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# More Heat Than Light: A Critical Assessment of the Gay Parenting Literature, 1995--2010

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# More Heat Than Light: A Critical Assessment of the Gay Parenting Literature, 1995–2010

By Douglas W. Allen<sup>□</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Since 1995 there have been fifty-two studies of gay parenting which include some type of child outcome measure. The vast majority of these studies conclude that children raised by gay parents perform as well, if not better, than their counterparts in heterosexual families. This conclusion, which may or may not be true, is not scientifically warranted due to the limitations of the studies. These include: some results are misreported; the entire literature is exploratory in nature and made up of small qualitative samples, biased data, and other research design failures; the studies concentrate almost exclusively on lesbian families; and outcome measures have been limited. Although these problems prevent scientific generalizations, social scientists have treated the preliminary, non-conclusive research as authoritative. Regardless of what science ultimately demonstrates about same-sex couples or gay single parents as a family structure, it is important to safeguard the research process from political pressures: either anti-gay marriage or pro-gay rights.

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## 1. Introduction

Within the past forty years a small empirical literature has developed to study the effects on children of growing up within a gay household.<sup>1</sup> Despite the various differences in each study, the vast majority have the same conclusion: children of gay parents perform at least as well as children from heterosexual families: there is no difference in child outcomes based on family structure. This conclusion has played a major role in legal cases, legislation, and professional opinions on gay family rights.<sup>2</sup> For several reasons the literature is unlike many others within social science. First, it partly arose from, and was strongly influenced by, legal cases in which lesbian mothers were denied custody of their children based on their sexual orientation. Second, for the most part it is written by individuals with strong personal world views that sympathize with those studied. Third, the focus of the literature is often on “soft” measures of child and family performance that are not easily verifiable by third party replication, and which differ substantially from measures used in other family studies.<sup>3</sup> And finally, almost all of the literature on gay parenting

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<sup>1</sup> A note on nomenclature. The non-heterosexual world is varied, loosely defined, fluid, and evolving in terms of labels for various sexual orientations. This makes it cumbersome to find a word(s) to describe this community as a class of people. The word “homosexual” might seem to fit as an umbrella term, but it is seldom used within the literature and no doubt carries a pejorative tone. Some moniker’s are long and awkward, and often over/under inclusive for a specific context. Here I follow the convention of using the word “gay” to have a double meaning. I will use it to describe the entire class of individuals who fall outside the heterosexual norm, and use it to describe male homosexuals. The context should make it clear which meaning is intended. When speaking of a specific class I will use “lesbian”, “bi-sexual”, and so on.

<sup>2</sup> For example, it forms the basis for the American Psychological Association’s position supporting gay marriage.

<sup>3</sup> By “soft” measures I refer to things like self reports on attitudes, awareness, and adjustments (e.g., McNeill et al. (1998)); self reports on parenting quality and socio-emotional child development (e.g., Golombok et al. (1997)); self reports on psychological well-being, identity, and relationships (e.g., Tasker et al. (1995)); self reports on family closeness, parental legitimacy, child bonding (e.g., Gartrell et al. (1999)); and self reports on stigma and self-esteem (e.g., Gershon et al. (1999)). In contrast, by “hard” measures I refer to things like self reported sexual orientation and family characteristics (e.g., Golombok and Tasker (1996) or Bailey et al. (1995)); government reported divorce statistics (e.g., Andersson et al. (2006)); grade retention (Rosenfeld (2010)); or the execution of legal documents and the performance of a marriage ceremony (e.g., Oswald et al. (2008)). One of

is based on weak designs, biased samples, and low powered tests. The result is a nascent literature that falls far short of standard social science research. At its best, the literature contains interesting exploratory studies that raise provocative questions and observations. At its worst, it is advocacy aimed at legislators and judges — which may explain why, despite its weak scientific nature, the literature is characterized by strong recommendations for policy and legal changes to family regulations. Although there has been some slight improvement over time, these aspects still characterize the literature.

This paper provides a critical assessment of the gay parenting literature, based on the standards of empirical work found throughout the social sciences.<sup>4</sup> An attempt was made to be exhaustive in the selection of reviewed papers between 1995–2010, but no doubt some studies have been missed, especially in the case of early studies. The emphasis on more recent work is for two reasons: i) critical surveys of earlier work already exist,<sup>5</sup> and ii) the more recent work is of a higher quality standard than the earlier work. In total, fifty-two studies of various methodologies are covered in this review, and are listed in Table 1 in the appendix.

I argue that the flaws within the current literature are fatal in terms of any ability to make generalizations regarding the population of gay parents, and therefore it is impossible and irresponsible to use the literature to advance any recommendations regarding gay family legislation. Such a claim should go without saying, and yet professional bodies have made claims based on this research that are not warranted. If this literature is to scientifically move forward, then the time has come to focus and develop large probability sample studies to properly test various theories of the family. If this is not possible, then it is certainly time to demonstrate more

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the odd characteristics of this literature is the lack of consistency of measures across time. Subsequent studies seldom test for measures that were used in previous studies. This no doubt reflects the difficulty in replicating and comparing soft measures. It also does not appear to be the practice within this literature to post data on line in order for other scholars to replicate findings.

<sup>4</sup> My particular field is law and economics.

<sup>5</sup> See Nock (2001).

modesty in what is actually known about gay parents and stop using biased samples to make generalizations of an unknown population. The irony of this literature is that a number of interesting and distinctive features of gay-parenting have been uncovered, but they have been downplayed or ignored in the interests of promoting the “no-difference” findings.

## 2. Various Sources of Bias

To be human is to be biased. Everyone holds opinions about life, and these world views influence how information is collected and interpreted. Statistical work contains its own technical sources of bias, especially in the social sciences where laboratory-like experiments are often difficult to perform. In a mature and diversified discipline these biases are mitigated by various checks and balances that distinguish good social science: replication of empirical findings, public availability of data and testing procedures, outlets for comments and opposing views, a focus on understanding and testing, the use of reliable and operational measures, and a wide body of research done by people with competing opinions. None of these conditions are met within the gay parenting literature. As a result, the literature is seriously flawed in terms of bias from a number of sources. These forms of bias make virtually all of the general claims within this literature unreliable.

### 2.1. Data Bias

A policeman sees a drunk man searching for something under a street light and asks what the drunk has lost. He says he lost his keys and they both look under the street light together. After a few minutes the policeman asks if he is sure he lost them here, and the drunk replies, no, that he lost them in the park. The policeman asks why he is searching here, and the drunk replies, “this is where the light is.”

