

STUDIES OF HOMOSEXUAL PARENTING: A CRITICAL REVIEW

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I. INTRODUCTION

In cases of a homosexual man or woman seeking divorce-related child custody, foster home placement, adoption, or artificial insemination, other interested parties have raised the commonly-held concerns that the homosexual lifestyle will influence the child's developing sexual orientation, future sexual choices, gender identity, sex role development, and risk of social or psychological disturbance.¹ Moreover, the fact that the social stigma associated with a homosexual parent will cause suffering for the child in the child's peer group relationships constitutes another area of concern.² A recent study by Cameron and Cameron stated accurately that the historic societal objections to homosexual parenting are three-fold:

- (1) [To] provide a model, associates, and experiences that would make a child more apt to engage in homosexuality and therefore

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¹ Sharon L. Huggins, *A Comparative Study of Self-Esteem of Adolescent Children of Divorced Lesbian Mothers and Divorced Heterosexual Mothers*, 18 J. HOMOSEXUALITY, 123, 123-24 (1989).

² *Id.*

become homosexual, (2) [to] increase the probability of various forms of childhood sexual victimization (from the parents and their associates), and (3) because the parents' worldview and behavioral standards are disturbed, the child would be more apt to be socially and psychologically disturbed than would children raised by nonhomosexual parents.³

Further, Brian Miller acknowledges in his study that in child custody cases, "it is understandable that gay men's wives may fear and struggle against the possibility of their children becoming homosexual since the lives of gays . . . tend to be more difficult than those of non-gays."⁴ As a result of such concerns, homosexual men and women have historically been prevented from obtaining sole child custody, adopting or foster-parenting children. Recently, a number of judges have taken the position that present research supports new rights for homosexuals.⁵

The shift in social policy rests on the stated conclusions of some of the handful of existing studies that purport to indicate a parent's homosexual lifestyle has no significant effect upon their children.⁶ For example, from their survey of twenty-three homosexual parents (without assessing the children), Harris and Turner reported few differences in the self-reported parenting behavior of homosexuals and heterosexuals, and concluded, "[r]esults from the present study do suggest that being gay is not incompatible with effective parenting, and certainly not the major issue in parents' relationships with their children."⁷

³ Paul Cameron & Kirk Cameron, *Homosexual Parents*, 31 *ADOLESCENCE* 757, 768 (1996).

⁴ Brian Miller, *Gay Fathers and Their Children*, 28 *FAM. COORDINATOR* 544, 547 (1979).

⁵ See, e.g., *Dean v. District of Columbia*, 653 A.2d 307, 353 n.59 (D.C. 1995) (Ferren, J., dissenting in part) (using studies discussed in this article to support the right of same sex marriage); *Opinion of the Justices*, 525 A.2d 1095, 1102 (N.H. 1987) (using studies discussed in this article to support the rights of homosexuals to adopt children). See generally Steve Suseoff, *Assessing Children's Best Interests When a Parent Is Gay or Lesbian: Toward a Rational Custody Standard*, 32 *U.C.L.A. L. REV.* 852 (1985) (using studies discussed in this article to support various arguments advocating for homosexual rights).

⁶ *Dean*, 653 A.2d at 353 (Ferren, J., dissenting in part) ("[T]here is powerful evidence that [a child's] so-called role models do not influence sexual orientation."); *Opinion of the Justices*, 525 A.2d at 1102 ("The legislature received no evidence because the overwhelming weight of professional study on the subject concludes no difference in psychological and psychosexual development can be discerned between children raised by heterosexual parents and children raised by homosexual parents.").

⁷ Mary B. Harris & Pauline H. Turner, *Gay and Lesbian Parents*, 12 *J. HOMOSEXUALITY* 101, 112 (1986).

Green, Mandell, Hotvedt, Gray, and Smith reported:

Our data demonstrate[s] no distinctions between the groups of male or female children of homosexual or heterosexual mothers regarding popularity or social adjustment.⁸

... The data reveal[s] that whatever the considerations that contribute to the best interests of the child (and the parents) in such litigation, the mother's sexual orientation per se should not enter this judicial calculus.⁹

Similarly, Huggins summarized her study by stating:

... Findings of the analysis of the self-esteem scores indicated there was no significant statistical differences in the self-esteem scores between adolescents with divorced lesbian mothers and adolescents with divorced heterosexual mothers.¹⁰

... [T]he data suggest[s] that growing up in a lesbian household does not in and of itself have a negative impact on the adolescent's self-esteem and is therefore not a valid criterion upon which to base child disposition decisions.¹¹

Summarizing their findings in a qualitative study, Lott-Whitehead and Tully concluded, "homosexuality in and of itself is not incompatible with successful family life."¹² Flaks, Ficher, Masterpasqua, and Joseph reported, "[l]ike earlier research, results of this study are consistent with the conclusion that the children of lesbian and heterosexual parents are remarkably similar, specifically in the areas of intellectual functioning and behavioral adjustment."¹³

But do these research reports adhere to conventional scientific standards? Have they used methods of sampling which allow generalizations beyond the study group itself? Are there serious sources of bias in the research study methods employed? Are these studies of scientific value for assisting courts in making child custody, adoptions, and/or foster child placement determinations?

This article discovered that with very few exceptions, the existing studies on homosexual parenting are methodologically flawed and they should be considered no more than exploratory pilot work which suggest directions for future rigorous research studies. The suggestive leads from

⁸ Richard Green et al., *Lesbian Mothers and Their Children: A Comparison with Solo Parent Heterosexual Mothers and Their Children*, 15 ARCHIVES SEXUAL BEHAV. 167, 180 (1986).

⁹ *Id.* at 183.

¹⁰ Huggins, *supra* note 1, at 123.

¹¹ *Id.* at 134.

¹² Laura Lott-Whitehead & Carol Tully, *The Family Lives of Lesbian Mothers*, 63 SMITH C. STUD. SOC. WORK 265, 275 (1993).

¹³ David K. Flaks et al., *Lesbians Choosing Motherhood: A Comparative Study of Lesbian and Heterosexual Parents and Their Children*, 31 DEV. PSYCHOL. 105, 112 (1995).

these exploratory ventures and some considerations of developmental theory were then explored to indicate the central issues, which need to be addressed in future research in this important area.

The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of the methodology and possible limitations of existing research studies¹⁴ on the effects of homosexual parenting upon child development in order to assist lawyers, legislators, and judges to identify politically-motivated assertions regarding so-called "research findings" that are not, in fact, substantiated by adequate scientific research. In doing so, section II considers matters of design, sampling, research measures, data analysis, and conclusions derived from the data of leading studies focusing on homosexual parenting. Section III will offer a discussion regarding what, if any, conclusions can be drawn from the studies considered by this article. Finally, section IV considers the question of adverse influence of homosexual parenting on children's psychosexual development.

II. A SYSTEMATIC IDENTIFICATION OF THE METHODOLOGICAL DEFICIENCIES OF EACH STUDY

Koepke, Hare, and Moran observed, "Conducting research in the gay community is fraught with methodological problems."¹⁵ Commenting on the state of studies of homosexual parenting, Turner, Scadden, and Harris observed, "most research has a white, middle-class bias; most studies have small sample sizes; and sampling procedures seldom meet the demands of rigorous research."¹⁶ Five years later, our systematic review found this critique still to be true for all but one recent study by Cameron and Cameron.¹⁷ Based on these arguments, the ensuing section will discuss the methodological flaws found in the leading studies on homosexuality in order to show that the conclusions of the studies are not reliable.

A. Deficiencies in Research Design

The designs of the various studies of homosexual parenting have a number of deficiencies. Some studies hold the limitations of lacking a systematic design altogether, in that they are essentially only

¹⁴ This review covers the best studies currently available, which are published in refereed academic journals, and does not review the more preliminary, pilot, and exploratory studies typically reported in masters' theses, doctoral dissertations, book chapters in edited volumes, and non-refereed books.

