

A Review and Analysis of Research Studies Which Assessed Sexual Preference of Children Raised by Homosexuals

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I conducted a review of all the studies I could locate which assessed sexual preference in homosexually parented children. I had only two criteria for inclusion in my review:

First, the authors of the study had to be **pro**-homosexual researchers, otherwise I was concerned that critics would simply disregard the results. And second, I only sought studies that utilized subjects 18 years of age or older, since many individuals don't self-identify as non-heterosexual until after that age (Patterson, 1992). Unfortunately, few studies met the minimum 18-years-of-age criteria. So, in order to maximize the number of studies in my survey, I included studies with subjects as young as 14 years of age. Because of the inclusion of studies with such young subjects, the reported percentages of **non**-heterosexual children may be **under**-estimates.

Pro-homosexual researchers frequently claim studies find "no differences" between children raised by homosexuals and heterosexuals. Amazingly, these claims are made in the abstracts of research studies that actually uncovered differences (Williams, 2000). The tendency to deny or downplay differences has been noted by pro-homosexual parenting researchers. After reviewing 21 studies, Stacey and Biblarz (2001) concluded that in regards to gender, sexual behavior and sexual preference, homosexually parented children **are** different from heterosexually parented children. But despite such findings, many continue to proclaim "no differences" in order to galvanize support for homosexual access to fertility services, adoption, custody, and same-sex marriage. Encouraging support for a cause is fine, as long as the information being disseminated is true. But in this case, it isn't.

Other researchers have reviewed homosexual parenting studies in general and concluded that they're either too problematic to make **definitive** claims (Belcastro, Gramlich, Nicholson, Price, and Wilson, 1993; Baumrind, 1995) or so methodologically flawed that **no** conclusions can be drawn (Lerner and Nagai, 2001)

Pro-homosexual parenting researchers and other activists can't have it both ways. Either the findings of these studies are valid and homosexual parents **are** more likely to raise non-heterosexual children, or these studies aren't valid and assertions of "no difference" can't be made.

I think that although these studies can't be used to make **definitive** statements, they are suggestive that homosexual parents are rearing disproportionate numbers of non-heterosexual children. This isn't surprising since parents are the primary influencers of children. Children raised by parents with different lifestyles, values, and attributes, are likely to be different from other children (Baumrind 1995). Stacey and Biblarz (2001) wrote, "... it is difficult to conceive of a credible theory of sexual development that would not expect the adult children of lesbian parents to display a somewhat higher incidence of homoerotic desire, behavior, and identity than children of heterosexual parents."

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the methodological flaws in the existing homosexual-parenting studies (including small, non-representative samples, lack of control groups, and non-longitudinal designs) highlight the need for scientifically rigorous and unbiased research, so that more definitive conclusions concerning sexual and gender identity outcomes of homosexually parented children can be drawn. In the meantime, we look to existing studies for suggestive trends.

The Review:

This review is a survey of nine studies that met the previously delineated criteria. The findings are limited by the weaknesses, limitations, and problems already described (Belcastro, et. al., 1993; Baumrind, 1995; Lerner and Nagai, 2001). It is descriptive in nature and offered for general informational purposes only.

Based on the average found in the following nine studies, 14% of children raised by homosexual parents develop homosexual or bisexual preferences. These studies reported rates of non-heterosexuality ranging from 8% to 21%. The most frequently reported percentages were 14% and 16% (two studies each). For comparison purposes, data from the best national surveys report that approximately 2% of the general population is non-heterosexual (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, and Michaels, 1994). Therefore, if these percentages hold true in better designed studies, children raised by homosexuals appear to be about seven times more likely to develop homosexual or bisexual preferences than children raised by heterosexuals. And, as was explained earlier, 14% may be an under-estimate due to the young ages of many of the subjects in these studies.

The nine studies surveyed are reviewed below and include the authors' abstracts or descriptions provided by others, followed by my own comments and/or analysis. They are presented in alphabetical order.

Bailey, J. M., Bobrow, D., Wolfe, M, & Mikach, S. (1995). Sexual orientation of adult sons of gay fathers. *Developmental Psychology*, 31(1), 124-129.