[Freedman, 2010]

Anyone trained in social science statistical methods cannot help be slightly taken aback by the data standards used within the gay parenting literature. Typically a social scientist develops a model that yields specific predictions given a set of

assumptions. These predictions are then tested through various methods using large probability samples — usually random samples — where the probability of a study participant is known. Randomness in the sample selection is extremely important. When a sample is not random, and when the source of bias is not understood, then the results of the data experiment have no generality, and nothing should be inferred from the biased data because such inferences will not reflect the true nature of the population. The point cannot be over stated. A proper probability sample is a necessary condition for making any claim about an unknown population. Within the gay parenting literature the street lamp effect abounds. Researchers have studied only those community members who are convenient to study. This means that the results lack the integrity and validity that lead to any truth statements regarding out of sample gay parents, and their children.

This is not to say that qualitative studies — those that involve an in depth analysis of a non-random biased sample — are of no value. Indeed, such studies can provide a wealth of information about the subjects of the study. Furthermore, such studies may lead to conjectures about the population in general, and may help researchers design more advanced studies. For example, within the gay parenting literature a number of potential differences between children raised by gay and non-gay parents have been observed: children of gay parents are more likely to engage in same-sex relations, same-sex fantasies, and identify as gay; lesbian couple households are less stable than gay male households or opposite-sex married households; and lesbian households are more likely to divide household tasks evenly than heterosexuals. Whether or not these findings are generally true or not is not known, and cannot be known absent the use of probability samples. It is simply wrong to draw conclusions about an unknown population from a biased sample, regardless of how in-depth the qualitative analysis is. Still, the information collected has value, and should lead to more advanced research.

This point has been raised by many others regarding the literature on gay parenting, including many within the literature.<sup>6</sup> Of the fifty-two studies reviewed here,

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<sup>6</sup> Andersson et al. (2006) note:

only five used probability samples.<sup>7</sup> All of the other studies arrived at their samples through means that introduced various levels of bias. Some studies recruited individuals from sperm bank data sources or other types of reproduction technology providers.<sup>8</sup> Other studies used Internet surveys where the respondents were recruited by various methods: parent forums, gay and lesbian web-sites, and online advocacy organizations.<sup>9</sup> Many studies recruited through LGBT events, bookstore and newspaper advertisements, word of mouth, networking, youth groups, and the like.<sup>10</sup> A common method of recruitment was to use a combination of the above methods to form a sample base, and then recruit friends of the base.<sup>11</sup> One set of

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The lack of representative samples is the most fundamental problem in quantitative studies on gays and lesbians, which commonly rely on self-recruited samples from an unknown population.

[p. 81]

Sweet's (2009) survey finds: 1) Less than 20 studies met her scientific selection criteria; 2) in all cases the tests had limited power and tended to accept the null of no difference between same-sex and opposite sex parenting; 3) most studies were not done in the U.S.; and 5) all studies had very small sample sizes, especially when broken down by gender. Stacey and Biblarz (2001) are more pessimistic and state the issues quite bluntly:

... it is impossible to gather reliable data on such basic demographic questions as how many lesbians and gay men there are in the general population, how many have children, or how many children reside (or have substantial contact) with lesbian or gay parents. ... there are no studies of child development based on random, representative samples of such families. ... Although scholars often acknowledge some of these difficulties, few studies explicitly grapple with these definitional questions.

[pp. 164–166, 2001]

<sup>7</sup> These were Rosenfeld (2010), Wainright, Russell and Patterson (2007), and Wainright and Patterson (2006, 2008), and Golombok et al. (2003). Two others used samples drawn from a population: Rothblum et al. (2008) and Andersson et al. (2008).

<sup>8</sup> For example: Bos et al. (2007); Bos and Van Balen (2008); Chan, Brooks, Raboy, and Patterson (1998); Brewaeys et al. (1997); and Chan, Raboy, and Patterson (1998).

<sup>9</sup> For example: Lehmilller (2010); Bos (2010); or Power et al. (2010).

<sup>10</sup> For example: Wright and Perry (2006); Oswald et al. (2008); Lehmilller (2010); Goldberg (2007); Bailey et al. (1995); Flaks et al. (1995); Fairtlough (2008); Dundas and Kaufman (2000); Power et al. or Fulcher et al. (2008).

<sup>11</sup> For example: Balsam et al. (2008); Golombok et al. (2003).

studies that was collectively called the “Bay Area Families Study” noted “Recruitment began when the author contacted friends, acquaintances, and colleagues who might be likely to know eligible lesbian mother families.”<sup>12</sup> Still other studies failed to even mention how their samples were arrived at.<sup>13</sup> Each different procedure has a different and unknown source of bias. Studies of lesbians are well known to contain subjects who are predominantly white, well educated, and high income — reflecting the demographics of the authors. Other characteristics that are less observable (e.g., willingness to speak openly about their families, political affiliations, etc.) may also be over or under represented. Although most studies acknowledge the non-representativeness of their biased samples, seldom is there any mention of the direction of the bias, never is anything done about it, and with few exceptions does the bias prevent the authors from drawing sweeping policy recommendations for practitioners, law makers, and judges.<sup>14</sup>

As mentioned, over the past decade a few studies attempt to use random samples to analyze gay parenting, and each of these recognizes the value of a probability sample. Unfortunately, most of these studies are still lacking in either power or design execution. Rosenfeld (2010) is by far the best attempt to date to use a large random sample. He uses the 2000 Census to measure child outcomes. The

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<sup>12</sup> Patterson, p. 94, 2001.

<sup>13</sup> For example: Stacey (2004, 2005) or Chrisp (2001).

<sup>14</sup> For example, Bos (2010) received 36 responses from an Internet mail-list of 1000 names, and compared parental stress and child psychological well-being with 36 straight fathers recruited from an elementary school. After concluding there was no differences found, and that the study had several serious limitations, she concludes:

Our findings have important practical implications: they underscore that although gay fathers do not differ from heterosexual fathers, there is a negative effect of minority stress (reflected in rejection) on the lives of gay fathers and their children. It would therefore be erroneous for family therapists to overlook or minimise the potential impact of rejection for being a gay father and they should support coping responses in dealing it.