¹⁵ Leslie Koepke et al., *Relationship Quality in a Sample of Lesbian Couples with Children and Child-Free Lesbian Couples*, 41 FAM. REL. 224, 225 (1992).

¹⁶ Pauline Turner et al., *Parenting in Gay and Lesbian Families*, 1 J. GAY & LESBIAN PSYCHOTHERAPY 55, 56 (1990).

¹⁷ Cameron & Cameron, *supra* note 3, at 759.

exploratory, descriptive, rudimentarily qualitative, or clinical case studies. The research designs selected for other studies have failed to incorporate theoretically appropriate comparison groups and/or have failed to include the necessary, adequate control group of homosexual parenting for statistical comparison, which could give comparative meaning to the findings of the studies.

1. Limitations of Exploratory, Descriptive, Qualitative, or Case Studies

Thirteen (37%) of the thirty-five studies reviewed were exploratory, descriptive, qualitative, or case studies with no attempt made to incorporate an experimental research design. With a focus on homosexual mothers, Lott-Whitehead and Tully reported one such study. They appropriately acknowledged the limitations of this methodology:

This study was descriptive and, therefore, had inherent in its design methodological flaws. . . . This study does not purport to contain a representative sample, and thus generalizability cannot be assumed.¹⁸

....

Researcher bias must be considered. . . . Interpretations of responses . . . can become contaminated with the researcher's values, cultural bias, and experiences.¹⁹

....

Possible biases here include the following: the acquiescent response set, in which subjects agree or disagree with all such-worded questions regardless of the questions' content; and the social desirability bias, in which subjects tend to respond in such a way as to make their reference group look good. . . . These biases may have been exaggerated in this project due to the sensitive and sometimes controversial nature of the subject.²⁰

....

[T]he study sample was small (N=45) and biased toward well-educated, white women with high incomes. . . . Second, there existed a regional bias Third, as aforementioned, the study was not experimental and not privy therefore to the rigorous sampling that permits greater external validity.²¹

These limitations apply to all thirteen of the descriptive studies of homosexual parenting which lacked inferential statistical testing of hypotheses.²²

¹⁸ Lott-Whitehead & Tully, *supra* note 12, at 269.

¹⁹ *Id.* at 270.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.* at 275.

²² For detailed tables summarizing the methodological weaknesses of the studies reviewed in this article, see G. A. Rekers & M. D. Kilgus, *A Review of the Effects of Homosexual Parenting Upon Child Development: Subject Characteristics and*

2. Design Problems in Controlled Studies

One area of problems when experimental designs are used pertains to the research design itself. The research designs selected for many of these studies failed to include theoretically appropriate comparison groups and/or fail to include the necessary control group for statistical comparison which could give comparative meaning to the findings of the studies. Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, and Mikach pointed out the theoretical issues, which require all the relevant groups to be included in the research design in this field of research:

It is important to note that at this stage of research, sons and daughters should be considered separately, because it is plausible that they are affected differently. For example, sexual orientation may be differentially malleable for the two sexes; if so, offspring of the more malleable sex could be especially influenced by parents' sexual orientation. Similarly, a child may be differently affected according to whether the father or mother is homosexual, and thus offspring of gay fathers should be considered separately from offspring of lesbian mothers. Moreover, some explanations, such as identification, depend on whether the child is the same or the opposite sex as the homosexual parent. Thus, to provide a complete answer, researchers must eventually fill the four cells of a Parent (gay father vs. lesbian mother) X Offspring (son vs. daughter) table-of-outcome data.²³

Further, because many theoretical and practical questions cannot be answered without the appropriate heterosexual single-parent and married two-parent control group(s) being included in the research design, the number of cells must increase from four to eight, twelve, or more.

3. Omission of Normal Control Groups in Studies of the Effects of Parenting by Homosexuals Upon Children

This review identified only seventeen studies of children reared by homosexuals, and thirteen (76%) of these studies failed to contain a heterosexual parent control group. Of the eleven published empirical studies describing the effects of custodial parenting by homosexual mothers or fathers upon the minor children currently residing in their homes, four (36%) failed to include a comparison group of children reared by married couples or heterosexual singles. But among the six retrospective studies of adult children of homosexual parents,²⁴ three

Methodological Deficiencies Summarized in Tabular Form (unpublished manuscript) (1998) (on file with author).

²³ J. Michael Bailey et al., *Sexual Orientation of Adult Sons of Gay Fathers*, 31 DEV. PSYCHOL. 124, 125 (1995).

²⁴ See generally, Bailey et al., *supra* note 23; Cameron & Cameron, *supra* note 3; Susan Golombok & Fiona Tasker, *Do Parents Influence the Sexual Orientation of their*

(50%) failed to include a comparison group of adult children reared by married couples or single heterosexuals.

For example, in what he called a "preliminary report," Green offered unsystematic clinical interview data on the gender role behaviors and sexual orientation of children reared by lesbians, male-to-female transsexuals, and female-to-male transsexuals.²⁵ However, the study did not include a married couple or heterosexual single-parent control group.²⁶ Furthermore, in their study of the sexual orientation of sons of homosexual fathers, Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, and Mikach acknowledged the methodological limitation of their research design as lacking a control group of married or single heterosexual fathers.²⁷ These uncontrolled case reports are only suggestive and do not substitute for controlled longitudinal research investigations.

4. Omission of Normal Control Group in Studies of Homosexual Parents

A search of the social science literature found only twenty-seven studies which describe the characteristics of homosexual parents. Thirteen (48%) of them did not include a married couple or a heterosexual single-parent comparison group of any kind (neither a single-parent heterosexual nor married couple). The following is a discussion of these studies.

(a) Very Few Studies Compare Homosexual Mothers and Fathers, Married or Heterosexual Single-Parent Fathers, and Married or Heterosexual Single-Parent Mothers.

Only two studies were found that investigated parental behaviors of both homosexual mothers and fathers as compared to married or heterosexual single parents.²⁸ Two additional studies investigated the parental behaviors of both men and women homosexuals but failed to include a married or heterosexual single-parent comparison group.²⁹ Another study compared conflict resolution styles in homosexual non-

Children?, *Findings from a Longitudinal Study of Lesbian Families*, 32 DEV. PSYCHOL. 3 (1996) [hereinafter, *Parents*]; Miller, *supra* note 4; Fiona Tasker & Susan Golombok, *Adults Raised as Children in Lesbian Families*, 65 AM. J. ORTHOPSYCHIATRY 203 (1995) [hereinafter, *Adults*].

²⁵ Richard Green, *Sexual Identity of 37 Children Raised by Homosexual or Transsexual Parents*, 135 AM. J. PSYCHIATRY 692, 696 (1978).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ Bailey et al., *supra* note 23, at 127.

²⁸ See generally, Cameron & Cameron, *supra* note 3; Harris & Turner, *supra* note 7.

²⁹ See generally, Turner et al., *supra* note 16; Norman L. Wyers, *Homosexuality in the Family: Lesbian and Gay Spouses*, 32 SOC. WORK 143, 143-148 (1987).

parents to heterosexual non-parents and parents.³⁰ Because so few studies have administered the same parallel measures to groups of both male and female homosexual parents, compared to both heterosexual mothers and fathers, very little can be concluded about how parenting specifically differs among homosexual mothers and fathers, married or heterosexual single fathers and married or heterosexual single mothers.

(b) A Small Number of Studies Compare Homosexual Mothers to Married or Heterosexual Single Mothers.

Eleven studies were identified which compare the characteristics of homosexual mothers to married or heterosexual single mothers. An additional ten studies (48% of the total number of studies of homosexual mothers) reported on homosexual mothers without a comparison group of heterosexual mothers.

(c) A Small Number of Studies Compare Homosexual Fathers to Married or Heterosexual Single Fathers.

