

Mark Regnerus Media Training

Key Points to Make:

You are a researcher, not an advocate. You are simply reporting on what the data tells us.

This is the first independent, large scale study of young adults. Unlike other studies, it does not depend on input from children nor are its participants self-selected or related to advocates.

This is a peer-reviewed study and has been published in highly-respected academic journals and been open to public review and criticism.

The study does not ascribe a cause to the effects, it simply reports the data.

The study reveals many serious and concerning differences between young adults who have been raised in same-sex households and those raised in intact, traditional families. The data shows that in no measurement are those raised in a same-sex household better off than those raised in an intact family, and are clearly worse off in many key measurement.

For many years, gay advocates have claimed that there are no meaningful differences between children of same-sex couples and other children. This study shows this not to be true.

Young adults raised in a same-sex household are [list key findings such as more likely to have considered suicide, etc.]

It is clear that we need additional research to better understand the causes of these significant outcome differences between young adults raised in a same-sex household and those raised in intact families.

Points to Avoid/Hard Questions:

Your opinion of same-sex marriage.

"The study is not about same-sex marriage. It does not attempt to assess the differences between those gay couples who have married and those who have not. It is focused on the differences between young adults raised in a same-sex household and those raised in an intact families. The study finds several significant differences."

Your opinion of President Obama's endorsement of same-sex marriage.

"I am a researcher, not an activist or advocate. I have no opinion of President Obama's position on same-sex marriage."

Whether gay couples should be able to adopt children.

"Again, I am a researcher, not an advocate. Our research finds that there are a number of significant differences between young adults raised in a same-sex household and those raised in intact families where their parents are married to each other. I have no position on adoption, gay marriage or any other similar issue."

Whether gay parents are worse than traditional parents.

"The study is not about parenting. There are no doubt excellent gay parents and terrible traditional parents. The study is about outcome differences between young adults raised in a same-sex household and those raised by their own parent in intact families. There are significant differences, but the study does not ascribe any causes for the differences. This can only be assessed with additional research."

The study is biased because it was paid for by an arch-conservative, anti-equality organization – Witherspoon Institute.

"Every academic study is paid for by someone. Witherspoon approached us with a desire to independently examine the differences between young adults raised in a same-sex household and those raised in traditional, intact families. They had no input into the design of the study, nor input into the researchers who actually conducted the study, nor the ability to influence the presentation of the results of the study. Indeed, the study was conducted by researchers on both sides of the gay marriage debate, and the study itself has been made available to outsiders to review and critique. Witherspoon has played no role in the outcome of this study."

Every other study analyzing the wellbeing of children raised by gay couples shows that they are either as well adjusted as other children, or even better adjusted. This study is an anomaly.

Every other study conducted on these issues are subject to significant methodological problems and likely present flawed data as a result. They are all very small in sample size. They frequently involve self-selected participants, usually gay advocates and their allies. They usually assess children and rely on the statements of those children, which are unreliable since all children want to please adults and will give answers they believe are desired by the adults. Our study is the first large scale study to have ever been conducted. It does not rely on data from self-selected participants. And it does not rely on the statements of children who might want to please their questioners."

Questions for YouTube videos:

1. You talk up front about this “no differences” paradigm. What is it?
2. The title of your article is “How different are the adult children of parents who have same-sex relationships?” So...to the punchline...how different are they?
3. What’s unique about the study? Is it more reliable than earlier research?
4. Does this study mean that same-sex parenting causes problems or is correlated with problems?
5. Aren’t the differences present because gay and lesbian families have long been marginalized?
6. Why undertake such a study, given the potential politicization of results?

The study is not about parenting per se. There are no doubt excellent gay parents and terrible straight parents. The study is, among other things, about outcome differences between young adults raised in a same-sex household and those raised by their own parents in intact families. There are many significant differences, but the study does not ascribe any causes for the

differences. This can only be assessed with additional research. What is evident in the data, however, is above-average instability among households in which mom or dad had a same-sex relationship. For example, among the former only two respondents out of 163 analyzed said they lived with their mother and her partner nonstop from birth to age 18. Two more said they did so for 15 years, two more for 13 years, and another pair for 10-12 years. To be sure, these 10 fared amply on more outcomes than did their peers. They're just uncommon. Future studies would ideally include more children from "planned" gay or lesbian families, but their relative scarcity in the NFSS data suggests that their appearance in even much larger probability samples will remain infrequent for the foreseeable future.

There is a lot we don't know; this is just a first step.

This is an overview piece that explores statistical associations, and explores what happens when I control for a variety of other variables. But an assessment of causation is not possible here. I explored a likely suspect—household instability—but apart from longitudinal data, I'd be in a tough spot to claim causation.

You realize the Witherspoon Institute is a pretty conservative organization, politically.

Yes. And the Ford Foundation is a pretty liberal one. Every academic study is paid for by someone. I've seen fine studies funded by all sorts of interest groups. I don't waste too much time worrying about the sources of funding, so long as the research questions are compelling and the data collection methods solid. Witherspoon had nothing to do with the study design, or with data analyses, or interpretations, or the publication of the study. To me, I treated it the same as if the funding came from NICHD or NSF.