

**De:** Centro de Recursos Pessoa, Família e Sociedade  
<cr.pessoa.familia.sociedade@gmail.com>  
**Enviado:** sexta-feira, 11 de Dezembro de 2015 16:37  
**Para:** Comissão 1ª - CACDLG XII; Comissão 1ª - CACDLG XIII  
**Assunto:** Parecer sobre as iniciativas legislativas objecto do nosso pedido de audiência.  
**Anexos:** SSRN-id2500537 Paul Sullins.pdf; Parecer Adop2015.pdf; Regnerus\_july\_2012\_ssr.pdf; ResearchNotes\_SameSexParenting.pdf; SSRN-id1937762 Loren Marks.pdf



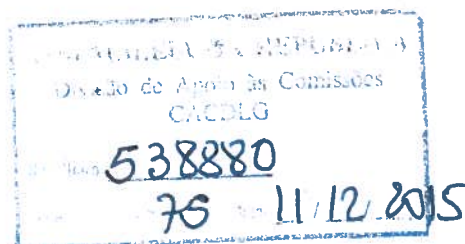
Lisboa, 11 de Dezembro de 2015

Exmos. Senhores,

Conforme solicitado vimos pelo presente enviar um Parecer sobre as iniciativas legislativas objecto do nosso pedido de audiência. É este constituído pelo próprio Parecer e pelos quatro anexos juntos os quais são para todos os efeitos parte integrante do mesmo.

Neste momento e por uma questão de lealdade institucional sentimo-nos obrigados a:

a) Informar que iremos recorrer para o senhor presidente da Assembleia da República da decisão da 1ª Comissão de não conceder a audiência requerida uma vez que nos parece que de acordo com as normas legais e regimentais em vigor a entrega de Pareceres escritos não substitui, antes apenas complementa, a audiência em pessoa e o “confronto” aberto e face a face com os deputados integrantes da Comissão requerida que além do mais assim tem a oportunidade de pedir esclarecimentos adicionais evitando as possíveis delongas de correspondência entre os



senhores deputados e este Centro

b) Observar que a referência de V. Exas. a “argumento novo para a discussão ou que não tenha sido indicado nos processos legislativos concluídos na anterior Legislatura” faz supor uma continuidade do processo legislativo que não corresponde de forma nenhuma à situação das iniciativas legislativas em apreço nem tem cabimento nas normas constitucionais, legais e regimentais aplicáveis. E ainda que por absurdo assim não se considerasse também a própria composição humana e política da 1ª Comissão é distinta da de legislatura anterior e por isso o esclarecimento dos senhores deputados acerca das distintas visões e perspectivas do assunto em debate, sempre se justificaria. A entender-se de outro modo então daí decorreria que assunto que já tivesse sido objecto de debate e decidido no parlamento numa legislatura, não poderia voltar a ser apreciado noutra...

Com os nossos melhores cumprimentos, subscrevemo-nos, de V. Exas.,  
muito atentamente,

Rui Gonçalves

**Centro de Recursos Pessoa, Família e Sociedade**

Exmo. Senhor Dr. Rui Gonçalves

Centro de Recursos Pessoa, Família e Sociedade - CRPFS

Em resposta ao pedido de audiência formulado, encarrega-nos o Senhor Presidente da Comissão de Assuntos Constitucionais, Direitos, Liberdades e Garantias, Deputado Bacelar de Vasconcelos, de acusar a sua receção e informar que, após a sua apreciação pela Comissão, na reunião hoje realizada, foi deliberado convidar essa entidade a, querendo, pronunciar-se por escrito sobre as iniciativas legislativas em apreço **até à próxima sexta-feira, dia 11 de dezembro**, caso considere útil aduzir algum argumento novo para a discussão ou que não tenha sido indicado nos processos legislativos concluídos na anterior Legislatura.

Os melhores cumprimentos da equipa de apoio à Comissão



**Comissão de Assuntos Constitucionais,**

**Direitos, Liberdades e Garantias**

1249-068 LISBOA

Telefone: 21 391 92 91 / 96 67

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[Portal da Comissão](#)

**De:** Centro de Recursos Pessoa, Família e Sociedade [mailto:[cr.pessoa.familia.sociedade@gmail.com](mailto:cr.pessoa.familia.sociedade@gmail.com)]

**Enviada:** segunda-feira, 7 de Dezembro de 2015 16:38

**Para:** Comissão 1ª - CACDLG XII <[Comissao.1A-CACDLGXII@ar.parlamento.pt](mailto:Comissao.1A-CACDLGXII@ar.parlamento.pt)>; Comissão 1ª - CACDLG XIII <[1CACDLG@ar.parlamento.pt](mailto:1CACDLG@ar.parlamento.pt)>

**Assunto:** Pedido de Audiência



Exmo. Senhor Presidente da  
Comissão dos Assuntos Constitucionais, Direitos, Liberdades e Garantias  
Assembleia da República  
Palácio de S. Bento  
1249-068 Lisboa

Assunto: Projectos de Lei n.º 2, 5, 11, 28 e 31/XIII/1ª

Exmo. Senhor Presidente

Tendo em consideração a discussão no âmbito dessa Comissão dos Projectos de Lei em referência, aprovados na generalidade no passado dia 20 de Novembro, o Centro de Recursos Pessoa, Família e Sociedade, que tem como um dos seus pressupostos de acção a intervenção nos debates político e legislativo na prossecução dos seus objectivos estatutários, vem por este meio pedir a V. Exa. o agendamento, nos competentes termos constitucionais, legais e regulamentares, aplicáveis, de uma Audiência, possibilitando-nos assim participar no processo legislativo em causa.

Para efeito do competente agendamento pode ser contactado Rui Gonçalves através do número 919 871 858 ou pelo email: [c.r.pessoa.familia.sociedad@gmail.com](mailto:c.r.pessoa.familia.sociedad@gmail.com).

Com os nossos melhores cumprimentos, subscrevemo-nos, de V. Exa., muito atentamente,

Pelo CRPFS

*Rui Gonçalves*

**ABEL MATOS SANTOS**  
*Psicólogo Clínico*  
Av. 5 de Outubro, 363-D  
1600-036 Lisboa



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## PARECER

**ORIGEM DO PEDIDO:** Centro de Recursos Pessoa, Família e Sociedade - CRPFS.

Este parecer tem nove folhas devidamente assinadas e rubricadas.

**MOTIVO DO PEDIDO:** Análise dos Projectos de Lei n.º 2, 5, 11, 28 e 31/XIII/1ª a serem discutidos na Assembleia da República Portuguesa e respectivo impacto das alterações à Lei da Adopção no desenvolvimento psicológico e emocional das crianças.

### **FACTOS DOCUMENTADOS E METODOLOGIA:**

Pesquisa bibliográfica sobre estudos, investigações e artigos científicos sobre o tema.

Um estudo recente, o *NFSS - New Family Structures Study* (2012), compara o desenvolvimento de crianças que cresceram com casais heterossexuais com crianças que cresceram noutros contextos como uma família com pessoas do mesmo sexo.

Os resultados sugerem que as crianças criadas por pessoas do mesmo sexo têm resultados significativamente piores nas dimensões sociais, emocionais e relacionais.

É o que provam autores de referência mundial que publicaram nas melhores revistas internacionais, em 2012, como Mark Regnerus (1) ou Lorens Marks( 2), com dois importantes estudos: **um mostrando claramente que as crianças criadas por pessoas do mesmo sexo têm resultados significativamente piores nas dimensões sociais, emocionais e relacionais e o outro onde os estudos que defendiam não existirem diferenças eram constituídos por amostras muito reduzidas e não representativas com falhas metodológicas graves.**  
*(vide anexos)*



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O estudo foi de tal modo criticado pelos seus detractores que foi escrutinado durante cerca de quatro meses de forma minuciosa, tendo a Universidade do Texas e a revista que publicou o estudo, dado o seu aval à qualidade científica do estudo e a sua validação, onde diz e cito "*The University of Texas at Austin has determined that no formal investigation is warranted into the allegations of scientific misconduct lodged against associate professor Mark Regnerus regarding his July article in the journal Social Science Research.*" (3)

Na minha opinião, o desejo de adoptar ou co-adoptar dos adultos nunca se pode impor aquilo que aos olhos da ciência parece ser o melhor para as crianças.

O Parlamento e o Estado devem essencialmente regular e defender os direitos das crianças a terem uma família o mais parecido com a família natural, é isso que diz o Instituto da Adopção, e não fazer ciência, o que compete às universidades e às academias, sendo estas que se devem pronunciar através de estudos até porque têm competências e conhecimentos para o fazer.

Vejam, pegando por exemplo na polémica análise da Ordem dos Psicólogos (4), esta inclui autores com publicações em revistas sem qualquer indexação nacional ou internacional e em publicações menores, para ignorar por completo autores de referência mundial que publicaram nas melhores revistas internacionais, em 2012, como **Mark Regnerus** (1) ou **Lorens Marks** (2), já citados.

De referir ainda que apenas cerca de metade das referências (52.8%) fazem parte da lista apresentada de publicações revistas por pares com factor de impacto, o que é manifestamente pouco. Como se isto não bastasse para facilmente colocar em causa a forma como chegaram às conclusões, onde não encontram nada que obste à co-adopção, parece terem-se esquecido do principal.

É que o que estes diplomas de alteração à lei da adopção implicam, entre outras coisas, é a filiação forçada das crianças a ter dois pais ou duas mães, e isso não é referido de forma evidente, não se explicando se este facto que vai ser imposto às crianças é ou não prejudicial ao seu desenvolvimento, à sua construção da identidade e da personalidade e às suas relações sociais.

Já em 2015, **Paul Sullins** (5) mostrou no seu estudo publicado no *British Journal of Education, Society & Behavioural Science* que os problemas emocionais tinham uma prevalência de mais do dobro em crianças criadas por pessoas do mesmo sexo do que em relação a crianças criadas por pessoas de diferentes sexos. (*vide anexos*)

Concluiu ainda que a complementaridade biológica de pais de sexos diferentes beneficia o bem-estar das crianças ao contrário de pais do mesmo sexo.



**(1) How different are the adult children of parents who have same-sex relationships? Findings from the New Family Structures Study.**

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0049089X12000610>

[http://www.markregnerus.com/uploads/4/0/6/5/4065759/regnerus\\_july\\_2012\\_ssr.pdf](http://www.markregnerus.com/uploads/4/0/6/5/4065759/regnerus_july_2012_ssr.pdf)

<http://www.familystructurestudies.com/>

**(2) Same-sex parenting and children's outcomes: A closer examination of the American psychological association's brief on lesbian and gay parenting.**

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0049089X12000580>

**(3)** [http://www.utexas.edu/news/2012/08/29/regnerus\\_scientific\\_misconduct\\_inquiry\\_completed/](http://www.utexas.edu/news/2012/08/29/regnerus_scientific_misconduct_inquiry_completed/)

**(4)** [https://www.ordemdospsicologos.pt/ficheiros/documentos/relataorio\\_de\\_evidencia\\_cientifica\\_psicologica\\_sobre\\_as\\_relaes\\_familiares\\_e\\_o\\_desenvolvimento\\_infantil\\_nas\\_familias.pdf](https://www.ordemdospsicologos.pt/ficheiros/documentos/relataorio_de_evidencia_cientifica_psicologica_sobre_as_relaes_familiares_e_o_desenvolvimento_infantil_nas_familias.pdf)

**(5) Emotional Problems among Children with Same-sex Parents: Difference by Definition**

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A forma apresentada, por alguns, para concluir um apoio explícito à adoção por pessoas do mesmo sexo, ignorando importantes estudos recentes e o uso de um argumentário que afirma, entre outras coisas "*que os homossexuais são tão bons pais e cuidam tão bem de crianças como os heterossexuais...*" é infeliz e desprovido de qualquer senso.

Todos sabemos que não é isto que está em causa! Apesar de se saber que o melhor meio familiar para as crianças crescerem é com um pai e com uma mãe, não está em causa nestes diplomas legais se a criança pode ou não viver com duas pessoas do mesmo sexo ou com orientações sexuais homo ou bissexuais.

O que tem de contar para a decisão é se uma criança forçada a ter uma filiação de dois pais ou duas mães vai ter pelo menos as mesmas oportunidades para o seu desenvolvimento do que as crianças sem essa imposição!

É preciso estar aberto à evidência científica e afastar o preconceito da homofobia e dos "bons" argumentos que toldam a evidência da realidade podendo levar os políticos a tomarem decisões que podem prejudicar em vez de ajudar.

Ver Conclusão na página 7.

**REFERÊNCIAS DE ALGUNS ESTUDOS CONSULTADOS:** No capítulo seguinte encontram-se os resumos.



- (1) Enright, R. & Fitzgibbons, R. (2000). *Helping Clients Forgive: An Empirical Guide for Resolving Anger and Restoring Hope*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association Books ,p. 187-89.
  - (2) McWhirter, D. and Mattison, A. 1985. *The Male Couple: How Relationships Develop*. Prentice Hall.
  - (3) Gartrell, N. & Bos, H. (2010) US national Longitudinal Lesbian Family Study: Psychological Adjustment of 17-year-old Adolescents, *Pediatrics*, Volume 126, Number 1, July 2010, 28-36.
  - (4) Xiridou, M. et al. (2003). The contribution of steady and casual partnerships to the incidence of HIV infection among homosexual men in Amsterdam. *AIDS* 17: 1029-38.
  - (5) D. O'Leary. (2007) *One Man, One Woman: A Catholic's Guide to Defending Marriage* Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 149-68.
  - (6) Kobak, R. (1999). "The emotional dynamics of disruptions in attachment relationships: Implications for theory, research, and clinical intervention". In J. Cassidy & P. R. Shaver. (Eds.), *Handbook of Attachment* (pp. 21-43). New York: The Guilford Press.
  - (7) [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/gergen/july-dec99/fisher\\_8-16.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/gergen/july-dec99/fisher_8-16.html).
  - (8) Sarantakos, S. (1996) Children in three contexts. *Children Australia*, 21(3), 23-31.
  - (9) Sirota, T, (2009) Adult Attachment Style Dimensions in Women with Gay or Bisexual Fathers. *Arch. Psych Nursing*, 23, 289-297.
  - (10) Gartrell, N. & Bos, H. (2010) US national Longitudinal Lesbian Family Study: Psychological Adjustment of 17-year-old Adolescents, *Pediatrics*, Volume 126, Number 1, July 2010 p. 28-36.
  - (11) Biblarz, T. J. & Stacey, J. (2010). How does the gender of parents matter? *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 72, 3-22.
  - (12) Kobak, R. (1999) "The emotional dynamics of disruptions in attachment relationships: Implications for theory, research, and clinical intervention". In J. Cassidy & P. R. Shaver. (Eds.), *Handbook of Attachment* (pp. 21-43). New York: The Guilford Press;
- Popenoe, D. (1996) *Life Without Father*, New York: Free Press, P. 176;





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Golombok, S. et al (1997) Children raised in fatherless families from infancy: Family relationships and the socioeconomic development of children of lesbian and single heterosexual mothers. *J. Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 38: 783-791;

Gallagher M. & Baker, J.K. (2004) Do Mom and Dads Matter: Evidence from the social sciences on family structure and at the best interests of the child. *Margins* 161(4):161-180.

### **RESUMO DAS CONCLUSÕES DOS ESTUDOS:**

Os números abaixo correspondem aos estudos com o mesmo número acima nas referências de acordo com Fitzgibbons, R. (2011). Same sex adoption is not a game. [http://www.mercatornet.com/articles/view/same\\_sex\\_adoption\\_is\\_not\\_a\\_game](http://www.mercatornet.com/articles/view/same_sex_adoption_is_not_a_game)

1 - Estudo editado pela APA sobre acompanhamento de crianças adotadas e em famílias de acolhimento durante vários anos; tratamento de crianças adotadas durante 35 anos;

2 - Um dos mais amplos estudos sobre casais homossexuais revelou que apenas 7 em 156 casais tinham uma relação sexual totalmente monógama. A maioria destas relações teve uma duração inferior a cinco anos. No caso dos casais com relações mais duradouras, os seus membros tinham também actividade sexual fora do relacionamento.

3 - As relações homossexuais são frágeis. A probabilidade de que a relação termine é elevada no caso dos casais de lésbicas. Num relatório de 2000, o "*US National Longitudinal Lesbian Family Study*", 40% dos casais que tinham concebido uma criança através de inseminação artificial terminaram a relação.

4 - Estudos holandeses demonstraram que a maioria dos novos surtos de infecções de VIH em Amsterdão surgiu em homens homossexuais que mantinham relacionamentos estáveis.

5 - Estudos de investigação nesta área demonstram que nas uniões homossexuais há maior incidência de violência doméstica, depressão, toxicodpendência e de doenças sexualmente transmissíveis.

6 - As crianças que foram privadas de cuidados maternos durante longos períodos na sua infância "revelam-se frias, mantêm relacionamentos afectivos superficiais, e



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demonstram ter tendência para comportamentos hostis e antissociais” na idade adulta.

7 - A vasta investigação dos problemas sociais psicológicos, académicos e sociais dos jovens criados em famílias sem pai demonstra a importância da presença de um pai em casa para o desenvolvimento saudável da criança.

8 - Em 1996 um estudo sólido realizado em 174 escolas primárias na Austrália – 58 crianças em famílias com pais casados, 58 em famílias com pais em união de facto (heterossexuais) e 58 em lares de uniões homossexuais – sugeria que as famílias de pais casados ofereciam o melhor ambiente para a educação e desenvolvimento social de uma criança. Em segundo lugar figuravam os unidos de facto e em último plano surgiam os casais homossexuais.

9 - Os resultados de um estudo realizado com mulheres no ano de 2009 em Nova Iorque, Boston e São Francisco, são semelhantes. Os investigadores entrevistaram 68 mulheres com pais homossexuais ou bissexuais. As mulheres (com média de idades de 29 anos, nos dois grupos) que tinham pais homossexuais ou bissexuais revelavam maior dificuldade nos seus relacionamentos a três níveis: Estavam menos à vontade com a proximidade e intimidade; eram menos capazes de confiar e depender dos outros; e experimentavam uma maior ansiedade nas relações em comparação com as mulheres educadas por pais heterossexuais.

10 e 11 - Os activistas homossexuais e os meios de comunicação social citam frequentemente dois grandes estudos publicados em 2010. Nanette Gartrell e Henry Bos (10), bem como Tomithy Biblarz e Judith Stacey (11) argumentam que as crianças que foram deliberadamente privadas dos benefícios da complementaridade que existem num lar com um pai e uma mãe não sofrem danos psicológicos.

No entanto, todos os dados utilizados no estudo de Gartrell e Bos são relatórios que as próprias mães e crianças objecto do estudo entregaram. As mães estavam cientes da agenda política por detrás da investigação o que muito provavelmente distorceu os resultados. Este erro metodológico põe seriamente em causa a credibilidade do estudo. No meta-estudo realizado por Biblarz e Stacey, em 31 dos 33 estudos de famílias com dois pais, foram os pais que forneceram os dados, que se tratavam, por isso, de juízos subjectivos.

Também aqui, esta metodologia levou a resultados enviesados uma vez que os pais homossexuais sabiam da agenda política que estava na origem do estudo. Acresce que, dos 33 estudos que abordaram estas famílias de casais, só dois estudos tratavam de homens, embora o título do estudo “Qual a importância do género dos



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pais?" levasse a crer que homens e mulheres estivessem igualmente representados.

Grande parte da investigação sobre casais homossexuais sofre geralmente de falhas metodológicas. Argumenta-se com frequência que não está provado de que seja prejudicial para as crianças serem criadas por dois homens homossexuais. Esta afirmação é verdadeira, no entanto, esta falta de provas não leva necessariamente à conclusão de que tal não é prejudicial para as crianças. Significa que não está provado. São raros os estudos sobre crianças criadas por homens homossexuais. Não há ainda nenhum estudo que tenha analisado os efeitos a longo prazo em homens adultos, que foram criados por homens homossexuais.