Similarly, only five studies were identified which compare the parenting of homosexual fathers to heterosexual fathers. Seven additional studies (58% of the total number of studies of homosexual fathers) reported on homosexual fathers without a comparison group of heterosexual fathers.

5. Lack of a Two-Parent Heterosexual Control Group.

Although most of the homosexual parents studied lived with a partner, the research designs of twenty-three (85%) of the twenty-seven studies of homosexual parents lacked a comparison of those parents to parallel married parents. Huggins' study of children of homosexual mothers appropriately noted that research is needed in which homosexual couples are compared with married couples and single homosexual mothers are compared with single heterosexual mothers.³¹ Past research has employed the flawed strategy of comparing homosexual couples to divorced or separated single parents.

For example, the study of children of homosexual mothers by Golombok, Spencer, and Rutter had a comparison group of divorced/separated heterosexual single mothers with the research design

³⁰ Lawrence A. Kurdek, *Conflict Resolution Styles in Gay, Lesbian, Heterosexual Nonparent, and Heterosexual Parent Couples*, 56 J. MARRIAGE & FAM. 705, 705 (1994).

³¹ Huggins, *supra* note 1, at 134.

requiring that the members of the control group have "no cohabitee."³² Yet, 67% of the homosexual mothers cohabited with a homosexual partner or with other adults in a shared household and the authors reported that most of the homosexual mothers actually lived with another woman.³³ Later in a follow-up study of these same families, Tasker and Golombok acknowledged that because the control group had consisted of young adults reared by heterosexual single parents, it was plausible that children from both types of families were atypical compared to those reared in married couple homes with both father and mother present.³⁴ In their further follow-up on these same samples, Golombok and Tasker appropriately acknowledged that an additional control group of married couple families should have been included in the original design, and a sufficient number of homosexual mothers sought to compare one-parent with two-parent lesbian families.³⁵

6. Inadequate Comparison Group

In the seventeen studies of children reared by homosexual parents whose design actually did contain a comparison group of some type, thirteen (76%) of the studies had no comparison group or a comparison group that was inadequate in some important respect. For example, as cited previously, Golombok, Spencer, and Rutter reported on the effects of homosexual parenting on children using a group of homosexual mothers in which 67% had a cohabiting lover or other adult in the household which they compared to the parenting of a group of single-parent heterosexual mothers who had "no cohabitee."³⁶ Sixty-seven percent of the homosexual parents compared to 37% of the heterosexual mothers had post-secondary school education and a professional occupation.³⁷ There were also statistically significant differences between the homosexual and control group in the age of children at time of break-up of marriage, the sex distribution of the children in the household, the total number of children in the household, and the children's weekly contact with their fathers.³⁸

The studies of child adjustment of children reared in homosexual homes versus married couple homes are further confounded by the fact

³² Susan Golombok et al., *Children in Lesbian and Single-Parent Households: Psychosexual and Psychiatric Appraisal*, 24 J. CHILD PSYCHOL. & PSYCHIATRY 551, 554-55 (1983).

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ *Adults, supra* note 24, at 213.

³⁵ *Parents, supra* note 24, at 8-9.

³⁶ Golombok et al., *supra* note 32, at 557.

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ *Id.*

that the children in homosexual homes have spent a significant part of their childhood in married couple homes before divorce and often maintain significant contact with non-custodial fathers. In the study by Golombok, Spencer, and Rutter for example, one-third (twelve subjects) had spent at least five years in a home with mothers and fathers before living in a homosexual setting, another one-third had lived in a married couple home for at least two years.³⁹ Moreover, only three children had never lived in a married couple home.⁴⁰

Golombok, Spencer, and Rutter found no difference in gender identity, sex role, and sexual orientation between the homosexual-reared versus heterosexual mother-reared children they studied.⁴¹ However, gender identity is established in the preschool years⁴² when most of the subjects in both groups had been still residing with their mother and father, and there are theoretical relationships between gender identity, sex role, and sexual orientation. The fact that children in the homosexual homes previously spent a considerable portion of their childhood in married couple homes is in addition to the non-parallel experience of the children in heterosexual homes living with a single parent and with larger numbers of siblings. Therefore, the research design is stacked against the child reared by the heterosexual parent in several respects, and the children reared by homosexuals have more adults present in the home (with partners and other adults in the household) and have had significant prior experience in a married couple home in most cases.

In their subsequent follow-up study of these same children followed into adulthood, Golombok and Tasker appropriately reported that the daughters of homosexual mothers were more open to homosexual relationships than were the sons.⁴³ However, as the investigators acknowledged, their sample of homosexual parents had a greater ratio of daughters to sons, and their sample of heterosexual parents had a greater ratio of sons to daughters.⁴⁴ Therefore, their findings of the different ratio of male to female children in the experimental and control groups may reflect this sampling bias.

The heterosexual comparison group of single-parent heterosexual households that was used by Green, Mandel, Hotvedt, Gray, and Smith differed on more variables than only sexual orientation, even though the investigators identified the independent variable as the mother's sexual

³⁹ *Id.* at 561.

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ *Id.* at 568.

⁴² Michael Rutter, *Psychosexual Development*, in SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATIONS OF DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHIATRY 322, 323 (Michael Rutter ed., 1980).

⁴³ *Parents*, *supra* note 24, at 9.

⁴⁴ *Id.*

orientation.⁴⁵ The study confounded this independent variable with several other statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups in the study. Seventy-eight percent of homosexual mother households contained partners or other adults.⁴⁶ Whereas, 10% of the heterosexual mothers lived with an adult, and none of the heterosexual mothers was reported living with a lover or partner.⁴⁷

Additionally, 75% of homosexual mothers versus 28% of heterosexual mothers did not desire to remarry.⁴⁸ Eighty-one percent of homosexual mothers versus 56% of heterosexual mothers did not plan to have more children in the future.⁴⁹ More homosexual mothers were active in homosexual and feminist politics.⁵⁰ Heterosexual mothers attended religious services more frequently than homosexual mothers, with 15% heterosexual mothers versus 56% homosexual mothers never attending a religious service.⁵¹ These variables may have had a causal connection to some of the statistically significant differences reported for their measures of child behavior in these two types of households.

B. Deficiencies in Sampling

Nearly all of the existing studies of homosexual parenting have major deficiencies in sampling. For example, problems include the use of a small sample size, the failure to obtain a truly representative sample due to sources of sampling bias, the lack of the use of a random sample, or the use of a sample with characteristics which are inappropriate for the crucial developmental research question involved in the study. These limitations inhibit further the reliability of these homosexual studies.

1. Limitations of Sample Size

Thirty-one (89%) of the thirty-five studies of homosexual parents and/or children reared by homosexual parents were found to suffer the methodological limitations of small sample size. The use of a small sample size in a study decreases the statistical power of the research design to detect group differences in the larger population from which the samples were drawn.⁵² This means that significant group differences that exist in the larger population are likely not to be detected by studies with small sample sizes. If a researcher would like to find no difference

⁴⁵ Green et al., *supra* note 8, at 172.

⁴⁶ *Id.*

⁴⁷ *Id.*

⁴⁸ *Id.*

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ *Id.*

⁵¹ *Id.*

⁵² See, e.g., Bailey et al., *supra* note 24, at 128.

between two samples on a particular factor, then choosing to use a small sample size would minimize the probability that any significant group differences would be detected.

