miscoding may create notable over-counts of the number of same-sex households in the US (Black et al., 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Tables 1–3, however, employ weighted estimates, in consonance with the original study.

<sup>6</sup> An unknown (though likely sizable) number of the respondents who report living with both their "biological mother and father" do not share the same residence with them, but rather spend time in each one's household.

ARTICLE IN PRESS

M. Regnerus / Social Science Research xxx (2012) xxx-xxx

6

Table 1  
Mean scores on select dichotomous outcome variables, NESS (can read as percentage; as in, 0.43 = 43%).

	1-IBF	2-MLR no partner	3-MLR + partner	4-FCR	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Currently married	0.43	0.31	0.38	0.38	0.36*	0.49	0.37	0.41	0.27	0.21*	0.17*	0.47	0.63	0.41	0.45
Currently cohabiting	0.09	0.18	0.27*	0.23	0.31*	0.11	0.20*	0.10	0.25*	0.18*	0.31*	0.22*	0.28*	0.07*	0.32*
Family received welfare growing up	0.17	0.72*	0.70*	0.51*	0.47*	0.41**	0.49*	0.37*	0.70*	0.75*	0.56	0.58*	0.13*	0.12*	0.47*
Currently on public assistance	0.10	0.32	0.49*	0.14*	0.31*	0.21*	0.22**	0.27*	0.52*	0.44*	0.49*	0.28	0.11*	0.27*	0.25
Currently employed full-time	0.49	0.36	0.17*	0.36	0.42**	0.48*	0.44*	0.55*	0.42*	0.31	0.09*	0.52*	0.75*	0.41*	0.42*
Currently unemployed	0.08	0.10*	0.40*	0.23	0.15*	0.13*	0.15*	0.06*	0.18	0.19	0.34*	0.03*	0.00*	0.22	0.12*
Voted in last presidential election	0.57	0.46	0.43	0.71**	0.63	0.53	0.58	0.52	0.58	0.43	0.37	0.70**	0.44	0.58	0.59
Thought recently about suicide	0.05	0.23*	0.09	0.17	0.08	0.10	0.06	0.02	0.11	0.09	0.03	0.04	0.01	0.07	0.11
Recently or currently in therapy	0.08	0.30*	0.17	0.10	0.12	0.17*	0.20*	0.11	0.24*	0.13	0.09	0.13	0.01**	0.22*	0.09
Identifies as entirely heterosexual	0.90	0.45*	0.68*	0.80*	0.83	0.82*	0.82*	0.89*	0.80	0.77*	0.83	0.91*	0.96*	0.82	0.72*
Is in a same-sex romantic relationship	0.04	0.12	0.02	0.14	0.05	0.15*	0.01	0.00*	0.05	0.01	0.04	0.13*	-	0.23	0.21
Had an affair while married/cohabiting	0.13	0.42*	0.38*	0.26	0.12*	0.28*	0.17	0.09*	0.48*	0.23	0.18	0.17	0.18	0.20	0.30
Has ever had an STI	0.08	0.21	0.26*	0.18*	0.12	0.12	0.17*	0.06*	0.25*	0.19*	0.26*	0.17	0.08	0.16	0.12
Ever touched sexually by an adult	0.02	0.16*	0.26*	0.07	0.10*	0.09*	0.10*	0.10*	0.20*	0.15*	0.11	0.05*	0.02*	0.03*	0.09
Ever forced to have sex against will	0.08	0.42*	0.27*	0.17*	0.24*	0.18*	0.20*	0.13	0.17	0.17	0.11	0.12	0.10	0.23*	0.17

\*1 = Lived with both bio mother and father from 0 to 18 or until left home (N = 919).

\*2 = MLR, but never lived with mother's same-sex romantic partner (N = 90).

\*3 = MLR, spent time in residence with mother's same-sex romantic partner (N = 85).

\*4 = FCR (N = 61).

\*5 = Lived with both bio mom and dad until 18, but subsequently they've gotten a divorce (N = 116).

\*6 = Parents were married, but got a divorce, R lived with mother, and R reported subsequent relationship(s) and remarriage (N = 223).

\*7 = Parents were married, but got a divorce, R lived with mother, and R reported subsequent relationship(s) but no remarriage (N = 278).

\*8 = Parents were married, but got a divorce, R lived with mother, and R reported NO subsequent relationship before 18 (N = 108).

\*9 = Parents never married, R lived with mother, and R reported subsequent relationship(s) and marriage (N = 104).

\*10 = Parents never married, R lived with mother, and R reported subsequent relationship(s) but no marriage (N = 221).

\*11 = Parents never married, R lived with mother, and R reported NO subsequent relationship (N = 48).

\*12 = Parents were married, but one parent died, and R reported subsequent relationship(s), possibly including remarriage (N = 117).

\*13 = Parents were married, but one parent died, and R reported NO subsequent relationship (N = 28).

\*14 = Adopted by strangers at birth or 1 year (at some point, either one or two adopted parents) (N = 101).

\*15 = Parents were married, but got a divorce, R lived with father (84% of the time, R said father had another relationship) (N = 95).

**Bold** indicates the mean scores displayed are statistically-significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the group's coefficient and that of IBF's, controlling for respondent's age, gender, race/ethnicity, level of mother's education, perceived household income while growing up, experience being bullied as a youth, and state's legislative gay-friendliness, derived from logistic regression models (not shown).  
An asterisk (\*) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the group's mean and the mean of Group 3 (MLR + partner), without additional controls.  
A caret (^) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the group's mean and the mean of Group 3 (MLR + partner), without additional controls.

ARTICLE IN PRESS

M. Regnerus/Social Science Research xxx (2012) xxx-xxx

Table 2  
Mean scores on select continuous outcome variables, NFSS.

	1-IBF	2-MLR no partner	3-MLR + partner	4-FGR	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Educational attainment	3.19	2.34*	2.41*	2.70	2.88**	2.72*	2.82**	3.06*	2.41*	2.18*	2.01*	2.78	2.92	3.21*	2.79*
Family-of-origin safety/security	4.13	3.23*	2.97*	3.35*	3.52**	3.70**	3.45**	3.71**	3.35*	3.44**	3.59**	3.63**	4.02*	3.77**	3.12*
Family-of-origin negative impact	2.30	3.30*	2.97*	2.88*	2.96*	2.67*	2.97*	2.55	3.04*	2.74*	3.02*	2.72*	2.62	2.83*	2.67
Closeness to biological mother	4.17	4.07	4.03	3.71*	3.95	4.26*	3.88	3.90	3.63	3.50*	4.20	3.87	4.17	3.58	3.79
Closeness to biological father	3.87	3.16	3.18	3.44	3.29*	3.53	3.29	3.29	-	1.57**	3.01	3.28	3.27	-	3.89
Self-reported physical health	3.75	3.50	3.24	3.67	3.46	3.51	3.58*	3.42	3.40	3.28*	3.09*	3.54	3.66	3.53	3.54
Self-reported overall happiness	4.16	3.63	4.04	3.79	4.02	3.94	3.93	3.83	3.88	3.70	3.64	4.03	4.58**	3.92	3.80
CES-D depression index	1.83	2.37*	2.12	2.07	2.01	1.88	1.92	1.84	2.02	2.08	1.99	1.76*	1.48**	1.95	1.90
Attachment scale (depend)	2.82	3.63**	3.27	3.10	3.08	3.00	3.12*	2.84	3.26	3.22*	3.40*	3.16	2.52*	3.12*	3.10
Attachment scale (anxiety)	2.46	2.77	2.63	2.60	2.71	2.47	2.54	2.41	2.66	2.65	2.77	2.51	2.03	2.66*	2.49
Level of household income	1.90	2.03	2.06	1.95	1.94	1.79*	1.93	1.84*	1.98	1.79*	1.81	1.86	1.66**	1.85	1.76*
Impulsivity scale	8.27	6.45*	5.96	7.08	7.42	7.46*	7.67*	7.34	5.72*	5.38*	3.67**	7.68*	9.03**	7.93*	7.73*
Current relationship quality index	4.11	3.80	3.76	3.73*	3.95	3.88	3.94	3.92	3.65	3.66*	3.92	3.77	4.36*	3.79	4.02
Current relationship is in trouble	2.04	2.60*	2.21	2.47	2.43	2.15	2.32*	2.19	2.77**	2.45*	2.60	2.31	1.85	2.35	2.31

IBF indicates the mean scores displayed are statistically-significantly different from IBFs (currently intact, bio mother/father household, column 1), without additional controls. An asterisk (\*) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the group's coefficient and that of IBFs, controlling for respondent's age, gender, race/ethnicity, level of mother's education, perceived household income while growing up, experience being bullied as a youth, and state's legislative gay-friendliness, derived from OLS regression models (not shown). A caret (^) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the group's mean and the mean of Group 3 (MIR + partner), without additional controls.

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**Table 3**  
Mean scores on select event-count outcome variables, NFSS.