12 - É pernicioso privar deliberadamente uma criança de um pai ou uma mãe. A investigação das ciências sociais sustenta esta tese.

### **CONCLUSÃO:**

O Instituto da Adopção é uma forma indispensável e fundamental de dar resposta a tantos bebés, crianças e jovens que por diversos motivos e factores se viram privados de um pai e de uma mãe, dos seus progenitores biológicos, tão importantes para a sã formação do ser humano.

Primeiro, o nasciturno resulta da fecundação que se dá pela junção de um gâmeta masculino e um gâmeta feminino, sendo que a complementaridade masculino/feminino começa imediatamente no momento da fecundação, altura onde a vida começa e surge a mórula potencial do ser humano, da pessoa que aí se começa a formar.

Segundo, é *latu sensu* que a presença masculina e feminina, do pai e da mãe são os elementos organizadores e fundamentais na construção da identidade, da personalidade e das dimensões psicoafectivas que caracterizam cada ser humano, cada pessoa. Obviamente, que a ciência comprova isto mesmo desde sempre.

Ou seja, o que se sabe é que o melhor para as crianças é terem um pai e uma mãe. Depois, todas as outras opções que se possam equacionar e que sejam possíveis, como ter só uma mãe ou só um pai, ou estar numa instituição ou ser criado por tias ou tios, até ser criado por dois homens ou duas mulheres serão sempre piores opções para a criança e isso está estudado e validado cientificamente.



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Portanto, quando se é adoptado por pessoas do mesmo sexo, independentemente de eles serem bons para a criança ou de gostarem dela ou de serem bons cuidadores, é sempre a opção menos boa para o seu desenvolvimento da criança, agravando-se ainda mais quando se impõe a dupla filiação materna ou paterna, como em Portugal se quer fazer, ao arripio de outros países onde a adopção é possível por pessoas do mesmo sexo e não se impõe no registo civil a impossibilidade biológica que é ser filho de dois homens ou de duas mulheres.

Na minha opinião, isto representa um acto negativo e nocivo sobre a criança que pode causar graves perturbações no seu desenvolvimento psicoafectivo, pelo facto de esta não poder desenvolver a representação intelectual, emocional e afectiva do pai ou da mãe que não tem ou nunca teve, pelo facto de este espaço intrapsíquico ser esmagado, diminuído ou eliminado pela existência de um outro cuidador significativo que a criança até pode gostar e que se impõe como um pai no lugar da mãe ou uma mãe no lugar do pai.

Como é que a criança vai perguntar a este significativo, "*onde está e quem é o meu pai/mãe?*" Como o pode fazer da forma correcta? Não pode! Esta situação poderá ficar reprimida e recalçada até à adolescência onde poderá surgir e vir a criar inúmeros problemas psicológicos e relacionais que têm levado em muitos casos a graves revoltas contra os cuidadores que lhes impuseram um modelo impossível, irreal e contra natural, revelador de um desejo egoísta, hedonista e que tende a desrespeitar o sentir do outro.

Desta forma, considero a adopção por pessoas do mesmo sexo absolutamente errada e prejudicial para as crianças e atentatório da sua liberdade e dos seus direitos fundamentais, nomeadamente a terem um pai e uma mãe.

Sendo que um modelo de adopção que imponha uma dupla filiação paterna ou materna no registo civil se mostra ainda mais grave e predisposta a causar dano psicológico e relacional nas crianças.

Aquilo que se deseja para o desenvolvimento de uma criança são a presença das figuras materna e paterna, que não só são fundamentais como imprescindíveis. É claro que existem pessoas boas e más como existem pais bons e maus independentemente da sua orientação sexual, pelo que não se pode é usar a argumentação hipócrita e afirmar que uma criança está melhor com um par homossexual bom do que com um casal mau!

Isto não é a regra, são excepções e se o casal é mau e não tem condições para criar uma criança ou sequer tê-la, e se for de todo fundamental retirá-la a esse casal ou se ele não a quer, então o instituto da adopção tem a obrigação e o dever de

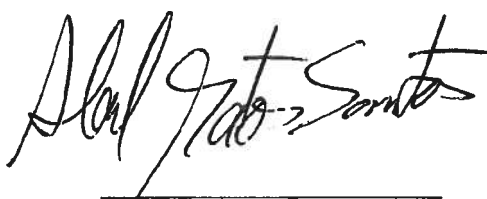
arranjar outro casal, outro meio que se assemelhe o mais possível a um pai e uma mãe porque é isso que as crianças precisam, merecem e desejam.

A questão nem deve ser colocada sobre a forma como a sociedade aceitará estas mudanças, porque as sociedades tendem a aceitar e a adaptar-se ao que lhes vai sendo imposto. E, neste caso não é plausível que exista discriminação ou maus tratos a essas crianças ou mesmo estigmatização.

A questão é que a adopção por pessoas do mesmo sexo e a imposição da dupla filiação do mesmo sexo é nociva e errada, é mesmo a pior opção para essas crianças e isso é que é grave! A estigmatização começa no interior e desde cedo no seio desse núcleo de pessoas que se querem constituir como família sem nunca de facto o poderem ser da forma como a família deve ser, complementar, contentora, protectora, cuidadora e organizadora.

Muito pior parece ser quando se alarga a PMA (procriação medicamente assistida) a mulheres sozinhas ou a pessoas do mesmo sexo com tudo o que isso implica de negativo, revelando a expressão de um pretensão direito, diria egoísta, de querer tudo, fazer tudo, ter filhos a todo o custo como se de uma coisa se tratasse sem pensar nas implicações desse acto para o ser vindouro que não escolheu nem pediu para nascer naquelas circunstâncias.

Lisboa, 9 de Dezembro de 2015



Dr. Abel Matos Santos

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## Emotional Problems among Children with Same-sex Parents: Difference by Definition

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### Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed and interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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### ABSTRACT

**Aims:** To test whether small non-random sample findings that children with same-sex parents suffer no disadvantage in emotional well-being can be replicated in a large population sample, and examine the correlates of any differences discovered.

**Methodology:** Using a representative sample of 207,007 children, including 512 with same-sex parents, from the U.S. National Health Interview Survey, prevalence in the two groups was compared for twelve measures of emotional problems, developmental problems, and affiliated service and treatment usage, with controls for age, sex, and race of child and parent education and income. Instruments included the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the Kessler Scale of Psychological Distress (SPD). Bivariate logistic regression models tested the effect of parent psychological distress, family instability, child peer stigmatization and biological parentage, both overall and by opposite-sex family structure.

**Results:** Emotional problems were over twice as prevalent (minimum risk ratio (RR) 2.4, 95% confidence interval (CI) 1.7-3.0) for children with same-sex parents than for children with opposite-sex parents. Risk was elevated in the presence of parent psychological distress (RR 2.7, CI 1.8-4.3,  $p(t) < .001$ ), moderated by family instability (RR 1.3, CI 1.2-1.4) and unaffected by stigmatization (RR 2.4, CI 1.4-4.2), though these all had significant direct effects on emotional problems. Biological parentage nullified risk both alone and in combination with any iteration of

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factors. Joint biological parents were associated with the lowest rate of child emotional problems by a factor of 4 relative to same-sex parents, accounting for the bulk of the overall same-sex/opposite-sex difference.

**Conclusion:** Joint biological parentage, the modal condition for opposite-sex parents but not possible for same-sex parents, sharply differentiates between the two parent groups on child emotional problem outcomes. For child well-being the two groups differ by definition. Intact opposite-sex marriage ensures children of the persistent presence of their joint biological parents; same-sex marriage ensures the opposite. Further work is needed to determine the mechanisms involved.

*Keywords: National health interview survey; same-sex parents; child emotional problems; stigmatization; biological parentage.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the past two decades dozens of studies have concluded that children with same-sex parents fare as well or better than those in opposite-sex families on a wide range of outcomes related to child well-being and emotional health. So consistent and well-publicized has been this finding of “no differences” that it has been presented as a settled conclusion in judicial proceedings and public policy and professional settings [1-4]. Recently, however, two developments have called this finding into question: Detailed critical reviews that have exposed substantial weaknesses in many of the studies of the same-sex parenting, and the emergence of studies designed to overcome those weaknesses which claim, not without controversy, to have discovered poorer outcomes on some measures for children in same-sex families [5,6].

In a flurry of excellent detailed contrasting reviews of the same-sex parenting literature [7-9,4 defend equal outcomes; for critical reviews see 10–15,6], critics and defenders agree that a critical issue constraining clarity on the question of equal outcomes has been the lack of sufficiently large random samples of the small population of same-sex parents, leading to the persistent use of small, non-representative samples. Allen, a critic, reviewing 49 same-sex parenting studies prior to 2010, 47 of which supported some variant of “no differences”, found that no study involved a representative sample large enough to distinguish differences if they existed. Rosenfeld, a defender, observes that the mean sample size of children with same-sex parents in the literature was only 39 cases [16], virtually guaranteeing Type II error (failing to detect a real effect) regarding population differences. Only four studies used a probability (random) sample; the largest of these included

only 44 same-sex families. The remaining 45 studies based their findings on conveniently available or selected groups of participants, usually recruited from homophile sources such as “LGBT events, bookstore and newspaper advertisements, word of mouth, networking and youth groups” (Allen 2013:640; see this article or Manning et al. 2014 or Marks 2012 for comprehensive lists of study sample sizes and sources.). Public health studies have repeatedly recognized the severe methodological limitations, including bias and non-representativeness, of such recruited samples [17–21].

To be sure, drawing a probability sample of sufficient size to discern population differences with any statistical power presents substantial difficulties for what Rosenfeld [22] has colorfully termed the “needle-in-a-haystack” population of same-sex parents. According to the U.S. Census, same-sex couple households comprise less than 0.005 (five one-thousandths, or one-half of one percent) of U.S. households with children [23].

<sup>1</sup>To attain a sample of 800 same-sex couples, which has been estimated to be the minimum sample size needed to make inferences for this population [24], would require drawing at least 160,000 cases, assuming a perfect response rate. Same-sex couples, moreover, tend to have somewhat lower than normal response rates, perhaps due to stigma and female couples are more likely to be raising children than males, resulting in an extremely low yield for same-sex parents and particularly gay male parents, in randomized population samples.

<sup>1</sup> The U.S. Census estimates, based on 2010 American Community Survey data, that 115,064 of the 24,443,599 U.S. households with children are comprised of same sex parents (.47 percent). [23]



Several recent studies have attempted to improve the state of knowledge by bringing larger and truly random samples to bear on questions of same-sex parenting, with mixed results. Wainwright and Patterson [25] attempted secondary analyses using the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health, but found that the 12,105 adolescent cases in the core sample yielded only 50 identifiable children with same-sex parents; only 6 of these were male couples. Regnerus [5], in an ambitious retrospective survey collecting 2,988 cases, discovered only 39 young adults who had lived as children with same-sex parent couples for more than three years; only 2 of the same-sex parent couples were male. Both of these studies employed well-validated standard measures of key outcomes that could have distinguished differences if the number of sampled children with same-sex parents had been sufficient. Both compensated for the sparse results—Wainwright and Patterson by employing matched samples, Regnerus by expanding the definition of “child with same-sex parents” to include anyone whose parent had ever had a same-sex relationship—to enable (largely contradictory) findings that, on the central question of differences between children in same-sex and opposite-sex parent families, are interesting and informative, but hardly dispositive. Regnerus’ study was very controversial and has been the subject of extensive criticism [26–29].

In 2010 Rosenfeld published an analysis of school completion rates for children in same-sex families based on over 700,000 cases from the 2000 Census Public Use Micro sample [16]. The study credibly found no significant difference in school completion rates for children with same-sex parents. However, because the decennial Census obtains only demographic information, Rosenfeld was limited to a single outcome measure that was inferred from questions about child age and grade in school. Allen and colleagues challenged this finding on technical grounds [30], and Allen later published an analysis finding that, in a sample of almost 1.2 million cases from the Canadian census, high school graduation rates were 35% lower for children with same-sex parents [6]. Although coming to contrasting conclusions, both of these studies represented substantial improvements in the quality and rigor of analysis focused on children with same-sex parents. The current study endeavors to advance the state of knowledge a step further, by comparing child emotional health in opposite-sex and same-sex

families using a nationally representative probability sample which both uses standard, well-validated psychometric measures of emotional problem prevalence and is sufficiently powerful to distinguish differences if they exist.

Despite the null finding of “no differences”, there has been a lively interchange in the literature regarding what mechanisms might affect child outcomes with parents of different sexual orientations. The current study tests four hypotheses deriving from this debate. These are not mutually exclusive; all may pertain to some extent. The most common claim is that social stigma faced by same-sex families may affect child well-being. Children who have two mommies or two daddies may suffer higher teasing, isolation, or bullying from their peers, leading to greater emotional distress. Same-sex persons and their children report suffering stigma in many social settings [31]. Recently Crouch and colleagues, reporting on the Australian Study of Child Health in Same-Sex Families, observed: “Numerous studies have found that when there is perceived stigma, experienced rejection or homophobic bullying, children with same-sex attracted parents are more likely to display problems in their psychosocial development” [32]. Their study confirmed that stigma can be a “key factor” affecting the health and well-being of children in same-sex families. Accordingly, the present study tests the hypothesis that bully victimization accounts for at least part of any differential distress for children with same-sex parents compared to those with opposite-sex parents.

It is also often suggested that child outcomes may be negatively affected by greater transience or impermanence in same-sex parental relationships. Demographic studies show that during the period under study. Same-sex relationships dissolved at somewhat higher rates than did opposite-sex ones [33–36]. Research on divorce has suggested that family dissolution and recoupling may affect child emotional health due to increased parental conflict prior to dissolution, as an indicator of genetic traits toward lower mental health common to parent and child, or by introducing increased relational transitions that children encounter as they mature [37]. Regardless of the mechanism, such effects are powerful and persist throughout the life course [38]. Recent studies have argued that navigating any type of change in parental and/or sibling relationships, whether out of or into marriage or between other family forms for parents, tends to

reduce overall child well-being [39,40]. Homeownership has repeatedly been found to be highly correlated with residential stability, which is in turn associated with relationship duration. A recent Census analysis of 2009 data, for example, found that renters were five times more likely to move than were homeowners [41]. Family homeownership has also been found to be associated, both independently and by means of increased stability, with a variety of positive outcomes for child educational achievement and health such as persistence in school [42], greater cognitive ability and fewer behavior problems [43], higher self-esteem and happiness [44] and more engaged parenting [45]. The present study tests the hypothesis that reduced stability relative to opposite-sex families may explain part or all of any increased emotional distress experienced by children in same-sex families.

Evidence is robust that the possession of mentally or affectively ill parents is a potent risk factor for child mental or emotional distress [46–50] and that same-sex attraction is associated with elevated risk for mental disorders or psychological distress [51,19,21,52]. Parent emotional dysfunction may indicate direct genetic influence [53] or may compromise family relationships and parenting quality to induce child emotional distress [54] in both opposite-sex and same-sex families [55]. The social effects on children, moreover, have been found to be strongly gendered [56] and suggest that “opposite-sex parenting [meaning a parent that is the opposite sex of the child] is important to children’s adjustment during the years of early adolescence” [57]. Taken together, this evidence suggests that parent psychological distress may be greater or transmitted to children in different ways in same-sex families, compared to opposite-sex families. The present study tests the hypothesis that this difference may account for some or all of any difference in child emotional distress.

Manning and colleagues, defending the “no differences” thesis, lament that the small sample sizes that characterize the same-sex parenting literature “can be problematic because they may prevent distinguishing between key sources of variation that differentiate same-sex parent families, such as ... biological relationship of children to parents ...”[4]. Although the strength of biological relatedness relative to other influences on child well-being is not clear, largely due to the difficulty of isolating genetic from family factors [58], the presence of this effect is

recognized [37,59]. Adopted children, compared to those not adopted, have long been found to have higher rates of emotional and behavioral problems [60,61]. More recently Juffer and van IJzendoorn [62], in a meta-analysis of 98 studies involving over 25,000 adoptees and 80,000 non-adoptees, reported significantly more behavioral problems among the adopted children. Keyes et al., examining emotional problems among children adopted in infancy, found that “being adopted approximately doubled the odds of having contact with a mental health professional and of having a disruptive behavior disorder” [63]. Although with increased re-partnering [39] many opposite-sex families include children who are not biologically related to one of their parents, same-sex families are much more likely to include such children. Currently, same-sex couples are about ten times more likely to adopt a child than are opposite-sex couples [64,65], (Table 1). The importance of biological ties has also been proposed as one theory to account for the increased emotional and adjustment problems evidenced by children in single-parent, divorced and blended families [66,67]. Almost all studies that have examined the question, by contrast, have found that child well-being is highest, all other things equal, among children who live with both of their biological parents [68]. The present study tests the hypothesis that differences in biological parentage account for at least part of any higher child emotional distress observed in same-sex families.

Biological parentage is also related to differences between opposite-sex and same-sex parents in family structure patterns, which may help to account for differences in child outcomes. Almost all opposite-sex parents who are raising joint biological offspring are in intact marriages, but very few, if any, same-sex parents were married during the period under observation. (Same-sex partners were not permitted to marry anywhere in the United States prior to 2004 and in only a small minority of states in the U.S. after that. All same-sex partners on NHIS are coded as “cohabiting”, although some, both before and after 2004, report their partner as “spouse” rather than “cohabiting partner”.) In addition to two-biological-parent married families, children with opposite-sex parents in the United States also may experience a step-parent family, in which only one partner is the biological parent of the child; a cohabiting family, in which the partners are not legally married; or may be raised by a single parent. Same-sex partners are more similar to cohabiting families or to step-parent

families than they are to intact married families in that they are not legally married or that at most one partner is the biological parent of the child. Research persistently has found that children in these alternate family forms suffer lower outcomes on most measures of well-being. Differences in child emotional problem risk due to same-sex parentage may be due to constrictions of family form, such that children with same-sex parents do no worse than children with opposite-sex cohabiting or step-parent families. The present study also tests this family structure hypothesis.

## 2. DATA AND MEASURES

The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) is the principal source of public health information about the United States population. Since 1957 the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics has annually interviewed between 35,000 and 40,000 households, collecting data on 75,000 to 100,000 individuals comprising a nationally representative sample of the civilian noninstitutionalized population of the United States. Extensive health and demographic information is collected for all household members. In addition, for each family that includes children under age 18, detailed supplemental health information is collected for one child chosen at random (the "sample child"). The information is provided by one of the child's parents or other knowledgeable adult informant. Detailed year-specific information on sample design and questionnaires is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis/nhis-questionnaire-s.htm>

The present study examines combined 1997-2013 NHIS data, consisting of information on 1,598,006 persons, including 207,007 sample children. Response rates for the NHIS household survey ranged from 75.7% to 91.8% over these seventeen years. The NHIS interview constructs a family roster which collects extensive background information on each family member and their relationships. As well as sex, household members who are spouses or cohabiting partners are also identified and paired. For this study, same-sex couples were identified as those persons whose reported spouse or cohabiting partner was of the same sex as themselves. This is similar to the procedure used in the U.S. Census, with the advantage that on NHIS the reported partner is clearly a sexual partner and not possibly just a roommate or unrelated adult

living in the household. Recent studies have used this procedure with NHIS data to examine cigarette smoking, general health and breast cancer risk among same-sex cohabiting and spousal couples [69-72]; the present study extends such analysis to their children. The NHIS sample included 2,751 same sex couples—2,304 cohabiting and 447 spousal—consisting of 1,387 male couples and 1,384 female couples; 582 couples—406 female and 176 male—had children under age 18 in the home. A more extensive battery of health questions, including the measures of emotional health used in this study, was completed for 512 children sampled, one per family, from the same-sex parenting families.