Although Patterson's review found little evidence that the gender identity or sex-typed behavior of children of homosexual parents is atypical,⁵³ the studies reviewed had little statistical power because of the small sample sizes. The study by Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, and Mikach had little statistical power because it had only seven non-heterosexual sons.⁵⁴

In their follow-up study of children into young adulthood reared by homosexuals, Golombok and Tasker employed such a small sample size that they had to acknowledge that their results underestimated the significance of group differences as a result of low statistical power (Type II error).⁵⁵ Also, because they included data for more than one child per family,⁵⁶ the group difference was arguably inflated due to reduced error variance. These investigators acknowledged that in order to adequately investigate the effects of family characteristics on sexual identity development, a large-scale epidemiological study of children of homosexual and married parents followed from childhood to adulthood would be necessary.⁵⁷ Reporting on other data from this same study, Tasker and Golombok acknowledged that any negative effects on children's well-being may have been undetected by their study due to their small sample size.⁵⁸

2. Small Sample Size in Studies of Children Reared by Homosexual Parents

In the sixteen studies which reported on female children reared by homosexual parents, the number of girls ranged from one to thirty, with a mean of twelve female child subjects per study. In the seventeen studies which reported on male children reared by homosexual parents, the number of boys ranged from one to forty-three, with a mean of twelve male child subjects per study.

In discussing their lack of finding differences in emotions, relationships, or behavior between children reared by homosexual and heterosexual single mothers, Golombok, Spencer, and Rutter acknowledged their study's methodological limitations of small sample

⁵³ Charlotte Patterson, *Children of Lesbian and Gay Parents*, 31 CHILD DEV. 1025, 1030-36 (1992).

⁵⁴ Bailey et al., *supra* note 23, at 127.

⁵⁵ *Parents*, *supra* note 24, at 8.

⁵⁶ *Id.*

⁵⁷ *Id.* at 9.

⁵⁸ *Adults*, *supra* note 24, at 213.

size and unmatched comparison group.⁵⁹ It was the case that the homosexual mothers were more highly educated, had more professional-level jobs, and had fewer children in their household.⁶⁰ The heterosexual mothers were single while the majority of the homosexual mothers were not.⁶¹

Similarly, after finding no significant difference between groups of nine children each in self-esteem scores of children of homosexual versus heterosexual mothers, Huggins appropriately acknowledged that the meaning of this finding was unclear and the interpretation of the data was difficult because of the small sample size.⁶² Javaid acknowledged that the number of subjects employed made it difficult to come to any conclusion from the study.⁶³ Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, and Mikach observed that the limited number of studies and the small sample sizes employed make it unclear whether children of homosexual parents have greater rates of homosexuality.⁶⁴

3. Small Sample Size in Control Groups of Children Reared by Married or Heterosexual Single Parents

Other than the Cameron and Cameron study which reported on a control group of 2769 adult female children reared by heterosexual parents, the other nine studies with control groups of female children reared by married or heterosexual single parents ranged in number from eight to twenty-eight, with a mean of thirteen female child subjects per study. Other than the Cameron and Cameron study which reported on a control group of 1818 adult male children reared by heterosexual parents, the other nine studies with control groups of male children reared by heterosexual parents ranged in number from seven to twenty-four, with a mean of thirteen male child subjects per study.

In contrast to the majority of studies which had just a handful of subjects (one to fifteen) and reported no significant differences between children reared by homosexuals versus married or heterosexual single parents, the experimental studies published to date that studied even a modestly greater number (thirteen to thirty) of boys or girls reared by homosexual parents⁶⁵ did find developmentally-important, statistically-

⁵⁹ Golombok et al., *supra* note 32, at 557.

⁶⁰ *Id.*

⁶¹ *Id.* at 555.

⁶² Huggins, *supra* note 1, at 134.

⁶³ Ghazala Javaid, *The Children of Homosexual and Heterosexual Single Mothers*, 31 DEV. PSYCHOL. 235, 245 (1993).

⁶⁴ Bailey et al., *supra* note 23, at 128.

⁶⁵ Golombok et al., *supra* note 32, at 557; *Parents*, *supra* note 24, at 5; Green et al., *supra* note 8, at 179; *Adults*, *supra* note 24, at 212; Cameron & Cameron, *supra* note 3, at 772.

significant differences between children reared by homosexual parents compared to married heterosexual single parents. For example, children reared by homosexuals were found to have greater parental encouragement for cross-gender behavior,⁶⁶ greater amounts of cross-dressing and cross-gender play/role behavior,⁶⁷ higher amounts of homosexual interests by puberty,⁶⁸ higher frequencies of homosexual orientation in adulthood,⁶⁹ and higher involvement in homosexual behavior in adulthood.⁷⁰

4. Small Sample Size in Studies of Homosexual Parents

In the nineteen studies that reported on characteristics of homosexual parents, the number of subjects ranged from eleven to eighty-four, with a mean of thirty-three homosexual parent subjects per study. Miller, Jacobsen, and Bigner, for example, acknowledged that their sample size was too small to permit multivariate statistical comparisons between experimental and control groups.⁷¹ In the twelve studies which reported on characteristics of homosexual parents, the number of subjects ranged from ten to fifty-seven, with a mean of thirty homosexual father subjects per study.

In the study of homosexual parenting with the best research methodology to date, Cameron and Cameron obtained a random sample by a one-wave, systematic cluster sampling of six U.S. metropolitan areas, in which they received responses from 5,182 adults (of 10,115 contacted) which constituted a 51.2% response rate.⁷² The sample produced small numbers of homosexual parents and small numbers of children reared by homosexual parents due to the low base rate of such individuals in the general population. This study obtained a random sample which contained (a) twenty-seven homosexual mothers compared to 1992 heterosexual mothers, (b) thirty-three homosexual fathers compared to 997 heterosexual fathers, (c) eleven adult female children of homosexual parents compared to 2769 adult female children of heterosexual parents, and (d) six adult male children of homosexual parents compared to 1818 adult male children of heterosexual parents.⁷³

⁶⁶ Green et al., *supra* note 8, at 179.

⁶⁷ *Id.* at 175.

⁶⁸ *Id.* at 208, 210-11.

⁶⁹ Cameron & Cameron, *supra* note 3, at 769.

⁷⁰ *Id.*

⁷¹ Judith Miller et al., *The Child's Home Environment for Lesbian vs. Heterosexual Mothers: A Neglected Area of Research*, 7 J. HOMOSEXUALITY 49, 55 (1981).

⁷² Cameron & Cameron, *supra* note 3, at 760.

⁷³ *Id.* at 762.

Cameron and Cameron appropriately noted that their findings were based on only seventeen childhoods which is too small to verify or disprove their hypotheses.⁷⁴ Because of the low base rate of children being reared by homosexual parents, a random sample strategy is likely to be an expensive strategy with such a high cost-to-benefit ratio that convenience sampling becomes a preferred strategy. But given the limitations of convenience sampling, researchers should express greater modesty regarding the representations of their findings to the general population of homosexual parents.

5. Sampling Bias Causing Failure to Obtain a Representative Sample

Thirty-four (97%) of the thirty-five studies of homosexual parents and/or children reared by homosexual parents failed to obtain a sample which could be considered representative of the larger population of homosexual parents and/or the larger population of children reared by homosexual parents. In empirical research, the findings obtained from a study of a sample of subjects cannot be legitimately generalized to any other individuals or groups unless that sample can be demonstrated to be representative of a larger population. If the method for obtaining the study's sample did not systematically select subjects according to acceptable methods for obtaining a representative sample, then sampling bias is present in the study sample. Sampling bias renders any generalizations of the findings to any other individuals to be unjustified.

All the studies reviewed here, with the exception of the Cameron and Cameron study, contained sampling bias which renders it scientifically impossible to generalize the studies' findings beyond the study samples. Koepke, Hare, and Moran observed that obtaining representative samples of homosexuals has been an ongoing problem for investigators and has necessitated cautious interpretations of research results.⁷⁵ In the discussion section of their reported empirical study, Miller, Jacobsen, and Bigner acknowledge that their data was insufficient to establish their suggested conclusions and, appropriately, that their rationale for this acknowledgement pointed to the methodological limitations of not obtaining a representative sample.⁷⁶ Similarly, Bigner and Jacobsen expressed frustration over the difficulties of obtaining adequate and valid sample sizes sufficiently large to perform acceptable statistical analyses.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ *Id.* at 768.

⁷⁵ Koepke et al., *supra* note 15, at 225.

⁷⁶ Miller et al., *supra* note 71, at 56.