[p. 367, 2010]

What is erroneous is to draw conclusions about all fathers from a small biased sample.



only measure of child performance within the census is a child's grade progression, and so he tests to see if children from same-sex partnerships are more likely to fail a grade in school compared to other household types. Rosenfeld finds a positive and significant correlation between same-sex parents and grade failure; however, the effect becomes statistically insignificant once income and other family characteristics are controlled for. If this result were true, it would be the only solid evidence that child performance did not depend on the sexual orientation of the parents. Unfortunately, the Rosenfeld study is flawed in a number of ways. First, since the census does not identify sexual orientation, Rosenfeld is forced to indirectly identify same-sex couples by tagging respondents who claim they are married or common law and living with someone of the same sex. On the one hand, this is likely to over sample same-sex households because it picks up many non-sexual same-sex relations (e.g., brothers, cousins, roommates, etc.), and because it relies on respondents to accurately answer a combination of questions.<sup>15</sup> In addition, many children living

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<sup>15</sup> The Williams Institute has recently completed a study of the 2010 census and notes that the bias works both ways: same-sex couples get coded as opposite sex couples, and opposite sex couples get coded as same-sex couples. They state:

the total national error rate is approximately 0.25%  $((0.2\% \times 0.74) + (0.4\% \times 0.26))$ . ... This measurement problem means that Census tabulations of same-sex couples may be biased too high, yielding an over-count. However, there is also reason to believe that Census procedures can undercount same-sex couples. Gates (2010) estimates that at least 15% of same-sex couples are not counted in Census Bureau tabulations either because they identified themselves as something other than "husband/wife" or "unmarried partner" or neither partner was Person 1 in the household. Some same-sex couples are unwilling to identify themselves as such on the Census due to concerns about confidentiality. Same-sex couples may experience stigma and discrimination and consider it too risky to identify as spouses or unmarried partners on a government survey like the Census. Instead, they may choose to call themselves roommates or unrelated adults. Couples where neither partner is Person 1 cannot be identified on the Census since identification relies upon knowing the relationship between Person 1 and others in the household. ... OConnell and Gooding 2007 found evidence that the over-count and undercount may effectively offset each other. If this is true, then Census same-sex couple tabulations may be a fairly accurate. However, the presence of the miscoded different-sex couples within the identified same-sex couples could seriously bias the reported rates of male versus female couples, child-rearing, and the overall geographic distribution of same-sex couples across a state.

with a gay or lesbian parent are in single adult homes, and this under represents the number of children in the sample. Finally, Rosenfeld decided to drop 680,425 observations from his sample (45% of the data) in order to eliminate children who had not lived in the same location for five years. This turns out to introduce a strong bias in the results since this variable is strongly correlated with grade failure. Allen, Pakaluk, and Price (2011) show that once the sample is restored and location is properly controlled for through the use of dummy variables, children from same-sex households are 35% more likely to fail a grade compared to children in opposite-sex two parent families. The actual finding by Allen et al. is neither here nor there. The point is that a proper control of bias can lead to a dramatic reversal of an empirical finding.

The five remaining random sample studies face a different problem. Most notable here are the three studies by Wainright and Patterson.<sup>16</sup> These are not three independent studies, but rather they are three separate publications utilizing the same data source. The data come from the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health, a random survey of school aged children conducted in the 94-95 school year. Like the Rosenfeld study, the authors were forced to identify gay parenting households indirectly, which likely leads to similar respondent coding errors as in Census data. However, an additional problem is that the survey is too small to adequately identify small minorities like gay parents. Although the Health survey contains 12,105 households, Wainright and Patterson are only able to identify 6 gay households and 44 lesbian ones. The 44 lesbian households represent 0.33 of one percent of all households in the survey, and is too small to generate any power in testing. This fraction is similar to that found by Golombok et al. (2003). This latter study uses the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children — a local

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[Williams Institute, 2011]

This is not to suggest that the census is disqualified for use in studying children in same sex households. Rather, it suggests there is a known bias that should be, but was not controlled for.

<sup>16</sup> Wainright and Patterson (2004, 2008) and Wainright, Russell, and Patterson (2006).

British study. Here they find only 18 lesbians, which amount to .22 of one percent of all mothers in the survey.<sup>17</sup> Again, the number of responding households is too small to adequately identify the group of interest, and too small to generate enough statistical power to identify the effect of household structure on child performance.

When lesbians make up between .5–1% of the population, surveys must contain upwards to half a million respondents before any reasonable lesbian sample size can be reached.<sup>18</sup> Wainright and Patterson proceed with their small sample which does not have enough power to distinguish differences across different households. Golombok et al. use snowball methods to add to their sample and bring their numbers up to 39 lesbians.<sup>19</sup> Of course, this number remains too small, and adding cases in this fashion introduces unknown bias and so their study ends up like the others.

One final type of data consists of proprietary longitudinal surveys that give an impression of random sampling. Perhaps the most important example is the National Lesbian Longitudinal Family Survey. Despite its name, it is not national. The survey was begun in 1986 when it recruited 84 lesbian families from “announcements at lesbian events, in womens bookstores, and in lesbian newspapers.” The families are urban (from Boston, DC, and San Francisco), well educated, and overwhelmingly white. These same families are interviewed at several stages, and the various publication titles give the impression of a national random sample.<sup>20</sup> Other

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<sup>17</sup> Rivers et al. (2008) uses a British survey similar to that used by Wainright and Patterson, and end up with a sample of 18 lesbian households.

<sup>18</sup> The fraction of lesbians and gays within the population is a number in some dispute, and a number that depends on how lesbians and gays are defined. Allen (2011) finds lesbians make up only 1/3 of one percent of the Canadian population. This estimate comes from the Canadian Community health Survey. The CCHS is the only large, random, nationally represented data set, I know of, that directly identifies sexual orientation. Reliable estimates of lesbian numbers in the U.S. are typically less than 2% of the population (Black et al. p. 54, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> “Snowballing” is the practice of asking individuals within a study to recruit their friends and associates to join the study.

<sup>20</sup> For example, in a recent well publicized paper by Gartrell and Bos (2010), the title started “US National Longitudinal Lesbian Family Study:...”

studies use the same rhetorical device. The “Toronto Lesbian Family Study” turns out not to be a study representing lesbian families in Toronto, but rather a survey of 16 families recruited “by word of mouth, networking, or through their involvement in a lesbian mothers support group in Toronto.” These studies, like the others, contain serious unknown biases that render estimations of the population of gay parents meaningless.

If sample bias is the fundamental data problem among lesbian family studies, the second critical problem is data sample size.<sup>21</sup> Of the fifty-two studies examined here, only two had sample sizes larger than 500.<sup>22</sup> Much more common were sample sizes between 30-60.<sup>23</sup> The problem with such small sample sizes is that the data cannot generate any power for statistical testing. Statistical testing contains two types of errors. A type I error is where the null hypothesis is rejected when it is in fact true, and the probability of this type of error is called the “level of significance.” A type II error is where the null hypothesis is not rejected even though it is false. The probability of this error is known as the “power of the test”. A powerful test means there is a small chance of not rejecting a false null hypothesis. Power, in part, comes from sample size: a small sample necessarily generates a weak test.

The very small sample sizes found in many of these studies creates a bias towards accepting a null hypothesis of “no effect” in outcomes between gay and heterosexual households. This is well recognized, but it is exacerbated in the context of gay

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<sup>21</sup> Of the fifty-two studies examined here, only a few dealt with gay male parents. Almost all of the studies are done on lesbians. This is another source of bias that warrants caution in drawing any conclusions about non-lesbian families.