NHIS employs a complex multistage probability sample that includes clustering, stratification and oversampling of some populations. After weighting for probability of selection, cases are stratified by race, ethnicity, region and residence within sampling units. Poststratification weights are subsequently applied to adjust the sample to the known joint distribution of age, race, ethnicity, and sex. By these means, sample representativeness is substantially improved over that of simple random sampling. In addition to adjusting variance for survey design in order to prevent inflated confidence intervals, the analytical models in this paper incorporated population and stratification weights as well as primary sampling unit and strata identifications to adjust for combining multiple years of data, based on design information provided by the CDC [73-76]. Table 1 compares selected resulting population estimates for age and family structure, including same sex spousal and cohabiting parents families, derived from the NHIS data used in this study to corresponding amounts reported by the U.S. Census. The population estimates agree very closely, providing confidence that the data and methods used in this study are accurate.

For the statistical analysis, logistic regression models were calculated using Stata 13, incorporating survey design weights with linearized variance estimates. To avoid overstating differences, relative risks were calculated rather than odds ratios, and bias-corrected confidence intervals were calculated when either proportion is less than 10. Contrasts were marginally standardized and adjusted for all other variables in the model. The adjusted risk ratios were computed using the algorithm and software developed by Norton and colleagues

[77]; selected estimates were also checked using Localio et al. bootstrap method [78], which produced nearly identical results. Goodness of fit was assessed by the F-adjusted mean residual test developed and recommended for testing the fit of logistic regression models in complex survey data, and validated using NHIS data, by Archer, Lemeshow and Hosmer [79–81].

## 2.1 Variables in the Analysis

### 2.1.1 Dependent variable

*Emotional or Behavioral Problems.* Beginning in 2001NHIS has in most years administered a short form of the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), a widely-used screening instrument for child emotional and mental health difficulties. For the NHIS interview, parents of children aged 4-17 years were asked whether each of the following five statements were "not true" (coded zero), "somewhat true" (coded 1), or "certainly true" (coded 2) with respect to the sample child: "1) Is generally well behaved, usually does what adults request, 2) has many worries, or often seems worried, 3) is often unhappy, depressed, or tearful, 4) gets along better with adults than with other children/youth, and 5) has good attention span, sees chores or homework through to the end."<sup>2</sup>The resulting 0-10 scale used on NHIS was calibrated against a sample with known clinical diagnoses by a team from the Harvard University School of Public Health, who discovered that a high score (6 or more) screened for 12-month clinical diagnoses, as determined by a more extensive clinical assessment, with a positive predictive value of 74%, negative predictive value of 98%, and overall concordance (AUC) of 80. [82] Other validation studies of the SDQ have demonstrated it to be a robust predictor of child mental health distress in diverse populations [83,84], as well as predicting "a significantly increased probability of meeting criteria for a DMS-IV disorder" [85]. In the present study "high SDQ" is coded "1" if the short form SDQ is 6 or greater and 0 otherwise.

On the NHIS interview parents were also asked directly: "Overall, do you think that [sample child] has any difficulties in one or more of the following areas: emotions, concentration, behavior, or being able to get along with other people?" The response options were 1) "no"; 2) "yes, minor difficulties"; 3) "yes, definite difficulties"; and 4) "yes, severe difficulties." A parental response of "yes, definite difficulties" or "yes, severe difficulties" has been found to be significantly

associated with higher use of mental health and special education services. [86] Following NCHS usage [87], the present study contrasts children with "serious" difficulties, defined as those whose parents reported "definite" or "severe" difficulties, with the remainder whose parents reported no or only minor difficulties. Responses for children whose parents reported both high SDQ and serious difficulties, or who reported either one or the other, are combined to form two other summary measures of emotional or psychic distress.

### 2.2 Independent Variables

Models in the analysis include dichotomous controls for sex, age, and race of child, and for parental education and family income. Female is coded 1 for females and 0 for males (the reference). White contrasts nonwhite persons (the reference) with all white persons, designating nonhispanic white persons following U.S. Census categories. Age of child is coded in years and, unless otherwise noted, conceived as a continuous linear predictor. Family income as a percent of poverty is calculated as a linear predictor over three groups: Below the poverty threshold (reference); 1-3.99 times the poverty income; and 4 or more times the poverty income. Pastor and colleagues, examining emotional problems on the NHIS, found that there was no significant difference between income categories, as a ratio of the poverty threshold, until families attained at least four times the poverty income [87]. Parent education is coded 0 for less than a college degree (reference) and 1 for a college degree or more education, and reports on the higher-educated parent.

Hypothesis variables draw on secondary measures that measure the proposed causal element directly or are highly correlated with the dimension of interest. Bully victimization uses an item that asked the family informant to characterize the statement, "During the past six months [the sample child] is picked on or bullied by other children" as not true, somewhat true, or certainly true.

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<sup>2</sup>The full 25-question version of the SDQ was administered on the NHIS in 2001, 2002 and 2004. The 2001 NHIS values are reported by Goodman as U.S. norms for the instrument; see <http://www.sdqinfo.com/USNorm.htm>. These quantities were computed from the data used in this study, and match Goodman's published norms exactly (i.e., to one decimal point, which is all he published).

Both "certainly true" and "somewhat true" are combined into a single category and contrasted with "not true" (reference). Relational stability is measured by housing status, indicating whether the family owned (or were buying) their home or were renting. For parent psychological distress, NHIS administers the Kessler Scale of Psychological Distress (K6) "to identify persons with a high likelihood of having a diagnosable mental illness and associated functional limitations" [88]. This 24-point scale, developed by a Harvard Medical School team led by Dr. Ronald Kessler [89], has been validated by dozens of studies, and is used to estimate the prevalence of mental illness in WHO surveys worldwide, as well as the Australian and Canadian counterparts to the NHIS. Following Kessler's scoring scheme and CDC usage, persons scoring 13 or higher were classified as experiencing non-specific serious psychological distress (SPD). Biological parentage reports three stages of biological relation between the child and both parents: 1) The child is the joint biological offspring of both parents; 2) The child is the biological offspring of only one parent. This includes all single parents. 3) The child is the biological offspring of neither parent, typically an adopted child.

Five types of parenting families are distinguished for analysis. The opposite-sex family structures replicate definitions used in a series of CDC reports of NHIS findings on family structure and health [90–92]: 1) Nuclear families, defined as "one or more children living with two parents who are married to one another and are each biological or adoptive parents to all children in the family" [90]. This is the reference category. 2) Any other married parent families, including step-parenting, adoptive and extended families. This category would include same-sex parents reporting as spouses if they were not broken out for comparison purposes. 3) Unmarried cohabiting partners with child (ren). The child may be the biological child of both partners, one of the parents may be a step-parent, or an adoptive child of one or both partners. This category would include same-sex parents reporting as unmarried partners if these were not broken out for comparison purposes. 4) Single parent families consisting of "one or more children living with a single adult" [90]. The adult may be of either sex, with a biological or adoptive child. Since NHIS did not ask about sexual orientation, this category probably includes an unknown number of same-sex oriented persons. 5) Same-sex parent couples.

### 3. RESULTS

Table 3 compares the unadjusted and adjusted prevalence of child emotional problems with same-sex parents and opposite-sex parents in the United States. Adjusted prevalence reports logit estimates controlling for the sex, age and race of the child and for the education and income of the parents. The three categories of measures replicate those selected by the CDC to characterize the range and depth of child emotional problems in a 2012 report on the emotional and behavioral health of America's children [87]. An additional category is included, "Either A or B", which is useful in the models examined later in this paper.

Four direct measures of emotional problems are included in the top four lines of Table 3; the third and fourth measures are constructed from the first two. On all four measures, children in same-sex families are at least twice as likely to experience serious emotional problems compared to their counterparts in opposite-sex families.

The top four lines of the table report on direct measures of emotional problems. On the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), children in same-sex families were over twice (2.1 times) as likely, at 9.3%, to be rated above the cutoff for emotional or behavioral difficulties than were children in opposite-sex families, at 4.4%. Likewise, same-sex parents or informants reported that their children experienced "definite" or "severe" emotional problems over twice (2.3 times) as often as did opposite-sex parents or informants. For the most restrictive test, which is both high SDQ and directly reported serious emotional problems, the proportion of children with emotional difficulties in same-sex families drops to only 6.3%, but the comparative proportion in opposite-sex families drops even more, to 2.1%, with the result that the risk ratio for same-sex families is even higher (2.9). "Either A or B", includes children indicated for emotional problems by either of the first two measures, reporting somewhat larger proportions but a smaller risk ratio (2.3) for same-sex families compared to opposite-sex families. This item, with a more inclusive categorization and lower discrimination between opposite-sex and same-sex families, is thus a more conservative measure both substantively and statistically, as being least likely to overstate opposite-sex/same-sex differences, and is the preferred measure for analysis in this paper.

**Table 1. Same-sex households in 2005: NHIS 1997-2013 Compared to U.S. Census Estimates (CPS and ACS)**

	NHIS	U.S. Census
U.S. Population	289,564,000 (100)	291,166,000 (100)
White Population – N (%)	236,252,000 (81.6)	238,920,000 (82.1)
Pop age 15 and over – N (%)	228,733,000 (79.0)	230,435,000 (79.1)
Married – N (%)	123,124,000 (53.8)	122,350,000 (53.1)
Widowed – N (%)	13,331,000(5.8)	13,860,000 (6.0)
Divorced – N (%)	17,565,000 (7.7)	22,302,000 (9.7)
Separated – N (%)	4,117,000 (1.8)	4,829,000 (2.1)
Never Married – N (%)	68,827,000 (30.1)	67,096,000 (29.1)
Same-sex partner households – N (%)	599,600 (100)	565,000 (100)
Male – N (%)	297,800 (49.7)	271,000(48.0)
<i>Percent With Children</i>	11.9	13.9
<i>Percent Reporting as Spouse</i>	17.3	24.3
Female – N (%)	301,800 (50.3)	294,000(52.0)
<i>Percent With Children</i>	26.8	26.5
<i>Percent Reporting as Spouse</i>	14.8	28.6

*Includes only the civilian noninstitutionalized population of the United States. U.S. Census population numbers are from Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement 2005, Age and Sex Composition in the United States 2005, Table 1, at <https://www.census.gov/population/age/data/2005comp.html>. NHIS estimates are derived from CDC/NCHS, National Health Interview Survey, 1997-2013 data estimating at the midpoint of 2005, and are rounded to the nearest thousand. NHIS marital status assignment includes two nonresponse categories, totaling about 0.8 percent, which are not shown. Census same-sex household estimates are from the 2008 American Community Survey*

Pastor and colleagues reported on three developmental conditions that were highly correlated with emotional problems. Of children whose parent or informant reported both a high SDQ score and serious emotional problems, 58% had been diagnosed with ADHD, 49% had a learning disability and 7% had an intellectual disability; 72% had one or more of these three [87]. The four middle lines of Table 3 compare children in opposite-sex and same-sex families with regard to any or all of these developmental conditions. Consistent with the direct measures of emotional problems, children in same-sex families were 1.8 to 2.1 times more likely to have been diagnosed with one of these developmental conditions. The adjusted difference is not significant, however, for intellectual disability.

The CDC also reported that children identified with emotional problems were more likely to receive special education services (41%), see a general doctor for mental health (47%) or see a mental health professional such as a psychiatrist or licensed counselor (58%). Eight in ten children (80%) with emotional problems had received at least one of these services [87]. The four lines in Table 3 under the heading "Treatment/Service Use" compare children with opposite-sex and same-sex parents on these four variables. Although the proportion of children in same-sex families using these services is higher than that of children in opposite-sex families, the adjusted difference is trivial for seeing a mental health

professional and is not statistically significant for the use of special education services. However, children in same-sex families were more than twice as likely to have seen a general physician for mental health issues and about 1.7 times as likely to have used at least one of the three services reported in the table-differences that are significant at 1%.

In sum, Table 3 reports that children with same-sex parents are assessed at higher levels of distress, compared to children with opposite-sex parents, for every measure of child emotional difficulty, developmental difficulty or treatment service. For eight of the twelve psychometric measures presented in the table, both adjusted and unadjusted differences between same-sex and opposite-sex families are clear, statistically significant, of substantial magnitude and to the advantage of opposite-sex families. For all but one item (Learning Disability), prevalence and same-sex parent risk are slightly higher in the presence of controls for age, sex, race, education and income.

### 3.1 Analysis of Confounders

To understand the differences further, risk contrasts adjusted for the four confounders presented in the Introduction were estimated from binomial logistic regression models predicting either a high SDQ score or reported

serious emotional problems, i.e. the variable reported as "Either A or B" in Table 3.

### **3.1.1 Same-sex versus opposite-sex contrasts**

Table 4 presents six models exploring the first four causal hypotheses presented in the Introduction. The dependent variable is either high SDQ score or reported serious emotional problems. The coefficient reported in these models is the adjusted risk ratio, which describes the likelihood of children experiencing emotional problems who have same-sex parents compared to those with opposite-sex parents. Model 4.1 presents the baseline comparison. This model is identical to the unadjusted prevalence shown in Table 3; its relative risk of 2.1 is precisely the ratio of the two proportions shown for "Either A or B" in Table 3, that is, 14.9% for children with opposite-sex parents and 7.1% for children with same-sex parents. Model 4.1 reports that, when no other factors are considered, children with same-sex parents are more than twice as likely to manifest emotional problems than are children with opposite-sex parents.

Model 4.2 includes the same control variables already reported in Table 3. For ease of interpretation the age control in the models in Table 4 is fit as linear, not categorical. The relative risk of 2.38 predicted by Model 4.2 thus differs slightly from the risk corresponding to the proportions reported in Table 3, which is 2.28. Model 4.2 predicts that when sex, age, and race of child and the education and income of the parents are held constant, children in same-sex families are at 2.38 times the risk of emotional problems compared to children in opposite-sex families.

The next four models in Table 4 (Models 4.3-4.6) introduce variables to test each of the four explanatory hypotheses discussed above. Model 4.3 presents housing status as a measure of residential and thus relational instability. The coefficient for instability is significant and including it improves model fit, suggesting that family stability has an important effect on the development of child emotional problems.

Model 4.4 tests the effect of stigmatization. The risk of emotional problems is over four times (4.33) greater among children who have been picked on or bullied by their peers than among those who have not, but including stigmatization in the model has no explanatory effect on the

relative risk due to having same-sex parents, actually increasing it slightly (from 2.36 to 2.38).

Model 4.5 examines the effect of parental serious psychological distress (SPD). As predicted, parent SPD is strongly associated with child emotional problems; in Model 4.5, children of parents with SPD are at three (2.99) times the risk of developing emotional problems compared to those whose parents do not have SPD. Fitting this association, however, does not reduce, but increases by 15%, children's risk ratio for emotional problems due to having same-sex parents.

Model 4.6 fits all three confounders for instability, peer stigmatization or victimization and parent SPD. All three effects are moderated slightly when combined.

Model 4.7 tests the effect of biological parentage. Including this variable in the model reduced the relative risk of child emotional problems with same-sex parents by 39% and the resulting risk ratio was no longer statistically significant.

### **3.2 Family Structure Contrasts**

Table 5 presents logistic regression models testing the family structure hypothesis. Since the relative risk with same-sex parents is the question of interest, each category of family structure shown in Table 5 serves as the reference group for the relative risk of child emotional problems with same-sex parents, expressed by the exponentiated coefficient (risk ratio) reported for each model. Model 5.1 presents the baseline unadjusted risks; it essentially elaborates Model 4.1 by family structure. The unadjusted risk for children with same-sex parents is not significant relative to opposite-sex cohabiting or single parent families, however in both cases it approaches significance. When the comparisons are equalized by demographic and SES controls (Model 5.2), risk with same-sex parents is systematically elevated, ranging from 1.8 to 3.6, and is significant at .01 or better relative to all opposite-sex family structures. The overall risk for same-sex parents (2.4, see Model 4.2) is greatly increased compared to two married biological parents (3.6) and reduced relative to all other opposite-sex family structures. Consideration of biological parentage, as Model 5.3 shows, renders null all same-sex parent risk ratios, fully accounting for differences between same-sex and opposite-sex parents in child emotional problems.

## 4. DISCUSSION

### 4.1 The Discovery of Difference

The findings of this paper present a clear counter-example to the dominant claim of "no differences" that disadvantage children with same-sex parents. Regarding this claim, Perrin and colleagues reasonably argue: "If there is sufficient evidence to support H2 ["Children from same-sex families display notable disadvantages when compared to children from other family forms"] with confidence, the no-differences hypothesis should be rejected; if there is not, the no-differences hypothesis stands as the current state of knowledge." [29] On this argument, based on the evidence in Table 3, the no-differences hypothesis should be rejected. Two other recent studies have also found disadvantages among older children and adults raised by same-sex parents [6,93]. At minimum, it is no longer accurate to claim that no study has found children in same-sex families to be disadvantaged relative to those in opposite-sex families [94,9,29,4].

In examining the possible causes of this difference, beginning with the models shown in Table 4, the control variables indicate that the

development of child emotional problems is lower among girls than boys, higher for nonwhite children, increases with the age of the child and is suppressed by higher parent education and income. When these factors are included, the predicted relative risk of emotional problems due to having same-sex parents is elevated slightly, by about 13% over the baseline model.

The relative risk for instability indicates that children of families in rented quarters are 31% more likely to experience emotional problems than children of homeowner families. However, this distinction accounts for very little (3%) of the difference in risk for child emotional problems. In supplementary modeling (not shown), the term for the interaction between stability and same-sex/opposite-sex parents was not significant, indicating that the effect of (in) stability on the development of child emotional problems was the same for both opposite-sex and same-sex parents. Although same-sex parents are more likely to be renters and thus probably less settled in their residences and relationships, than are opposite-sex parents, the difference between the two groups, at only eight percentage points (see Table 2), is evidently not sufficient to account for much of the increased emotional distress of children with same-sex parents.