⁷⁷ Jerry Bigner & R. Brooke Jacobsen, *Adult Responses to Child Behavior and Attitudes Toward Fathering: Gay and Nongay Fathers*, 23 J. HOMOSEXUALITY 99, 109 (1992).

Consequently, current knowledge about homosexuals is limited by these methodological problems. The available studies on homosexual fathers typically use convenience sampling of groups of white, urban, well-educated males. In her study of homosexual mothers, Pagelow appropriately acknowledged that due to the non-random sample selection of the study, the generalizability of the findings could not be determined.⁷⁸ Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, and Mikach acknowledged this same methodological limitation to their study of the sexual orientation of adult sons of gay fathers:

The more serious limitation concerns the recruitment of gay fathers by means of advertisements. This recruitment strategy cannot guarantee a representative sample of either gay fathers or sons of gay fathers. The most important potential bias is that fathers' decisions to participate might depend, in part, on their sons' sexual orientations, a kind of bias that Kendler and Eaves (1989) called *concordance-dependent ascertainment bias*. . . . [T]he existence and direction of concordance-dependent bias are not ultimately resolvable with data from this study.⁷⁹

Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, and Mikach concluded further that their study could not definitively answer the basic question of whether sons of gay fathers have higher rates of homosexuality.⁸⁰

Similarly, in her study of the self-esteem of adolescent children of homosexual versus heterosexual mothers, Huggins concluded that the limitations of the study made it difficult to generalize the findings beyond the study sample.⁸¹ In his study of homosexual parents, Wyers acknowledged that his study could not be considered representative, and that therefore, the results could not be generalized beyond the sample itself.⁸² His sample ended up having a white, middle-class bias, even though he made commendable efforts to recruit non-white and working-class homosexual mothers and fathers.⁸³ Additionally, Patterson acknowledged that sampling bias rendering the study's findings to be non-representative.⁸⁴ In fact, a majority of the homosexual mothers were white, well-educated, relatively affluent, and living in the greater San Francisco Bay area.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ Mildred Pagelow, *Homosexuality and Lesbian Single Mothers: A Comparison of Problems, Coping, and Solutions*, 5 J. HOMOSEXUALITY 189, 192 (1980).

⁷⁹ Bailey et al., *supra* note 23, at 127.

⁸⁰ *Id.* at 128.

⁸¹ Huggins, *supra* note 1, at 134.

⁸² Wyers, *supra* note 29, at 144.

⁸³ *Id.*

⁸⁴ Charlotte Patterson, *Families of the Lesbian Baby Boom: Parents' Division of Labor and Children's Adjustment*, 31 DEV. PSYCHOL. 115, 122 (1995).

⁸⁵ *Id.*

Golombok, Spencer, and Rutter acknowledged that they could not obtain a representative sample of homosexual women with children, that their samples were possibly biased towards "normality," and that therefore their findings could not be generalized to exclusively and permanently homosexual women who have become pregnant by means of artificial insemination.⁸⁶ In their follow-up of children into adulthood who had been raised by homosexual mothers, Golombok and Tasker fairly acknowledged the limited generalizability of the findings in the context of the self-selected nature of the study's sample.⁸⁷ They argued that it is not even feasible to recruit a representative sample of homosexual mothers because many do not publicly disclose their sexual identity.⁸⁸ However, a confidential and anonymous large scale sample of the general population might be a feasible way to obtain such a representative sample.

6. Lack of a Random Sampling

Thirty-four (97%) of the thirty-five studies of homosexual parenting and/or of children reared by homosexual parents failed to obtain a random sample to investigate. A random sample is necessary to ensure that a study will be representative of a larger population. To ensure a random sample, researchers must use a systematic procedure for selecting a sample of a population or by selection of study subjects with the use of a random numbers table to eliminate potential sources of bias in the selection of sample subjects.

With the exception of the study by Cameron and Cameron, all the studies on homosexual parenting have used "convenience samples" of various sorts, failing to obtain a systematic or random sample of the population of interest. Wyers acknowledged that he did not use random sampling procedures, making his study vulnerable to methodological problems associated with self-selected subjects.⁸⁹ The study by Golombok, Spencer, and Rutter used groups of volunteers obtained through homosexual and single-parent magazines and associations.⁹⁰ Clearly, this did not constitute random sampling and the author acknowledged that it was not possible to ascertain what biases were introduced by their method of sample selection.

⁸⁶ Golombok et al., *supra* note 32, at 569.

⁸⁷ Parents, *supra* note 24, at 8; Adults, *supra* note 24, at 213.

⁸⁸ Parents, *supra* note 24, at 8.

⁸⁹ Wyers, *supra* note 29, at 144.

⁹⁰ Golombok et al., *supra* note 32, at 554.

7. Effect of Combined Deficiencies of Small Sample Size and Lack of Representative or Random Sample

In thirty (86%) of the thirty-five studies of homosexual parenting and of children reared by homosexual parents, the methodological deficiency of a small sample size was combined with the deficiency of failing to obtain a representative or random sample. If a small sample is drawn in a representative fashion or randomly from a larger population and a statistically significant difference is found between two groups, the study's findings are considered to be valid, although they would need to be replicated by subsequent studies to be definitive. However, when a small sample is drawn in a non-representative fashion and a statistically significant difference is found between two groups, all the researcher can legitimately conclude is that there is a probable difference between his or her two samples. Moreover, the researcher is limited in the conclusions he or she can draw about the underlying larger population because his sample is non-representative. In such a case, a careful researcher would only consider the findings to be suggestive and warranting further study with a representative or random sample in future research.

But when a small sample is drawn in a non-representative fashion and no statistically significant difference is found between two groups (as was the case for many of the studies available on characteristics of homosexual parenting versus married couple heterosexual single parenting and/or its effects on the children so reared), the persistent problem is that the findings from an unrepresentative sample have no demonstrated generalization to the larger population of homosexual parents and their children. Additionally, there is the added possibility that even if the sample had been representative of the population, the study's small sample size rendered it methodologically limited in being able to detect any actual differences that may exist in the larger population studied. Therefore, a finding of no differences between small, unrepresentative samples provides insufficient evidence to determine whether a group difference is present or not in the larger population of homosexual parents and their children compared to others.

Furthermore, as discussed below, it is scientifically illegitimate to claim that a study affirms the null hypothesis of no difference between two groups. Careful logic and the proper use of scientific hypothesis testing dictates that one cannot claim with any level of probability that even small representative samples confirm that there is no difference between the homosexual and married couple or heterosexual single-parent groups in the larger population. On the other hand, a dispassionate and appropriately skeptical scientist reading this body of research on homosexual parenting might well entertain the hypothesis that the purported findings of these studies reflects a process that is

similar to the "allegiance effect" in psychotherapy research – that is, researchers find results that support their theoretical allegiance. Perhaps in these studies, the researchers find results that parallel their own sexual orientation and/or values regarding homosexual lifestyles.

8. Sample Inappropriate for Developmental Research Questions

A few of the published studies assessed gender identity in older children of homosexual parents versus married couples or heterosexual single parents and found no difference.⁹¹ But, gender identity is established in the first two years of life.⁹² Moreover, the children of homosexual parents were reared in the pre-divorce, married couple homes between birth and later preschool years. The appropriate sample would have been children reared from birth by a homosexual parent.

Several studies that included adolescent children of homosexual parents asked them questions regarding "crushes," sexual fantasies, sexual interests, sexual orientation, interests in marriage, and/or gender of sexual behavior partners to assess the effects upon sexual development.⁹³ But psychosexual development is still quite fluid during adolescence, and sexual thoughts and sexual behavior in this time period can be exploratory and not indicative of adult sexual adjustment. Therefore, the more appropriate subject sample would be children reared by homosexual parents followed into young adulthood, at which time the assessment of such variables of psychosexual development would be stable and enduring, and the results of these studies would have greater relevance.