<sup>22</sup> These were Rosenfeld (2010) and Andersson et al. (2006). According to Nock (p. 37, 2001), to properly test any hypothesis regarding gay parenting, a sample size of 800 is required.

<sup>23</sup> Often the problem of small sample size comes from low response rates. Many of the fifty-two studies are silent on the question of response rates to their surveys, but when information is provided it often shows that response rates are very low. For example, in Bos (2010) the gay males were recruited from an Internet mail list for gay parents. Although the list had 1000 names, only 36 replied and participated in the study. This amounts to a 3.6% response rate. Other studies (e.g., Chan et al. and Fulcher et al.) have reductions in their samples similar in relative size to Rosenfeld. Response rates lower than 60% are usually taken to mean the presence of a strong selection bias — even when the initial list is random.

parenting because avenues through which these households are formed are many and complicated. As noted by Stacey and Biblarz (2001, 2010), these families often have experienced a prior divorce, previous heterosexual marriages, intentional pregnancies, co-parenting, donor insemination, adoption, and surrogacy. Empirical work needs to control for the various selection effects that arise from the number of parents, sexual identity, marital status, gender, and biological relationships with children. That is, child performance is affected by all these channels and they need to be statistically identified. To do this requires large amounts of data, and to date almost no study has had the numbers to effectively sort this out.<sup>24</sup>

Out of the fifty-two studies reviewed here, only Andersson et al. (2006) met the criteria of reliable data — although as a study of divorce it is not technically a study of parenting. These authors use the marriage and domestic partnership records of Norway and Sweden to study family stability, and essentially calculate divorce hazard rates over time.<sup>25</sup> The data set is large, verifiable, replicable, longitudinal, and based on the population. Ironically, this one study finds a number of results inconsistent with the general thrust of the literature. First, relatively few gays and lesbians appear interested in marriage since “the incidence of same-sex marriage in Norway and Sweden is not particularly impressive.”<sup>26</sup> Second, gay men were 60% more likely to marry compared to lesbians. And finally, there was a large difference in divorce rates between gays and lesbians, with lesbians twice as likely to divorce as gays, and three times more likely to divorce than heterosexual married couples.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> In the odd case where the sample size was sufficient (e.g., Rosenfeld) the instruments for were not available.

<sup>25</sup> Sweden adopted same sex marriage in 2009, and so Andersson et al. actually are comparing divorce hazards between different types of unions.

<sup>26</sup> Andersson et al. p. 86, 2006. Nor is it impressive in Canada where same-sex marriage has been legal since 2005. According to Allen (2011) only 12.2% of lesbians, and 4.9% of gays, are married.

<sup>27</sup> Andersson et al. p. 94, 2006. There is one other study that is particularly well done. Sarantakos (1996) does not use a random sample, but rather draws on a longitudinal study and uses objective, verifiable, hard measures of performance that are not self-reported. he finds a “difference” as well, with children from gay households doing significantly worse in mathematics, language, and other school related matters. Interestingly, this study is not mentioned in any of the literature surveys.

## 2.2. Researcher Bias

Public agencies are very keen on amassing statistics — they collect them, add them, raise them to the  $n^{\text{th}}$  power, take the cube root and prepare wonderful diagrams. But what you must never forget is that every one of those figures comes in the first instance from the village watchman, who just puts down what he damn well pleases.

[Sir Josiah Stamp, 1929 pp. 258259]

For decades prior to the 1970s most psychological research on homosexuality used a pathological model, and treated gay and lesbian sexual orientations as a form of illness.<sup>28</sup> As a result, gay or lesbian parents often lost custody of children in divorce disputes if one of the parents could be shown to be gay or lesbian. Thus, since the mid 1970s empirical research often had the objective of showing that gay and lesbian parents were on par with heterosexual parents.<sup>29</sup> From its start then, researchers and participants in that research have had a social justice agenda over and above the simple social science pursuit of understanding gay households.<sup>30</sup> From this starting point a type of researcher has emerged: mostly female (74 of

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<sup>28</sup> See Clarke, Kitzinger, and Potter, 2004 for a discussion.

<sup>29</sup> Goldberg (p. 110 2010), cites the 1993 Virginia case of *Bottoms v. Bottoms* as a “catalyst” for the literature. In the case, the court awarded custody of Sharon Bottom’s son to her mother, Kay Bottoms, on the grounds that her lesbian sexual orientation made her an unfit mother.

<sup>30</sup> Stacey and Biblarz (2001) note this:

... social science research on lesbigay (sic) family issues has become a rapid growth industry that incites passionate divisions. For the consequences of such research are by no means “academic,” but bear on marriage and family policies that encode Western culture’s most profoundly held convictions about gender, sexuality, and parenthood.

[ pp. 159-160, 2001]

As does Goldberg:

Legal decisions such as this [*Bottoms vs. Bottoms* 1993] served as the catalyst for a steady wave of research studies that compared lesbian and gay parents with heterosexual parents to determine whether parental sexual orientation has implications for parent functioning.

[ p. 110, 2010]

102 in the fifty-two studies), often lesbian, and strongly feminist and supportive of gay rights. Indeed, Stacey and Biblarz admit that “few contributors to this [gay parenting] literature personally subscribe to [a hetero-normative] view.”<sup>31</sup> When the political stakes in research are high, it is important that contributors to that research come from many different sides of the question in order to offset researcher bias and serve the scientific process. Unfortunately, this has seldom been the case within this literature.

A third party reader of the literature easily picks up on researcher bias, but the case for this bias is also expressly found within the literature itself. Stacey and Biblarz (2001) point out that the desire to show gay and lesbian parents on par with heterosexual parents led “sensitive scholars ... to tread gingerly around the terrain of differences.”<sup>32</sup> In other words, although several scholars actually found some differences in children between the different types of parents, they either ignored, downplayed, or did not follow up those issues. They state “... on some dimensions—particularly those related to gender and sexuality — the sexual orientations of these parents matter somewhat more for their children than the researchers claimed.”<sup>33</sup>

An even more fascinating case is revealed in Clarke, Kitinger, and Potter (2004). This paper deconstructs eleven interviews and eleven television documentaries on bullying in cases where the child’s parent is either gay or lesbian. They find that, depending on the bias of the interviewer and the respondent, the conversation was directed to a pre-determined outcome. These authors argue that in the case of bullying many sympathetic to gay and lesbian issues want to minimize its relevance because it can be used as a ground for denying custody. Those more hostile to gay issues often want to play the practice of bullying up for the same reason. And so “some work on lesbian and gay families maximizes the incidence and

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<sup>31</sup> Stacey and Biblarz, p. 160 2001.

<sup>32</sup> Stacey and Biblarz, p. 162, 2001.