	1-IBF	2-MLR no partner	3-MLR + partner	4-FGR	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Frequency of marijuana use	1.32	1.78	1.85*	1.62	2.00*	1.32	1.71*	1.61	1.86*	1.99*	1.70	1.50	1.62	1.33	1.50
Frequency of alcohol use	2.70	2.58	2.41	2.42	2.55	2.35	2.64	2.87	2.84*	2.63	1.89	2.55	2.59	2.74	2.84
Frequency of drinking to get drunk	1.68	1.89	1.88	1.89	1.90	1.58	1.75	1.91	1.96*	1.78	1.37	1.73	1.32	1.73	1.68
Frequency of smoking	1.79	2.95*	2.84*	2.22	2.44	2.25*	2.03	2.31	2.38	2.27	2.14	1.90	2.59	2.34*	2.44
Frequency of watching TV	3.01	4.21*	3.46	3.17	3.33	3.21	3.24	3.47	3.98*	3.50	3.51	3.37	2.27	3.31	2.77
Frequency of having been arrested	1.18	1.82*	1.76*	1.52	1.38	1.39**	1.37**	1.17*	1.34*	1.43*	1.47*	1.27*	1.37	1.31*	1.53*
Freq pled guilty to non-minor offense	1.10	1.43*	1.35*	1.36	1.30	1.20	1.21*	1.10*	1.22	1.15	1.18	1.20	1.23	1.19	1.24
N of female sex partners (among women)	0.22	1.66**	0.70*	0.74*	0.96*	0.52*	0.41	0.14*	0.51	0.64*	0.94	0.52	0.36	0.47	0.47*
N of female sex partners (among men)	2.70	2.37*	3.97	4.16	3.66	3.79	3.30	2.03*	3.91*	4.38*	2.06	4.52*	3.43	3.24	3.60
N of male sex partners (among women)	2.79	5.73**	2.98	4.51*	3.97*	4.55**	4.05**	3.70	4.90**	4.42**	4.13	3.38	3.36	3.49	4.53**
N of male sex partners (among men)	0.20	2.13*	1.18*	1.47*	0.98	0.37	0.10*	0.72	0.20	0.35*	0.62*	0.21	0.47*	0.27	1.76

**Bold** indicates the mean scores displayed are statistically-significantly different from IBFs (currently intact, bio mother/father household, column 1), without additional controls. An asterisk (\*) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the group's coefficient and that of IBFs, controlling for respondent's age, gender, race/ethnicity, level of mothers' education, perceived household income while growing up, experience being bullied as a youth, and state's legislative gay-friendliness, derived from Poisson or negative binomial regression models (not shown). A caret (^) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the group's mean and the mean of Group 3 (MLR + partner), without additional controls.

## ARTICLE IN PRESS

M. Regnerus / Social Science Research xxx (2012) xxx–xxx

9

their early years were spent with both their biological mother and her same-sex partner. The household presence of a same-sex partner begins emerging slowly but steadily through the course of childhood. In numerous cases LM/MLR respondents indicated first living with their mother's girlfriend/partner at a comparatively older age (for example, 54 began at or after age 10, 40 at or after age 13, and 18 at or after age 16).

Whether these were in fact mixed-orientation marriages or relationships is of course impossible to discern with confidence, since the study did not ask the respondents to identify their parents' sexual orientation, a decision I remain comfortable with given the era the data are describing. Many LM/MLR and GF/FGR respondents may well have witnessed their parents' mixed-orientation marriage. On the other hand, given the documented fluidity of women's sexuality, I would hesitate to assert that a same-sex relationship—especially if relatively brief—is indicative of a fixed sexual orientation (Diamond, 2008).

While the etiology of homosexuality is not under study here, the matter seems tacitly embedded in criticisms about classification. As such, the original study should be understood in the manner in which it is explicitly titled—about the adult children of parents who have same-sex relationships. If for whatever reason that is an unsatisfying anchor—parental sexual behavior rather than orientation—it is beyond the scope of an academic study to be something it is not. Nevertheless, it suggests the importance of consistently employing the acronyms MLR and FGR.

### 2.5. Bisexuality in the NFSS?

As an extension of this, a few critics have raised the possibility that plenty of the NFSS LM/MLRs and GF/FGRs may in reality be bisexual in orientation. In an unpublished study of the most recent two series of data from the National Survey of Family Growth—presented at the 2012 PAA conference—Danielle Wondra reports that self-identified bisexual men and women are notably more likely to desire a (or another) child than self-identified gay or lesbian respondents. Suffice it to say that more research needs to be conducted on bisexual parents outside of a simplistic “mixed-orientation” rubric that may not reflect the reality of many couples' history of sexual experiences or preferences. Moreover, claims about “mixed orientation marriages” unnecessarily problematize bisexuality by prioritizing a dualistic (either/or) essentialism about sexual orientation that may not fit social reality (Diamond, 2008).

If the complex calendar histories are any clue, bisexuality is probable among some NFSS respondents' parents. Such frequencies of opposite-sex relationship behavior or opposite-sex attraction are not out of step with other studies of same-sex partnerships (Andersson et al., 2006; Potter, 2012; Rosenfeld, 2012). Nevertheless, only four LM/MLRs reported an opposite-sex parent figure—a stepfather—living in the household *after* having reported a same-sex parent figure (i.e., a mother's girlfriend/partner). In sum, the B in LGBT parenting deserves more attention than it has been given, and may constitute a more significant share of such households-with-children than has often been recognized.

### 2.6. Foster care experiences

A few critics have raised the suggestion that in the era represented by the NFSS respondents, gay and lesbian parents were more apt to either adopt foster children, or—at the other extreme—faced the forcible placement of their own children in foster care. Either scenario raises concern about the original study's claim that LM/MLR respondents were the most apt to report experience with the foster care system. This concern prompted a detailed exploration of the calendar data for the 21 LM/MLR respondents who reported such an experience, in order to discern the timing of their foster system experience. As with the original study's discussion about the timing of sexual victimization, here too the story is muddled. Three of the 21 LM/MLRs who spent time in foster care did so immediately prior to reporting living in a household with their mother and her female partner—one of the two scenarios anticipated by critics. Four of the 21 spent some time in foster care following their report of living in a household with their mother and her partner—the other scenario that concerned critics. Whether any of these seven cases actually match those scenarios in reality is impossible to know from the data. The remaining 14 cases display calendar data less apt to suggest either of these two scenarios as a likely fit. Just under half of the 21 respondents reported their foster care experience beginning before age 10.

## 3. Alternative analyses

Tables 1–3 display results in a manner similar to Tables 2–4 in the original study (not shown), with several changes made in response to criticisms:

1. I split the LM/MLRs (hereafter, MLRs) between those who never lived with their mother's same-sex romantic partner and those that have.

Why this particular division? Of the 85 cases wherein the respondent indicated living in residence with both their mother and her female partner, only 19 spent five consecutive years together, and six cases spent 10 consecutive years together. While this is not quite the comparison some critics seek, the statistical power is simply not present for a direct comparison

## ARTICLE IN PRESS

10

*M. Regnerus / Social Science Research xxx (2012) xxx-xxx*

of the most stable MLRs, given uncommon relationship longevity in their households-of-origin. It is true, though, that greater longevity of such in residence relationships tended to reveal better outcomes at face value.

2. I shifted the 12 cases wherein a respondent reported that both parents had had a same-sex relationship from FGR to MLR.

As noted in the original study, analyses of the household calendar data for these 12 cases revealed comparable exposure to both their mother and father. As a result, there are now 90 MLR cases who never reported living with their mother's partner/girlfriend, 85 MLRs who did, and 63 FGRs. As reported in the original study, the latter group very infrequently reported living with their father and his partner/boyfriend, so this group remains unaltered in its structure.

3. I expanded the total number of groups to 15 in order to better reflect the different experiences of stability and partnering in American households. I did not include an "others" catch-all group in this set of analyses. As a result, the final tables reflect just under 400 fewer cases than in the original study.

Given the outcome measures are the same as employed in the original study, I do not describe their operationalization here. That can be located in the original study's text and its Appendix B. The analytic strategy—an overview featuring both simple between-group means tests as well as an indicator of statistical significance after controlling for several independent variables via outcome-appropriate forms of regression analyses—remains the same as well, for comparability.

As was the case in the original analyses, Tables 1–3 reveal that those adult children who report a maternal same-sex relationship—regardless of whether their mother ever resided with her same-sex partner—look far more similar to adult children of other types of households than they do to those from stably-intact biological families. There are 20 simple statistically-significant differences between group 2 (MLRs who never lived with their mother's same-sex partner) and IBFs, and an identical number between group 3 (MLRs who did live with their mother's same-sex partner for a time) and IBFs. After controls—via regression analysis—there are 21 and 19 statistically-significant differences between groups 2 and 3, respectively, and IBFs. These numbers are a dip from those reported in the original study.

Most of the distinctions between IBFs and groups 2 and 3 are consistent with those reported in the original study. On 16 different outcomes, *both* groups 2 and 3 appear statistically different from IBFs prior to controls (i.e., regression models); the same is true of 13 outcomes after controls. There are nine simple differences between FGRs and IBFs prior to controls, and 12 after them. As in the original study, distinctions between the two MLR groups and IBFs appear in the domains of sexuality, sexual behavior, sexual victimization, household economics and work, educational attainment, smoking, arrests, and retrospective sentiment about family life while growing up.<sup>7</sup>

Carets denote a simple statistically-significant difference between group 3 (MLRs who spent time living with their mother's partner) and all non-IBF groups. Of the 517 possible between-group differences, 89% (or 17%) appear significant at the bivariate level, a decline from the 24% figure when assessing all MLRs together in the original study. Several groups compare similarly to group 3 in terms of very few simple differences:

- Group 4 (FGRs): two differences.
- Group 11 (never-married single mothers with no subsequent relationships): two differences.
- Group 9 (single mothers who subsequently remarried): four differences.
- Group 10 (never-married single mothers with relationships but no marriage): four differences.
- Group 2 (MLRs who did not live with their same-sex partner): four differences.

Group 10 displays by far the most pre- and post-regression statistically-significant differences with IBFs (31 and 23, respectively), and tends to fare consistently poorly across most outcomes which are agreeably suboptimal. Group 3 (MLRs who lived with their mother's partner) compare less favorably with:

- Group 8 (divorced, lived with mother, no subsequent relationships): 12 differences.
- Group 13 (parents married until one died, no subsequent relationships): 15 differences.

