

Better Off With Mom and Dad

New Parenting Study Questions Politically Correct View

by Sue Ellen Browder

For the past decade, a cadre of social scientists has claimed that kids raised by homosexuals show “no differences” from kids raised by opposite-sex couples. Now, a large national study of the well-being of young adults reared in different types of families challenges this widely circulated “no differences” thesis. In the June issue of *Social Science Research*, University of Texas sociologist Mark Regnerus reports that Americans ages 18 to 39 who grew up in families where either parent had a same-sex romance fared significantly worse on 25 of 40 measures. They were three and a half times likelier to be unemployed and almost four times likelier to be on public assistance than children raised in biological, intact mom-and-dad marriages. Children reared by same-sex-wooing adults were also more likely to have been arrested, to have pled guilty to a minor criminal offense, to smoke marijuana, and to have thought about suicide during the previous year.

Regnerus’ “*New Family Structures Study*,” which screened more than 15,000 Americans and interviewed nearly 3,000, radically challenges the previous scientific consensus. In a 2005 brief, the American Psychological Association (APA) stated: “Not a single study has found children of lesbian or gay parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of heterosexual parents.” The APA’s primary stated objective for publishing the brief was to influence family law. The preface declared that “the focus of the publication ... [is] to serve the needs of psychologists, lawyers and parties in family-law cases.”

The APA statement seemed to accomplish, at least in part, the work it set out to do. The “no differences” thesis has been used in many legal briefs, articles and expert testimonies to sway state and federal judges on same-sex “marriage” decisions. Iowa Supreme Court Chief Justice Mark Cady cited the “no differences” thesis in his opinion for the 2009 case that legalized same-sex “marriage” in the Hawkeye State. Likewise, now retired Judge Vaughn Walker of the U.S. district court in San Francisco repeatedly cited the “no differences” thesis in his 2010 decision, which overturned California’s Proposition 8 voter initiative defining marriage as between one man and one woman. Judge Walker said the research supporting the conclusion that children raised by homosexual parents are as likely to be “healthy, successful and well-adjusted” as other children was “beyond serious debate.” But, in fact, there is serious debate about the quality of research that was used to establish the “no differences” claim.

In a thorough critique of the 2005 APA brief, which also appears in the same issue of *Social Science Research*, Louisiana State University associate professor Loren Marks writes that “strong assertions” about same-sex parents, “including those made by the APA,” are not “empirically warranted.” Marks says that 77% of the 59 studies cited in the APA paper were conducted on small, non-representative samples of fewer than 100 people, with one study including only five participants. In Marks’ words, “It seems that influential claims by national organizations should be based, at least partly, on research that is nationally representative.”

Those researching same-sex parenting, Marks said, also tend to study a few privileged lesbians (predominantly white, well-educated and middle-class), then unscientifically generalize their findings to all same-sex couples nationwide. In a press release responding to Marks’ critique and the Regnerus study, the APA simply reiterated its 2005 position that “there is no scientific evidence that parenting effectiveness is related to parental sexual orientation.”

Asked how the *New Family Structures Study* (NFSS) differs from previous same-sex parenting studies, Regnerus said, “We employed a random, population-based sample, and a large one at that, so people can generalize to the broader population of young adults in America. And we talked to independent adults, not to parents or kids still in the home. Nobody did that before.” In an article for the online magazine *Slate*, Regnerus wrote, “I’m not claiming that all the previous research on this subject is bunk. But small or non-random studies should not be the gold standard for research, all the more so when we’re dealing with a topic so weighted with public interest and significance.”

Among the most disturbing of the new findings were those regarding childhood sexual abuse. Sadly, when asked if they were ever touched sexually by a parent or an adult, grown children of lesbian mothers were 11 times more likely to say “Yes” than those from intact biological mom-and-dad families. The new study shows clear advantages for being reared by an intact biological family. “The biologically intact, stable nuclear family may seem like an

endangered species — it is not,” Regnerus writes. “But it remains the most secure environment for child development.”

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