<sup>33</sup> Stacey and Biblarz, p. 167 2001.

impact of homophobic bullying ... much of the literature ... minimizes homophobic bullying.”<sup>34</sup>

Clarke et al. note that these interviews do not take place within a vacuum, and as a result the accounts are often “self serving” and not objective. The respondents are “aware” of the issues, and fully aware of the implications of their answers. Indeed, they note that “[l]esbian and gay researchers who conduct interview studies with lesbian and gay men often report that many of their participants only agreed to take part because the interviewers were also lesbian or gay.”<sup>35</sup>

In her 2010 book Goldberg discusses another case of researcher reporting bias. She also notes that gays and lesbians are aware of the political issues surrounding their cause and purposely use language that distorts what actually goes on within the household. In particular, an analysis of division of labor studies “revealed that both lesbian and gay couples tended to describe the division of household labor in ways that sometimes deviated from the objective, or observed, distribution of tasks”.<sup>36</sup> She notes as well that the researchers were also biased in their reporting: “... it is important to consider the possibility that researcher’ perspectives and interpretations (e.g. the tendency to view shared labor divisions as egalitarian and therefore nongendered and the tendency to view unequal labor division as

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<sup>34</sup> Clarke, Kitzinger, and Potter, p. 533 2004. Furthermore “... many psychologists sympathetic to lesbian and gay parenting are keen to emphasize that for most children in lesbian and gay families homophobic bullying — if it does occur — is of little (psychological) consequence.” p. 546.

<sup>35</sup> Clarke, Kitzinger, and Potter, p. 535 2004. Ironically, some writers within this literature point out the problem of researcher bias in the literature that opposes same-sex families:

The deeply rooted hetero-normative convictions about what constitutes healthy and moral gender identity, sexual orientation, and family composition held by contributors to this literature hinders their ability to conduct or interpret research with reason, nuance, or care.

[Stacey and Biblarz, p. 162, 2001]

<sup>36</sup> Goldberg, p. 101, 2010.



unequalitarian and therefore gendered) not necessarily mirror the experiences and interpretations of lesbian and gay parents themselves.”<sup>37</sup>

The actual types of bias in these studies is not relevant for the purpose here. The key point is that a homogeneous researcher bias exists. Researcher bias is a wild card in empirical research. It is hidden and unknown, and can swamp statistical bias in terms of the results. The only practical solution for it is to have studies that are both verifiable and replicable by third parties. In almost all cases this is not possible within this literature.

### 2.3. Theories of Parenthood

There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics.

[Benjamin Disraeli]

The typical lesbian parent study recruits a small biased sample of lesbian parents, and usually matches this sample with a similar sized sample of heterosexual parents. Without exception in the fifty-two cases studied here, there is never a detailed discussion of how the comparison sample is selected, how ties in qualifications are handled, or why the specific selection criteria are used over others. The typical study then proceeds to ask a series of standardized questions. These questions often relate to how the parent feels about some aspect of gay parenting; their understanding of their child’s experience growing up in a gay household; their perceptions of behavior, peer relations, and school performance; or their expectations of their child’s future. Some studies read diaries, watch play times, or listen to how young children speak to each other. A few studies examine hard quantifiable measures of performance and adjustment, but they are the exception. The general rule is to find some type of soft measure of “parenting” — of the fifty-two studies, only eleven dealt with hard objective measures. The typical study then does a simple difference of means test between the two groups to draw its conclusions.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Goldberg, p. 102, 2010.

<sup>38</sup> Conducting a standard difference of means, or any other type of standard statistical test, only makes sense when the conditions of a probability sample are met. This condition is almost never the case.

What comes out of this is a steady stream of confirmations of a particular type of parenting: a double dose of motherhood is best. For example, Bos et al. (2007), using several subjective measures, claim that the social mother in a lesbian household is a much better parent than a heterosexual father. They state:

...lesbian social mothers are more effective and more committed than heterosexual fathers as a parent. They show higher levels of support (e.g., more emotional involvement and parental concern) and lower levels of control (less power assertion, less structure, less limit-setting, and more respect for the child's autonomy).

[p. 45, 2007]

Indeed, the literature contains many sentiments that report better parenting by lesbians over fathers. In a paper that notes children in opposite-sexed parent households are more likely to commit "gender transgressions" (for example, the children were more likely to think that boys should not wear fingernail polish and girls should not play football), Fulcher et al. note:

... lesbian mothers had more liberal attitudes about gender-related behavior among children than did heterosexual parents.

[p. 336, 2008]

Children with parents with more liberal attitudes about gender and more egalitarian divisions of labor were more flexible in their own gender stereotypes and in their occupational aspirations.

[p. 338, 2008]

In heterosexual-parented families, fathers usually hold more conservative attitudes about gender roles and gender-related activities than do mothers.

[p. 331, 2008]

They conclude that "if parents, regardless of sexual orientation, organize their attitudes and behaviors in an egalitarian manner more common in lesbian couples, children may have more flexible attitudes about gender."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Fulcher et al., p. 338, 2008. The same sentiments are driven home in Goldberg's book, in lesbian families there is:

... greater sense of openness and communication within the family ... greater tolerance for diversity, a greater sensitivity to discrimination, and growing up in a loving environment. ... freedom from traditional models ... less gender-

Dundas and Kaufman claim, based on their study of 27 lesbians recruited by “word of mouth, networking, or through their involvement in a lesbian mother’s support group”, that lesbian households have several advantages over heterosexual ones. Namely, they produce more tolerant children, there is more mother energy, and parenting decisions are made more carefully.<sup>40</sup> Brewaeys et al. were not surprised to find that “...one striking difference was found between lesbian and heterosexual families: social mothers showed greater interaction with their children than did fathers”, even though the fathers were not present to represent themselves at the interview.<sup>41</sup> In a meta study, Biblarz and Stacey (2010) confirm some feminist stereotypes: women are more nurturing, less likely to work outside the home, more egalitarian, more likely to play with children, less likely to discipline and use punishment, less likely to conform to gender roles. This double dose of feminine influence “can lead Heather’s two mommies to be among the best ... coparenting couples.” (p.12).<sup>42</sup>

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stereotyped ideas.

[Goldberg, p. 97 2010]

<sup>40</sup> Dundas and Kaufman, p. 74, 2000. In a similar vein, Wainright et al. (2004) claim that “a warm accepting style of parenting is related to optimal outcomes for adolescents...” (p. 1887).

<sup>41</sup> Brewaeys et al., p. 1356, 1997. Gartrell and Bos (2010), concluding on the performance of the NLLFS children at age 17 state:

The lower levels of externalizing problem behavior among the NLLFS adolescents may be explained by the disciplinary styles used on lesbian mother households. The NLLFS mothers reported using verbal limit-setting more often with their children. Other studies have found that lesbian mothers use less corporal punishment and less power assertion than heterosexual fathers.