In general, groups 8 and 13 fared rather well on many outcomes, shedding light on the likely importance of avoiding further household transitions. Where outcomes are clearly discernible as optimal or suboptimal—for example, educational attainment or STI, respectively—group 8 fares better than groups 6–7, whose only distinction is subsequent maternal romantic relationships and, in group 6's case, remarriage. Additional parental romantic partners, even remarriages, seem to make a (negative) difference. As in the original study, there is much that these analyses cannot document, including causation as well as any effects of sexual orientation. Selectivity is very likely at work on multiple outcomes.

Analyses comparing younger versus older NFSS respondents may prove a fertile avenue of exploration. Initial ancillary analyses suggest that older young adult MLRs seem to have struggled more than younger ones. Whether this is a function

<sup>7</sup> As noted in the original study text, the NFSS data is insufficiently capable of discerning much information about the context surrounding respondents' sexual victimization. No simplistic conclusions about it ought to be discerned from the analyses.

## ARTICLE IN PRESS

M. Regnerus/Social Science Research xxx (2012) xxx-xxx

11

of time exposure, or more pronounced social stigma further in the past than among the “newest” young adult MLRs, is difficult to say, given the interpretive limitations of this data. Alternately, some challenges may cumulate over time; it may be that the older respondents have simply had more time to experience particular outcomes.

#### 4. Conclusion

This follow-up study has sought to address six common criticisms that have arisen following the July 2012 publication in this journal of the original study entitled, “How different are the adult children of parents who have same-sex relationships?” One in particular, about comparing stable heterosexual couples to stable same-sex couples, is particularly challenging to accomplish with all but the very largest datasets (which, in turn, tend to have fewer interesting outcome measures). It also raises important conceptual and analytic questions about how to navigate persistent instability in the NFSS’s MLR and FGR cases. This is complicated by contemporary evidence in the US and Scandinavia suggesting that lesbian relationships in particular—including legally married couples—continue to exhibit instability in excess of heterosexual relationships and even gay male relationships.

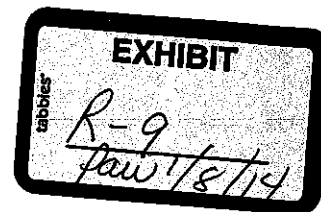
Perhaps in social reality there really are two “gold standards” of family stability and context for children’s flourishing—a heterosexual stably-coupled household and the same among gay/lesbian households—but no population-based sample analyses is yet able to consistently confirm wide evidence of the latter. Moreover, a stronger burden of proof than has been employed to date ought to characterize studies which conclude “no differences”, especially in light of longstanding reliance on nonrandom samples of unknown bias and the high risk of making Type II errors in small-sample studies (Marks, 2012; Nock, 2001). In other words, the science here remains young. Until much larger random samples can be drawn and evaluated, the probability-based evidence that exists—including additional NFSS analyses herein—suggests that the biologically-intact two-parent household remains an optimal setting for the long-term flourishing of children.

Of course the flourishing of children involves many other factors besides parental relationship structure and decision-making, as analyses of the NFSS and numerous other datasets confirm. Indeed, most young-adult respondents in the NFSS report ample success and largely avoid problematic physical and emotional difficulties, regardless of their parents’ experiences, decisions, and actions.

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# Family Inequality



JULY 20 2013 7:24 AM

## Paul Amato on reviewing Regnerus

*I recently discussed Paul Amato's role in the Regnerus Affair. I offered my opinion that, if Amato was a reviewer of the Regnerus article, he should not have been, mostly because he had served as a paid consultant on the study. (My long version of the Affair is [here](#), a critique of the paper I co-authored is [here](#).)*

*I regret that before writing that post I didn't directly ask Amato if he wanted to discuss his role and whether he served as a reviewer. After the post appeared he sent me this statement, which I agreed to post. I added some more comments of my own below. (He also reminded me that he had voted for the Family Section Council [resolution](#) asking ASA to respond to the Regnerus study, which [they did](#).)*

*Amato is President Elect of the National Council on Family Relations and a Distinguished Professor at Penn State University.*

### Thoughts on the Mark Regnerus (2012) study, by Paul Amato

One year has passed since Mark Regnerus (2012) published a highly controversial article on the children of parents who have same-sex relationships. Given that time tends to improve one's perspective, this seems like a good time to reflect on the study and its aftermath.

#### *My involvement*

I worked for two days at the University of Texas as a consultant on the New Family Structures Study (NFSS). As I recall, seven consultants were at the meeting, along with a statistician from the survey research organization that later collected the data. I consulted primarily on sampling and measurement issues, and I was paid for two days of my time, plus travel expenses for myself (and my wife, who accompanied me). I charged for two days at my usual fee, which is \$150 per hour. So I earned about \$2,400. I received no further compensation after that.

About six months later, the editor of Social Science Research (SSR) asked me to review a manuscript written by Mark Regnerus. I informed the editor that I had worked as a paid consultant on the survey on which the manuscript was based. The editor said that he would like to have my views on the paper anyway, so I shared my views as honestly as I could.

This situation comes up now and then in my experience. When reviewing manuscripts for journals, I occasionally discover that I know the author and have some sort of relationship with the author or the study. In one case, for example, the author was a friend and colleague of mine, and I had read an earlier version of the paper and provided comments to the author. In this and every other case in which I have brought information like this to the editor's attention, the editor has asked me to do the review anyway. Journal editors often have a difficult time getting





reviews, and I assume they treat these reviews as one more data point. So the editor of SSR was doing what other editors do, as far as I know.

Was this particular case a conflict of interest for me? The American Sociological Association (ASA) defines a conflict of interest in the following manner:

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Conflicts of interest arise when sociologists' personal or financial interests prevent them from performing their professional work in an unbiased manner.

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With respect to the Regnerus manuscript, I had no personal or financial interest in whether the paper was published. So by this definition, there was not a conflict of interest. Of course, sometimes there is the *appearance* of a conflict of interest. In these cases, the ASA code states:

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Sociologists disclose relevant sources of financial support and relevant personal or professional relationships that may have the appearance of or potential for a conflict of interest...

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As noted earlier, I disclosed to the editor that I had worked as a paid consultant on the NFSS. I also disclosed my role as a paid consultant in the commentary that I wrote for the Regnerus article, which appeared in SSR. I never attempted to hide the fact that I was part of the team that consulted on survey design.

In retrospect, I understand that providing a review was not a good idea, because one should avoid even the hint of impropriety in matters like this. At the time, however, I simply felt that I was helping the editor and being a good colleague.

Contrary to the views of some (but not all) of my colleagues, I thought the Regnerus manuscript was worth publishing. My key recommendation, however, was that the editor should publish the paper with commentaries from authors who hold a variety of perspectives, including gay and lesbian scholars who had published in this area. I believed that the Regnerus paper, accompanied by a diverse set of commentaries, could represent a useful contribution to the literature on LGBT families. Unfortunately, the editor was unable to recruit any gay or lesbian scholars to contribute commentaries, so my idea for an exchange of views fell flat. (The subsequent issue of SSR devoted to the controversy came closer to what I had envisioned.)

#### *Almost everyone got it wrong*

When the study was published, criticism from the political left was swift and harsh. Unfortunately, some commentary devolved into ad hominem attacks, accusations of fraud, and name-calling. Rather than intellectually engage the findings, the goal of some critics was to thoroughly discredit the study—and the author. While they were at it, many critics also attacked the editor, the reviewers, the consultants, those who wrote commentaries—even the survey research firm that collected the data! Anyone with any form of contact with the study became an enemy of the people.

This is unfortunate, because the political left could have benefitted from a strategic appropriation of the findings. The study involved a national sample of young adults with an LGBT parent. As the study noted, few of these young adults spent long periods of time in households with two parents of the same sex. Instead, ~~few~~ <sup>many</sup> were born into heterosexual families that later broke up, presumably when one parent came out as gay or lesbian. Many of these youth went on to

experience a variety of other family structures before reaching adulthood. One out of seven spent time in foster care. Previous research shows that instability in the family of origin increases the risk of a variety of long-term social and psychological problems for offspring. Consistent with this research, young adults in the study had *modestly* elevated problem profiles. It is reasonable to conclude that the elevated number of problems observed in these young adults was due to family instability rather than the sexual orientation of parents. For this reason, most observers have noted correctly that this study contributes nothing to our understanding of how children fare when raised by same-sex parents in stable households

Rather than dismiss these findings as being irrelevant, however, it's useful to dig more deeply into the results. Why did these marriages end in divorce? More importantly, why did gays and lesbians wind up in heterosexual marriages in the first place? The explanation probably would go something like this: Like heterosexuals, many gays and lesbians wish to have families and raise children. But a generation ago, intolerance was the rule and discrimination against gays and lesbians was endemic. For many, forming heterosexual unions appeared to be the only way to achieve the dream of family and children. But these unions tended to be unstable, with problematic consequences for adults and children. Presumably, as our society becomes more accepting of LGBT families, the unfortunate circumstances of children and parents described in the Regnerus study will become less common. The freedom to marry, in particular, should increase stability in the lives of children with gay and lesbian parents.

In short, findings from the Regnerus study can be interpreted as strong evidence in support of same-sex marriage. The American Psychological Association and ASA research briefs emphasized the fact that almost all prior studies found no differences between children with heterosexual parents and children with gay or lesbian parents. The "no difference" perspective suggests that children will not be harmed by same-sex marriage. The lesson from the Regnerus study, however, is that children thrive on family stability, including children with gay and lesbian parents. We know that marriage tends to stabilize relationships, yet same-sex marriage is not allowed in most states. Given that children benefit from the stability provided by marriage, it is unfair and unkind to deny children the right to live with married parents. In contrast to the "no difference" perspective, a "family stability" perspective implies that we need to change our laws NOW to protect and benefit children.