Authors' Abstract:

"The sexual development of children of gay and lesbian parents is interesting for both scientific and social reasons. The present study is the largest to date to focus on the sexual orientation of adult sons of gay men. From advertisements in gay publications, 55 gay or bisexual men were recruited who reported on 82 sons at least 17 years of age. More than 90% of sons whose sexual orientation could be rated were heterosexual. Furthermore, gay and heterosexual sons did not differ on potentially relevant variables such as length of time they had lived with their fathers. Results suggest that any environmental influence of gay fathers on their sons' sexual orientation is not large."

My Comments:

This study used two methods for rating non-heterosexuality in adult sons of homosexual fathers. First, they asked fathers to rate whether their sons were heterosexual or non-heterosexual. Fathers who reported being at least "virtually certain" of their son's sexual preference, reported that seven out of 75 sons, or 9%, were non-heterosexual. It should be noted that two sons whose fathers were only "moderately certain" their sons were non-heterosexual were **excluded** from the analysis. If those two sons had been included the percentage of non-heterosexual sons would have risen to 12%. The second method used to assess the number of non-heterosexual sons of homosexual fathers was self-report by the sons. Of the 43 sons who rated themselves, six out of 43, or 14% self-identified as non-heterosexual. Certainly, the percentage of non-heterosexual sons is best ascertained by the report of the sons themselves, therefore the 14% figure likely is the more accurate measure for this sample. In their discussion, the authors acknowledge that based on several large-scale, population-based surveys "it could be argued, the rate of homosexuality in the sons (9%) is several times higher than that suggested by the population-based surveys." And, the 14% figure of self-identified non-heterosexual sons is higher still. Note how the authors' own abstract downplays those findings.

Bozett, F.W. (1988). Social control of identity of children of gay fathers. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 10(5), 550-565.

Bozett's Demographic Description:

[Bozette's study included] "19 subjects, 13 females and 6 males, representing 14 gay fathers. Children's ages ranged from 14 to 35; 9 were in their teens, 6 in their 20s, and 4 were between 30 and 35. All of the children were biological, except 1 who was adopted at the age of 2 by a single man. Two of the six males identified themselves as gay, 1 female said she was bisexual, and the remainder of the women

reported they were heterosexual."

My Comments:

Overall, 16% of those in Bozett's sample self-identified as non-heterosexual, a figure eight times higher than the national average. Additionally, many theorists believe that there may be differential impacts on homosexually-parented children depending on the sex of the homosexual parent and the sex of the child. So, perhaps most dramatic among Bozett's findings is the fact that **33%** of the male children of homosexual fathers identified themselves as homosexual. And, these results may be an under-estimate because nearly half of Bozette's subjects were teenagers who may eventually label themselves as non-heterosexual.

Goldberg, A. (2007). (How) does it make a difference? Perspectives of adults with lesbian, gay, and bisexual parents. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 77(4), 550-562.

The Author's Abstract:

"Few studies have addressed the experiences or perceptions of adult children of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) parents. In this study, 46 adult children of LGB parents were interviewed, and their perceptions of how growing up with LGB parents influenced them as adults were examined. Qualitative analysis revealed that adults felt that they were more tolerant and open-minded and had more flexible ideas about gender and sexuality as a function of growing up with LGB parents. Participants often felt protective of their parents and the gay community, and some went to great efforts to defend them to peers, family members, and society. Some participants struggled with issues of trust in adulthood, which they related to the experience of their parents' unexpected coming out, as well as to experiences of teasing and bullying. The importance of understanding these findings in the context of societal heterosexism is discussed."