[p. 7, 2010]

<sup>42</sup> Although the double dose also leads to competition between the mothers and an exacerbation of the genetic asymmetry between the mothers and children, Biblarz and Stacey conclude that gender trumps biology, and even marital status (two unmarried lesbians perform better than a married heterosexual couple). That lesbian couples are also less stable than other types of families is attributed to discrimination by others (p. 12).

Heterosexual fathers consistently come off as poor parents in these studies. For example, based on a biased sample of 30 lesbian and 30 heterosexual households, one study claimed:

... lesbian couples were more aware of the skills necessary for effective parenting than were their heterosexual counterparts. Specifically, the lesbian couples proved to be superior in their ability to identify the critical issues in child-care situations and to formulate appropriate solutions to the problems they noticed. With further analysis, however, it was revealed that these differences were related to the parents' gender rather than to their sexual orientation: Both heterosexual and lesbian mothers demonstrated an awareness of parenting skills that was superior to that of heterosexual fathers.

[Flaks, et al. p. 112, 1995]

Other studies suggest that heterosexual fathers contribute nothing to the welfare of their children. Consider: "... being without a resident father from infancy does not seem to have negative consequences for children."<sup>43</sup> This quote is from self reported questionnaires of 25 lesbian families, 38 families headed by a single heterosexual mother, and 38 two heterosexual parent families where the mothers answered the questions.

Biblarz and Savci sum the literature up this way:

The picture painted by recent research is mostly a continuation of a story from earlier research — that families with two lesbian parents (biological, social, or step) exhibited a number of strengths. ... lesbian parent couples have high levels of shared employment, decision making, parenting, and family work. ... Lesbian couples also averaged higher satisfaction with their relationships with each other and with each other's parenting. ... Lesbian DI mothers ... tended to equal or surpass heterosexual married couples on time spent with children, parenting skill, and warmth and affection.

[pp. 481-482, 2010]

All of this favor towards two mothers might suggest a reciprocal problem for gay fathers: poorer performance on these dimensions given their double dose of masculinity. However, in their review of the tiny gay male parenting literature Biblarz and Savci note that "Many studies indicated that when two gay men co-parented,

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<sup>43</sup> MacCallum and Golombok, p. 1407, 2004.

they did so in ways that seemed closer to that of women (lesbian and heterosexual) than to married heterosexual men.”<sup>44</sup> The only bad parent, apparently, is a heterosexual father.

Seen together, what is apparent is the common theory of the family held by the researchers. Again, to cite some introductory remarks in Biblarz and Savci’s survey:

Researchers were documenting what most social scientists already knew but what much of the public, perhaps inundated by “virtual social science”, did not: that sexual orientations and gender identities per se have almost nothing to do with fitness for family roles and relationships, including parenting.

[ p. 480, 2010]

The question is: how did the researchers already know the answer before they collected data? The answer: because their theoretical world view led them to the conclusion. The lesbian parenting literature is dominated by feminist theory, in which heterosexual families are seen as patriarchal, oppressive, and hostile to many people. Within the context of this world view the freedom to choose alternatives necessarily leads to an institutional improvement.<sup>45</sup> Thus, even if the empirical

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<sup>44</sup> Biblarz and Savci, p. 487, 2010.

<sup>45</sup> An interesting tension arises in the context of lesbian families and feminist ideology: the raising of sons. Chrisp (2001) provides an almost emotional account of the dilemma faced by a feminist lesbian mother of a son:

Few mothers, I believe, would not want their sons to make their own decisions, to be their own people, and to have the world full of opportunity for them. And yet, we need them [the sons] to reject the patriarchal status quo that has inhibited our own opportunities and will continue to do so for the women in their lives.

[p. 198, 2001]

These sentiments are repeated in Biblarz and Savei’s 2010 survey:

Lesbian mothers raising sons may face unique tensions in wanting social and socioeconomic success for their sons when that may mean colluding with cultural ideas of hegemonic masculinity that encourage male achievement but involve the subordination of women.

[p. 482, 2010]

Ironically, since lesbians using some type of sperm donor insemination want to maximize the prob-

results found within the literature turn out to be true, as a matter of logic the conclusions do not necessarily follow, but depend on a particular feminist view of the family.<sup>46</sup> A different theoretical view of the family could draw a different conclusion from the same data.

## 2.4. Self Reporting and Vertical Integration

42.7% of all statistics are made up on the spot.

[Steven Wright]

Two final features of the gay and lesbian literature on parenting lead to a concern over biased and unreliable results. The first is that most results are self-reported. Exceptions exist, but the bulk of studies have gay, lesbian, and heterosexual parents report on their own performance as parents. Given that the respondents understand the implications of their answers, and that no one is an independent observer of their own behavior, one wonders what the actual meaning of the responses are. A dramatic example of this is found in the fourth interview of the National Lesbian Family Study. The interview included questions of child abuse, and the researchers considered it a major finding that:

The prevalence of childhood sexual abuse among NLFS girls (5%) and boys (0%) contrasts strikingly with national rates. ... None of the NLFS children had been physically abused. Although the NLFS mothers were the informants and the

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ability of conception, they often inseminate on the day of ovulation which increases the chance of having a son (Chrisp, p. 198, 2001).

<sup>46</sup> One element of feminist theory that crops up within this literature is the irrelevance of biology — a major theoretical competitor to feminist theories of the family. The importance of gender over sex has already been mentioned. Males can make good parents if they parent like a female. Another area is in the role of “social mother” the mother not biologically related to the child. Goldberg et al. (2008) claim that by the time a child is 3.5 years old, children are indifferent between the biological and social mother. Based on a biased sample of 30 couples and some very soft questions they conclude: “These women demonstrate the power of “social motherhood” in creating maternal connections that transcend biological relatedness over time. ” (p. 432). Finally, an almost humorous example is found in Goldberg (2010). After noting that birth mothers tend to specialize in the household she quickly retorts: “This is not to say that lesbian mothers are reproducing gender relations along the lines of biology; rather it suggests that they are shaped by (and also shape) broader social patterns and various structural and symbolic forces.” (p. 99). Everything is a social construct.

index children had not yet reached maturity, these data suggest that the absence of adult heterosexual men in households may be protective against abuse and its devastating psychological sequelae.

[Gartrell et al., p. 523, 2005]

Although the authors recognize the lack of incentive a mother has in reporting her own abusive behavior, they readily draw the conclusion that their result actually reflects the reality of abuse within these households. On the contrary, their result does not allow for such a conclusion since it is much more reasonable to infer that parents will not self report their own transgressions, especially when illegal.

When combined with the unverifiable and subjective nature of many questions, the self reporting format of these studies naturally leads to no differences found between households when both households have the same incentives to misreport bad outcomes. Verifiable measures like school performance, births out of wedlock, tobacco use, or employment can overcome this problem, but the soft non-verifiable questions most often asked mean that the responses simply cannot be trusted.