C. Deficiencies in Measures

Many of the homosexual parenting studies contain deficiencies in the research instruments and measurement procedures they employ. Some use inappropriate measures because the study is poorly conceptualized in the first place. Other studies contain the measurement limitations that are inherent in procedures which do not grant anonymity to research participants, or which involve the opportunity for self-justification or self-presentation bias. Still other studies have employed measures that lack reported reliability and/or validity.

⁹¹ See, e.g., Golombok et al., *supra* note 32, at 568; Green et al., *supra* note 8, at 169.

⁹² JOHN MONEY & ANKE A. EHRHARDT, *MAN AND WOMAN, BOY AND GIRL: GENDER IDENTITY FROM CONCEPTION TO MATURITY* 21 (1996).

⁹³ Golombok et al., *supra* note 32, at 551; Green, *supra* note 25, at 692; Green et al., *supra* note 8, at 167; Javaid, *supra* note 63, at 234; R. Weeks et al., *Two Cases of Children of Homosexuals*, 6 *CHILD PSYCHIATRY & HUM. DEV.* 26 (1975).

1. Insufficient Measures Due to Poorly Conceptualized Studies

Research studies which are poorly conceptualized and lacking in well thought out experimental hypotheses run the risk of measuring variables which will not advance scientific understanding of the research question. For example, Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, and Mikach contended,

Investigations of adult children will be most useful if they explore specific hypotheses rather than merely focus on the rate of homosexuality among the children. Exploring which, if any, variables distinguish children who became heterosexual from those who became homosexual could support or falsify specific developmental theories. Moreover, these analyses may be less sensitive to methodological difficulties such as potentially biasing self-selection. At least two variables are especially relevant: the degree of exposure of a child to a gay or lesbian parent, and the degree of genetic relatedness between parent and child. . . . The ultimate goal of studies in this area should be to illuminate the mechanism, as well as the fact, of any environmental or genetic transmission of sexual orientation.⁹⁴

2. Lack of Anonymity of Research Participants

Among the thirty-five studies of homosexual parents and/or of children reared by homosexual parents, thirty-one (89%) used a research procedure which failed to guarantee total anonymity to the research participants. The lack of anonymity in the data collection from homosexual parents poses methodological limitations.⁹⁵ When the research procedures do not provide for complete anonymity of the potential research subject, there is introduced a source of bias as to who will decline and who will participate as a research subject, as well as potential reluctance to frankly answer research questions with complete candor or openness by those who do participate in the study. Because the lack of anonymity in the data collection from homosexual parents poses such significant methodological limitations, one must consider the 89% of the studies which failed to guarantee total anonymity to the research participants to be seriously flawed.

For example, Harris and Turner pointed out that most homosexual parents who voluntarily participate in research studies are not only concerned about their parenting and their children, but most also have chosen a public homosexual identity.⁹⁶ The non-public homosexual parent is less accessible to researchers and their problems could differ significantly from those of more openly public gay parents.⁹⁷ For such reasons, Harris and Turner developed research procedures that enabled

⁹⁴ Bailey et al., *supra* note 23, at 128.

⁹⁵ Harris & Turner, *supra* note 7, at 111.

⁹⁶ *Id.*

⁹⁷ *Id.*

"closet" gay parents to become research subjects without anyone, including investigators, discovering their identity.⁹⁸ When Harris and Turner discovered that not one of their subjects in the present study reported that a spouse or child showed a positive reaction to the discovery that the subject was gay, they attributed this different finding from prior studies to the superior research technique of guaranteeing the anonymity of their subjects.⁹⁹

3. Self-presentation Bias

Among the twenty-seven studies of homosexual parents, twenty-six (96%) used a research procedure which was contaminated by self-presentation bias. In discussing the methodological problems of a longitudinal study of homosexual families, Gartrell, Hamilton, Banks, Mosbacher, Reed, Sparks and Bishop wrote:

Some may have volunteered for this project because they were motivated to demonstrate that lesbians were capable of producing healthy, happy children. To the extent that these subjects might wish to present themselves and their families in the best possible light, the study findings may be shaped by self-justification and self-presentation bias.¹⁰⁰

Because of the widespread awareness of general social taboos against homosexuality and because of the obvious self-interest of homosexual parents, such self-presentation bias would be present in studies in which the subjects explicitly identified themselves as homosexual parents on the research instruments. For example, rather than assessing the children directly, the research method of Wyers involved "self-presentation bias" by asking homosexual parents if their child had knowledge about their homosexuality and whether learning this fact had an "overall positive impact" or "overall negative impact" upon their child, and whether this knowledge had enhanced their parent-child relationship.¹⁰¹

In a study of the reports of homosexual parents on whether their own homosexuality created special problems or benefits or both for their children, Harris and Turner acknowledged having no way of determining how representative their sample was.¹⁰² The authors noted that the high percentage of gay subjects who were willing to be interviewed suggests unusual interest in the issues raised in the questionnaire.¹⁰³ The authors

⁹⁸ *Id.*

⁹⁹ *Id.* at 112.

¹⁰⁰ Nanette Gartrell et al., *The National Lesbian Family Study: Interviews with Prospective Mothers*, 66 AM. J. ORTHOPSYCHIATRY 272, 279 (1996).

¹⁰¹ Wyers, *supra* note 29, at 144-46.

¹⁰² Harris & Turner, *supra* note 7, at 111.

¹⁰³ *Id.*

suspected that the gay parents could have been biased toward reporting the positive aspects of their relationships with their children, with a belief that the study's results could influence the courts' custody decisions in future cases.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, great caution should be used in interpreting and generalizing the results of such a study.

Harris and Turner also evaluated the limitations of their self-presentation data. "Because all uncorroborated self-report data are subject to biases, and because parents may deliberately or unconsciously minimize the extent of conflicts with their children, these findings cannot be accepted at face value."¹⁰⁵ In their extension of this earlier study, Turner, Scadden, and Harris also noted this methodological weakness in their study of homosexual parents by cautioning about the likelihood of social desirability influencing parental reports of their children's problems and of their parent-child relationships.¹⁰⁶

The study by Golombok, Spencer, and Rutter employed mothers' interviews to assess their children's mental health and peer relationships, and although the data was assessed blindly by raters, the homosexual mothers may have had presentation-bias when describing their own children's adjustment.¹⁰⁷ In a subsequent follow-up of the same sample, Tasker and Golombok acknowledged that interview data is vulnerable to criticisms of self-presentation bias.¹⁰⁸ In their study, it was possible that homosexual mothers portrayed an overly positive picture of their family life.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, in their study of homosexual mothers by donor insemination and others in the process of attempted donor insemination or pregnant by such means, Gartrell, Hamilton, Banks, Mosbacher, Reed, Sparks, and Bishop acknowledged self-justification and self-presentation bias in their data because some subjects may have volunteered out of a motivation to show that homosexuals were capable of producing well-adjusted children.¹¹⁰

Patterson acknowledged the methodological limitation and potential bias present in relying exclusively on mothers' and children's self-report data in the absence of direct observational assessments.¹¹¹ Because her study relied exclusively on self-report data, the correspondence between parental reports about division of labor and the actual division of labor could not be determined in the study.¹¹² Similarly, it would have been

¹⁰⁴ *Id.*

¹⁰⁵ *Id.* at 112.

¹⁰⁶ Turner et al., *supra* note 16.

¹⁰⁷ Golombok et al., *supra* note 32, at 555.

¹⁰⁸ *Adults*, *supra* note 24, at 213.

¹⁰⁹ *Id.*

¹¹⁰ Gartrell et al., *supra* note 100, at 279.

¹¹¹ Patterson, *supra* note 84, at 122.

¹¹² *Id.*

more methodically sound to conduct direct assessments of children's adjustment by observers unaware of the child and family background. Thus, a study of the effects of homosexual parenting on child adjustment which relies exclusively on parent report and child report should be viewed with skepticism.