If the political left missed an opportunity by failing to understand the full implications of the Regnerus study, the political right made even more serious blunders. Many conservative observers have cited the Regnerus study as if it provided evidence that being raised by gay or lesbian parents is harmful to children. This claim is disingenuous, because the study found no such thing. A noteworthy example came from Regnerus himself, who signed an amicus brief to the Supreme Court citing his study as evidence against same-sex marriage. This is curious because on page 766 in his 2012 article, Regnerus stated that his study was not intended to either affirm or undermine the legal right to same-sex marriage. And on page 768 of his response to the commentaries in the same issue, he stated that his data should not be used to press any political program. Given these cautious early statements, it is exasperating to see Regnerus later cite his own study as evidence against same-sex marriage.

#### *Concluding thoughts*

Many observers have argued that the Regnerus study should never have been published. It is important, however, to focus on what the study actually showed, and not on what people claim that it showed or wanted it to show. The study showed that family instability is not good for children, and many children with gay and lesbian parents, a generation ago, experienced a lot of family instability. It is not difficult to see how the personal problems of these families were affected by the restrictive social milieus in which they lived.



Since the Regnerus study was published, studies by Potter (2012) and Allen, Pakuluk, and Price (2013) have shown associations between having same-sex parents and child problems. Like the Regnerus paper, both of these articles survived the peer review process and, in fact, were published in top-tier social science journals. Rather than try to discredit these studies (and any future studies that may show similar results), it is better to examine the findings carefully and figure out what is going on. In fact, both studies are entirely consistent with the family stability perspective described earlier.

In conclusion, the political left discredited the Regnerus study without fully considering its findings, and the political right used the study disingenuously to further their political goals. Few people have focused thoughtfully on what the data actually show and what we can learn from the study. The controversy over the Regnerus study provides a sobering illustration of what can go wrong when ideology distorts social research.

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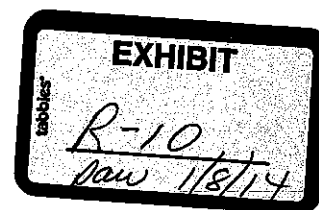
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Follow

Philip's followup comments



Nos. 12-144, 12-307

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IN THE  
**Supreme Court of the United States**

DENNIS HOLLINGSWORTH, ET AL., *Petitioners*,

v.

KRISTIN M. PERRY, ET AL., *Respondents*.

UNITED STATES, *Petitioner*,

v.

EDITH SCHLAIN WINDSOR, IN HER CAPACITY AS  
EXECUTOR OF THE ESTATE OF THEA CLARA SPYER,

and

BIPARTISAN LEGAL ADVISORY GROUP OF THE UNITED  
STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, *Respondents*.

*On Writs of Certiorari to the United States Court of  
Appeals for the Ninth and Second Circuits*

AMICI CURIAE BRIEF OF SOCIAL SCIENCE  
PROFESSORS IN SUPPORT OF  
HOLLINGSWORTH AND BIPARTISAN LEGAL  
ADVISORY GROUP ADDRESSING THE MERITS  
AND SUPPORTING REVERSAL

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**QUESTIONS PRESENTED**

*Hollingsworth, et al. v. Perry, et al.*

1. Whether the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment prohibits the State of California from defining marriage as the union of a man and a woman.

*United States v. Windsor, et al.*

1. Whether Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act, 1 U.S.C. § 7, violates the equal protection component of the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

QUESTIONS PRESENTED ..... i

TABLE OF CONTENTS ..... ii

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES ..... iv

INTEREST OF *AMICI CURIAE* ..... 1

SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT ..... 3

ARGUMENT ..... 5

I. Compelling Evidence Shows that Children  
Benefit from the Unique Parenting  
Contributions of Both Men and Women. .... 5

II. Children Raised By Gay and Lesbian Parents  
and Intact Biological Parents Is Empirically  
Undermined by Significant Methodological  
Limitations ..... 13

    A. The APA studies are based on small  
    sample sizes ..... 15

    B. on homogeneous samples ..... 17

    C. Most of the samples in the APA-cited  
    studies relied on non-random,  
    convenience sampling. .... 19

III. The Largest Population-Based Studies Do Not	
About Child Outcomes Among Same-Sex	
Parents .....	21
CONCLUSION .....	29

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

CASES

*Bowen v. Gilliard*,  
483 U.S. 587 (1987) ..... 5

*Lofton v. Secretary of the Department of Children  
and Family Services*,  
358 F.3d 804 (11th Cir. 2004) ..... 15

*Perry v. Schwarzenegger*,  
704 F. Supp. 2d 921 (N.D. Cal. 2010) ..... 7

OTHER AUTHORITIES

Douglas W. Allen et al.,  
*Nontraditional Families and Childhood  
Progress Through School: A Comment on  
Rosenfeld*,  
Demography, November 2012,  
<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13524-012-0169-x/fulltext.html> ..... 15, 28

Douglas W. Allen,  
*High School Graduation Rates Among  
Children of Same-Sex Households* (2012) ..... 23



- Paul R. Amato,  
*More Than Money? Men's Contributions to  
 Their Children's Lives?*,  
 in *Men in Families, When Do They Get  
 Involved? What Difference Does It Make?* 267  
 (1998) ..... 9
- Paul R. Amato & Fernando Rivera,  
*Paternal Involvement and Children's Behavior  
 Problems*,  
 61 *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 375  
 (1999) ..... 11
- Gunnar Anderson et al.,  
*The Demographics of Same-Sex Marriages In  
 Norway and Sweden*,  
 43 *Demography* 79 (2006) ..... 26
- Marilyn Coleman et al.,  
*Reinvestigating Remarriage: Another Decade  
 of Progress*,  
 62 *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 1288  
 (2000) ..... 16
- Scott Coltrane,  
*Family Man* 54 (1996) ..... 7
- Suzanne A. Denham et al.,  
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 Psychopathology* 23 (2000)..... 8-9

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*Sensitivity and Attachment: A Meta-Analysis  
on Parental Antecedents of Infant Attachment*,  
68 *Child Development* 571 (1997) ..... 7
- Greg Duncan & Jeanne Brooks-Gunn,  
*Consequences of Growing Up Poor* (1999) ..... 9
- Ruth Feldman,  
*Oxytocin and Social Affiliation In Humans*,  
61 *Hormones and Behavior* 380 (2012) ..... 6
- Mark V. Flinn et al.,  
*Fluctuating Asymmetry of Stepchildren*,  
20 *Evolution of Human Behavior* 465 (1999).... 16
- Norval D. Glenn,  
*The Struggle for Same-Sex Marriage*,  
41 *Society* 27 (2004) ..... 9, 21
- Colleen Hoff & Sean Beougher,  
*Sexual Agreements Among Gay Male Couples*,  
39 *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 774 (2010)..... 26
- Sandra L. Hofferth et al.,  
*The Demography of Fathers: What Fathers Do*,  
in *Handbook of Father Involvement:  
Multidisciplinary Perspectives* 81 (2002)..... 7
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Development*,  
18 *Human Development* 245 (1975) ..... 6

Robert Lerner & Althea K. Nagai,  
*No Basis: What the Studies Don't Tell Us  
 About Same-Sex Parenting* (Marriage Law  
 Project, 2001)..... 20

Laura Lott-Whitehead and Carol T. Tully,  
*The Family Lives of Lesbian Mothers,*  
 63 *Smith College Studies in Social Work* 275  
 (1993) ..... 18

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### INTEREST OF *AMICI CURIAE*<sup>1</sup>

*Amici* have studied and published on parental and household distinctions and their association with child and young-adult developmental outcomes. *Amici's* expertise in these fields would assist the

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<sup>1</sup> In Case No. 12-144, all parties granted blanket consent to the filing of *amicus curiae* briefs in support of either party or neither party, and in Case No. 12-307, the petitioner, United States of America, and Respondent Bipartisan Legal Advisory Group of the United States House of Representatives granted same; these consent letters are on file with the Clerk of the Court. The s written consent to the filing of this brief in Case No. 12-307 is filed contemporaneously. In accordance with Rule 37.6, *amicus curiae* states that no counsel for any party authored this brief in whole or in part, and that no counsel or party made a monetary contribution intended to fund the preparation or submission of this brief, and that no person or entity, other than *amicus curiae*, made a monetary contribution to the preparation or submission of this brief.



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### SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT

A persistent claim by those supporting same-sex outcomes of children raised by a biological mother and father and those who have been raised by two women or two men. That claim was made to the courts below, and will no doubt be made to this Court by associations like the American Psychological indicates, the claim is difficult to support because

involving non-random, non-representative samples, often with relatively few participants. Specifically, the vast majority of the studies were based on samples of fewer than 100 parents (or children), and typically representative only of well-educated, white women (parents), often with elevated incomes. These are hardly representative samples of the lesbian and gay population raising children, and therefore not a sufficient basis to make broad claims about child outcomes of same-sex parenting structures.

These and other methodological limitations make suspect. The claim also contradicts longstanding research asserting the view that the ideal environment for raising children is a stable biological mother and father. The science on comparative parenting structures is relatively new, especially that concerning same-sex households. Therefore, a claim that another parenting structure provides the same level of benefit should be rigorously tested and based on sound methodologies and representative samples.

Nearly all of the studies cited by the APA fail to meet those criteria.