**Table 2. Weighted proportions (standard deviations) of independent variables in the analyses, by same-sex or opposite-sex parents: NHIS 1997–2013**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Opposite-Sex parents</b>	<b>Same-Sex parents</b>
<b>Family structure</b>		
Intact married biological parents (CDC Definition)	48.5 (.002)	0 (0.0)
All other married (step-families)	28.8 (.002)	27.3 (.025)
Unmarried cohabiting	4.9 (.001)	72.7 (.024)
Single parent	17.9 (.02)	Unknown
Female	48.9 (.14)	50.2 (2.8)
Age of child (mean)	8.54 (.02)	8.57 (.29)
White	50.3 (.30)	48.1 (2.8)
B.A. or higher	33.6 (.27)	35.2 (2.6)
<b>Poverty income</b>		
Under poverty threshold	18.9 (.22)	20.1 (2.9)
1-3.99 times poverty threshold	55.6 (.22)	49.7 (3.2)
4 or more times poverty threshold	25.5 (.25)	30.3 (2.8)
Housing Status - Renting (vs. home owned/being bought)	37.8 (.28)	45.1 (2.8)
Child picked on or bullied by peers	19.2 (.31)	15.1 (4.4)
Serious psychological distress (SPD) - Parents	3.4 (.08)	6.1 (2.2)
<b>Biological parentage – parents-child biological relationship</b>		
Two biological parents	63.9 (.22)	0 (0)
One biological parent	34.2 (.22)	76.4 (2.7)
No biological parent	1.8 (.04)	23.6 (2.7)

*Table values show survey-based population estimates with linearized standard errors reported in parentheses. Confidence intervals may be different than plus/minus the standard error. Values significantly different by t-test at .05 level are in bold*



**Table 3. Unadjusted and adjusted population prevalence of child emotional problems, development problems and associated service use, among children aged 4–17 years, comparing opposite-sex and same-sex families: NHIS 2001–2013**

	Unadjusted prevalence				Adjusted prevalence				Model fit	P (t): OS=SS	
	OS parents	95% CI	SS parents	95% CI	OS parents	95% CI	SS parents	95% CI			
<b>Emotional</b>											
A: High SDQ score	4.2	4.1-4.37	8.2	4.38-12.1	.04	4.4	4.2-4.6	9.3	4.7-13.9	.66	.04
B: Serious emotional problems	5.2	5.1-5.4	12.1	8.0-16.2	.001	5.5	5.3-5.7	14.9	9.7-20.0	.65	<.001
Both A and B	2.0	1.9-2.1	4.9	1.8-8.0	.06	2.1	2.0-2.3	6.3	2.2-10.5	.46	.045
Either A or B	7.1	6.9-7.3	14.9	10.0-19.8	.001	7.4	7.2-7.6	17.4	12.1-22.7	.08	<.001
<b>Developmental</b>											
C: ADHD	6.8	6.7-7.0	14.0	9.7-18.2	.001	7.1	6.9-7.2	15.5	10.8-20.2	.38	<.001
D: Learning disability	7.7	7.5-7.9	14.1	9.5-18.8	.007	8.0	7.8-8.2	14.1	9.1-19.0	.62	.02
E: Intellectual disability	0.7	0.69-0.8	1.5	0.3-2.8	.21	0.7	0.68-0.8	1.9	0.3-3.5	.98	.17
Any of C, D or E	9.9	9.7-10.0	18.3	13.8-22.9	<.001	10.2	10.0-10.4	19.3	14.6-24.0	.40	<.001
<b>Treatment/Service Use</b>											
F: Special education	6.5	6.3-6.6	9.5	6.0-13.0	.09	6.7	6.5-6.8	10.4	6.5-14.4	.78	.07
G: Saw general doctor for mental health	5.0	4.8-5.1	11.0	6.4-15.5	.01	5.2	5.0-5.4	13.1	8.1-18.0	.006	.002
H: Saw mental health professional	17.2	16.6-17.8	18.1	8.5-27.6	.86	18.6	17.8-19.3	24.6	11.3-37.8	.39	.38
Any of F, G or H	9.9	9.8-10.1	15.9	11.6-20.2	.006	10.4	10.2-10.6	17.8	13.0-22.5	.69	.003

Table values show logit estimates for children ages 4-17. Adjusted prevalence adjusts for child sex, age (one-year categories) and race, and parents' education and income. Uncontrolled models fit marginal effects, i.e. a fit of 1.0. SDQ, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, OS, opposite sex; SS, same sex; CI, confidence interval; ADHD, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder. P <0.05; \* P <0.01; \*\* P <0.001. Values significantly different by t-test at .05 level are in bold.

Like instability, stigmatization has a powerful effect on child emotional distress, but accounts for none of the difference between same-sex families and opposite-sex families. As Table 2 indicates, there is no difference between children with opposite-sex and same-sex parents in exposure to bullying; in fact, contrary to the assumption underlying this hypothesis, children with opposite-sex parents are picked on and bullied more than those with same-sex parents, though the overall difference is not above sampling variation. Moreover, the interaction term between bullying and same-sex/opposite-sex parents (not shown) is not significant. In sum, while the experience of peer rejection, abuse or stigmatization is strongly associated with child emotional problems, it appears that the rate of abuse and susceptibility to emotional distress due to stigmatization does not differentiate sharply between children in same-sex and opposite-sex families.

Exposure to parental severe psychological distress (SPD), far from explaining children's increased risk of emotional problems in same-sex families, appears to moderately elevate the relative risk of emotional problems compared to an equivalent exposure in an opposite-sex family.

Surprisingly, the risk due to same-sex parents is not moderated, but increases substantially, when all three of the above factors are combined. Further exploration of this interesting and contrary finding is beyond the scope of the present study. Here it is pertinent only to note that these factors did not appear to explain, but rather aggravate, the risk of child emotional problems due to same-sex parents.

By contrast, biological parentage had a powerful explanatory effect. In supplementary modeling (not shown), the relative risk for having same-sex parents was statistically significant in every model that excluded biological relationship, but was not significant in most models that included it. No combination of explanatory variables that included biological relationship, moreover, improved upon the reduction in predicted relative risk for same-sex parents obtained by biological relationship alone. Biological relationship, it

appears, is both necessary and sufficient to explain the higher risk of emotional problems faced by children with same-sex parents.

Findings for adopted children were consistent with this result, although because of the very small number of adopted children it was not possible to include this category in the multivariate models. As with instability and stigmatization, adopted children were at higher risk of emotional problems overall (RR 1.65 CI 1.5-1.8), but including child adoption status had no effect on risk due to same-sex parents (RR 2.10 CI 1.5-2.9 with adoption included). Among children with no biological relationship to either parent, the prevalence of emotional problems was twice as high for ones with same-sex parents (22.0% CI 8.0-47.6) than for those with opposite-sex parents (11.2% CI 10.2-12.1). This estimate should be interpreted with caution due to the sparseness of the data.

Regarding the family structure hypothesis, examined in Table 5, residence with opposite-sex cohabiting partners or a step-parent or single parent does raise the level of child emotional problems, reducing the observed risk for residing with same-sex parents relative to these family forms. Child emotional problems in opposite-sex families are highest for single parent families and lowest with married joint biological parents. Compared to single parents, children with same-sex parents have less than twice the risk of emotional problems (1.8 times), but they are at almost four (3.6) times the risk of emotional problems when compared to children residing with married biological parents. However, risk with same-sex parents is lowest relative to opposite-sex single parent arrangements, not cohabiting or step-parent families and after adjusting for controls, is significantly higher relative to any opposite-sex family form. Risk of child emotional problems is 1.9-2.2 times greater, significant at .01 or better, with same-sex parents than with opposite-sex cohabiting parents or step-parent family. Therefore, the hypothesis that restrictions on parentage or married status explain the higher risk of emotional problems in same-sex families must be rejected.

**Table 4. Logistic regression models predicting adjusted risk ratios (95% CI) for emotional and behavioral problems (clinically high SDQ score or reported serious difficulties) among children aged 4–17 years, comparing opposite-sex and same-sex families: NHIS 2001-2013**

	Model 4.1	Model 4.2	Model 4.3	Model 4.4	Model 4.5	Model 4.6	Model 4.7*
All opposite-Sex	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
All same-Sex	2.10 <sup>***</sup> (1.5 – 2.9)	2.38 <sup>***</sup> (1.7-3.3)	2.32 <sup>***</sup> (1.7-3.2)	2.38 <sup>***</sup> (1.4 - 4.2)	2.74 <sup>***</sup> (1.8 - 4.3)	3.43 <sup>***</sup> (2.0-5.9)	1.43(0.98-2.1)
<b>Controls</b>							
Female		0.64 <sup>***</sup> (0.60-0.68)	0.68 <sup>***</sup> (0.61-0.71)	0.85 <sup>***</sup> (0.77-0.95)	0.65 <sup>***</sup> (0.60-0.71)	0.82 <sup>***</sup> (0.70-0.96)	0.67 <sup>***</sup> (0.63-0.70)
Older (in years)		1.05 <sup>***</sup> (1.045-1.06)	1.05 <sup>***</sup> (1.04-1.06)	1.06 <sup>***</sup> (1.05-1.08)	1.04 <sup>***</sup> (1.03-1.05)	1.06 <sup>***</sup> (1.03-1.08)	1.04 <sup>***</sup> (1.03-1.05)
Nonwhite		1.45 <sup>***</sup> (1.3-1.6)	1.48 <sup>***</sup> (1.39-1.59)	1.24 <sup>***</sup> (1.10-1.39)	1.35 <sup>***</sup> (1.23-1.49)	1.27 <sup>***</sup> (1.1-1.5)	1.51 <sup>***</sup> (1.41-1.61)
B.A. Degree		0.72 <sup>***</sup> (0.66-0.78)	0.79 <sup>***</sup> (0.73-0.85)	0.78 <sup>***</sup> (0.67-0.90)	0.77 <sup>***</sup> (0.69-0.86)	0.90(0.75-1.1)	0.86 <sup>***</sup> (0.79-0.93)
Income (Poverty multiple)		0.60 (0.57-0.64)	0.69 (0.65-0.72)	0.76 (0.70-0.83)	0.68 (0.64-0.72)	0.85 (0.75-0.97)	0.71 <sup>***</sup> (0.67-0.74)
<b>Confounders</b>							
Instability			1.31 <sup>***</sup> (1.23-1.41)			1.17(0.99-1.4)	
Child picked on/bullied				4.33 <sup>***</sup> (3.9-4.8)		4.16 <sup>***</sup> (3.6-4.8)	
Parent SPD					2.99 <sup>***</sup> (2.6-3.4)	2.76 <sup>***</sup> (2.3-3.4)	
Biological Degree							2.14 <sup>***</sup> (2.0-2.3)
N (unweighted)	115,700	89,282	89,236	22,047	38,389	10,712	85,577
Model Fit F (p)	1.0	0.08	0.72	0.71	0.22	0.97	0.94

Numbers in parentheses report the 95% confidence interval. SDQ, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire; SPD, Severe Psychological Distress on the Kessler scale. P <0.05; P <0.01; P <0.001. \* - indicates preferred model. Data for confounders do not align by year sufficiently to include all of them in a single model.

**Table 5. Risk ratios for child emotional problems contrasting same-sex parents with four opposite-sex family structures: two married biological parents, married step-parent family, cohabiting partners, and single parent: NHIS 2001–2013**

Relative Risk for Same-Sex parents compared to: Risk for same-sex parents relative to reference group:	Model 5.1 (baseline)	Model 5.2 (controls)	Model 5.3 (controls and confounders)	Model 5.4 (controls and parentage)
Two married bio parents	3.50 <sup>***</sup> (2.5-4.9)	3.62 <sup>***</sup> (2.6-5.0)	4.52 <sup>***</sup> (2.53-8.1)	1.48 <sup>***</sup> (1.01-2.2)
Married step-parent	1.82 <sup>†</sup> (1.3 – 2.5)	2.16 <sup>***</sup> (1.6-3.0)	2.97 <sup>***</sup> (1.7-5.3)	1.39 (0.95-2.0)
Cohabiting	1.49 (1.04 – 2.13)	1.87 <sup>†</sup> (1.3-2.6)	2.46 (1.3-4.7)	1.31 (0.9-2.0)
Single parent	1.38 <sup>†</sup> (0.99 – 1.9)	1.76 <sup>†</sup> (1.3-2.4)	3.08 (1.2-1.8)	1.50 <sup>†</sup> (1.03-2.2)
<b>Controls</b>				
Female		0.65 <sup>***</sup> (0.62-0.70)	0.83 (0.71-0.98)	0.65 <sup>***</sup> (0.6-0.7)
Older (in years)		1.04 <sup>***</sup> (1.03 - 1.05)	1.05 <sup>†</sup> (1.03-1.07)	1.04 <sup>***</sup> (1.03-1.05)
Nonwhite		1.50 <sup>***</sup> (1.4-1.6)	1.32 <sup>†</sup> (1.1-1.6)	1.51 <sup>***</sup> (1.4-1.6)
B.A. Degree		0.82 <sup>***</sup> (0.77 - 0.88)	0.97 (0.81-1.2)	0.83 <sup>***</sup> (0.77-0.90)
Income (Poverty multiple)		0.71 <sup>†</sup> (0.68 – 0.78)	0.88 (0.77-1.0)	0.71 <sup>†</sup> (0.68-0.75)
<b>Confounders</b>				
Stigmatization			1.08 (0.92-1.3)	
Parent SPD			4.10 (3.5-4.8)	
Biological parentage			2.62 <sup>***</sup> (2.1-3.2)	
N	111,437	86,160	10,423	2.14 <sup>***</sup> (2.0-2.3)
Model Fit F (p)	1.0	0.59	.79	84,924
				.59

Numbers in parentheses report the 95% confidence interval. P < 0.05; P < 0.01; P < 0.001; .05 < P <= .10

Confirming this conclusion, and consistent with Model 4.6, the relative risk for same-sex parents increases in the presence of confounders for stability, peer stigmatization and parent psychological distress (Model 5.3). The risk ratio increases (from Model 5.2 to Model 5.3) much more for children with single parents (by 73%) compared to cohabiting (30%) or stepfamilies (38%), and the least (24%) for children with two married biological parents, suggesting that among children with opposite-sex parents, those with single parents are the most exposed to, and those with two married biological parents the most protected from, the effect of these confounders. Further study of these effects is beyond the scope of this paper.

As expected, family structure interacts with biological parentage, as Model 5.3 shows. The risk ratios for two married biological parents and for single parents are marginally significant, however, with P-values less than .10, but there is clearly no difference in risk between same-sex parents and opposite-sex step and cohabiting parent families once the degree of biological relationship is specified. It is possible, therefore, to assert that the family structure hypothesis is supported in a limited sense: The risk of child emotional problems is no different with same-sex and opposite-sex parents in the comparable family forms, i.e. cohabiting and step-parent families, once differences in biological parenting are equalized.

On the other hand, parentage and structure are highly correlated ( $r = .68$ ) and in every model that fit both parentage and structure as independent effects, structure was highly attenuated while biology was scarcely affected. Family structure, in other words, appears to specify differences in biological parentage. Rather than due to any independent effect, this suggests, the apparent effect of structure may be attributed to the fact that it serves as an efficient proxy for biological parentage.

#### 4.2 The Importance of Biology

In examining the causes of the differences observed, the results of this paper converge on a clear central finding: Biological parentage uniquely and powerfully distinguishes child outcomes between children with opposite-sex parents and those with same-sex parents. In every analytical model that excluded parentage, the relative risk due to same-sex parents was significant and substantial; in every model that

included it, the relative risk was rendered null. Regarding the other three confounders, stigmatization and parent psychological distress aggravated relative risk while instability reduced it slightly; their combined effect increased, rather than accounted for, the relative risk due to same-sex parents.

Biological parentage, however, is not strictly speaking a proper explanatory variable for differences between opposite-sex and same-sex families, because it is implicated in the definition of those categories. The absence of common biological parents is not an external factor, but is part of the premise of same-sex partnerships. No children were reported living with both biological parents in a same-sex family, while in opposite-sex families almost two-thirds (64%) of children lived with both biological parents (See Table 2). Only 4.3% (95% CI 4.0-4.5) of such children suffer emotional problems (compared to 7.1% overall, for the measure "Either A or B", see Table 3), whereas there is no corresponding group of children with such small emotional problems in same-sex families. The presence of this large group of children with opposite-sex parents with a very low rate of emotional problems accounts for most of the difference in overall emotional problems between the two groups of parents. This striking difference in distribution on biological parentage is not accidental, but definitional. No child can be the joint biological offspring of two intimate partners of the same sex, whereas this is the modal condition of children with opposite-sex parents.

In every analysis in this paper, the lowest risk of emotional problems was observed among children living with both biological parents who were married. Family research on two-biological-parent married and cohabiting parents has broadly demonstrated that "both marital status and biological parentage are integral to children's well-being" [95,96]. The strength of marriage and biology relative to each other and relative to other influences on child well-being, as well as theories to account for their effects, are a matter of some debate, but the fact, that the parent-child biological relationship has a strong effect, has been well established. In this research, as in the present study, other factors—for example, economic resources, parental socialization, family stability, or even marriage—are also influential on child well-being and may qualify or interact with biological parentage, but they do not explain it away [97–99,95]. To a large extent, the present study merely extends to same-sex

families McLanahan and Sandefur's conclusion regarding single-parent families: "Children who grow up in a 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" regardless of the parents' race, education and marital status, including remarriage [100]. This is also true, the present study would add, regardless of whether the parents are same-sex or opposite-sex partners.

Clinical studies of female same-sex partners conceiving via donor insemination or other assisted reproductive techniques (ART), moreover, have long recognized that the lack of conjoined biological ties creates unique difficulties and relational stresses [101–104]. The birth and non-birth mother (also known as the co-mother) are subject to competition, rivalry, and jealousy regarding conception and mothering roles that are never faced by conceiving opposite-sex couples, and which, for the children involved, can result in anxiety over their security and identity [105]. Biblarz and Stacey [9] acknowledge that "[I] esbian [donor insemination] comothers ... confront asymmetrical legal, biological and cultural ties to children that can exasperate [sic] maternal competition and jealousy" leading to higher rates of relationship dissolution compared to opposite-sex parents. The authors add that "access to equal legal parental status and rights ... will not eliminate these asymmetries" [9].

#### 4.3 Strengths and Limitations

The greatest strength of this study is its use of a representative sample of same-sex parents that, with 512 families, with many outcome measures, is several times larger than typical samples of this population and permits unbiased estimates with relatively large statistical power. The greatest limitation of this study is its use of a representative sample of only 512 same-sex parent families, which is several times smaller than optimum for most population studies. Post-stratification weighting improved representativeness somewhat over that of simple random sampling, however the data for same-sex parents were still too sparse to support examination of distinctions within this group, such as between same-sex male and same-sex female partner couples, or those identifying as spouses or cohabiting partners, which may have significant effects on child emotional problems. The representativeness of the weighted sample provides generalizability of the results to United

States household population, however results may not be applicable to other countries, particularly where the social situation of same-sex parents differs markedly from the US. As with all observational studies, causal inference is not possible. Another limitation is the use of secondary measures, which may not relate to the topic of interest in the manner intended, and of parent-reported measures that are likely subject to social desirability bias. However, it is unlikely that such measurement imprecision or bias would operate differentially on the two groups of parents involved.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

With respect to joint biological fertility, same-sex partners are different from opposite-sex partners by definition. The importance of common biological parentage for optimum child well-being found in this study raises the difficult prospect that higher child emotional problems may be a persistent feature of same-sex parent families, since they are distinguished from opposite-sex parents on just this capacity. Since same-sex partners cannot, at least at present, conceive a child that is the biological offspring of both partners, in the way that every child conceived by opposite-sex partners is such,<sup>3</sup> it is hard to conceive how same-sex parents could ever replicate the level of benefit for child well-being that is the case in opposite-sex relationships involving two biological parents. Future research on the relative effects of marriage and biological relationship among all family forms, including same-sex couples, would be of great value to help sort out these issues more clearly.

#### 5.1 Implications for Marriage Policy

The reduced risk of child emotional problems with opposite-sex married parents compared to same-sex parents is explained almost entirely by the fact that married opposite-sex parents tend to raise their own joint biological offspring, while same-sex parents never do this. The primary benefit of marriage for children, therefore, may not be that it tends to present them with improved parents (more stable, financially affluent, etc., although it does do this), but that it presents them with their own parents.

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<sup>3</sup>While some forms of ART among female same-sex partners can formally achieve a genetic link to both partners, none can do so without introducing male sperm from a third party.

This is the case for almost all children with married joint biological parents—which most successfully fulfill the formal civil premise of marriage, which is lifelong and exclusive partner commitment—compared to less than half of children in any other family category and no children in same-sex families. Whether or not same-sex families attain the legal right, as opposite-sex couples now have, to solemnize their relationship in civil marriage, the two family forms will continue to have fundamentally different, even contrasting, effects on the biological component of child well-being, to the relative detriment of children in same-sex families. Functionally, opposite-sex marriage is a social practice that, as much as possible, ensures to children the joint care of both biological parents, with the attendant benefits that brings; same-sex marriage ensures the opposite.

It is worth noting that, even in the worst case conditions examined in this study, the large majority of children did not experience emotional problems. Although children fare worse in some family settings than others, to an extent that well justifies social and policy concerns about differences between family structures, including between opposite-sex and same-sex families, most children in most families achieve a level of psychosocial function that is not characterized by serious emotional problems.

## 5.2 Future Research

Future research is needed to determine the mechanisms by which biological parentage affects child emotional wellbeing. Research should focus on distinctions among same-sex families and their children to determine the predictors of child emotional distress in this population more precisely, and on associations that may help to identify mechanisms. For example, a study that distinguished sex of parent and child, examining outcomes for male and female children with same-sex male parents and same-sex female parents, could distinguish influences on child outcomes, if any, due to the presence or absence of an opposite-sex parent (meaning a parent that is the opposite sex of the child). Research that differentiated adolescents (age 12-17) from younger children (age 4-11) would contribute to our knowledge of the effect of same-sex parenting on the distinct emotional profiles of these two groups, and may be able to suggest time-order effects. Research that distinguished adopted from non-adopted children

may help to distinguish biological from familial effects. Further research would also be helpful to explore the surprising finding that parent psychological distress aggravated rather than helped to account for the risk of child emotional problems with same-sex parents. Most valuable, of course, would be population representative longitudinal data following children with same-sex parents into adulthood, which would support rigorous causal inference regarding long-term differences in outcome, if any, in this population.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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## Errata

Table 2, page 108, bottom notes, the notation "Values significantly different by t-test at .05 level are in bold." should be deleted.