My Comments:

The subjects in Goldberg's study ranged in age from 19 to 50. In this study, 91% of them believed that having non-heterosexual parents "influenced their ideas about gender and relationships," and "felt having LGB parents had led them to develop less rigid and more flexible notions and ideas about sexuality and gender." Based on those beliefs, it's not surprising that 17% of Goldberg's subjects identified themselves as non-heterosexual (lesbian, bisexual or gender-queer). Goldberg summed up her findings and the findings of others by stating that children of LGB parents are "socialized to question rigid and confining notions of sexuality and gender and to view a range of sexual and gender identities as appropriate...." Goldberg's study lends direct support to the belief offered by other researchers (Baumrind, 1995; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001) that the sexual attitudes and lifestyles of parents **do** influence the attitudes and lifestyles of their children.

Golombok, S. & Tasker, F. (1996). Do parents influence the sexual orientation of their children? Findings from a longitudinal study of lesbian families. *Developmental Psychology*, 32, 3-11.

The Authors' Abstract:

"Findings are presented of a longitudinal study of the sexual orientation of adults who had been raised as children in lesbian families. Twenty-five children of lesbian mothers and a control group of 21 children of heterosexual single mothers were first seen at age 9.5 years on average, and again at age 23.5 years of age. Standardized interviews were used to obtain data on sexual orientation from the young adults in the follow-up study, and on family characteristics and children's gender role behavior from the mothers and their children in the initial study. Although those from lesbian families were more likely to explore same-sex relationships, particularly if their childhood family environment was characterized by an openness and acceptance of lesbian and gay relationships, the large majority of children who grew up in lesbian families identified as heterosexual."

My Comments:

Although flawed, this study is considered one of the best crafted studies assessing

differences between homosexually and heterosexually parented children because of its longitudinal design (Williams, 2000). This study found that 8% of the adult children raised by lesbian parents self-identified as non-heterosexual, but in order to be coded as non-heterosexual in this study, the adult child had to currently identify as non-heterosexual **and** commit to a future identity as a non-heterosexual—a very unusual method for coding non-heterosexuality. Using such a method likely led to some individuals who currently self-identified as non-heterosexual **not** being counted as such. However, the unusual coding method may explain another of this study's findings. When you examine the Kinsey Ratings listed in Table 2, a total of 16% of the participants indicated bisexual or homosexual levels of sexual attraction. If you compare the two groups (children raised by lesbians versus children raised by heterosexuals) using the 16% figure, there **are** significant differences between the groups (Throckmorton, 2004). The authors didn't mention this point or offer any explanations or comments about it. Nonetheless, 16% of those reared by lesbians had homosexual or bisexual levels of same-sex attraction, while 0% of the children of heterosexuals did. **That's 16% compared to 0%**. Additionally, 67% of the children from lesbian family backgrounds said that they had "previously considered, or thought it a future possibility, that they might experience same-gender attraction or have a same-gender sexual relationship or both" compared to 14% of children from heterosexual families. **That's 67% compared to 14%**. And finally, 24% of the homosexually parented young adults had actually experienced one or more homosexual sexual relationships, while none of the young adults reared by heterosexuals had. **That's 24% compared to 0%**. And finally, if you subtract 16% (the percentage of adult-children in this sample who are sexually attracted to members of their own sex) from 24% (the percentage of adult-children in this sample who actually engaged in a homosexual relationship) you have 8%. That means 8% of this sample of adult-children reared by lesbians had a homosexual relationship even though they weren't sexually attracted to same-sex partners.

Clearly, this study uncovered several striking differences between homosexually and heterosexually parented children. And those differences are in keeping with the belief that homosexual parents can and do influence the sexual behavior of their children. But despite the **many** intriguing differences revealed between the two groups in this study, the authors' abstract either downplays or omits them. Moreover, this study is often cited by pro-homosexual researchers as showing that there are no differences between children reared by homosexuals versus others.

Hays, D.& Samuels, A. (1989). Heterosexual women's perceptions of their marriages to bisexual or homosexual men. In F. Bozett (Ed.), Homosexuality and the family (pp. 81-100). New York: Harrington Park Press.

The Authors' Summary (in part):

"Twenty-one heterosexual women who were or had been married to bisexual or homosexual men and had children by them responded to a 28-page questionnaire that explored their experiences as wives and mothers..."