Indeed, the only studies that were based on large, random, representative samples tended to reveal the opposite conclusion, finding significant differences in the outcomes of children raised by parents in a same-sex relationship and those raised by a married biological mother and father. What is clear is that much more study must be done on these questions. But there is no dispute that a biological mother and father provide, on average, an effective and proven environment for raising children. And it is reasonable to conclude that a mother and father function as a complementary parenting unit and that each tends to contribute something unique and beneficial to child development.

The State of California and the federal government thus have a rational interest in supporting that proven parenting structure by reserving the title and status of marriage to unions comprised of a man and a woman.

## ARGUMENT

### I. Compelling Evidence Shows that Children Benefit from the Unique Parenting Contributions of Both Men and Women.

It is a well-established and well-regarded household with only one biological parent are worse off, on average, than children who grow up in a household with both of their biological parents . . .

Sara McLanahan & Gary Sandefur, *Growing Up With a Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps* 1 (1994); see also Wendy D. Manning & Kathleen A. Lamb, *Adolescent Well-Being in Cohabiting, Married, & Single-Parent Families*, 65 *J. Marriage & Family Therapy* 105 (1999). The advantage of marriage appears to exist primarily when the child is the

Anderson Moore, et al, *Marriage from a Child's Perspective*, Child Trends Research Brief at 1-2 . . . but the presence of two biological parents that

Indeed, a few decades ago Justice William Brennan recognized what was likely considered a very unremarkable proposition when he stated that

*Bowen v. Gilliard*, 483 U.S. 587, 614 (1987) (Brennan, J. dissenting). Experts have long contended that both mothers and fathers make unique contributions to parenting. As sociologist David Popenoe explains,

idea that gender-differentiated parenting is important for human development and that the contribution of fathers to childrearing is unique and

*Life Without Father: Compelling New Evidence that Fatherhood & Marriage are Indispensable for the Good of Children & Society*

expert, Professor Michael Lamb, advocated that same view prior to his advocacy for same-sex marriage,

crucial and qualitatively different roles in the *Fathers: Forgotten Contributors to Child Development*, 18 Human Dev. 245, 246 (1975).

Current research on the psycho-social development of children continues to affirm that the complementarity of an intact family, with a mother and a father serving unique relational roles, is

*See, e.g.,* Ruth Feldman, *Oxytocin and Social Affiliation In Humans*, 61 *Hormones & Behav.* 380-391 (2012) (noting the different roles that mothers and fathers play across species, the importance of those differences to human development, and suggesting that human oxytocin systems may account for the different yet complementary maternal and paternal functions). Indeed, in his testimony in the Proposition 8 trial below, Dr. Lamb admitted he had previously stated that men and women are not

differences between maternal and paternal behavior

biological gender or sex roles, than to either their degree of involvement in infant care or their attitudes regarding the desirability of paternal

*Perry v.*  
*Schwarzenegger*, 704 F. Supp. 2d 921 (N.D. Cal. 2010), trial transcript at 1064 & 1068.

deal of scholarship on the distinct ways in which separate maternal and paternal contributions promote positive child development outcomes. For example, distinctive maternal contributions are numerous and significant. The natural biological responsiveness of a mother to her infant fosters critical aspects of neural development and capabilities for interactivity in the infant brain.<sup>2</sup> Mothers are also able to extract the maximum return on the temporal investments of both parents in a two-parent home because mothers provide critical direction for fathers on routine caretaking activities, particularly those involving infants and toddlers. See Sandra L. Hofferth et al., *The Demography of Fathers: What Fathers Do*, in Handbook of Father Involvement: Multidisciplinary Perspectives 81 (Catherine Tamis-Lamonda & Natasha Cabrera eds., 2002); Scott Coltrane, *Family Man* 54 (1996). This

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<sup>2</sup> See C.A. Nelson & M. Bosquet, *Neurobiology of Fetal and Infant Development: Implications for Infant Mental Health*, in Handbook of Infant Mental Health 37-59, (C.H. Zeanah Jr. ed., 2d ed. 2000); M. DeWolff & M. van Ijzendoorn, *Sensitivity and Attachment: A Meta-Analysis on Parental Antecedents of Infant Attachment*, 68 Child Dev. 571-91 (1997); M. Main & J. Solomon, *Discovery of an Insecure-Disorganized Disoriented Attachment Pattern*, in Affective Development in Infancy 95-124 (T.B. Brazelton & M.W. Yogman eds., 1986).

direction is needed in part because fathers do not share equally in the biological and hormonal interconnectedness that develops between a mother and a child during pregnancy, delivery, and lactation.

In comparison to fathers, mothers generally maintain more frequent and open communication and enjoy greater emotional closeness with their children, in turn fostering a sense of security in children with respect to the support offered by the family structure. Ross D. Parke, *Fatherhood 7* (Developing Child Series, Jerome Bruner et al. eds.,

predictable, interactive, and geared toward joint problem-solving, which helps children to feel comfortable in the world they inhabit. Eleanor Maccoby, *The Two Sexes* 266-67 (1998)<sup>3</sup>; see also Parke, *supra* at 5. Mothers also impose more limits and tend to discipline more frequently, albeit with greater flexibility when compared with fathers. Maccoby, *supra* at 273.

Mothers also uniquely play a greater role in cultivating the language and communication skills of their children. Parke, *supra* at 6. Mothers help children to understand their own feelings and respond to the feelings of others, in part by encouraging open discussion of feelings and emotions within the family unit. See Suzanne A. Denham et al., *Prediction of Externalizing Behavior Problems*

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<sup>3</sup> Professor Maccoby, who is a distinguished feminist psychologist at Stanford University and who championed the idea that sex differences were caused only by socialization, is now acknowledging the importance of biology in explaining sex differences in parenting. Maccoby, *supra* at 314.

*From Early to Middle Childhood: The Role of Parental Socialization and Emotion Expression*, in *Development and Psychopathology* 23-45 (2000); Maccoby, *supra* at 272. Active maternal influence and input is vital to the breadth and depth of

in connecting children to friends and extended family. Paul R. Amato, *More Than Money? Men's Contributions to Their Children's Lives?*, in *Men in Families, When Do They Get Involved? What Difference Does It Make?* 267 (Alan Booth & Ann C. Crouter eds., 1998).

Fathers also make distinctive contributions to the upbringing of their children, and positive paternal contributions play a key role in avoiding a variety of negative outcomes that arise with greater frequency in homes where a father is not present. Having a father is associated with an increase in positive outcomes for children in domains such as education, physical health, and the avoidance of juvenile delinquency. McLanahan & Sandefur, *supra* (1994); Greg Duncan & Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, *Consequences of Growing Up Poor* (1999). As Professor Norval

for believing that both fathers and mothers are important, and the huge amount of evidence of relatively poor average outcomes among fatherless children makes it seem unlikely that these outcomes are solely the result of the correlates of

Norval D. Glenn, *The Struggle for Same-Sex Marriage*



Fathers engage proactively in spontaneous play with their fathers . . . quickly learn that biting, kicking, and other forms of physical violence are not *supra* at 144. A study conducted by developmental psychologist Daniel Paquette found that fathers are also more likely to supervise children at play while refraining from

*The Risky Situation: A Procedure for Assessing the Father-Child Activation Relationship*, 180 *Early Childhood Dev. & Care* 33-50 (2010).<sup>4</sup> Boys who do not regularly experience the love, discipline, and modeling of a good father are more likely to engage in

they reject and denigrate all that is feminine and instead seek to prove their masculinity by engaging in domineering and violent behavior. Popenoe, *supra* at 157.

Paternal modes of play activity are only one example of the ways in which fathers encourage their children to take risks. Compared to mothers, fathers are more likely to encourage children to try new things and to embrace novel situations and challenges. *See* Parke, *supra* at 6. One study summarized this aspect of paternal input and conveyed the feeling that they can rely on their

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<sup>4</sup> *See* <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/37741738> (last visited January 25, 2012).

differentiation from the family and consolidation of

Klein, *Distinctive Role of the Father in Adolescent Separation-Individuation*, 62 *New Dir. Child & Adolesc. Dev.* 41, 53 (1993).

Fathers also tend to utilize a different discipline style than mothers, in that they discipline with less frequency, but greater predictability and less flexibility in terms of deviating from pre-determined consequences for particular behavior. *See* Thomas G. Powers et al., *Compliance and Self-Assertion: Young Children's Responses to Mothers Versus Fathers*, 30 *Dev. Psychol.* 980-89 (1994). Children respond differently to paternal discipline, and are comparatively more likely to resist maternal commands and comply with paternal requests. Maccoby, *supra* at 274-75. This may be one reason why a number of studies have found that paternal influence and involvement plays an outsized role in preventing adolescent boys from breaking the law, and lowering the odds that a teenage girl will become pregnant. *See, e.g.*, Paul R. Amato & Fernando Rivera, *Paternal Involvement and Children's Behavior Problems*, 61 *J. Marriage & Fam.* 375-84 (1999) (finding that paternal involvement is linked to lower levels of delinquency and criminal activity, even after controlling for maternal involvement); Mark D. Regnerus & Laura B. Luchies, *The Parent-Child Relationship and Opportunities for Adolescents' First Sex*, 27 *J. Fam. Issues* 159-83 (2006) (study of 2000 adolescents noted that father-daughter relationship, rather than mother-daughter relationship, was an important predictor of whether

and when adolescent girls transitioned to sexual activity); *see also* W. Brad Wilcox, et al., *Why Marriage Matters: Twenty-Six Conclusions from the Social Sciences*, 14, 22-23 (3d ed. 2011) (discussing evidence suggesting that female sexual development is slowed by early childhood exposure to pheromones of biological father, and accelerated by regular early childhood exposure to pheromones of adult male who

As President Obama has noted:

grow up without a father are five times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime; nine times more likely to drop out of schools, and twenty times more likely to end up in prison. They are more likely to have behavioral problems, or run away from home or become teenage parents themselves. And the foundations of our community are weaker because of it.