Table 3, page 109, bottom notes, the notation "Values significantly different by t-test at .05 level are in bold." should be deleted and replaced with "Significance tested by t-test."

Table 5, page 112, Model 5.3 "Single Parent" confidence interval shown (1.2-1.8) is incorrect. It should be (1.8-5.3).

At Table 5, page 112, the title "Risk for same-sex parents relative to reference group:" is redundant and should be deleted.

At page 115, top line left column, the word "almost" should be deleted.





## 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; Brewaeyts 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
CES-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	<b>0.24*</b>	0.21	0.07^	<b>0.31*</b>	<b>0.19*</b>	<b>0.19*</b>	0.13
Family received welfare growing up	0.17	<b>0.69*</b>	<b>0.57*</b>	0.12^	<b>0.47*</b>	<b>0.53*</b>	<b>0.48*</b>	<b>0.35*</b>
Currently on public assistance	0.10	<b>0.38*</b>	0.23	<b>0.27*</b>	<b>0.31*</b>	<b>0.30*</b>	<b>0.30*</b>	<b>0.23*</b>
Currently employed full-time	0.49	<b>0.26*</b>	0.34	0.41	0.42	0.47^	0.43^	<b>0.39</b>
Currently unemployed	0.08	<b>0.28*</b>	0.20	0.22*	0.15	0.14	<b>0.13*</b>	<b>0.15</b>
Voted in last presidential election	0.57	<b>0.41</b>	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	<b>0.22*</b>	0.12	<b>0.17*</b>	<b>0.13*</b>	0.09
Identifies as entirely heterosexual	0.90	<b>0.61*</b>	0.71*	0.82^	0.83^	<b>0.81*</b>	<b>0.83*</b>	<b>0.82*</b>
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	<b>0.40*</b>	0.25	0.20	0.12^	<b>0.32*</b>	0.19^	0.16^
Has ever had an STI	0.08	0.20*	0.25*	0.16	0.12	<b>0.16*</b>	<b>0.14*</b>	0.08
Ever touched sexually by parent/adult	0.02	<b>0.23*</b>	0.06^	0.03^	0.10*	<b>0.12*</b>	<b>0.10*</b>	<b>0.08*</b>
Ever forced to have sex against will	0.08	<b>0.31*</b>	0.25*	<b>0.23*</b>	<b>0.24*</b>	<b>0.16*</b>	<b>0.16*</b>	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*</b> <sup>^</sup>	<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*</b> <sup>^</sup>	<b>3.52*</b>	<b>3.52*</b> <sup>^</sup>	<b>3.58*</b> <sup>^</sup>	<b>3.77*</b> <sup>^</sup>
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*</b> <sup>^</sup>
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	–	<b>3.29*</b>	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*</b> <sup>^</sup>	<b>3.10*</b> <sup>^</sup>	<b>3.05*</b> <sup>^</sup>	<b>3.02*</b> <sup>^</sup>
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	1.86 <sup>^</sup>	1.82 <sup>^</sup>	1.89
Level of household income	8.27	<b>6.08</b>	7.15	7.93 <sup>^</sup>	7.42 <sup>^</sup>	<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	<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	2.37	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>	2.61*	2.34*	2.44*	<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	2.95 <sup>^</sup>
Frequency of having been arrested	1.18	<b>1.68*</b>	<b>1.75*</b>	1.31 <sup>^</sup>	1.38	<b>1.38*</b> <sup>^</sup>	<b>1.35*</b> <sup>^</sup>	<b>1.34*</b> <sup>^</sup>
Frequency pled guilty to non-minor offense	1.10	<b>1.36*</b>	1.41*	1.19	1.30	<b>1.21*</b>	<b>1.17*</b> <sup>^</sup>	1.17 <sup>^</sup>
N of female sex partners (among women)	0.22	<b>1.04*</b>	<b>1.47*</b>	0.47 <sup>^</sup>	<b>0.96*</b>	0.47 <sup>^</sup>	<b>0.52*</b> <sup>^</sup>	0.33 <sup>^</sup>
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>	2.91 <sup>^</sup>
N of male sex partners (among men)	0.20	1.48*	1.47*	0.27	0.98*	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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## SAME SEX PARENTING | studies show... 1

- **Children from married heterosexual two-parent households do better academically, financially, emotionally and behaviourally than children raised in other forms of relationships.**

A study reported in the journal *Children Australia*, comparing 174 children living in either heterosexual married, heterosexual cohabiting or homosexual co-habiting homes, concludes:

Overall, the study has shown that children of married couples are more likely to do well at school, in academic and social terms, than children of co-habiting heterosexual and homosexual couples...In this study, married couples seem to offer the best environment for a child's social and educational development.

(S. Sarantakos, "Children in three contexts: Family, Education and Social Development," *Children Australia*, Vol 21, No 3 (1996), 23.)

The American College of Pediatricians states:

In summary, tradition and science agree that biological ties and dual gender parenting are protective for children. The family environment in which children are reared plays a critical role in forming a secure gender identity, positive emotional well-being, and optimal academic achievement. Decades of social science research documents that children develop optimally when reared by their two biological parents in a low conflict marriage.

(American College of Pediatricians, Revised March 2012,  
<http://www.acpeds.org/Homosexual-Parenting-Is-It-Time-For-Change.html>)

A report by *Child Trends*, a nonpartisan research organization, concludes:

[R]esearch clearly demonstrates that family structure matters for children, and the family structure that helps children the most is a family headed by two biological parents in a low-conflict marriage.

(Kristin Anderson Moore, Susan M. Jekielek, and Carol Emig. "Marriage from a Child's Perspective: How Does Family Structure Affect Children, and What Can be Done about It?" Research Brief, June 2002. Washington, DC: *Child Trends*. p. 6.)

Conversely, a recent Australian report finds:

...if there is one major demographic change in western societies that can be linked to a large range of adverse consequences for many children and young people, it is the growth in the numbers of children who experience life in a family other than living with their two biological parents, at some point before the age of 15.

(For Kids' Sake – Repairing the Social Environment for Australian Children and Young People, 2011 [http://sydney.edu.au/law/news/docs\\_pdfs\\_images/2011/Sep/FKS-ResearchReport.pdf](http://sydney.edu.au/law/news/docs_pdfs_images/2011/Sep/FKS-ResearchReport.pdf))

- **Studies of same sex parenting have generally suffered from serious methodological problems.**

Sociology professor, Steven Nock, reviewed several hundred such studies as an expert witness for the Attorney General of Canada, and concluded:

Through this analysis I draw my conclusions that 1) all of the articles I reviewed contained at least one fatal flaw of design or execution; and 2) not a single one of those studies was conducted according to general accepted standards of scientific research.

(Steven Nock. 2001. Affidavit to the Ontario Superior Court of Justice regarding Halpern *et al.* v. Canada. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Sociology Department.)

The 2005 American Psychological Association (APA) Brief on “Lesbian and Gay Parenting”, which is repeatedly invoked in the same-sex marriage debate, makes the strong assertion: “Not a single study has found children of lesbian or gay parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of heterosexual parents.” However, Loren Marks’ 2012 paper in the journal *Social Science Research* systematically examines whether the APA’s conclusions are valid and precise, based on the cited scientific evidence.

Are we witnessing the emergence of a new family form that provides a context for children that is equivalent to the traditional marriage-based family? Even after an extensive reading of the same-sex parenting literature, the author cannot offer a high confidence, data-based “yes” or “no” response to this question. To restate, not one of the 59 studies referenced in the 2005 APA Brief compares a large, random, representative sample of lesbian or gay parents and their children with a large, random, representative sample of married parents and their children. The available data, which are drawn primarily from small convenience samples, are insufficient to support a strong generalizable claim either way. Such a statement would not be grounded in science. To make a generalizable claim, representative, large-sample studies are needed—many of them.

(Loren Marks, “Same-sex parenting and children’s outcomes: A closer examination of the American psychological association’s brief on lesbian and gay parenting” *Social Science Research* 41 (2012) 735–751.)

The American College of Pediatricians state:

The limited research advocating childrearing by homosexual parents has severe methodological limitations. There is significant risk of harm inherent in exposing a child to the homosexual lifestyle. Given the current body of evidence, the American College of Pediatricians believes it is inappropriate, potentially hazardous to children, and dangerously irresponsible to change the age-old prohibition on homosexual parenting, whether by adoption, foster care, or reproductive manipulation. This position is rooted in the best available science.

(American College of Pediatricians, Revised March 2012,  
<http://www.acpeds.org/Homosexual-Parenting-Is-It-Time-For-Change.html>)

- **The New Family Structures Study (NFSS) is the *first large, long-term study* to look at young-adults who were raised by parents that had a same-sex relationship.**

The NFSS 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 the debut article of the NFSS, Mark Regnerus has found numerous, consistent differences on 40 different social, emotional, and relational outcome variables (including many that are obviously suboptimal such as education, depression, employment status, or marijuana use) between young-adult children of a parent who has had a same-sex romantic relationship and those with still-married (heterosexual) biological parents.

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.

(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 (2012) 752–770.)



**Same-Sex Parenting and Children's Outcomes:  
A Closer Examination of the American Psychological Association's  
Brief on Lesbian and Gay Parenting**

Loren Marks<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** In 2005, the American Psychological Association (APA) issued an official brief on Lesbian and Gay Parenting. This brief included the assertion: "Not a single study has found children of lesbian or gay parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of heterosexual parents" (p. 15). The present article closely examines this assertion and 59 published studies cited by APA to support it. Seven central questions address: (1) homogenous sampling, (2) absence of comparison groups, (3) comparison group characteristics, (4) contradictory data, (5) the limited scope of children's outcomes studied, (6) paucity of long-term outcome data, and (7) lack of APA-urged statistical power. The conclusion is that strong assertions, including those made by the APA, were not empirically warranted. Recommendations for future research are offered.

**KEYWORDS:** same-sex parenting, lesbian, gay

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Over the past few decades, differences have been observed between outcomes of children in marriage-based intact families and children in cohabiting, divorced, step, and single-parent families. These differences have recurred in connection with myriad issues of societal-level concern including: (a) health<sup>2</sup>, mortality<sup>3</sup>, and suicide risks<sup>4</sup>, (b) drug and alcohol abuse<sup>5</sup>, (c) criminality and incarceration<sup>6</sup>, (d) intergenerational poverty<sup>7</sup>, (e) education and/or labor force contribution<sup>8</sup>, (f) early sexual activity and early childbearing<sup>9</sup>, and (g) divorce rates as adults.<sup>10</sup> These outcomes represent important impact variables that influence the well-being of children and families, as well as the national economy.

By way of comparison, social science research has repeatedly reported no significant differences between children from gay/lesbian households and heterosexual households. These recurring findings of no significant differences have led some researchers and professional organizations to formalize related claims. Perhaps none of these claims has been more influential than the following from the 2005 American Psychological Association (APA) Brief on “Lesbian and Gay Parenting”:

Not a single study has found children of lesbian or gay parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of heterosexual parents.<sup>11</sup>

Are we witnessing the emergence of a new family form that (unlike cohabiting, divorced, or single-parent families) provides a context for children that is equivalent to the intact family? Many proponents of same-sex marriage contend that the answer is yes. Others are skeptical and wonder—given that other departures from the intact family form have been correlated with less-desirable child outcomes—do children in same-sex families demonstrably avoid being “disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of heterosexual parents” as the APA asserts? This is a question with important implications, particularly since the 2005 APA Brief on “Lesbian and Gay Parenting” has been repeatedly invoked in the current same-sex marriage debate.

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<sup>2</sup> Waite, 1995

<sup>3</sup> Gaudino et al., 1999; Siegel et al., 1996

<sup>4</sup> Wilcox et al., 2005, p. 28; Cutler et al., 2000

<sup>5</sup> Bachman et al. 1997; Flewelling & Bauman, 1990; Horwitz et al., 1996; Johnson et al., 1996; Simon, 2002; Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Weitoff et al., 2003; Wilcox et al., 2005

<sup>6</sup> Blackmon et al., 2005; Harper & McLanahan, 2004; Kamark & Galston, 1990, pp. 14-15; Manning & Lamb, 2003; Margolin, 1992, p. 546

<sup>7</sup> Akerlof, 1998; Blackmon et al., 2005; Brown, 2004; Oliver & Shapiro, 1997; Rank & Hirschl, 1999

<sup>8</sup> Amato, 2005; Battle, 1998; Cherlin et al., 1998; Heiss, 1996; Lansford, 2009; Manning & Lamb, 2003; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Phillips & Asbury, 1993; Teachman et al., 1998

<sup>9</sup> Amato, 2005; Amato & Booth, 2000; Ellis et al., 2003; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994

<sup>10</sup> Cherlin et al., 1995; Wolfinger, 2005

<sup>11</sup> Patterson, p. 15 (from APA Brief, 2005)



## Statement of Purpose and Specific Questions

The overarching question of this paper is: *Are the conclusions of the research presented in the 2005 APA Brief on "Lesbian and Gay Parenting" valid and precise, based on the cited scientific evidence?* In the present paper, seven questions are posed, examined, and addressed:

- (1) How culturally, ethnically, and economically diverse were the gay/lesbian households in the published literature behind the APA Brief?
- (2) How many studies of gay/lesbian parents had no heterosexual comparison group?
- (3) When there were comparison groups, which groups were compared?
- (4) Does a scientifically-viable study exist to contradict the APA's published statement that "not a single study has found children of lesbian or gay parents to be disadvantaged"?
- (5) What types of outcomes have been investigated?
- (6) What do we know about the long-term outcomes of children of lesbian and gay parents?
- (7) Have the studies in this area committed the type II error and prematurely concluded that heterosexual couples and gay and lesbian couples produce similar parental outcomes?

Two portions of the APA brief are of particular concern to us in the present paper: (a) the "Summary of Research Findings" (pp. 5–22), and (b) the first and largest section of the annotated bibliography, entitled "Empirical Studies Specifically Related to Lesbian and Gay Parents and Their Children" (pp. 23–45). In the latter section (pp. 23–45), the APA references 67 manuscripts. Eight of these studies are "unpublished dissertations."<sup>12</sup> An adapted portion of one of these dissertations (Steckel, 1985) was eventually published (Steckel, 1987) and is included in the present examination; the other unpublished work is not. Fifty-nine published studies are listed in Table A, providing parameters from which to formulate responses to the seven questions outlined.

### ***Question 1: How culturally, ethnically, and economically diverse were the gay/lesbian households in the published literature behind the APA brief?***

In response to question 1, of the 59 published "Empirical Studies Specifically Related to Lesbian and Gay Parents and Their Children," no studies mention African-American, Latin-American, or Asian-American families in either their titles or subtitles. The reference list in the APA Brief's "Summary of Research Findings" (pp. 15–22) is also void of any studies focusing on African-American, Latin-American, or Asian-American families.<sup>13</sup> None of the "Empirical Studies Specifically Related to Lesbian and Gay Parents and Their Children" (pp. 23–45) holds, as its focus, any of these minorities.

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<sup>12</sup> These unpublished dissertations that were not peer-reviewed include: Hand, 1991; McPherson, 1993; Osterweil, 1991; Paul, 1986; Puryear, 1983; Rees, 1979; Sbordone, 1993; Steckel, 1985. These are omitted in Table A.

<sup>13</sup> Three years after the 2005 APA Brief, Moore (2008) published a small but pioneering study on African-American lesbians.

A closer examination of the studies reveals that White/Caucasian samples comprise several of the studies from the “Empirical Studies...” (pp. 23–45) section of the APA Brief. For example:

1. “All of [the fathers in the sample] were Caucasian” (Bozett, 1980, p. 173).
2. “Sixty parents, all of whom were White” comprised the sample (Flaks et al., 1995, p. 107).
3. “[All 40] mothers...were white” (Hoeffler, 1981, p. 537).
4. “All the children, mothers, and fathers in the sample were Caucasian” (Huggins, 1989, p. 126).
5. “The twenty-five women were all white” (Rand et al., 1982, p. 29).
6. “All of the women...[were] Caucasian” (Siegenthaler & Bigner, 2000, p. 82).
7. “All of the birth mothers and co-mothers were white” (Tasker & Golombok, 1998, p. 52).
8. “All [48] parents were Caucasian” (Vanfrasussen et al., 2003, p. 81).

Many other studies do not explicitly acknowledge all-White samples, but also do not mention or identify a single minority participant—while others report “almost” all white samples.<sup>14</sup> Same-sex researchers Lott-Whitehead and Tully (1993) cautiously added in the discussion of their APA Brief-cited study:

Results from this study must be interpreted cautiously due to several factors. First, the study sample was small (N=45) and biased toward well-educated, white women with high incomes. These factors have plagued other [same-sex parenting] studies, and remain a concern of researchers in this field (p. 275).

Similarly, in connection with this bias, Patterson (1992), who would later serve as sole author of the 2005 APA Brief’s “Summary of Research Findings on Lesbian and Gay Families,” reported:

Despite the diversity of gay and lesbian communities, both in the United States and abroad, samples of children [and parents] have been relatively homogeneous.... Samples for which demographic information was reported have been described as predominantly Caucasian, well-educated, and middle to upper class.<sup>15</sup>

In spite of the privileged and homogenous nature of the non-representative samples employed in the studies at that time, Patterson’s (1992) conclusion was as follows:

Despite shortcomings [in the studies], however, results of existing research comparing children of gay or lesbian parents with those of heterosexual parents

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<sup>14</sup> Examples of explicit or implicitly all-White (or nearly all-White) samples include, but are not limited to: Bigner & Jacobsen, 1989a, 1989b; Bozett, 1980; Flaks et al., 1995; Green, 1978; Green et al., 1986; Hoeffler, 1981; Huggins, 1989; Koepke et al., 1992; Rand et al., 1982; Siegenthaler & Bigner, 2000; Tasker & Golombok, 1995, 1998; Vanfraussen et al., 2003

<sup>15</sup> Patterson, 1992, p. 1029

are *extraordinarily clear*, and they merit attention... There is *no* evidence to suggest that psychosocial development among children of gay men or lesbians is compromised *in any respect* relative to that among offspring of heterosexual parents.<sup>16</sup>

Patterson's conclusion in a 2000 review was essentially the same:

[C]entral results of existing research on lesbian and gay couples and families with children are *exceptionally clear*.... [The] home environments provided by lesbian and gay parents are just as likely as those provided by heterosexual parents to enable psychosocial growth among family members.<sup>17</sup>

Although eight years had passed, in this second review, Patterson (2000) reported the continuing tendency of same-sex parenting researchers to select privileged lesbian samples. Specifically, she summarized, "Much of the research [still] involved small samples that are predominantly White, well-educated [and] middle-class" (p. 1064).<sup>18</sup> Given the privileged, homogeneous, and non-representative samples of lesbian mothers employed in "much of the research," it seems warranted to propose that Patterson was empirically premature to conclude that comparisons between "gay or lesbian parents" and "heterosexual parents" were "extraordinarily clear"<sup>19</sup> or "exceptionally clear."<sup>20</sup>

There is an additional point that warrants attention here. In Patterson's statements above, there are recurring references to research on children of "gay parents." In 2000, Demo and Cox reported that "children living with gay fathers" were a "rarely studied household configuration."<sup>21</sup> In 2005, how many of the 59 published studies cited in the APA's list of "Empirical Studies Specifically Related to Lesbian and Gay Parents and Their Children" (pp. 23–45) specifically addressed the outcomes of children from gay fathers? A closer examination reveals that only eight studies did so.<sup>22</sup> Of these eight studies, four did not include a heterosexual comparison group.<sup>23</sup> In three of the four remaining studies (with heterosexual comparison groups), the outcomes studied were:

- "the value of children to...fathers" (Bigner & Jacobsen, 1989a, p. 163).
- "parenting behaviors of...fathers" (Bigner & Jacobsen, 1989b p. 173).
- "problems" and "relationship with child" (Harris & Turner, 1986, pp. 107–108).