Finally, given that national statistics agencies have neglected to identify sexual orientation in their surveys, researchers in the field of gay and lesbian parenting have mostly had to rely on their own surveys. No doubt their budget and time constraints have led to many of the problems identified thus far. These constraints also necessitate the involvement of the researcher in both the collection and analysis of the data. As noted in Clarke, Kitzinger, and Potter (2004), researchers often implicitly and explicitly direct and guide the respondents to an answer that matches their preconceived understanding. Whether this is intentional or not, separation of the collection and analysis of data is a critical feature of social science research that is generally absent in the gay parenting literature. This is likely to change over time as government agencies establish surveys that identify sexual orientation. However, in the meantime, it calls into question virtually the entire body of research done thus far.

## 2.5. Inappropriate Conclusions

All of the above would be natural and expected in any new empirical literature. Individual exploratory studies invariably start with convenience samples, anecdotes, and are laced with researcher bias. Such problems are even more likely when the group under study has been socially stigmatized, and are often afraid to reveal personal information related to their sexual orientation. The point of any exploratory study is to simply begin an investigation that will hopefully turn up findings others are interested in. These findings must then be later investigated more thoroughly and with rigor in order for society at large to trust and use them. Unfortunately, the gay parenting literature has generally skipped the second step, and moved immediately from “exploratory finding” to staunch policy implications.

Some conclusions are like the ones pointed out by Biblarz and Stacey (2001), where the authors go out of their way to misrepresent their findings. For example, Bailey et al. (1995) conduct a particularly poor study that recruited 55 gay fathers through advertisements in homosexual publications with a phone number to call. They asked the respondents about their sons, and then tried to contact the sons to ask them about their sexual orientation. They got in touch with 43 of the sons, most of whom did not answer the question regarding their sexual orientation. They then ask the fathers, who responded that in their estimation close to 10% of the sons were not heterosexual. After their recognition of the limitations of their study they conclude that

The present study cannot definitively answer the basic question of whether sons of gay fathers have elevated rates of homosexuality. It does, however, support one conclusion that, although quite general, may also be important: The large majority of sons of gay fathers are heterosexual.

[p.128, 1995]

Given that gay males make up less than one percent of the population, if it were true that 10% of sons of gay fathers were also gay, then this would be a finding of enormous importance. On the contrary, no one would expect growing up with



a gay father to determine sexual orientation, and so a finding of less than 100% is hardly surprising. Therefore, the conclusion that “the large majority of sons of gay fathers are heterosexual” is hardly noteworthy.<sup>47</sup>

More common is the study where conclusions are tacked on to the findings as policy recommendations, even though these recommendations do not follow directly from the findings but are combined with unmentioned theories of the family. For example, Bos et al. (2004) conduct a study to see if lesbian mothers are stressed. Generally they find that stress does not arise from being a lesbian, and “[t]he lesbian mothers in this sample generally reported low levels of rejection, perceived stigma, and internalized homophobia.”<sup>48</sup> In other words, the lesbian parents were doing all right, and the stresses they faced mostly came from the normal stresses of parenthood. Nonetheless, they conclude that

Our findings underscore the importance of the effect of minority stress on the lives of lesbian mothers and their children. Health care providers working with lesbian families, but also teachers with children from lesbian mothers in the classroom, should appreciate the effect of minority stress and should learn to support those coping and dealing with minority stress. On the other hand, granting legal rights and respect to lesbian parents and their children should lessen the stigma some of them now suffer.

[ p. 301, 2004]

It may be true that stress is important and that legal rights might alleviate it, but none of these conclusions follow from their narrow study.

This practice of inferring policy implications beyond what the data allow is found throughout Goldberg’s recent 2010 book. This book is essentially a large survey of the gay parenting literature. At the beginning there is a nod given to small sample issues, difficult problems of definitions, bias, and the like, but all is

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<sup>47</sup> Nock, (p. 78, 2001), in his review of this study notes the inconsistency as well: “[t]he authors appear unwilling to accept the findings of their own study and go to lengths to explain why the results should not be interpreted on their face.” The misplaced emphasis is understandable given their following remark: “The available evidence, including this study, fails to provide empirical grounds for denying child custody to gay or lesbian parents because of concern about their children’s sexual orientation.” (p. 128).

<sup>48</sup> Bos et al., pp 299-300, 2004.

soon forgotten. Almost every chapter ends not with a “conclusion” but a section on “recommendations” for lawyers, practitioners, and legislators that promote same-sex families. The point is not whether the recommendations have merit or not, but rather that none of them follow from the empirical findings. For example, at the end of Chapter Four Goldberg authoritatively claims “The research on lesbian and gay parents strongly indicates that they are no less equipped to raise children than their heterosexual counterparts.”<sup>49</sup> This claim is then used as a launching pad for a series of policy interventions:

...therapists, practitioners, and educators should be aware of the ways in which social inequities and institutional heterosexism shape the parenting practices and experiences of sexual minority parents. ... Therapists and practitioners should support lesbian and gay parents in anticipating and handling disclosure issues .... Workplaces can play a significant role in supporting lesbian and gay parents .... Finally, it is essential that policymakers and court officials rely on the existing research — as opposed to stereotypes and morally driven arguments — in making custody and adoption decisions that involve lesbian and gay parents.

[pp. 121–122, 2010]

One wonders why, if the parents are “no less equipped” and the children are performing at the same or better level, any policy needs to be implemented to advance gay households further? But the point is this: these conclusions are based on world views and do not follow from any of the results discussed in her chapter. Indeed, given the weak scientific nature of the studies, these opinions are based on stereotypes and morally driven arguments. Social science research should never develop like this.

### 3. Conclusion

Once, in 1919, I reported to him [Adler] a case which to me did not seem particularly Adlerian, but which he found no difficulty in analyzing in terms of his theory of inferiority feelings, although he had not even seen the child. Slightly shocked, I asked him how he could be so sure. “Because of my thousandfold experience,” he replied; whereupon I could not help saying: “And with this new case, I suppose, your experience has become thousand-and-one-fold.”

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<sup>49</sup> Goldberg, p. 120, 2010. As noted throughout, this cannot be concluded for the lesbian studies, and certainly cannot be concluded for gay parents, for whom there is almost nothing known.

A consistent remark found within the gay parenting literature relates to how large and growing it is. New studies are said to confirm many past studies, and there is a general impression that, like a snowball rolling down a hill, the evidence is mounting and becoming unchallengable. This, of course, is not a scientific conclusion. A series of weak research designs and exploratory studies do no amount to a growing body of advanced research. Nock (2001) provided the first critical assessment of this literature. He stated then that “the only acceptable conclusion at this point is that the literature on this topic does not constitute a solid body of scientific evidence.”<sup>50</sup> Although the best studies have been done recently, Table 1 shows that the majority of latest studies have the same structural flaws found fifteen years earlier. Nock’s conclusion still stands.