Barack Obama, Statement at Apostolic Church of God (June 15, 2008)<sup>5</sup>; *see also* James Q. Wilson, *The Marriage Problem*  
scientific evidence seems clearly to support the view

In sum, a substantial body of evidence exists documenting that both mothers and fathers make  
sex parenting structures, by definition, exclude either

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<sup>5</sup>*Available at*  
[http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2008/06/obamas\\_speech\\_on\\_fatherhood.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2008/06/obamas_speech_on_fatherhood.html) (last visited January 25, 2013).

a mother or a father. Certainly same-sex couples, like other parenting structures, can make quality and successful efforts in raising children. That is not in question. But the social science evidence, especially evidence founded on conclusions from population-based samples, suggests that there remain unique advantages to a parenting structure consisting of both a mother and a father, political interests to the contrary notwithstanding. Therefore it remains rational for government to provide distinctive recognition and incentive to that proven parenting structure through the status of marriage.

## II.

### Children Raised By Gay and Lesbian Parents and Intact Biological Parents Is Empirically Undermined by Significant Methodological Limitations.

Decades of study on various other parenting structures yield the near uniform conclusion that a biological mother and father provide optimal child outcomes. Mark Regnerus, *How Different Are the Adult Children of Parents Who Have Same-Sex Relationships? Findings from the New Family Structures Study*, 41 Soc. Sci. Research 752, 763 (2012) [hereinafter *How Different?*]. So the claim that another parenting relationship produces child outcomes just as good as (or even better than) intact biological parents is a surprising proposition, to say the least, and one that must be rigorously tested (and until then, viewed with healthy suspicion).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Although outcomes of children raised by adoptive parents are often positive, outcomes for those children are not typically as positive as children raised by biological parents in an intact

A closer examination of the studies purporting to show no difference between same-sex parenting and parenting by biological parents suggests that they cannot bear the weight that advocates place on them. Most striking is that all but one failed to involve a large, random, representative sample of the population. While this can be attributed to the fact that such a sample is difficult to locate randomly, it nevertheless ought to raise concern when they are used to support broad public policy changes, like those at issue in this case. In short, it is faulty to with such thin support.

The Eleventh Circuit has recognized these limitations in the research on gay and lesbian methodologies and conclusions, such as the use of small, self-selected samples; reliance on self-report instruments; politically driven hypotheses; and the use of unrepresentative study populations consisting

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marriage, despite the rigorous screening process that adoption entails. Regnerus, *How Different?*, *supra*

and consistently revealed important and wide-ranging differences, on average, between adopted children and biological ones. In fact, these differences have been so pervasive and consistent that adoption experts now emphasize that is critical for both parents and

(citing Brent Miller et al., *Comparisons of Adopted and Non-Adopted Adolescents In A Large, Nationally Representative Sample*, 71 Child Dev. 1458 (2000)).

*Lofton v. Sec'y of the Dep't of Children and Family Servs.*, 358 F.3d 804, 825 (11th Cir. 2004).

A. The APA studies are based on small sample sizes.

Most of the studies that the APA relies on to

small, non-representative, convenience samples of fewer than 100 participants. *Same-Sex Parenting and Children's Outcomes: A Closer Examination of the American Psychological Association's Brief on Lesbian and Gay Parenting*, 41 Soc. Sci. Res. 735, 736-38 (2012); see also Douglas W. Allen et al., *Nontraditional Families and Childhood Progress Through School: A Comment on Rosenfeld*, Demography November 2012, <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13524-012->

considerable research on the effect of family structure on child outcomes, almost none of the research using nationally representative samples has included same-sex parents as

The hallmark of a rigorous study is a large, representative pool of participants drawn from a population-based random sample. Regnerus, *How Different?*, *supra* at 754 (2012). Indeed, it is very difficult to draw reliable conclusions from the data used in small samples because the conclusions from such limited studies cannot be confidently extrapolated to the general population and the risk of erroneously attributing statistical insignificance to between-group comparisons (that is, mistakenly concluding there are no differences between groups) is high. Marks, *supra*

matched samples, as a variety of studies have done, fails to mitigate the challenge of locating statistically-significant differences when the sample size is small. This is a concern in all social science, but one that is doubly important when there may be motivation to confirm the null hypothesis (that is, that there are in fact no statistically-significant

*How*

*Different?, supra at 754.*

Because of the small sample sizes in these studies, expected differences in children raised by biological and non-biological parents could not be measured in a meaningful way. For example, it is well established that having a stepfather in the home tends on average to result in less optimal child outcomes. Mark V. Flinn et al., *Fluctuating Asymmetry of Stepchildren*, 20 *Evol. Hum. Behav.* e absence of a genetic relationship between stepchildren and stepparents

including specific behaviors that affect nutrition, sleep routines, hygiene, medical attention, work loads, instruction, comforting, protection and so

Coleman et al., *Reinvestigating Remarriage: Another Decade of Progress*, 62 *J. Marriage & Fam.* 1288,

stepchildren were similar to children living with single mothers on the preponderance of outcome measures and that step-children generally were at a greater risk for problems than were children living

parent. But because of the small sample sizes of same-sex parents represented in the studies (and especially of gay fathers), these outcome differences have not often surfaced (or even been evaluated), raising additional questions about the reliability of the studies purporting to show no differences. Alternately, comparisons are most often made between children in heterosexual stepfamilies and those in gay unions, which overlook the general consensus about the importance of two biological connections to begin with.

Even one of the larger studies that the APA cites, but does not discuss, showed significant outcome differences between children raised by same-sex parents and those raised by biological parents in an

that children of married couples are more likely to do well at school in academic and social terms, than

Marks, *supra* at 742-43 (quoting S. Sarantokas, *Children In Three Contexts: Family, Education, and Social Development*, 21 *Children Australia* 23 (1996),

puzzling de-emphasis of it).

homogeneous samples.

Not only are most of the studies claiming no differences in same-sex parenting based on small sample sizes, they also tend to draw upon privileged lesbian mothers

*supra* at 739. For example, many of the studies cited by the



APA include no minorities with samples predominantly composed of white, well-educated, middle- to upper-class women. *Id.* at 738. As one

small and biased toward well-educated, white women with high incomes. These factors have plagued other [same-sex parenting] studies, and remain a concern

*Id.* (quoting Laura Lott-Whitehead and Carol T. Tully, *The Family Lives of Lesbian Mothers*, 63 *Smith Coll. Studies Soc. Work* 275 (1993)); *see also* C.J. Patterson, *Children of Lesbian and Gay Parents*, 63 *Child Dev.* 1025, 1029

communities, both in the United States and abroad, samples of children [and parents] have been relatively homogenous . . . . Samples for which demographic information was reported have been described as predominantly Caucasian, well-

And very few of the APA-cited studies on same-sex parenting analyzed the outcomes of children raised by gay fathers. Only eight of the fifty-nine cited studies included gay fathers, and only four of those included a heterosexual comparison group. Marks, *supra*

not considered developmental outcomes for children brought up from birth by single gay men or gay male couples (planned gay father families), possibly because of the difficulty of locating an adequate

*Lesbian Mothers, Gay Fathers and Their Children: A Review*, 26 *Dev. & Behav. Pediatr.* 224, 225 (2005).

C. Most of the samples in the APA-cited studies relied on non-random, convenience sampling.

It is not surprising that the samples in these studies are so homogenous, given that most of the people in them were recruited by use of non-random, convenience (snowball) sampling. Regnerus, *How Different?*, *supra* at 753 (2012). For example, one data-collection effort that has been the subject of at least 19 different peer-reviewed publications to date

*Id.* This method of recruitment was common among the APA-cited studies. *Id.*

to generalize the findings of such a specific subgroup to the general population. *Id.* (quoting Tom A. Snijders, *Estimation on the Basis of Snowball Samples*, 36 Bulletin de Methodologie Sociologique 59 (1992)).

garnered from people who have a great deal in common with each other, how well their findings characterize a broader population of gay families

researchers examining same-sex parenting have repeatedly selected small, non-representative, homogeneous samples of privileged lesbian mothers *supra* at 739; see also Walter R. Schumm, *What Was Really Learned From Tasker & Golombok's (1995) Study of Lesbian & Single Parent Mothers?*, 95 Psych. Reports

interpreting research on homosexual issues and be wary of outcomes when samples are very small and often nonrandom, so the null hypothesis is not rejected but is used for political purposes as if a

research has likewise found that studies purporting to show no difference between children raised by same-sex couples and those raised by married mothers and fathers share these significant limitations.<sup>7</sup>

If these studies were being employed to shed light on the outcomes of children raised by highly educated and affluent middle to upper class white women, their conclusions would have merit. But the studies ought not be generalized to the childhood and adolescent experiences of the wide spectrum of gay and lesbian parents, since gay and lesbian parents are, in reality, economically, racially, and socially far more diverse than those studies imply.