The two Bigner and Jacobsen (1989a, 1989b) studies focused on fathers' reports of *fathers'* values and behaviors, not on children's outcomes—illustrating a recurring tendency in the same-sex parenting literature to focus on the parent, rather than the child. Harris and Turner (1986) addressed parent-child relationships, but their study's male

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<sup>16</sup> Patterson, 1992, p. 1036 (emphasis added)

<sup>17</sup> Patterson, 2000, p. 1064 (emphasis added)

<sup>18</sup> Patterson, 2000, p. 1064

<sup>19</sup> Patterson, 1992, p. 1036

<sup>20</sup> Patterson, 2000, p. 1064

<sup>21</sup> Demo & Cox, 2000, p. 890

<sup>22</sup> Bailey et al., 1995; Barrett & Tasker, 2001; Bigner & Jacobsen, 1989a, 1989b; Bozett, 1980; Harris & Turner, 1986; Miller, 1979; Sarantakos, 1996

<sup>23</sup> Bailey et al., 1995; Barrett & Tasker, 2001; Bozett, 1980; Miller, 1979

heterosexual comparison group was comprised of two single fathers. It appears that although several studies have examined aspects of gay fathers' lives, almost no heterosexual comparison studies referenced in the APA Brief (pp. 23–45) appear to have specifically focused on children's developmental outcomes—a rare exception is Sarantakos (1996), a study to which we will return later.

In summary response to Question 1 (“How culturally, ethnically, and economically diverse were the gay/lesbian households in the published literature behind the APA Brief?”), the reader may ascertain that none of the cited articles (pp. 23–45) focus on African-American, Latino, or Asian-American families. Further, many studies do not include any minority individuals or families. Finally, comparison studies on children of gay fathers were almost non-existent as well. By their own reports, social researchers examining same-sex parenting have repeatedly selected non-representative, homogeneous samples of privileged lesbian mothers to represent all same-sex parents. This pattern across three decades of research raises significant questions regarding lack of diversity and lack of generalizability in the same-sex parenting studies.

***Question 2: How many studies of gay/lesbian parents had no heterosexual comparison group?***

Of the 59 publications cited by the APA in the annotated bibliography section entitled “Empirical Studies Specifically Related to Lesbian and Gay Parents and Their Children” (pp. 23–45), 33 involved a heterosexual comparison group. In direct response to Question 2, 26 (44.1 percent) of the studies on same-sex parenting did not include a heterosexual control group. In well-conducted science, it is important to have a clear comparison group before drawing conclusions regarding differences or the lack thereof. We see that nearly half of the “Empirical Studies Specifically Related to Lesbian and Gay Parents and Their Children” referenced in the APA Brief allowed no basis for comparison between these two groups (see Table A). To proceed with precision, this fact does not negate the APA claim. It does, however, dilute it considerably as we are left with not 59, but 33, studies with heterosexual comparison groups.

***Question 3: When there were comparison groups, which groups were compared?***

We now turn to a question regarding the nature of comparison samples. Of the 33 published “Empirical Studies Specifically Related to Lesbian and Gay Parents and Their Children” (APA Brief, pp. 23–45) that did directly include a heterosexual comparison group, *what were the more specific characteristics of the groups that were compared?* The earlier examination and response related to Question 1 documented that, by Patterson's reports, “Despite the diversity of gay and lesbian communities...in the United States,”<sup>24</sup> the repeatedly selected representatives of same-sex parents have been “small samples [of lesbians] that are predominantly White, well-educated [and] middle-class” (p. 1064).<sup>25</sup>

In spite of homogenous sampling, there is considerable diversity among gay and lesbian parents. Considerable diversity exists among heterosexual parents as well. Indeed, the opening paragraph of this article noted recurring differences in outcomes of

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<sup>24</sup> Patterson, 1992, p. 1029

<sup>25</sup> Patterson, 2000, p. 1064

children in marriage-based intact families and children in cohabiting, divorced, step, and single-parent families. To restate, these differences have recurred in connection with myriad issues of societal-level concern including: (a) health<sup>26</sup>, mortality<sup>27</sup>, and suicide risks<sup>28</sup>, (b) drug and alcohol abuse<sup>29</sup>, (c) criminality and incarceration<sup>30</sup>, (d) intergenerational poverty<sup>31</sup>, (e) education and/or labor force contribution<sup>32</sup>, (f) early sexual activity and early childbearing<sup>33</sup>, and (g) divorce rates as adults.<sup>34</sup> Most of these findings are based on probability samples of thousands (see Table B for 17 illustrative studies).

Because children in marriage-based intact families have historically fared better than children in cohabiting, divorced, step, or single-parent families on the above outcomes, the question of what “groups” researchers selected to represent heterosexual parents in the same-sex parenting studies becomes critical. A closer examination of the 33 published same-sex parenting studies with comparison groups which follows, listed chronologically, reveals that:

1. Pagelow (1980) used “single mothers” as a comparison group (p. 198).
2. Hoeffler (1981) used “heterosexual single mothers” (p. 537).
3. Kirkpatrick et al. (1981) used “single, heterosexual mothers” (p. 545).
4. Kweskin and Cook (1982) used women from Parents without Partners (p. 969).
5. Lyons (1983) used “heterosexual single mothers” (p. 232).
6. Golombok et al. (1983) used “single-parent households” (p. 551).
7. Green et al. (1986) used “solo parent heterosexual mothers” (p. 175).
8. Harris and Turner (1986) used 2 “male single parents” and 14 “female single parents” (p. 105).
9. Huggins (1989) used “divorced heterosexual mothers”<sup>35</sup> (p. 123).
10. Tasker and Golombok (1995) used “heterosexual single mothers” (p. 203).
11. Tasker and Golombok (1997) used “single heterosexual mothers” (p. 38).

We see that in selecting *heterosexual* comparison groups for their studies, many same-sex parenting researchers have not used marriage-based, intact families as heterosexual representatives, but have instead used single mothers (see Table A). Further, Bigner and Jacobsen used 90.9 percent single-father samples in two other studies (1989a, 1989b).<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Waite, 1995

<sup>27</sup> Gaudino et al., 1999; Siegel et al., 1996

<sup>28</sup> Wilcox et al., 2005, p. 28; Cutler et al., 2000

<sup>29</sup> Bachman et al. 1997; Flewelling & Bauman, 1990; Horwitz et al., 1996; Johnson et al., 1996; Simon, 2002; Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Weitoft et al., 2003; Wilcox et al., 2005

<sup>30</sup> Blackmon et al., 2005; Harper & McLanahan, 2004; Kamark & Galston, 1990, pp. 14-15; Manning & Lamb, 2003; Margolin, 1992, p. 546

<sup>31</sup> Akerlof, 1998; Blackmon et al., 2005; Brown, 2004; Oliver & Shapiro, 1997; Rank & Hirschl, 1999

<sup>32</sup> Amato, 2005; Battle, 1998; Cherlin et al., 1998; Heiss, 1996; Lansford, 2009; Manning & Lamb, 2003; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Phillips & Asbury, 1993; Teachman et al., 1998

<sup>33</sup> Amato, 2005; Amato & Booth, 2000; Ellis et al., 2003; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994

<sup>34</sup> Wolfinger, 2005

<sup>35</sup> “4 of the 16 [divorced] heterosexual mothers were either remarried or currently living with a heterosexual lover” (p. 127).

<sup>36</sup> “Of the 66 respondents, 6 were married, 48 were divorced, 8 were separated, and 4 had never been married” (Bigner & Jacobsen, 1989a, p. 166). This means the sample was 90.9 percent single.

In total, in at least 13 of the 33 comparison studies listed in the APA Brief's list of "Empirical Studies" (pp. 23–45) that include heterosexual comparison groups, the researchers explicitly sampled "single parents" as representatives for heterosexual parents. The repeated (and perhaps even modal) selection of single-parent families as a comparison heterosexual-parent group is noteworthy, given that a nonpartisan *Child Trends* (2002) review has stated that "children in single-parent families are more likely to have problems than are children who live in intact families headed by two biological parents."<sup>37</sup>

Given that at least 13 of the 33 comparison studies listed in the APA Brief's list of "Empirical Studies" (pp. 23–45) used single-parent families as heterosexual comparison groups, what group(s) did the remaining 20 studies use as heterosexual representatives? In closely examining the 20 remaining published comparison group studies, it is difficult to formulate precise reports of the comparison group characteristics, because in many of these studies, the heterosexual comparison groups are referred to as "mothers" or "couples" without appropriate specificity (see Table A for details). Were these "mothers" continuously married—*or* were they single, divorced, remarried, or cohabiting? When "couples" were used, were they continuously married—*or* remarried or cohabiting? These failures to explicitly and precisely report sample characteristics (e.g., married or cohabiting) are significant in light of Brown's (2004) finding based on her analysis of a data set of 35,938 U.S. children and their parents, that "regardless of economic and parental resources, the outcomes of adolescents (12–17 years old) in cohabiting families...are worse...than those...in *two-biological-parent* married families."<sup>38</sup> Because of the disparities noted by Brown and others, scientific precision requires that we know whether researchers used: (a) single mothers, (b) cohabiting mothers and couples, (c) remarried mothers, or (d) continuously married mothers and couples as heterosexual comparison groups.

Due to the ambiguity of the characteristics of the heterosexual samples in many same-sex parenting studies, let us frame a question that permits a more precise response, namely: *How many of the studies in the APA Brief's "Empirical Studies" section (pp. 23–45) explicitly compare the outcomes of children from intact, marriage-based families with those from same-sex families?* In an *American Psychologist* article published the year after the APA Brief, Herek (2006) referred to a (large, national) study by McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) "comparing the children of intact heterosexual families with children being raised by a single parent." Herek then emphasized that "this [large scale] research literature does not include studies comparing children raised by two-parent same-sex couples with children raised by two-parent heterosexual couples."<sup>39</sup> Isolated exceptions exist with relatively small samples (as discussed shortly in response to Question 4 and as listed in Table A), but they are rare.

As we return to the APA's section of 33 published "Empirical Studies" (pp. 23–45) that directly involve heterosexual comparison groups, we see that the repeated, and perhaps modal, practice of same-sex parenting researchers has been to use single parents as heterosexual representatives. Nebulously defined "mothers" and "couples" are frequently used as heterosexual comparison groups, but only in rare cases are explicitly

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<sup>37</sup> Moore et al., 2002; For an extensive review, see Wilcox et al., 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Brown, 2004, p. 364 (emphasis added)

<sup>39</sup> Herek, 2006, p. 612

intact, marriage-based families used as the group representing heterosexual parents.<sup>40</sup> This is important because the intact, marriage-based family is the family form consistently associated with best children's outcomes in large-scale research.<sup>41</sup>

Given what we have seen regarding heterosexual comparison group selection, let us revisit three related claims. First, in 1992, Patterson posited that:

[N]ot a single study has found children of gay and lesbian parents to be disadvantaged in any respect relative to children of *heterosexual parents*.<sup>42</sup>

Patterson's (2000) claim was similar:

[C]entral results of existing research on lesbian and gay couples and families with children are exceptionally clear.... [The] home environments provided by lesbian and gay parents are just as likely as those provided by *heterosexual parents* to enable psychosocial growth among family members.<sup>43</sup>

Lastly, and most significantly, we turn to the APA Brief's "Summary of Research Findings on Lesbian and Gay Parenting," also single-authored by Patterson (see p. 5):

Not a single study has found children of lesbian or gay parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of *heterosexual parents*.<sup>44</sup>

The reader will note that in all three of these claims (including that latter from the 2005 APA Brief), Patterson uses the broad and plural term "heterosexual parents," a term that at least implicitly includes marriage-based, intact families. This broad claim is not nuanced by the vital information that with rare exceptions, the research does not include studies comparing children raised by two-parent, same-sex couples with children raised by marriage-based, intact heterosexual couples. Further, no mention is made that in at least 14 of the 33 extant comparison studies referenced in the Brief (pp. 23–45), the groups selected to represent "heterosexual parents" were comprised largely, if not solely, of single parents.

Question 3 asked, "When there were comparison groups (used in same-sex parenting research), which groups were compared?" In light of the information this closer examination has yielded, the scientific community is invited to assess whether or not the APA Brief's claim of no difference between "children of lesbian or gay parents...[and] children of heterosexual parents"<sup>45</sup> reflected appropriate scientific precision.

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<sup>40</sup> e.g., Sarantakos, 1996

<sup>41</sup> Brown, 2004; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Wilcox et al., 2011

<sup>42</sup> Patterson, 1992, p. 1036 (emphasis added)

<sup>43</sup> Patterson, 2000, p. 1064 (emphasis added)

<sup>44</sup> Patterson, p. 15 (from APA Brief, 2005), (emphasis added)

<sup>45</sup> Patterson, p. 15 (from APA Brief, 2005)

**Question 4: Does a scientifically-viable study exist to contradict the conclusion that “not a single study has found children of lesbian or gay parents to be disadvantaged”?**

There is at least one notable exception to the APA’s claim that “Not a single study has found children of lesbian or gay parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of heterosexual parents.”<sup>46</sup> In the “Summary of Findings” section, the APA Brief references a study by Sarantakos (1996), but does so in a footnote that critiques and dismisses the study (p. 6, footnote 1). On page 40 of the APA Brief’s annotated bibliography, a reference to the Sarantakos (1996) article is offered, but there is no summary of the findings, only a note reading “No abstract available.” This statement from the APA Brief is not accurate. An abstract was available and was printed on the first page of the article. The last sentence of that abstract reported that “in the majority of cases, the most successful [children] are children of married couples, followed by children of cohabiting couples and finally by children of homosexual couples” (p. 23).

Upon closer examination, we find that the Sarantakos (1996) study is a comparative analysis of 58 children of heterosexual married parents, 58 children of heterosexual cohabiting couples, and 58 children living with homosexual couples that were all “matched according to socially significant criteria (e.g., age, number of children, education, occupation, and socio-economic status).”<sup>47</sup> The combined sample size (174) is the seventh-largest sample size of the 59 published studies listed in the APA Brief’s “Summary of Research Findings on Lesbian and Gay Parenting” (see Table A). However, of the six studies with larger sample sizes, all were *adult self-report studies*,<sup>48</sup> making the Sarantakos combined sample the largest study (APA Brief, pp. 23–45) that examined *children’s developmental outcomes*.

Key findings of the Sarantakos study are summarized below. To contextualize these data, the numbers are based on a teacher rating-scale of performance “ranging from 1 (very low performance), through 5 (moderate performance) to 9 (very high performance).”<sup>49</sup> Based on teacher (not parent) reports, Sarantakos found several significant differences between married families and homosexual families (and cohabiting families).<sup>50</sup>

<i>Language Achievement:</i>	Married 7.7, Cohabiting 6.8, Homosexual 5.5
<i>Mathematics Achievement:</i>	Married 7.9, Cohabiting 7.0, Homosexual 5.5
<i>Social Studies Achievement:</i>	Married 7.3, Cohabiting 7.0, Homosexual 7.6
<i>Sport Interest/Involvement:</i>	Married 8.9, Cohabiting 8.3, Homosexual 5.9
<i>Sociability/Popularity:</i>	Married 7.5, Cohabiting 6.5, Homosexual 5.0

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<sup>46</sup> Patterson, p. 15 (from APA Brief, 2005)

<sup>47</sup> Sarantakos, 1996, p. 23

<sup>48</sup> In order, these six studies include: (1) Morris et al., 2002 (N=2,431), who addressed adults’ reports of “coming out”; (2) Johnson and Connor, 2002 (N=415), who addressed adults’ reports of parenting beliefs, division of labor, etc.; (3) Crawford et al., 1999 (N=388), who addressed psychologists’ self-reports of gay adoption; (4) King and Black, 1999 (N=338), who addressed college students’ perceptions of gay parents; (5) Bos et al., 2003 (N=200), who addressed parental motives and desires; and (6) Bos et al., 2004 (N=200), who addressed parental reports of couple relations. Again, these foci are not on the child.

<sup>49</sup> Sarantakos, 1996, p. 24

<sup>50</sup> Social Studies Achievement is significant at the p=.008 level; the eight other differences are significant at the p=.000 level.



<i>School/Learning Attitude:</i>	Married 7.5, Cohabiting 6.8, Homosexual 6.5
<i>Parent-School Relationships:</i>	Married 7.5, Cohabiting 6.0, Homosexual 5.0
<i>Support with Homework:</i>	Married 7.0, Cohabiting 6.5, Homosexual 5.5
<i>Parental Aspirations:</i>	Married 8.1, Cohabiting 7.4, Homosexual 6.5 <sup>51</sup>

Sarantakos concluded, “Overall, the study has shown that children of married couples are more likely to do well at school in academic and social terms, than children of cohabiting and homosexual couples.”<sup>52</sup>

While the above ratings were based on teacher reports, two other areas of home-based interest were based on parent reports: *Personal Autonomy* and *Household Tasks* (pp. 27–28). In both of these areas, homosexual parents rated their children significantly higher than married parents. The latter two areas of interest differ in content from the nine listed above. However, as the data source shifted from teacher reports to parent reports—the typical ordering of married families (first in 8 of 9 categories) and homosexual families (last in 8 of 9 categories) reversed (i.e., 8.3 for homosexual; 5.9 for married, on *Personal Autonomy*). It has long been known, and is well replicated, that individuals tend to rate the group with which they most identify more positively than they do other groups. This positive bias includes within-family ratings (Roese & Olson, 2007).<sup>53</sup>

As we proceed, it should also be noted that “parent reports” are the dominant (almost sole) basis of the same-sex parenting studies cited in the APA brief. In fact, the decision to de-emphasize the Sarantakos (1996) study was based, in part, on the criticism that “nearly all indicators of the children’s functioning were based on subjective reports by teachers.”<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the Sarantakos study was primarily, but not solely, based on teacher reports. However, it may be argued that Sarantakos’ decision *not* to rely solely or extensively on parent reports (as done in most same-sex parenting studies) is a pronounced strength, given parents’ tendencies towards bias when reporting on their own children. Further, Sarantakos also drew data from school aptitude tests and observations, thereby modeling a research ideal of triangulation of sources.<sup>55</sup> In fact, Sarantakos integrated not only three data sources to triangulate; he used five (teachers, tests, observations, as well as parent reports, and child reports). In light of this rigorous design, it was not surprising to learn that Sarantakos is the author of several methods textbooks (2005, 2007b) and the author/editor of a four-volume, 1672-page work in Sage Publications’ *Benchmarks in Social Research Series*, 2007a.

Question 4 asked: Does a scientifically viable study exist to contradict the APA’s published statement that “not a single study has found children of lesbian or gay parents to be disadvantaged”? The answer is yes. Sarantakos (1996) controlled for “education, occupation, and socio-economic status” and then, based on teacher reports, compared

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<sup>51</sup> Sarantakos, 1996, pp. 24–27

<sup>52</sup> Sarantakos, 1996, p. 30

<sup>53</sup> Roese & Olson, 2007

<sup>54</sup> APA Brief (2005), footnote 1, p. 6 (emphasis added)

<sup>55</sup> “Triangulation is a means of checking the integrity of the inferences one draws. It can involve the use of multiple data sources, ...multiple theoretical perspectives, multiple methods, or all of these” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 257). In effect, the standard of triangulation is advocacy for internal checks and balances. The bottom line is that (as in the courtroom) additional “witnesses,” particularly more objective ones, are vital for the most-valid outcomes.

marriage-based families with homosexual families and found nine significant differences—with children from marriage-based families rating higher in eight areas. By objective standards, compared with the studies cited by the APA Brief, the Sarantakos study was:

- a) *The largest study to examine children's outcomes*,<sup>56</sup>
- b) *One of the most comparative* (only about five other studies used three comparison groups<sup>57</sup>), and
- c) *Perhaps the most comprehensively triangulated study* (five data sources) conducted on same-sex parenting.<sup>58</sup>

Accordingly, this study deserves the attention of scientists interested in the question of homosexual and heterosexual parenting, rather than the dismissal it received from APA.