My Comments:

Hays and Samuels found that approximately 12% of the children in their sample who were 16-years-old or older were reported by their mothers to be homosexual. Unfortunately, the authors didn't report a gender breakdown of the non-heterosexual children, so assessment of differences between boys and girls of non-heterosexual fathers couldn't be calculated. And, the reported percentage of non-heterosexual children was based on the mothers' reports, though self-reports by the children would have been preferable. This was another study that may have under-estimated the numbers of non-heterosexual children due to the young ages of many of its subjects.

Haack-Moller, A. & Mohl, H. (1984). Born af lesbiske modre [Children of lesbian mothers]. *Dansk Psykolog Nyt*, 38, 316-318.

Description of Haack-Moller & Mohl's Study:

Haack-Moller and Mohl did a 10 year follow-up study of children raised by lesbian mothers. The original study was conducted by Nini Leick and John Nielsen. Haack-Moller and Mohl were able to contact 13 of the original 15 children and all 13 agreed

to be re-interviewed. The sample of children consisted of 6 boys and 7 girls ranging in age from 14 to 31. Of this small sample, 1 child of a lesbian mother was reported as having a homosexual preference, representing 8% of the total.

Haack-Moller and Mohl stated that the mothers' lesbianism had been problematic for the children. Overall, it was most difficult for the sons, although children of both sexes reported negative reactions and problems with peers. Moreover, all of the children had, at one time, expressed the wish for a father and "a real family."

My Comments:

Another small sample utilizing children as young as 14, thereby increasing the chances that 8% is an under-estimate of the true percentage of non-heterosexuals in this sample. Unfortunately, the sex of the one homosexual child was not identified so assessment of differing impacts on sons versus daughters can't be explored.

Miller, B. (1979). Gay fathers and their children. *The Family Coordinator*, 28(4), 544-552.

The Author's Abstract:

"Depth interviews were conducted with a snowball sample of 40 gay fathers and 14 of their children. Questions addressed the nature and quality of the fathering as experienced by both the men and their offspring. Four issues often raised in gay parent custody cases are examined. Data indicate that notions about gay fathers' compensatory behavior, molestation of children, negative influence on child development, and instigation of harassment are largely unfounded. The father's "coming out" to his children tends to relieve family tension and strengthen the father-child bond."

My Comments:

The children of homosexual fathers in this study ranged in age from 14 to 33 years old. Based on the fathers' reports, 8% of the children were homosexual. However, 14% of the children who were **directly** interviewed identified themselves as homosexual. Again, self-reports are more reliable than parental reports. And, this is another study that included children under 18 years of age, a group more likely to include individuals who won't self-identify as non-heterosexual until later in life. Unfortunately, the author doesn't offer an age breakdown, so the percentage of children in the under-18-years-of-age category isn't known.

O'Connell, A. (1993). Voices from the heart: The developmental impact of a mother's lesbianism on her adolescent children. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 63, 281-299.

The Author's Abstract:

"This article is based upon a study exploring the impact of a divorced mother's lesbian orientation on her children, as they experience adolescence within a homophobic culture. Sexual identity issues and friendships are highlighted. Findings indicate profound loyalty and protectiveness toward the mother, openness to diversity, and sensitivity to the effects of prejudice. Subjects reported strong needs for peer affiliation and perceived secrecy regarding mother's lesbianism as necessary for relationship maintenance. Other concerns, abating over time, were unrealized fears of male devaluation and homosexuality. Pervasive sadness about the parental breakup remained and wishes for family reunification were relinquished when mother "came out."

My Comments:

O'Connell's sample was very small, consisting of just six young women (ages 16 - 23) and five young men (ages 19 - 23). Nine percent of O'Connell's sample self-identified as non-heterosexual. The two major concerns expressed by the children following their mother's disclosure of homosexuality was "confusion about homosexuality and the fear of becoming homosexual." Additionally, many of the children also openly verbalized "feelings of anger, disappointment, and resentment." O'Connell also thought it likely that "the road to a stable sexual identity contained some experiences that made for a different experience [for these children] than for

their peers... " Unfortunately, O'Connell doesn't expound on that theory.