The issue is further complicated by the political widespread support for same-sex marriage among social and behavioral scientists, it is becoming politically incorrect in academic circles even to

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<sup>7</sup> One of the most extensive critiques of the research was offered by Professor Steven Lowell Nock of the University of Virginia. Nock Aff., *Halpern v. Attorney General of Canada*, Case No. 684/00 (Ontario Sup. Ct. Justice 2001), available at [http://marriagelaw.cua.edu/Law/cases/Canada/ontario/halpern/aff\\_nock.pdf](http://marriagelaw.cua.edu/Law/cases/Canada/ontario/halpern/aff_nock.pdf). See also Glenn, *supra* at 26-27; Schumm, *supra* at 423; Robert Lerner & Althea K. Nagai, *No Basis: What the Studies Don't Tell Us About Same-Sex Parenting* (Marriage Law Project, 2001).

suggest that arguments being used in support of  
*supra* at  
25; see also Judith Stacey & Timothy Biblarz, (*How*)  
*Does the Sexual Orientation of Parents Matter?*, 66  
psychologists who are sympathetic to lesbian/gay

Given such limitations characteristic of a youthful domain of inquiry, the vast majority of the studies relied upon by the APA for its general claim that there is no difference in outcomes of children raised by gay and lesbian parents and those raised by heterosexual parents are poorly poised to address the broad propositions asserted in this case.

### III. The Largest Population-Based Studies Do Not About Child Outcomes Among Same-Sex Parents.

Recent research using larger, randomly selected, nationally representative samples suggests that there are significant differences in the outcomes of children raised by parents who have had a same-sex relationship and children raised by intact biological parents. This research, called the New Family Structures Study (NFSS), was conducted on young adults with a very large sample size of nearly 3,000 participants, which comprised a racially, socioeconomically, and geographically diverse group that reflects the diversity noted in demographic mappings of the gay and lesbian population in

America. Regnerus, *How Different?*, *supra* at 755, 757. The study surveyed adults aged 18-39 who

relationship behavior, which occurred as recently as a few years ago or as far back as 30 or more years.<sup>8</sup> Among that sample, 175 people reported living with a mother who was (and may still be) in a same-sex romantic relationship, and 73 who had reported living with a father who had been in a same-sex romantic relationship.

outcomes (as reported by the adult children in the study rather than by those who raised them) among various groups, including married biological parents, stepparents, single parents, and parents who had been in a same-sex romantic relationship, among

children who grew up in biologically (still) intact, mother-father families, the children of women who reported a same-sex relationship look markedly different on numerous outcomes, including many that are obviously suboptimal (such as education,

*Id.* at 764. Specifically, some of the statistically significant differences where adult children who reported living in a household with their mother and

for mother in a lesbian relationship) fared worse than

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them many who witnessed a failed heterosexual union.

intact biological family) included:

- cohabitation (9% of the IBF and 27% of the MLR group),
- receiving welfare while growing up (17% of the IBF and 70% of the MLR group),
- currently receiving public assistance (10% of the IBNF and 49% of the MLR group),
- current full-time employment status (49% of the IBF and 17% of the MLR group),
- current unemployment (8% of the IBF and 40% of the MLR group),
- having an affair while married or cohabitating (13% of the IBF and 38% of the MLR group),
- having been touched sexually by a parent or other adult caregiver (2% of the IBF and 26% of the MLR group), and
- having been forced to have sex against their will (8% of the IBF and 27% of the MLR group).

Mark Regnerus, *Parental Same-Sex Relationships, Family Instability, and Subsequent Life Outcomes for Adult Children: Answering Critics of the New Family Structures Study with Additional Analysis*, 41 Soc. Sci. Res. 1367, 1372-74 (2012) [hereinafter *Parental Same-Sex Relationships*]; see also Douglas W. Allen, *High School Graduation Rates Among Children of Same-Sex Households* at 4 (2012) (unpublished manuscript, on file with Department of Economics, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada) (analyzing Canadian census data to find that children raised by gay and lesbian parents are

much less likely to graduate from high school compared to children raised by a married mother and father).

Because of the smaller sample size for fathers who have had gay relationships, there were not as many significant findings as compared to mothers who have had lesbian relationships. However, adult children of fathers who are or have been in a same-

raised by intact biological parents] to smoke, have been arrested, pled guilty to non-minor offenses, and

*How*

*Different?, supra*

that the study is not poised to assess causation or definitively answer political questions. Indeed, the suboptimal outcomes may not be due to the sexual orientation or sexual behavior of the parent. Rather, the author simply asserts that the groups display numerous, notable distinctions, the exact sources of which would be difficult if not impossible to adequately sequester.

When the NFSS-based study was released in summer 2012, it initiated much heated discussion about same-sex parenting, and encountered widespread criticism and a level of scrutiny unusual for a published sociological study based on nationally-representative data. Regnerus, *Parental Same-Sex Relationships, supra* at 1367. One of the most frequent criticisms by supporters of same-sex

of stably intact biological parents with both adult children whose mother or father left a heterosexual

union for a same-sex one, and the rare scenarios in which children were raised consistently and stably in a same-sex household. *Id.*

stability is a key asset for households with children, then it is sensible to use intact biological families in *Id.* at 1368. Indeed, part of the problem of nearly all previous studies is that they seldom included a married biological family control group. *Id.* at 1368-69. Second, the fact that most of the same-sex households were at some point unstable raises the question of whether stable same-sex households were genuinely undercounted in the study, or whether same-sex relationships were more short-lived. *Id.* The last scenario is possible, if not probable, given other research on the comparative volatility of lesbian relationships.

A study of Norwegian and Swedish same-sex marriages notes that divorce risk is higher in same-sex marriages and that the

actually is more than twice that for male

risk of divorce as did more recent unions, suggesting no notable variation in instability over time as a function of new law or pent-up demand among more stable, longstanding relationships. The study authors estimate that in Sweden, 30% of female marriages are likely to end in



divorce within 6 years of formation, compared with 20% for male marriages and 13% for heterosexual ones.

*Id.* at 1370 (emphasis added) (quoting Gunnar Anderson et al., *The Demographics of Same-Sex Marriages In Norway and Sweden*, 43 *Demography* 79, 89 (2006)). Other studies show similar instability, especially among lesbian couples. *Id.* relationships appear more stable than lesbian relationships, they are less likely to be monogamous. *Id.* (citing Colleen Hoff & Sean Beougher, *Sexual Agreements Among Gay Male Couples*, 39 *Arch. Sex. Beh.* 774 (2010)).

An important, unanswered question then is whether the NFSS-based study randomly undercounted stable same-sex parenting relationships, or whether its small number of such stable relationships (a) was a product of an earlier era exhibiting a poorer social climate for same-sex households, or (b) reflects possible greater instability in same-sex parenting relationships, thus limiting their easy location via random sampling. Whatever the answer, and it is empirically unknown, what is clear is that there remains much to be studied in this

study author indicated,

Perhaps in social reality there are really

heterosexual stably-coupled household and

but no population-based sample analysis is

yet able to *consistently confirm wide evidence* of the latter. Moreover, a stronger burden of proof than has been employed to date ought to characterize studies which

of longstanding reliance on nonrandom samples of unknown bias and the high risk of making [significant] errors in small-sample studies. Simply put, the science here is young. Until much larger random samples can be drawn and evaluated, the probability-based evidence that exists suggests that the biologically-intact two-parent household remains an optimal setting for long-term flourishing of children.

*Id.* at 1377 (citations omitted); *see also* Walter R. Schumm, *Methodological Decisions and the Evaluation of Possible Effects of Different Family Structures on Children: The New Family Structures Survey*, 41 Soc. Sci. Research 1357-66 (2012) (validating methodological decisions made in New Family Structures Study, and noting similar decisions in other large-scale surveys).

Other population-based studies have similarly identified better outcomes for children raised by a biological mother and father than other parenting structures. In his assessment of group differences in academic progress through school, Rosenfeld noted no differences in school progress for children raised by same-sex parents. Michael J. Rosenfeld, *Nontraditional Families and Childhood Progress Through School*, 47 Demography 755 (2010).

However, a reanalysis of his high-quality, Census-couples, not just those who were residentially stable raised by same-sex couples are 35% less likely to

Allen et al., *supra* strikingly different from those of the original

conclusion may be a result of dropping more unstable households from his analytic sample. While the Census is optimal for a comparison of same-sex and opposite-sex couples, it is not poised to assess the households of gay or lesbian single parents, since the Census does not ask questions about sexual orientation.

Indeed, no existing study yet bears the ability to randomly compare large numbers of children raised by gay couples with the same among heterosexual couples over a long period of time. The social science of same-sex parenting structures remains young, and subject to significant limitations about what can be known, given that the influence of household structures and experiences on child outcomes is not a topic for experimental research design. But those analyses that employ large, population-based samples continue to document differences, in contrast to contrary scholarly claims. With so many significant outstanding questions about whether children develop as well in same-sex households as in opposite-sex households, it remains prudent for government to continue to recognize marriage as a union of a man and a woman, thereby promoting

what is known to be an ideal environment for raising children.

### CONCLUSION

Marriage is the legal means by which children are stably united with their biological mothers and fathers and poised for optimal development. Opposite-sex parenting allows children to benefit from distinctive maternal and paternal contributions. Given these facts, safeguarding marriage is a liberty to be accorded to children at least as much as to their parents.

Thus, Amici respectfully request that the Court reverse the Ninth Circuit and the Second Circuit decisions.

Respectfully submitted,

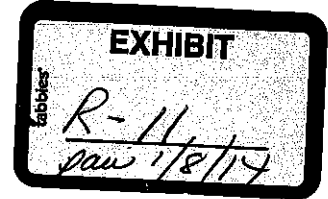
Abram J. Pafford  
*Counsel of Record*  
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(202) 756-4886  
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January 29, 2013

0137

9:02:50 A.M. Eastern Daylight Time, regnerus@prc.utexas.edu writes:

conservative.