As we conclude the examination of Question 4, let us review a portion of APA's published negation of Sarantakos' study:

[*Children Australia*, the journal where the article was published] cannot be considered a source upon which one should rely for understanding the state of scientific knowledge in this field, particularly when the results contradict those that have been repeatedly replicated in studies published in better known scientific journals.<sup>59</sup>

Patterson and the APA dismissed the Sarantakos study, in part, because it contradicted the “no significant difference” findings that had been “repeatedly replicated in studies published in better known scientific journals.”<sup>60</sup> For other scientists, however, the salient point behind Sarantakos' findings is that the novel comparison group of marriage-based families introduced significant differences in children's outcomes (as opposed to the recurring “no difference” finding with single-mother and “couple” samples). Additional studies with intact, marriage-based families as the heterosexual comparison group are conspicuously rare in the APA Brief's list of “Empirical Studies Specifically Related to Lesbian and Gay Parents and Their Children” (pp. 23–45). We now turn to the fifth question.

#### ***Question 5: What types of outcomes have been investigated?***

With respect to the APA Brief's claim that “not a single study has found children of lesbian or gay parents to [have] disadvantaged [outcomes],” *what types of outcomes have been examined and investigated?* Specifically, how many of the same-sex parenting

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<sup>56</sup> Six of the 59 studies listed in the 2005 APA Brief (pp. 23–45) had larger samples, but, as discussed earlier, they all focused on adult reports of adult perceptions and outcomes.

<sup>57</sup> For example, Brewaeys et al., 1997; Golombok et al., 2003; Golombok et al., 1997; MacCallum & Golombok, 2004; Tasker & Golombok, 1998

<sup>58</sup> In spite of the strong design with respect to triangulation, the Sarantakos study does not appear to be based on a true probability sample, nor is it a *large* sample (although it is a subsample of a 900-plus study). The study is rigorous by comparison to other same-sex parenting studies, but is relatively limited compared with most of the nationally representative studies on intact families listed in Table C.

<sup>59</sup> Patterson (2005) in APA Brief, p. 7, footnote 1.

<sup>60</sup> Patterson (2005) in APA Brief, p. 7, footnote 1.

studies in Table A address the societal concerns of intergenerational poverty, collegiate education and/or labor force contribution, serious criminality, incarceration, early childbearing, drug and alcohol abuse, or suicide that are frequently the foci of significant national studies on children, adolescents, and young adults, as discussed previously?

Anderssen and colleagues cataloged the foci of same-sex parenting studies in a 2002 review. In connection with the examined outcomes in the studies they reviewed, Anderssen et al. reported:

Emotional functioning was the most often studied outcome (12 studies), followed by sexual preference (nine studies), gender role behavior (eight studies), behavioral adjustment (seven studies), gender identity (six studies), and cognitive functioning (three studies).<sup>61</sup>

Examination of the articles cited in the 2005 APA Brief on Lesbian and Gay Parenting yields a list of outcomes that are consistent with Anderssen's summary. For example: "sexual orientation"<sup>62</sup>; "behavioral adjustment, self-concepts, and sex-role identity"<sup>63</sup>; "sexual identity"<sup>64</sup>; "sex-role behavior"<sup>65</sup>; "self-esteem"<sup>66</sup>; "psychosexual and psychiatric appraisal"<sup>67</sup>; "socioemotional development"<sup>68</sup>; and "maternal mental health and child adjustment."<sup>69</sup> Several other single studies address topics that fall outside the six most frequently studied outcomes noted by Anderssen et al., and there are a few foci that are examined in two or more studies, including: "stigmatization"<sup>70</sup>; "contact(s) with grandparents and other adults"<sup>71</sup>; "division of labor;"<sup>72</sup> and "interviews with mothers."<sup>73</sup>

With these focal outcomes identified, it is noteworthy that all of the aforementioned outcomes of societal-level concern are absent from the list of "most often studied outcome(s)" as identified by Anderssen et al.<sup>74</sup> In response to the present article's Question 5 (what *types* of outcomes have been investigated for children of gay/lesbian families?), it may be concluded: In the same-sex parenting research that undergirded the 2005 APA Brief, it appears that gender-related outcomes were the dominant research concern, to the neglect of other important outcomes. To be more precise, Table A lists several categories of information regarding 59 published empirical studies; one of these categories is the "outcome studied." More than 20 studies have examined gender-related outcomes, but there was a dearth of peer-reviewed journal articles from which to form science-based conclusions in myriad areas of societal concern including: intergenerational poverty, criminality, college education and/or labor force contribution,

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<sup>61</sup> Anderssen et al., 2002, p. 343

<sup>62</sup> Bailey et al., 1995; Golombok & Tasker, 1996

<sup>63</sup> Patterson, 1994

<sup>64</sup> Green, 1978

<sup>65</sup> Hoeffler, 1981; Kweskin & Cook, 1982

<sup>66</sup> Huggins, 1989

<sup>67</sup> Golombok et al., 1983

<sup>68</sup> Golombok et al., 1997

<sup>69</sup> Patterson, 2001

<sup>70</sup> Gershon et al., 1999; King & Black, 1999

<sup>71</sup> Fulcher et al., 2002; Patterson et al., 1998

<sup>72</sup> Chan, Brooks, et al., 1998; Patterson, 1995

<sup>73</sup> Gartrell et al., 1999, 2000

<sup>74</sup> Anderssen et al., 2002, p. 343

drug/alcohol abuse, suicide, sexual activity and early childbearing, and eventual divorce as adults.

In any less-developed area of empirical inquiry it takes time, often several decades, before many of the central and most-relevant questions can begin to be adequately addressed. This seems to be the case with same-sex parenting outcomes, as many of the issues of societal concern have gone unaddressed. For scientists and others who favor data-informed decisions, the identified dearth, in connection with several critical outcomes, presents a significant concern.

***Question 6: What do we know about the long-term outcomes of children of lesbian and gay parents?***

In the preceding response to Question 5, the outcomes of intergenerational poverty, criminality, college education and/or labor force contribution, drug/alcohol abuse, suicide, early sexual activity, early childbearing, and eventual divorce as adults were mentioned. The reader will note that these outcomes are not “child” outcomes per se. Indeed, most of these outcomes are not optimally observable until (at the soonest) mid-late adolescence or early adulthood (and in the case of divorce, not until middle adulthood). As discussed in Question 5, virtually none of the peer-reviewed, same-sex parenting comparison studies addressed these outcomes.<sup>75</sup> Of the 59 published studies cited by the APA 2005 Brief (pp. 23–45), it is difficult to find comparison studies of any kind that examine adolescent outcomes, and the few that do employ comparison groups of 44 or fewer.<sup>76</sup> Let us further explore the importance of a lack of data centered on adolescents and young adults.

Table B identifies 17 of the hundreds of available studies on outcomes of children from intact families (as contrasted with comparison groups such as cohabiting couples and single parents). Many of these studies are based on data from nationally representative sample sizes of several thousand. One of these studies included a data set of 35,938 children—one of “the largest...nationally representative survey[s] of U.S. children and their parents.”<sup>77</sup> Based on analysis of this nationally representative sample, Susan Brown emphasized, “The findings of this study...demonstrate the importance of separately examining children and adolescents.” She then explained:

Although the outcomes of children (6–11 years old) in cohabiting families...are worse...than those of children in two-biological-parent married families, much of this difference...is economic.... In contrast, regardless of economic and parental resources, the outcomes of adolescents (12–17 years old) in cohabiting families...are worse...than those...in two-biological-parent married families.<sup>78</sup>

In short, in the case of cohabiting families and “two-biological-parent married families” the differences in children’s outcomes *increase in significance as the children grow older*. The likelihood of significant differences arising between children from same-sex

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<sup>75</sup> Gartrell and colleagues (1999, 2000, 2005) have commenced to do so, but in 2005 they were reporting on children who were only 10 years old (with a sample size of 74 and no heterosexual comparison group).

<sup>76</sup> i.e., Wainwright Russell, & Patterson, 2004

<sup>77</sup> Brown, 2004, p. 355

<sup>78</sup> Brown, 2004, p. 364

and married families may also increase across time—not just into adolescence but into early and middle adulthood. For example, research indicates that “[d]aughters raised outside of intact marriages are...more likely to end up young, unwed mothers than are children whose parents married and stayed married,” and that “[p]arental divorce increases the odds that adult children will also divorce.”<sup>79</sup>

Longitudinal studies that follow children across time and into adulthood to examine such outcomes are comparatively rare and valuable. We briefly turn to a key finding from one such study that has addressed children of divorce who are now in middle adulthood. Based on a 25-year longitudinal study, Wallerstein and colleagues (2001) state:

Contrary to what we have long thought, the major impact of divorce does not occur during childhood or adolescence. Rather, it rises in adulthood as serious romantic relationships move center stage. When it comes time to choose a life mate and build a new family, the effects of divorce crescendo (p. xxix).

Wallerstein’s research, like nearly all of the studies in the same-sex parenting literature, is based on a small, non-representative sample that should not be generalized or overextended. Her longitudinal work does, however, indicate that “effects [can] crescendo” in adulthood. Did any peer-reviewed, same-sex parenting study cited by the 2005 APA Brief (pp. 23–45) track the societally significant long-term outcomes into adulthood? No.

Is it possible that “the major impact” of same-sex parenting might “not occur during childhood or adolescence...[and that it will rise] in adulthood as serious romantic relationships move center stage”? Is it possible that “when it comes time to choose a life mate and build a new family” that the effects of same-sex parenting will similarly “crescendo” as they did in Wallerstein’s study? It is possible.

From a scientific perspective, the unfortunate answer to the question regarding the long-term (i.e., adult) outcomes of lesbian and gay parenting is that we have no empirical basis for responding, because not a single peer-reviewed comparison study has followed same-sex parented children across time and into mid-adulthood. We now move to a final empirical question regarding the same-sex parenting literature.

***Question 7: Have the studies in this area committed the type II error and prematurely concluded that heterosexual couples and gay and lesbian couples produce similar parental outcomes?***

In social science research, our questions are typically framed as follows: “Are we 95 percent sure the two groups being compared are different?” ( $p < .05$ ). If our statistics seem to confirm a difference with 95 percent or greater confidence, then we say the two groups are “significantly different.” But what if, after statistical analysis, we are only 85 percent sure that the two groups are different? By the rules of standard social science, we would be obligated to say we were unable to satisfactorily conclude that the two groups are different. However, this reported finding of “no statistically significant difference” (at the  $p < .05$  level; 95percent-plus certainty) is a grossly inadequate basis upon which to offer the science-based claim that the groups were conclusively “the same.” In research,

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<sup>79</sup> Wilcox et al. 2011, p.11

incorrectly concluding that there is no difference between groups when there is in fact a difference is a Type II error. A Type II error is more likely whenever undue amounts of random variation are present in a study. Specifically, small sample size, unreliable measures, imprecise research methodology, or unaccounted-for variables can all increase the likelihood of a Type II error. All one would have to do to be able to come to a conclusion of “no difference” is to conduct a study with a small sample and/or sufficient levels of random variation. Such weaknesses compromise a study’s “statistical power” (Cohen, 1988). It must be re-emphasized that a conclusion of “no significant difference” means that it is unknown whether or not a difference exists. This conclusion does not necessarily mean that the two groups are the same. This point is especially important with same-sex parenting research because Patterson (1992, 2000) and the 2005 APA Brief seem to draw inferences of sameness based on the observation that gay and lesbian parents and heterosexual parents appear not to be statistically different from one another—thereby becoming vulnerable to a classic Type II error.

To make the APA’s proposition of sameness more precarious, in a review published one year after the APA Brief in the flagship APA journal, *American Psychologist*, Herek (2006) acknowledged that many same-sex parenting studies have “utilized small, select convenience samples and often employed unstandardized measures.”<sup>80</sup> Anderssen et al. (2002) similarly indicated in their review of same-sex parenting studies, “The samples were most often small, increasing the chance to conclude that no differences exist between groups when in fact the differences do exist. This casts doubt on the external validity of the studies.”<sup>81</sup> With these limitations noted, the 2005 APA Brief explicitly claimed that findings of non-significant differences between same-sex and heterosexual parents had been “repeatedly replicated” (p. 7, footnote 1). Many readers with more traditional scientific interpretations of replication are likely to view this as an overstatement for various reasons, including the sampling and measurement limitations acknowledged previously.

Another reason for skepticism is that “the logic of replication implies that different researchers are unlikely to make the same errors.”<sup>82</sup> However, if errors (e.g., similarly biased sampling approaches employing “small, select convenience samples”<sup>83</sup> and comparison groups) are repeated by different researchers, the logic behind replication is undermined. As has been previously detailed in the response to Question 1 in this article, same-sex parenting researchers have repeatedly selected White, well-educated, middle- and upper-class lesbians to represent same-sex parents. This tendency has recurred even after this bias was explicitly identified by Patterson (1992, 2000).<sup>84</sup> Further, repeated sampling tendencies in connection with heterosexual comparison groups (e.g., single mothers), were documented in response to Question 3 in this paper. Whether these repeated sampling tendencies across studies that employed different measures constitute valid scientific replication must be determined by the informed reader.

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<sup>80</sup> Herek, 2006, p. 612

<sup>81</sup> Anderssen et al., 2002, p. 348

<sup>82</sup> Neuman, 1997, p. 150

<sup>83</sup> Herek, 2006, p. 612

<sup>84</sup> Further, single mothers have been repeatedly selected to represent heterosexual parents as documented in this paper’s response to Question 3.

An additional scientific question raised by the above information regarding “small, select convenience”<sup>85</sup> samples is framed by Stacey and Biblarz (2001) who reveal that “many of these [comparative same-sex parenting] studies use conventional levels of significance...on miniscule samples, substantially increasing their likelihood of failing to reject the null hypothesis.”<sup>86</sup> Was the APA’s claim that “Not a single study has found children of lesbian or gay parents to be disadvantaged...”<sup>87</sup> based on clear scientific evidence or (perhaps) Type II errors?

The last three editions of the *APA Publication Manual* (1994, 2001, 2010) have urged scholars to report effect sizes and to take statistical power into consideration when reporting their results. The APA 5<sup>th</sup> Publication Manual (2001) in use at the time of APA’s 2005 Brief on Lesbian and Gay Parenting stated:

Take seriously the statistical power considerations associated with your tests of hypotheses. Such considerations relate to the likelihood of correctly rejecting the tested hypotheses, given a particular alpha level, effect size, and sample size. In that regard, you should routinely provide evidence that your study has power to detect effects of substantive interest (e.g., see Cohen, 1988). You should be similarly aware of the role played by sample size in cases in which not rejecting the null hypothesis is desirable (i.e., when you wish to argue that there are no differences [between two groups])... (p. 24).

The latter note regarding maintaining an awareness of statistical power in cases “when you wish to argue that there are no differences” bears directly on same-sex comparative research. The *APA 5<sup>th</sup> Publication Manual* (2001) continues:

Neither of the two types of probability [alpha level or *p* value] directly reflects the magnitude of an effect or the strength of a relationship. For the reader to fully understand the importance of your findings, it is almost always necessary to include some index of effect size or strength of relationship in your Results section (p. 25).

Let us restate three statements from the *APA 5<sup>th</sup> Publication Manual* (2001) for emphasis:

- 1) The APA urges researchers to: “Take seriously the statistical power considerations” and “routinely provide evidence” (p. 24).
- 2) The APA identifies a specific concern with “sample size” and statistical “power” in connection with cases where authors “wish to argue that there are no differences” between compared groups (p. 24).
- 3) The APA concludes: “It is almost always necessary to include some index of effect size or strength of relationship in your Results section” (p. 25).

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<sup>85</sup> Herek, 2006, p. 612

<sup>86</sup> Stacey & Biblarz, 2001, p. 168, footnote 9

<sup>87</sup> Patterson, p. 15 (from APA Brief, 2005)

Above, the APA's first exhortation is that an author "should routinely provide evidence that your study has sufficient power...(e.g., see Cohen, 1988)." The reference cited here by the APA is the volume *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) by the late psychometrician Jacob Cohen, who has been credited with foundational work in statistical meta-analysis (Borenstein, 1999). In his APA-cited volume, Cohen stated:

Most psychologists of whatever stripe believe that samples, even small samples, mirror the characteristics of their parent populations. In effect, they operate on the unstated premise that the law of large numbers holds for small numbers as well... [Citing Tversky and Kahneman] "The believer in the law of small numbers has incorrect intuitions about significance level, power, and confidence intervals. Significance levels are usually computed and reported, but power and confidence levels are not. Perhaps they should be."

But as we have seen, too many of our colleagues have not responded to [this] admonition.... They do so at their peril (p. xv).

First, let us briefly contextualize "the law of small numbers" with respect to the APA Brief-cited same-sex parenting studies. In response to Question 6, a study of family structure based on a nationally representative sample of 35,938 children was cited (Brown, 2004). By way of contrast, the combined non-representative sample total of all 59 same-sex parenting studies in the 2005 APA Brief (pp. 23–45) is 7,800<sup>88</sup>—about one-fifth (21.7 percent) the size of Brown's nationally representative sample for a single study.

We now turn to another question directly relating to Cohen's above statements: How many of the published same-sex parenting studies with a heterosexual comparison group cited in APA's Brief (pp. 23–45) "provide[d] evidence" of statistical power, consistent with APA's Publication Manual and the "admonition" of Jacob Cohen who is cited in the APA manual? An examination of the studies found only a few that did so.<sup>89</sup>

In the practice of closer examination that has led us through responses to the first six questions—let us take a closer look. In addition to Cohen's (1988) statement that statistical power is ignored at our own peril, he offered several tables in his volume for researchers to reference. Employing these tables, statistical experts Lerner and Nagai (2001) computed the sample sizes required for "a power level of .80, or a Type II error rate of .20, or one in five findings" (p. 102). At this power level, the minimum number of cases required to detect a small effect size<sup>90</sup> is 393 for a T-test or ANOVA, or 780-plus

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<sup>88</sup> This figure (7,800) includes all same-sex parents and their children, heterosexual comparison groups, psychologists, students, etc.

<sup>89</sup> These include Chan, Raboy, et al., 1998; Fulcher et al., 2002; Golombok & Tasker, 1996; Tasker & Golombok, 1997.

<sup>90</sup> By way of context, in a 67 study meta-analysis of the average differences in outcomes between children with "divorced and continuously married parents," Amato (2001) reported an average weighted effect size of between -0.12 and -0.22 (a -0.17 average) with an advantage in all five domains considered to children of continuously married parents (p. 360). These differences, although statistically robust and replicated, would be classified by most scholars as "small effect" sizes, not as "large effect" sizes. Even so, based on the data, most family scholars would agree that children whose parents remain continuously married tend to fare slightly to moderately better than when parents divorce. However, large numbers were needed to



for Chi-Square or Pearson Correlation Coefficient tests.<sup>91</sup> In Table A of this report, the 59 published same-sex parenting studies cited in the APA Brief (pp. 23–45) are compared against these standards. A close examination indicates that not a single study, including the few that reported power, meets these standards needed to detect a small effect size. Indeed, it appears that only two of the comparison studies (Bos et al., 2003; Bos et al., 2004) have combined sample sizes of even half of “the minimum number of cases.”<sup>92</sup>

In their book-length examination of same-sex parenting studies, Lerner and Nagai (2001) further indicate that 17 of the 22 same-sex parenting comparison studies they reviewed had been designed in such a way that the odds of *failing* to find a significant difference [between homo- and hetero-sexual groups] was 85 percent or higher.<sup>93</sup> Indeed, only one of the 22 studies they analyzed revealed a probability of Type II error below 77 percent, and that study *did* find differences.<sup>94</sup> These significant methodological concerns (and several others) are raised and explained in Lerner and Nagai’s monograph (see, especially, pp. 95–108; also Wardle, 1997). The significant concerns raised by Lerner and Nagai, however, are not substantively responded to in the 2005 APA Summary of Research Findings on Lesbian and Gay Parenting. Indeed, the Lerner and Nagai volume was never mentioned.