Only the Cameron and Cameron study attenuated the problem of self-presentation bias. To guard against self-presentation bias, the authors embedded the questions on parenting and on the subjects' sexual orientation in a 500+ question life history and sexual history questionnaire which was administered anonymously on a random selection basis.¹¹³ On the other hand, the other studies pursued most participants in homosexual groups that were recruited specifically to take assessment measures designated to study homosexual parenting.

4. Use of Measures Lacking Reported Reliability

Among the thirty-five studies of homosexual parents and/or of children reared by homosexual parents, at least twenty-one (60%) reported the use of one or more research measures which lack reported reliability. For example, because none of the previously published studies contained measures of sex role behavior which suited the purpose of their study, Golombok, Spencer, and Rutter constructed their own sex role scale for which they reported no reliability data.¹¹⁴ Similarly, Harris and Turner constructed their own questionnaires which were not assessed for reliability.¹¹⁵

5. Use of Measures Lacking Reported Validity

Among the thirty-five studies of homosexual parents and/or of children reared by homosexual parents, at least twenty-three (66%) reported the use of one or more research measures which lack reported validity. On a theoretical basis, it could be argued that studies of pubertal children which attempt to measure "sexual orientation" on the basis of interview data on friendship patterns, sexual feelings, "crushes," or heterosexual and/or homosexual behavior may not be valid measures of sexual orientation when measures eliciting such pre-adult data have not been demonstrated to be correlated with lifetime adulthood sexual orientation by a validation study.

For example, Golombok, Spencer, and Rutter acknowledged "our findings on sexual orientation are necessarily more limited because seventeen years constituted the top of the age range studied and because

¹¹³ Cameron & Cameron, *supra* note 3, at 759.

¹¹⁴ Golombok et al., *supra* note 32, at 555.

¹¹⁵ Harris & Turner, *supra* note 7, at 105.

there were relatively few post-pubertal children."¹¹⁶ Additionally, Harris and Turner constructed their own questionnaires which were not assessed for validity with regard to the dimensions they were assuming that they were measuring.¹¹⁷ Thus, the majority of the available studies used one or more measures which did not have demonstrated reliability nor validity, rendering the studies to be merely exploratory and suggestive, rather than definitive investigations.

D. Deficiencies in Data Analysis and Interpretation of Findings

The common deficiencies in data analysis and interpretation of findings in the studies of homosexual parenting include inaccurate reporting of the findings, failure to incorporate any inferential statistical testing of hypotheses, and erroneous scientific reasoning exhibited by making the illegitimate claim of affirming the null hypothesis and/or by making illegitimate generalizations or conclusions from the study's data.

1. Inaccurate Reporting of Findings

In their study of children from homosexual versus heterosexual mother-headed households, Green, Mandel, Hotvedt, Gray, and Smith stated in the abstract of their article, "no significant differences were found between the two types of households for boys and few significant differences for girls,"¹¹⁸ but this contradicts the results reported in the body of the article. With regard to statistically significant differences between the two types of households for boys, the body of the article states:

Thirty-two percent of lesbians' sons wanted to play at both sexes' activities equally as opposed to only 10% of heterosexuals' sons, Kendall's tau beta = -0.36, $p \leq 0.01$.¹¹⁹

. . . .

Younger boys who had been living in a house without a man for a longer period of time were more likely to mention a woman as a person they would like to be like when grown, $r^2 = 0.21$, $p \leq 0.05$.¹²⁰

Moreover, "[m]ore children of lesbian mothers showed a 'considerable' interest in playacting and role-taking than did children of heterosexual mothers (daughters: Kendall's tau beta = -0.27, $p \leq 0.05$; sons: Kendall's tau beta = -0.24, $p \leq 0.05$)."¹²¹ In fact, "[s]ons of heterosexual mothers were more likely to have experienced more than

¹¹⁶ Golombok et al., *supra* note 32, at 568.

¹¹⁷ Harris & Turner, *supra* note 7, at 105.

¹¹⁸ Green et al., *supra* note 8, at 168.

¹¹⁹ *Id.* at 178.

¹²⁰ *Id.* at 178-79.

¹²¹ *Id.* at 177.

one period of separation from father, whereas sons of lesbian mothers typically had experienced a single separation, Kendall's tau beta = 0.23, $p \leq 0.05$"¹²² With regard to the two groups of boys, "73% of heterosexual mothers encouraged truck play compared to only 30% of lesbian mothers, $x^2 = 9.72$, $df = 2$, $p \leq 0.01$."¹²³ Finally, "[f]or the first year of life, the majority of lesbian mothers reported having spent fewer daytime hours holding or touching their infant sons than did heterosexual mothers, $x^2 = 17.83$, $df = 5$, $p \leq 0.01$."¹²⁴

Furthermore, the article reported many statistically significant differences between the daughters from the two types of households, including: compared to daughters of heterosexual mothers, the daughters of homosexual mothers had significantly more cross-dressing, more rough-and-tumble play, more playing with trucks, more play with guns, more play with boys' activities, greater preference for both masculine and feminine activity, and greater preference for taking masculine adult roles. Significantly more (60%) of homosexual mothers compared to heterosexual mothers (29%) encouraged their daughters to play with trucks. "Girls whose mothers were active in lesbian or feminist organizations were significantly more likely to express an interest in traditionally masculine occupations. . . ."¹²⁵ "Fifty percent of heterosexual mothers reported holding their daughters seven hours or more per day in the first year whereas only 17% of lesbian mothers reported holding their daughters this many hours, Kendall's tau beta = 0.25, $p \leq 0.05$."¹²⁶ This impressive list of developmentally important differences is more than a "few" differences as the author's abstract states.

Because researchers locate articles by searching a computer retrieval system which prints the title and abstract of studies, they would be misled by the false information in the abstract to this article. Researchers may therefore never obtain the entire article to discover these statistically significant differences which were actually found in the study. Others who obtain the article may simply quote from the abstract of the study in writing or in court room testimony without having read the detailed results section of the article.

2. Lack of Inferential Statistical Testing of Hypotheses

A lack of inferential statistical test of a hypothesis weakens the reliability of a study. Among the seventeen studies of children of homosexual parents identified in this review, seven (41%) of them lacked

¹²² *Id.* at 174.

¹²³ *Id.* at 179.

¹²⁴ *Id.* at 174.

¹²⁵ *Id.* at 179.

¹²⁶ *Id.* at 174.

any inferential statistical testing of hypotheses. Further, among the total of thirty five studies of homosexual parents and/or of children reared by homosexual parents, thirteen (37%) of them lacked any inferential statistical testing of hypotheses.

Weeks, Derdeyn, and Langman presented only clinical descriptions of two children of homosexual parents.¹²⁷ Miller and O'Connell simply presented selected quotes from interviews and verbal summaries in essays about issues pertaining to the relationships of homosexual parents with their children, together with raw numbers of sons and daughters reporting a homosexual versus a heterosexual orientation.¹²⁸ Green and Javaid presented data on tables for visual inspection, on such variables such as sex, age, years in heterosexual or homosexual household, age of child at awareness of parent's homosexuality, sexual preferences, or sexual fantasies.¹²⁹

In studies of homosexual parents only, without child subjects, Wyers; Gartrell, Hamilton, Banks, Mosbacher, Reed, Sparks, and Bishop; Pagelow; and Bozett presented only descriptive data in terms of verbal summaries and/or raw percentages of subjects reporting a certain direction on their interview questions.¹³⁰ At best, these published articles could be considered pilot observations, not experimental studies.

3. Illegitimate Claim of Affirming the Null Hypothesis

An illegitimate claim by a researcher that affirms a study's null hypothesis is invalid. Among the seventeen studies of children of homosexual parents identified in this review, seven (41%) of them made the claim that the study's results had affirmed the null hypothesis. Among the total of thirty-five studies of homosexual parents and/or of children reared by homosexual parents, eleven (31%) of them made the claim that the study's results had affirmed the null hypothesis.