[mailto: [REDACTED]]

9/22/2010 7:03:07 AM

Next Steps

...take charge plan to spend what we ought to, nothing less nothing more, and just give me a  
...up, as we begin to understand costs we will draw up a budget; we will include some money for  
...and Brad on account of the time and effort you will be devoting to this. We are not lavish but we do  
pay....

In a message dated 9/22/2010 9:02:50 A.M. Eastern Daylight Time, [REDACTED] writes:

Got it; thanks, Luis, and Brad. I think it'll work well. Will keep you in the loop. I have a light teaching  
load all this year, which is a significant help. Providential, perhaps. And I'll put [REDACTED] onto some  
of this stuff--is very capable.

Mark

From: [REDACTED] [mailto:[REDACTED]]  
Sent: Wed 9/22/2010 7:56 AM  
To: [REDACTED] Mark Regnerus  
Subject: Re: Next Steps

This all seems reasonable; Mark there is flexibility here and you should feel free to weigh in as to  
what is best in a given issue including the timing. Naturally we would like to move along as expeditiously  
as possible but experience suggests we ought not get hung up with deadlines, do what is right and best,  
move on it, don't dilly dolly, etc....It would be great to have this before major decisions of the Supreme  
Court but that is secondary to the need to do this and do it well....I would like you to take ownership and  
think of how would you want it done...rather than someone like me dictating parameters....but of course,  
here to help. Luis

In a message dated 9/21/2010 11:33:06 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time [REDACTED] writes:

Dear Mark:

This sounds right on target. My thoughts in CAPS. Thanks, Brad

On Sep 21, 2010, at 6:27 PM, Mark Regnerus wrote:

- > Brad,
- >
- > OK, so let me process some of this. I need to have my stuff together before I approach Mark  
Hayward, perhaps early next week if I'm clear about things.
- >
- > Tell me if any of these aren't correct
- >
- > 1. We want to run this project through UT's PRC. I'm presuming 10% overhead is acceptable to

RE: NFSS update

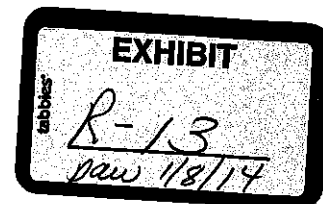
Page 1 of 4

**RE: NFSS update**

Regnerus, Mark

Sent: Tuesday, February 07, 2012 8:36 PM

To: Paul Amato [pamato@la.psu.edu]



Hi Paul,

Thanks very much for this--I'll check it out.

Mark

---

**From:** Paul Amato [pamato@la.psu.edu]

**Sent:** Tuesday, February 07, 2012 11:05 AM

**To:** Regnerus, Mark

**Subject:** RE: NFSS update

Hi Mark,

I came across an article that definitely will be of interest to you. This article is "in press" with JMF, accepted but not yet published. The author wrote the paper last year as a graduate student and recently submitted it to me for consideration for an ASA Family Section award. The author is a little protective of the manuscript, but he gave me permission to share it with you. I'm not sure if you want or need to cite it, given that it is not yet published. But if you want to cite it, please contact the author first.

Cheers, Paul

RE: NFSS update

Regnerus, Mark

to: Paul Amato

02/02/2012 01:07 PM

From: "Regnerus, Mark" <regnerus@pro.utexas.edu>

To: Paul Amato <pamato@la.psu.edu>

Hi Paul,

Sure, the full, final data and codebook is yours whenever you want it, starting in about six weeks. As soon as I receive it. For the curious, I was totally fine to send out a 95% finished version now.

About the manuscript, I'm happy to send it to you; it's attached. First, some background: I approached Jim

RE: NFSS update

Wright at Soc Sci Res in December and asked him if he'd consider both reviewing the overview manuscript (on group differences on 40 outcomes), and if he'd be speedy about it. I asked him because I know he was a friend of Steve Nock's and published your letter about him. Basically, this is my one chance at getting a peer-reviewed journal article that could, maybe be released online before the report. As I did the data analyses of earlier data editions in Nov/Dec, I realized that the report may well bring me trouble, professionally, and at that point I thought if I could squeeze out a peer-reviewed article instead/first, that would be nice, would limit criticism (at least a bit). But it's a risk I chose to take when I signed up to run the project--that I would tell what the data say. And I'm fine with that. Just want to be rigorous.

So...Jim asked for a long list of who I thought would be a fair reviewer, and I listed you among 12-15 others. I didn't want to compromise your (possible) willingness to review it by shopping the ms around early, although with SSR it's only half-blind anyway. I thought about shopping it around widely for more advice, but if it's to have a chance at being released prior to the report, time is pretty important. I've already delayed the report from February (this month, way back when) to late Spring, to mid-late Summer.

I'm sure your curiosity is even more piqued now. Please do not circulate the ms, though. I think it's reasonable, balanced, not flawless, and I'm flexible in how I talk about the different groups. But the reality of the numbers isn't going anywhere, regardless of how I talk about the same-sex relationship groups (esp the women). And that's in part why I'm putting it in the journal queue, even though the data collection isn't fully done. I can't see how it would change things. I'll update the tables after the final version comes in.

Your feedback on it is welcome, of course, if you want to give it. And I'd hope that if you're asked to review it, you would consider doing so. I think you're one of the fairest, level-headed scholars out there in this domain.

yours,  
Mark

---

From: Paul Amato [pamato@la.psu.edu]  
Sent: Thursday, February 02, 2012 11:09 AM  
To: Regnerus, Mark  
Subject: RE: NFSS update

Hi Mark,

Thanks for the update and the invitation.

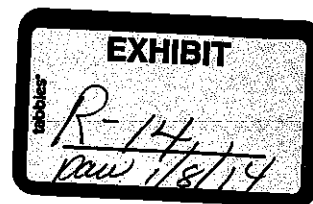
I'm not certain that I will use the data, although there is a strong possibility. But I probably won't need it for the next few months. That's because my research agenda already is pretty full.

If I wait, will I be able to get access to the ultimate (rather than the penultimate) data set later this year?

Also, are you willing to let others have a look at your manuscript now, or would you prefer to wait until it's been peer reviewed? As you can imagine, I'm curious to know what you found.

Thanks again Mark.

The University of Texas at Austin  
Population Research Center  
New Family Structure Study



A REQUEST FOR FUNDING PREPARED FOR  
THE LYNDE AND HARRY BRADLEY FOUNDATION

Submitted by:

Luis E. Tellez

President

The Witherspoon Institute

16 Stockton Street

Princeton, NJ 08540

Phone: 609-688-8779

Fax: 609-688-1027



[www.wlnst.org](http://www.wlnst.org)

Introduction and Executive Summary



April 5, 2011

Dr. Dan Schmidt  
The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation  
The Lion House  
1241 North Franklin Place  
Milwaukee, WI 53202-2901

Dear Dan:

Pursuant to our telephone conversation, enclosed please find a proposal from The Witherspoon Institute concerning a sociological research project called the New Family Structure Study (NFSS). The NFSS is being undertaken by the Population Research Center of the University of Texas at Austin. Appended to the proposal is a dossier of important pieces of correspondence documenting the relationship between The Witherspoon Institute and the Population Research Center. The Center has requested that The Witherspoon Institute work with it in raising the necessary funds, and given the importance of the project, the Institute has committed to doing so, with Dr. Mark Rognerus's assistance. We are quite sure that if we do not intervene, the project will not be funded in a timely fashion. And this is a project where time is of the essence.

In our proposal, we request an outright grant of \$ 200,000 from the Bradley Foundation. We are also hopeful that the foundation will lend assistance as the Institute and the Population Research Center work to raise additional funds from other foundations. The Bradley Foundation has already supported the planning stage of the NFSS through its Grant 20100789 issued to The Witherspoon Institute toward the larger project on "Marriage and Sexual Ethics: Strengthening Marriage Scholarship and the Witness of Family Scholars in the Public Square." All of the funds from that grant were applied to the NFSS. Now a more substantial gift is being sought to carry the project beyond its planning stages.

The NFSS will be the first scientifically sound study to examine whether young adults raised by same-sex parents fare as well as those raised in different familial settings.

This is the question that must now be answered—in a scientifically serious way—by those who are in favor of traditional marriage. In courts, in legislatures, and in the media, the proponents of same-sex marriage continually buttress their position by pointing to a handful of previous studies

on this question. Those small studies purport to show that children from same-sex families fare no differently than those raised by married mothers and fathers.

The problem is that those studies are deeply flawed. Not only that, but many previous studies have led to the conclusion that children thrive best when they are raised by a married mother and father.

Until someone sponsors proper research comparing such families to those headed by gay and lesbian couples, these flawed studies will continue to lend credibility to the same-sex-marriage movement, simply because there are still no other studies that address this question.

As you know, the future of the institution of marriage at this moment is very uncertain. It is essential that the necessary data be gathered to settle the question in the forum of public debate about what kinds of family arrangement are best for society. That is what the NFSS is designed to do. Our first goal is to seek the truth, whatever that may turn out to be. Nevertheless, we are confident that the traditional understanding of marriage will be vindicated by this study as long as it is done honestly and well. However, this project is very large, and it cannot be undertaken unless it obtains substantial financial support from the philanthropic community.

All of the money raised by The Witherspoon Institute for this project will go directly toward the NFSS's direct expenses. No funds will be reserved for the Institute's overhead, personnel costs, or anything else. Those who invest in the NFSS can be assured that one hundred percent of their support is being used to offset the project's outlays.

We are very grateful for The Bradley Foundation's consideration of this request. Mark Regnerus, Robby George, Brad Wilcox, and I would be happy to work with the Bradley Foundation to identify other funding partners. I may be reached at (609) 688-8779 or at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

Luis Tellez  
President  
The Witherspoon Institute