I have focused on an examination of bias within the literature; however, a few other characteristics of this literature should be mentioned. First, several papers use the same data set over and over again, and although they might investigate different issues, they tend to draw the same conclusions. As mentioned, the three papers by Wainright and Patterson and their coauthor Russell use the same small data set from the Adolescence Health survey. The three papers by Chan, Raboy, and Patterson and their co-authors Brooks and Fulcher all use a data sample that comes from a sperm bank in California. Bos et al. (2008) and Vanfraussen et al. (2002) use a data set that was, in part, used by Brewaeys et al. (1997) and MacCallum and Golombok (2004). Stacey (2004) and (2005) use the same data set. Of course, the National Longitudinal Lesbian Family Survey uses the same sample in each wave. There is nothing wrong with using a data set over again to answer separate questions or to follow individuals through time. However, one must keep in mind that the number of independent studies is less than the total number of studies. Given that each study uses a small sample, this reduction in independent studies is critical.

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<sup>50</sup> Nock, p. 47, 2001.

A related observation is the dominant role of several researchers. Charlotte Patterson is a co-author of ten of the fifty-two studies, Henny Bos a co-author of six, Nanette Gartrell a co-author of five, Judith Stacey and Abbie Goldberg the co-authors of four, and a few others are co-authors three times. Often they are co-authors with each other. Again, there is nothing wrong with a scholar dominating a field or working with others. However, it once again points to the reduction in independent studies, and leads to the repetition of specific claims. Three survey papers have Timothy Biblarz as a co-author which no doubt also helps to create the impression of a unified body of research. Karl Popper's warning needs to be heeded.

Finally, as an economist looking in from the outside on psychological, sociological, and feminist studies, I was struck by the rhetorical style of the papers. Paper titles were long and "scientific" sounding, lending an impression of advanced research. Along the same lines, papers often had many authors, even though almost all of the papers were short. Many of the secondary authors were likely research assistants given their general lack of graduate degrees and academic positions. This practice mimics the tradition found in the physical sciences where every member of a laboratory is considered an author of a study. And lastly, almost all of the papers conducted simple difference of means, Chi-squared, or other testing procedures that only have meaning when the conditions of a probability sample are met — which they never are. They give the visual impression of hard science where there is none. An outsider is led to ask: what is the purpose of such a rhetorical style? The answer can only be that the intended audience of this research is not the scientific community — which sees through it — but the community of lawyers, judges, and politicians who will, and do, decide the fates of gay and lesbian rights. If the literature on gay parenting is to rise to the standards of social science, then it has to move beyond the pre-occupation with advocacy.

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APPENDIX  
TABLE 1: Summaries of Gay Parenting Studies

Study	Random Sample	Gay Sample Size	Content <sup>†</sup>	Comparison Group Size	Time Series Data	Gay or Lesbian Study <sup>‡</sup>
Bailey et al. 1995	No	55	Hard	None	No	G
Flaks et al. 1995	No	30	Soft	30	No	L
Patterson 1995	No	26	Soft	None	No	L
Tasker et al 1995	No	25	Soft	21	No	L
Golombok et al. 1996	No	25	Hard	21	No	L
Sarantakos 1996	No	58	Soft	116	Yes	G&L
Brewaeys et al. 1997	No	30	Soft	68	No	L
Golombok et al. 1997	No	30	Soft	83	Yes	L
Chan et al. 1998a	No	30	Soft	16	No	L
Chan et al. 1998b	No	55	Soft	25	No	L
McNeill et al. 1998	No	24	Soft	35	No	L
Patterson et al. 1998	No	37	Soft	None	No	L
Gershon et al. 1999	No	76	Soft	None	No	L
Gartrell et al. 1999	No	84	Soft	None	Yes	L
Dundas et al. 2000	No	27	Soft	None	No	L
Gartrell et al. 2000	No	84	Soft	None	Yes	L
Barrett et al. 2001	No	101	Soft	None	No	G
Chrisp 2001	No	8	Soft	None	No	L
Patterson 2001	No	37	Soft	None	No	L
Fulcher et al. 2002	No	55	Soft	25	No	L
Vanfraussen et al. 2002	No	24	Soft	24		No L
Golombok et al. 2003	No	39	Soft	134	No	L
Bos et al. 2004	No	100	Soft	None	No	L
Patterson et al. 2004	No	33	Hard	33	No	L
Stacey 2004	No	50	Soft	None	No	G
MacCallum et al. 2004	No	25	Soft	76	No	L
Wainright et al. 2004	Yes	44	Hard	44	No	L
Gartrell et al. 2005	No	84	Soft	None	Yes	L
Leung et al. 2005	No	47	Soft	111	No	G & L
Scheib et al. 2005	No	12	Soft	17	No	L
Stacey 2005	No	50	Soft	None	No	G
Wainright et al. 2006	Yes	44	Hard	44	No	L
Wright et al. 2006	No	156	Soft	None	No	G
Bos et al. 2007	No	99	Soft	100	No	L
Goldberg 2007	No	46	Soft	None	No	G & L
Andersson et al. 2008	pop.	2819	Hard	220,949	Yes	G & L
Balsam et al. 2008	No	281	Soft	55	No	G & L

Cont.

APPENDIX

TABLE 1: Summaries of Gay Parenting Studies Cont.

Study	Random Sample	Gay Sample Size	Content <sup>†</sup>	Comparison Group Size	Time Series Data	Gay or Lesbian Study <sup>‡</sup>
Bos et al. 2008a	No	63	Soft	None	No	L
Bos et al. 2008b	No	152	Soft	None	No	L
Fairlough 2008	No	67	Soft	None	No	G & L
Fulcher et al. 2008	No	33	Soft	33	No	L
Goldberg et al. 2008	No	30	Soft	None	No	L
Oswald et al. 2008	No	190	Hard	None	No	G & L
Rothblum et al. 2008	pop.	475	Hard	None	No	G,L& T
Rivers et al. 2008	Yes	18	Soft	18	No	L
Sutfin et al. 2008	No	29	Soft	28	No	L
Wainright et al. 2008	Yes	44	Soft	44	No	L
Bos 2010	No	36	Soft	36	No	G
Gartrell et al. 2010	No	84	Hard	93	Yes	L
Lehmiller 2010	No	68	Soft	86	No	G
Power et al. 2010	No	455	Hard	None	No	G & L
Rosenfeld 2010	Yes	3502	Hard	> 700,000	No	G & L

† Hard implies the questions asked were potentially verifiable, quantifiable, and had observable answers. Soft implies the opposite. Some studies included both and were classified as hard.

‡ G= Gay, L= Lesbian, and T= Transgendered.