Paul, J.P. (1986). Growing up with a gay, lesbian, or bisexual parent: an exploratory study of experiences and perceptions. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

Description of Paul's Dissertation by Patterson (1992):

"A study involving interviews with the young adult sons and daughters of lesbian, gay, or bisexual parents was reported by Paul (1986). In the interview, respondents (aged 18-28 years) were asked to report on their own sexual orientation. Of the 34 respondents, two identified themselves as bisexual, three identified themselves as lesbians, and two as gay men. Thus, about 15% of the sample identified themselves as gay or lesbian. Again, this figure was within the normal range of variability in the population."

My Comments:

Although 15% of Paul's sample did self-identify as gay or lesbian, another 6% identified themselves as bisexual. It seems odd that even though bisexual parents were included and counted as such, bisexual children were excluded from the total quoted above. The reason Patterson omitted bisexual children from the total isn't known. But, regardless of the reason, 21% of Paul's sample of young adults raised by non-heterosexual parents identified themselves as non-heterosexual. Moreover, Patterson's comment that the 15% finding was "within the normal range of variability in the population" is not explained. As has been previously described, the most accurate figures to date are that approximately 2% of the general population is non-heterosexual. So, even if comparing just the lower figure of 15%, Paul's sample of non-heterosexuals is 7.5 times higher than would be expected, while the 21% figure is 10.5 times higher.

Brief Summary of Review and Final Comments:

The preceding nine studies suggest that children raised by homosexual or bisexual parents are approximately 7 times more likely than the general population to develop a non-heterosexual sexual preference. These findings are not surprising. Referring to work by Ford and Beach, Amy Butler (2005) of the University of Iowa wrote, "... sexual behavior, including the gender of one's preferred sexual partner, is largely socially learned. Children are taught at an early age how to express their sexual urges by being rewarded for approved activities and punished for socially disapproved behavior." Obviously, non-heterosexual parents **would** be more accepting of non-heterosexual behavior on the part of their children. And, in fact, studies have revealed that some lesbian mothers actually **prefer** that their daughters become lesbian and many of their daughters reportedly know it (Tasker and Golombok, 1997). Butler (2005) concludes, "Findings from anthropological and sociological research and from twin studies indicate that there is a **substantial** [emphasis mine] environmental component to whether a person takes a same-sex sexual partner...." Being raised by a parent who exhibits or endorses non-heterosexual behavior would certainly be considered a potent environmental force, and thus the fact that a disproportionate number of homosexually parented children develop same-sex attractions shouldn't be surprising to anyone.

Following their review of 21 studies, **pro-homosexual** parenting researchers Stacey and Biblarz (2001) concluded: "Children with lesbigay parents appear less traditionally gender-typed and more likely to be open to homoerotic relationships...The evidence, while scanty and underanalyzed, hints that parental sexual orientation is positively associated with the possibility that children will be more likely to attain a similar orientation." Ann Pelligrini, associate Professor at NYU put it more bluntly, "queer families are going to produce queer kids" (Bronski, 2001).

When Stacey and Biblarz (2001) revealed that the "no difference" research had actually uncovered differences between children raised by homosexual and heterosexual parents, Paula Ettlebrick of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force said that they had "burst the bubble of one of the best kept community secrets." Keeping that secret has proven to be a wise strategy that has served the homosexual community well, influencing both court decisions and public opinion

(Clarke, 2002).

The purpose of this review is to ensure that research findings regarding outcomes for homosexually parented children are honestly and forthrightly revealed to the public. Although greatly flawed, the research studies we have to date suggest that non-heterosexuals are far more likely to raise non-heterosexual children than heterosexuals. If long-standing sociopolitical opinions and legal restrictions regarding homosexual parenting are to be changed, it's only right it be done by a fully informed citizenry.

Additional References:

Baumrind, D. (1995). Commentary on sexual orientation: Research and social policy implications. *Developmental Psychology*, 31 (1), 130-136.

Belcastro, P.A., Gramlich, T., Nocholson, T., Price, J., & Wilson, R. (1993). A review of the data based studies addressing the effects of homosexual parenting on children's sexual and social functioning. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 20 (1/2), 105-122.