To restate, in connection with the APA’s published urging that researchers: “Take seriously the statistical power considerations” and “routinely provide evidence,” the academic reader is left at a disadvantage. Only four comparison studies specifically reported statistical power at all and no comparison study approached the minimum sample size of 393 needed to find a small effect.

Question 7 has examined how comparisons have been made from a research methods standpoint. In summary, some same-sex parenting researchers have correctly acknowledged that “miniscule samples”<sup>95</sup> significantly increase “the chance to conclude that no differences exist between groups when in fact the differences do exist”—thereby casting “doubt on the external validity of the studies.”<sup>96</sup> An additional concern is that the APA Brief’s claim of “repeatedly replicated” findings of no significant difference rested

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determine this “small” but important effect. Indeed, most effect sizes in social science research tend to be small. Rigorous and sound social science tends to include and account for many influential factors that each has a small but meaningful effect size. In social science, detecting a novel “large effect” from a single variable (whether it is divorce, remarriage, or same-sex parenting), is a comparatively rare occurrence. If we are to examine possible effects of same-sex parenting with scientific precision and rigor, related examinations would, like Amato’s work, be designed and refined to detect “small effect” sizes.

<sup>91</sup> Cohen (1988) proposes a “relatively high power” of .90 for cases where one is trying to “demonstrate the *r* [difference] is trivially small” (p. 104). If the .90 power were applied, the required sample sizes would further increase. However, because none of the studies in Table A of the present report approach the .80 power levels, .90 calculations are unnecessary here.

<sup>92</sup> The “minimum number of cases” is 393. The two Bos et al. studies both have combined samples of 200. The Crawford et al. (1999) study almost meets the minimum *N* of 393 (with 388). However, the study examines neither parents nor children; it is an examination of psychologists’ self-reports regarding attitudes. Similarly, King and Black (1999) examine perceptions of 338 college students.

<sup>93</sup> Lerner & Nagai, 2001, p. 103

<sup>94</sup> The single exception was Cameron and Cameron (1996) with a comparatively low probability error rate of 25 percent. This study, like the Sarantakos (1996) study mentioned earlier, did report some significant differences between children of heterosexual and homosexual parents but, like Sarantakos (1996), was not addressed in the body of the 2005 APA brief but was instead moved to a footnote on p. 7.

<sup>95</sup> Stacey & Biblarz, 2001, p. 168

<sup>96</sup> Anderssen et al., 2002, p. 348

almost entirely on studies that were published without reports of the APA-urged effect sizes and statistical power analyses.<sup>97</sup> This inconsistency seems to justify scientific skepticism. In light, however, of the finding that only two of the heterosexual comparison studies cited by Patterson in the APA Summary reach half of the required minimum sample size required to detect a small effect size, informed readers are offered an opportunity to assess the balance, precision, and rigor behind the conclusions posed in the 2005 APA Brief.

### ***Summary***

In 2005, the American Psychological Association (2005) claimed:

Not a single study has found children of lesbian or gay parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of heterosexual parents.<sup>98</sup>

Seven specific points of examination were presented at the outset of this article and were then respectively addressed. A restatement of these central questions and a summary of the examination-based responses are now offered.

***Question 1: How culturally, ethnically, and economically diverse were the gay/lesbian households in the published literature behind the APA brief?***

***Summary Response to Question 1:*** In a decade review on same-sex families, Patterson (2000), the author of the APA's Summary of Research Findings on Lesbian and Gay Parenting, reported the tendency of same-sex parenting researchers to select privileged lesbian samples. Specifically, "much of the research involved small samples that are predominantly White, well-educated [and] middle-class" (p. 1064).<sup>99</sup> Indeed, the reference list in APA's "Summary of Research Findings" (pp. 15-22) lists *no* studies that focus on African-American, Latin-American, or Asian-American families and several studies include no minority families at all. Further, there are almost no studies specifically examining outcomes of children of gay fathers. Although most same-sex parenting studies have been conducted with White, well-educated, middle- to upper-class lesbians, this group has been repeatedly employed by scholars in this domain to represent gay fathers and (all) lesbians, including those who are minority, poor, and less educated.

***Question 2: How many studies of gay/lesbian parents had no heterosexual comparison group?***

***Summary Response to Question 2:*** Of the 59 publications cited by the APA in the annotated bibliography section entitled "Empirical Studies Specifically Related to Lesbian and Gay Parents and Their Children" (pp. 23-45), only 33 involve a heterosexual comparison group, while 26 do not (44.1 percent). Accordingly, nearly half of the "Empirical Studies Specifically Related to Lesbian and Gay Parents and Their Children"

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<sup>97</sup> Schumm, 2010

<sup>98</sup> Patterson, p. 15 (from APA Brief, 2005)

<sup>99</sup> Patterson, 2000, p. 1064

referenced in the APA Brief (pp. 23–45) allowed no basis for comparison between these two groups (see Table A for documentation).

**Question 3: When there were comparison groups, which groups were compared?**

**Summary Response to Question 3:** Most same-sex parenting studies report “no significant differences” between groups. However, White, educated, middle- to upper-class lesbians have typically been selected to represent “same-sex parents” while single heterosexual mothers have been repeatedly selected to represent “heterosexual parents” in at least a dozen studies. Cohabiting heterosexual couples have also been used on occasion, but almost no studies undergirding the APA Brief explicitly employed marriage-based, intact families as the heterosexual comparison group.

**Question 4: Does a scientifically-viable study exist to contradict the APA’s published statement that “not a single study has found children of lesbian or gay parents to be disadvantaged”?**

**Summary Response to Question 4:** A study designed by a methodology expert (Sarantakos, 1996), did find several significant differences between intact and homosexual families in eight areas. Sarantakos concluded, “Overall, the study has shown that children of married couples are more likely to do well at school in academic and social terms, than children of cohabiting and homosexual couples.”<sup>100</sup> This study, however, was dismissed in the APA Brief by a footnote<sup>101</sup> and is disregarded in APA claims.

**Question 5: What types of outcomes have been investigated?**

**Summary Response to Question 5:** The present paper documents that while a score of papers on same-sex parenting address “gender” and related issues, the same claim cannot be made for myriad variables of critical societal and economic concern, including: (a) health, mortality, and suicide risks, (b) drug and alcohol abuse, (c) criminality and incarceration, (d) intergenerational poverty, (e) college education and/or labor force contribution, (f) early sexual activity and early childbearing, and (g) eventual divorce as adults. Indeed, these critical issues received almost no attention in the peer-reviewed scholarship on same-sex parenting that undergirded the APA Brief’s 2005 claim.

**Question 6: What do we know about the long-term outcomes of children of lesbian and gay parents?**

**Summary Response to Question 6:** The reader is reminded that most of the outcomes highlighted in Question 5 are not optimally observable until late adolescence and early to mid-adulthood. The empirical answer to the question regarding what is known about the long-term (i.e., adult) outcomes of lesbian and gay parenting is that *we have no empirical basis for responding*—no large-scale, peer-reviewed study has followed same-sex parented children across time and into mid-adulthood.

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<sup>100</sup> Sarantakos, 1996, p. 30

<sup>101</sup> APA Brief (Patterson), 2005, p. 6, footnote 1

**Question 7: Have the studies in this area committed the Type II error?**

**Summary Response to Question 7:** Same-sex parenting studies have not employed large enough samples to overcome the possibility, or probability, of the Type II error, thereby “substantially increasing [the] likelihood” of failing to find differences.<sup>102</sup> Further, significant critiques provided by social research methodology specialists Lerner and Nagai (2001) were not cited in the 2005 APA Brief.<sup>103</sup> If the conclusion to be drawn is that there are no parenting differences between same-sex and heterosexual couples, such a conclusion cannot be drawn at the present time, given this problem with the Type II error, pervasive in the same-sex parenting literature.

The APA Publication Manual urges researchers to “take seriously the statistical power considerations” and “routinely provide evidence” of adequate statistical power and effect sizes, however, a review of the 59 articles cited in the APA Brief (pp. 23-45), revealed that only a few complied. Further examination indicated that of the comparison studies, zero studies reached the “minimum requirement” of 393 to detect a small effect size. Indeed, only two comparison studies reached half of the minimum requirement.

**Conclusion**

We now return to the overarching question of this paper: *Are we witnessing the emergence of a new family form that (unlike cohabiting, divorced, or single-parent families) provides a context for children that is equivalent to the intact family?* Even after an extensive reading of the same-sex parenting literature, the author cannot offer a high confidence, data-based “yes” or “no” response to this question. The data are insufficient to support a strong claim either way, and thus insufficient to produce a definitive binary statement. Such a statement would not be grounded in science. Representative, large-sample studies are needed—many of them, including high quality longitudinal studies (i.e., Table B). Although some same-sex opponents have made “egregious overstatements”<sup>104</sup> and, conversely, some same-sex parenting researchers seem to have implicitly contended for an “exceptionally clear”<sup>105</sup> verdict of “no difference” between same-sex and heterosexual parents since 1992, a closer examination leads to the conclusion that strong assertions, including those made by the APA, were not empirically warranted.

The scientific conclusions in this domain will be clearer as researchers: (a) move from small convenience samples to larger nationally representative samples, (b) increasingly examine critical societal and economic concerns that emerge during adolescence and adulthood, (c) include more diverse same-sex families (e.g., gay fathers, racial minorities, and those without middle-high socioeconomic status), (d) include intact, marriage-based heterosexual families as comparison groups, and (e) acknowledge and respond to experts’ methodological critiques in the effort to refine and add validity and rigor to findings. In connection with this latter point, it is particularly vital that statistical power no longer be ignored. Taking these steps will help lead the field towards more

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<sup>102</sup> Anderssen et al., 2002; Lerner & Nagai, 2001; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001

<sup>103</sup> Lerner & Nagai, 2001; Schumm, 2004

<sup>104</sup> As indicated by Shiller (2007)

<sup>105</sup> Patterson, 1992

nuanced and scientifically informed responses to significant questions affecting families and children.

Author and Year	GayLes N	Hetero N	Stat Used	Cohen N	Stat Power	Outcome Studied	Hetero Compar Group
Bailey et al., 1995	55par,82chl	0	T-test/Chi	393	N/A	Sexual Orientation	None
Barrett & Tasker, 2001	101	0	T-test/Chi	393	N/A	Child Responses to a Gay Parent	None
Bigner & Jacobsen, 1989a	33	33	T-test	393	No	Parents Reports of Values of Children	Fathers
Bigner & Jacobsen, 1989b	33	33	T-test	393	No	Parent Reports of Parent Behavior	Fathers
Bos et al., 2003	100	100	MANOVA	393	No	Parental Motives and Desires	Families
Bos et al., 2004	100	100	MANOVA	393	No	Parent Reports of Couple Relations	Families
Bozett, 1980	18	0	Qualitative	N/A	N/A	Father Disclosure of Homosexuality	None
Brewaeys et al., 1997	30	68	ANOVA	393	No	Emotional/Gender Development	DI/Non-DI Couples
Chan, Brooks, et al., 1998	30	16	Various	393	No	Division of Labor/ChildAdj	DI Couples
Chan, Raboy, et al., 1998	55	25	ANOVA	393	Reported	Psychosocial Adjustment	DI Couples
Ciano-Boyce & Shelley-Sireci, 2002	67	44	ANOVA	393	No	Division of Child Care	Adoptive Parents
Crawford et al., 1999	0	0	MANOVA	393	Almost	388 Psychologists' Attitudes	N/A
Flaks et al., 1995	15	15	MANOVA	393	No	Cognitive/Behavioral/Parenting	Married Couples
Fulcher et al., 2002	55	25	T-test/Chi	393	Reported	DI/Adult-Child Relationships	Parents
Gartrell et al., 1996	154	0	Descript	N/A	N/A	Prospective Parent Reports	None
Gartrell et al., 1999	156	0	Descript	N/A	N/A	Reports on Parenting Issues	None
Gartrell et al., 2000	150	0	Descript	N/A	N/A	Reports on Parenting Issues	None
Gartrell et al., 2005	74	0	Descript	N/A	N/A	Health, School/Education	None
Gershon et al., 1999	76	0	Reg.	390	N/A	Adolescent coping	None
Golombok et al., 1983	27	27	T-test/Chi	393	No	Psychosexual Development	Single Mother Families
Golombok et al., 2003	39	134	Various	393	No	Socioemotional Dev./Relations	Couples & Singles
Golombok & Rust, 1993	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Reliability Testing of a Pre-School Gender Inventory	
Golombok & Tasker, 1996	25	21	Pearson	783	Reported	Sexual Orientation	Children of Single Mothers
Golombok et al., 1997	30	83	MANOVA/r	393	No.	Parent-Child Interactions	Couples & Singles
Green, 1978	37	0	Descript	N/A	N/A	Sexual Identity	None
Green et al., 1986	50par,56chl	40par,48chl	Various	390	No	Sexual Identity/Social Relations	Single Mothers
Harris & Turner, 1986	23	16	ANOVA	393	No	Sex Roles/Relationship with Child	Single Moth. & Fath.
Hoeffler, 1981	20	20	ANOVA	393	No	Sex-role Behavior	Single Mothers
Huggins, 1989	18	18	T-test	393	No	Self-Esteem of Adolescent Children	Divorced Mothers
Johnson & Connor, 2002	415	0	Various	N/A	No	Parenting Beliefs/Division of Labor/etc.	None
King & Black, 1999	N/A	N/A	F	393	N/A	338 College Students' Perceptions	N/A
Kirkpatrick et al., 1981	20	20	Descript	N/A	No	Gender Development	Single Mothers
Koepke et al., 1992	47 couples	0	MANOVA	N/A	N/A	Relationship quality	None
Kweskin & Cook, 1982	22	22	Chi-Sqr	785	No	Sex-Role Behavior	Single Mothers

Lewis, 1980	21	0	Qualitative	N/A	N/A	Child Response to M. Disclosure	None
Lott-Whitehead & Tully, 1993	45	0	Descriptive	N/A	N/A	Adult Reports of Impacts on Children	None
Lyons, 1983	43	37	Descriptive	N/A	No	Adult Self-Reports	Divorced Mothers
McLeod et al., 1999	0	0	Mult. Repr.	N/A	No	151 College Student Reports	N/A
Miller, 1979	54	0	Qualitative	N/A	N/A	Father Behavior & F-Child Bond	None
Miller et al., 1981	34	47	Chi-Sqr	785	No	Mother Role/Home Environment	Mothers
Morris et al., 2002	2,431	0	MANCOVA	N/A	N/A	Adult Reports on "Coming Out"	None
Mucklow & Phelan, 1979	34	47	Chi-Sqr	785	No	Behavior and Self-Concept	Married Mothers
O'Connell, 1993	11	0	Qualitative	N/A	N/A	Social and Sexual Identity	None
Pagelow, 1980	20	23	Qual/Descr.	N/A	N/A	Problems and Coping	Single Mothers
Patterson, 1994	66	0	T-test	393	No	Social/Behavioral/Sexual Identity	Available Norms
Patterson, 1995	52	0	T-test/Chi/F	393	No	Division of Labor/Child Adjustment	None
Patterson, 2001	66	0	Various	393	No	Maternal Mental Health/Child Adjus.	None
Patterson et al., 1998	66	0	Various	393	No	Contact w/Grandparents & Adults	None
Rand, Graham, & Rawlings, 1982	25	0	Correlations	783	No	Mothers' Psychological Health	None
Sarantakos, 1996	58	116	F-test	393	N/A	Children's Educational/Social Outcomes	Married/Non-married
Siegenthaler & Bigner, 2000	25	26	T-test	393	No	Mothers' Value of Children	Mothers
Steckel, 1987	(Review)	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	Psychosocial Development of Children	None
Sullivan, 1996	34 couples	0	Qualitative	N/A	N/A	Division of Labor	None
Tasker & Golombok, 1995	25	21	Pearson	783	No	Psychosocial/Sexual Orientation	Single Mothers
Tasker & Golombok, 1997	27	27	Various	393	Reported	Psychological Outcomes/Family Rel.	Single Mothers
Tasker & Golombok, 1998	15	84	ANCOVA/Chi	785	N/A	Work and Family Life	DI & NC Couples
Vanfraussen et al., 2003	24	24	ANOVA	393	No	Donor Insemination/Family Funct.	Families
Wainwright et al., 2004	44	44	Various	393	No	Psychosocial/School/Romantic	Couples
Wright, 1998	5	0	Qualitative	N/A	N/A	Family Issues/Processes/Meaning	None

N/A = Not Applicable (e.g., in connection with Statistical Power, qualitative studies and studies without heterosexual comparison groups are coded as N/A).

**Table B: Brief Overview of Intact/Divorce/Step/Single Family Studies**

(N): Number of reported participants  
 Probability: Is the study based on a Probability Sample?  
 Comp Grp: Is a probability sample used as a comparison group?  
 Long: Does the study employ measurements across time?  
 Key: ! = Yes; X = No

	(N)	Probability	Comp Grp	Long
<b>Amato, 1991</b>	9,643	!	!	!
<b>Aquilino, 1994</b>	4,516	!	!	!
<b>Booth &amp; Amato, 2001</b>	629	!	!	!
<b>Brown, 2004<sup>106</sup></b>	35,938	!	!	X
<b>Chase-Lansdale et al., 1995<sup>107</sup></b>	17,414	!	!	!
<b>Cherlin et al., 1998<sup>108</sup></b>	11,759	!	!	!
<b>Ellis et al. 2003</b>	762	!	!	!
<b>Harper &amp; McLanahan, 2004<sup>109</sup></b>	2,846	!	!	!
<b>Hetherington &amp; Kelly, 2002<sup>110</sup></b>	1,400	!	!	!
<b>Jekielek, 1998</b>	1,640	!	!	!
<b>Lichter et al., 2003<sup>111</sup></b>	7,665	!	!	X
<b>Manning &amp; Lamb, 2003</b>	13,231	!	!	X
<b>McLanahan &amp; Sandefur, 1994 (based on 4 data sets):</b>				
<b>PSID<sup>112</sup></b>	2,900	!	!	!
<b>NLSY<sup>113</sup></b>	5,246	!	!	!
<b>HSBS<sup>114</sup></b>	10,400	!	!	!
<b>NSFH<sup>115</sup></b>	13,017 <sup>116</sup>	!	!	!
<b>Mitchell et al., 2009<sup>117</sup></b>	4,663	!	!	!
<b>Nock, 1998<sup>118</sup></b>	3,604	!	!	!
<b>Page &amp; Stevens, 2005<sup>119</sup></b>	2,023	!	!	!
<b>Rickel &amp; Langer, 1985</b>	1,000+	!	!	!

<sup>106</sup> National Survey of America's Families (NSAF)

<sup>107</sup> United Kingdom study and sample

<sup>108</sup> United Kingdom study and sample

<sup>109</sup> National Longitudinal Survey of Young Men and Women (NLSY)

<sup>110</sup> Virginia Longitudinal Study (VLS)

<sup>111</sup> National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG)

<sup>112</sup> Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID)

<sup>113</sup> National Longitudinal Survey of Young Men and Women (NLSY)

<sup>114</sup> The High School and Beyond Study (HSBS)

<sup>115</sup> National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH)

<sup>116</sup> This is the total original sample. The sub-sample is unlisted but is likely smaller.

<sup>117</sup> National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health)

<sup>118</sup> National Longitudinal Survey of Young Men and Women (NLSY)

<sup>119</sup> Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID)



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