Bronski, M. (2001). "Queer as your Folks: A New Study says Gay Parents Create Gay Kids. How Will This Research be Used by Conservatives and Liberals?" The Boston Phoenix, August 21, 2001.

Butler, A. C. (2005). Gender differences in same-sex sexual partnering, 1988-2002. *Social Forces*, 84, 41-449.

Clarke, V. (2002). Sameness and difference in research on lesbian parenting. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 12, 210-222.

Lauman E.O., Gagnon, J.H., Michael, R.T., & Michaels, S. (1994). *The social organization of sexuality: Sexual practices in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lerner, R. & Nagai, A. (2001). *No Basis: What the studies don't tell you about same-sex parenting*. Washington, DC: Marriage Law Project.

Patterson, C.J. (1992). Children of lesbian and gay parents. *Child Development*, 63, 1025-1042.

Stacey, J. & Biblarz, T.J. (2001). (How) does the sexual orientation of parents matter? *American Sociological Review*, 66, 159-183.

Throckmorton, W. (2004). "Do Parents Influence the Sexual Preference of Children?" Available on the web at www.drthrockmorton.com.

References Related to the Non-Genetic Basis of Homosexuality:

Bailey, J.M., Dunne, M.P., & Martin, N.G. (2000). Genetic and environmental influences on sexual orientation and its correlates in an Australian twin sample. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78 (3), 524-536.

Bailey is a well-known **pro-genetic-basis-for-homosexuality** researcher, but as a result of this study Bailey and colleagues wrote, "ours did not provide statistically significant support for the importance of genetic factors for [sexual orientation]."

Bearman, P.S., & Bruckner, H. (2002). Opposite-sex twins and adolescent same-sex attraction. *American Journal of Sociology*, 107 (5), 1179-1205.

Bearman and Bruckner found no support for a genetic influence, but did find support for a socialization model of male homosexuality.

Council for Responsible Genetics (2006). "Brief on Sexual Orientation and Genetic Determinism." Available on the web at www.gene-watch.org.

"... to date, no conclusive link between genetics and sexual orientation has been found."

Mustanski, B.S., Dupree, M.G., Nievergelt, C.M., Bocklandt, S., Schork, N.J., & Hamer, D.H. (2005). A genomewide scan of male sexual orientation. *Human Genetics*, 116 (4), 272-278.

Mustanski and colleagues, including Dean Hamer (another well-known **pro-genetic-basis-for-homosexuality researcher**), found no part of the entire human genome linked in any statistically significant way to male homosexuality.

Whitehead, N.E. & Whitehead, B. (originally published in 1999). "My Genes Made Me Do It! - A Scientific Look at Sexual Orientation." Constantly updated and available on the web at www.mygenes.co.nz.

Dr. Neil Whitehead is a research scientist who has authored over 120 published scientific papers. This current book is based on a comprehensive 13 year review of over 10,000 scientific papers and publications on homosexuality. Whitehead writes, "Geneticists, anthropologists, developmental psychologists, sociologists, endocrinologists, neuroanatomists, medical researchers into gender, and twin study researchers are in broad agreement about the role of genetics in homosexuality. Genes don't make you do it. There is no genetic determinism, and genetic influence at most is minor."

Reference for a General Understanding of Behavioral Genetics:

Baker, C. (2004). "Behavioral Genetics." Available on the web at www.aaas.org. Washington D.C: American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). The AAAS also publishes the journal *Science*.

"So when next you see an article that proclaims, "Gene for *[insert human behavior here]* discovered," read it with a critical eye... The pervasive role of genes in behavior does not mean what it is commonly misunderstood to mean. It does not mean that a gene or even several genes can make you act in any particular way. It does not mean that a behavior can "pass down through the genes." Such claims are not accepted in behavioral genetics... So while we do inherit our genes, we do not inherit behavior traits in any fixed sense. The effect of our given set of genes on our behavior is entirely dependent upon the context of our life as it unfolds day to day."

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