The legitimate scientific use of inferential statistical testing involves the calculation of the probability that the null hypothesis of no difference between two groups can be rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis that there is a difference between two groups. It is a basic lesson in inferential statistics that, regardless the size of the sample, the null hypothesis can never be affirmed by statistical testing. Instead, one can only attempt to find that one can reject the null hypothesis with a

¹²⁷ Weeks et al., *supra* note 93.

¹²⁸ Miller, *supra* note 4, at 545-51. See generally Ann O'Connell, *Voices from the Heart: The Developmental Impact of a Mother's Lesbianism on Her Adolescent Children*, 63 SMITH C. STUD. SOC. WORK 281 (1993).

¹²⁹ Green, *supra* note 25, at 695; Javaid, *supra* note 63, at 239-44.

¹³⁰ See generally Fredrick W. Bozett, *Gay Fathers: How and Why They Disclose Their Homosexuality to Their Children*, 29 FAM. RELATIONS 173 (1980); Gartell et al., *supra* note 100; Pagelow, *supra* note 78; Wyers, *supra* note 29.

certain level of probability that the difference between groups sampled reflects genuine differences in parallel groups in the general population and that the difference in one's sample is not due to chance. On the basis of testing samples alone, one could never make a legitimate scientific statement that no differences exist in the parallel groups in the general population. The only way one could scientifically prove that there is no difference between two population groups would be to measure every individual in the general population. On the basis of sampling alone, it is unscientific to confirm the null hypothesis that there is no difference between two groups in a general population. As Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, and Mikach acknowledged:

If Patterson (1992) is correct that children of gay men and lesbians are no more likely than children of heterosexual people to become homosexual, then it is unnecessary to reach consensus on the desirability of heterosexual versus homosexual outcomes, at least in the context of child custody. It is of course impossible to prove the null hypothesis, but it should be possible to determine whether being reared by a homosexual parent makes an appreciable difference in a child's sexual orientation.¹³¹

However, most of the studies of homosexual parenting of children claim to have confirmed the null hypothesis of no difference between groups of homosexual parents and/or their children as compared to groups of married couples or heterosexual single parents and/or their children. For example, Miller concluded his non-quantitative, case interview report by claiming to have proved the null hypothesis, "[p]eople's sexual orientation says nothing about their desire or ability to care for children."¹³² Some investigators have even made the mistake of stating their experimental hypothesis as a null hypothesis as though they could confirm the null hypothesis by their study of a sample.

Golombok, Spencer, and Rutter concluded:

The findings of the study have been consistent in showing no differences between children reared in lesbian households and children brought up by a heterosexual single parent with respect to gender identity, sex role behaviour or sexual orientation. This lack of difference seems to negate the hypothesis that children brought up by an actively lesbian mother are likely to show psychosexual anomalies.¹³³

This latter statement turns inferential statistical testing on its head. Instead of using standard experimental procedures and inferential statistics to see if a null hypothesis of no difference can be rejected with some level of probability, these investigators (which perhaps they realize

¹³¹ Bailey et al., *supra* note 23, at 125.

¹³² Miller, *supra* note 4, at 551.

¹³³ Golombok et al., *supra* note 32, at 568.

by using the words "seems to negate") take a lack of difference as reason to reject a directional hypothesis!

Huggins stated: "A test and analysis of variance were used to test the hypothesis that the self-esteem of adolescents of divorced lesbian mothers was not significantly different than the self-esteem of adolescents of divorced heterosexual mothers."¹³⁴ Bigner and Jacobsen affirmed the null hypothesis this way:

[T]he similarities in responses on the involvement and intimacy factors and on the majority of items of the Inventory lend support to the notion that sexual orientation has no direct or deleterious effect on the gay father's ability to parent in an effective manner.¹³⁵

E. Illegitimate Generalizations or Conclusions from the Data

An illegitimate generalization or conclusion drawn from the data of a study has no reliability. However, among the seventeen studies of children of homosexual parents identified in this review, eleven (65%) of them made other illegitimate generalizations from their findings or made unwarranted conclusions from the study's data. Among the total of thirty-five studies of homosexual parents and/or of children reared by homosexual parents, twenty-one (60%) of them made illegitimate generalizations from their findings or made unwarranted conclusions from the study's data.

Wyers acknowledged that he interviewed only homosexual parents while not interviewing nor assessing their children, that his sample of homosexual parents was biased and could not be considered representative of the general population of homosexual parents, and therefore that his findings could "not be generalized beyond this sample itself."¹³⁶ However, he repeatedly fell to the temptation of making illegitimate generalizations from his data in his discussion of the implications of his findings for practice. For example, he concluded, "[g]ay fathers might benefit from specific information about the overall positive effect on children of other gay fathers who learned that their fathers are homosexual."¹³⁷

Similarly, although Harris and Turner acknowledged their study's limitations of small sample size, and self-presentation bias in "uncorroborated self-report data,"¹³⁸ that "there is no way of knowing how representative the sample is . . .,"¹³⁹ and that "not one subject . . .

¹³⁴ Huggins, *supra* note 1, at 127.

¹³⁵ Jerry Bigner & R. Brooke Jacobsen, *Parenting Behaviors of Homosexual and Heterosexual Fathers*, 18 J. HOMOSEXUALITY 173, 184 (1989).

¹³⁶ Wyers, *supra* note 29, at 144.

¹³⁷ *Id.* at 147.

¹³⁸ Harris & Turner, *supra* note 7, at 112.

¹³⁹ *Id.* at 111.

reported that a spouse or child showed a positive reaction to the discovery that the subject was gay."¹⁴⁰ However, they nevertheless offered the following conclusion:

Results from the present study do suggest that being gay is not incompatible with effective parenting, and certainly not the major issue in parents' relationships with their children. However, significant legal decisions concerning custody continue to reflect a misunderstanding of this phenomenon. . . .¹⁴¹

Moreover, in the abstract to their article, Harris and Turner make the unsubstantiated, broad generalization: "The findings suggest that being homosexual is clearly compatible with effective parenting and is not a major issue in parents' relationships with their children."¹⁴²

On the basis of not finding any significant differences among groups of nine children each in her study of the effects homosexual versus heterosexual parenting have on a measure of self-esteem, Huggins concluded: "Therefore, the assumption that children of lesbian mothers are socially stigmatized by their mothers' sexual choice is not borne out by this study."¹⁴³ This is an illegitimate generalization and conclusion from the data for three reasons: (1) her study measured self-esteem and not the experience of social stigmatization, (2) the very small sample size rendered the study very weak in power to detect any potential differences in the underlying general population of children reared by homosexuals versus heterosexuals, and (3) it is scientifically improper and impossible to confirm the null hypothesis of no differences in the underlying population groups. Huggins made further illegitimate conclusions from her study by acknowledging the impossibility of generalizing from her very small and biased sample, but then continuing in the next sentence to make a sweeping generalization to the broader population of homosexual households and their children:

Given the limitations of this study, it is difficult to generalize these findings beyond the study population. Nevertheless, the data suggest that growing up in a lesbian household does not in and of itself have a negative impact on the adolescent's self-esteem and is therefore not a valid criterion upon which to base child disposition decisions.¹⁴⁴

Despite all the statistically significant differences found for boys and girls reared in homes headed by a lesbian mother compared to a heterosexual mother (some of which are listed above under the heading "Inaccurate Reporting of Findings"), Green, Mandel, Hotvedt, Gray, and Smith made these generalizations and conclusions, tantamount to

¹⁴⁰ *Id.* at 112.

¹⁴¹ *Id.*

¹⁴² *Id.* at 101.

¹⁴³ Huggins, *supra* note 1, at 132.

¹⁴⁴ *Id.* at 134.

affirming the null hypothesis on the basis of finding no differences for some variables (even though many significant differences were found for many other psychosexual and psychosocial variables):

It is clear that boys and girls raised from early childhood by a homosexual mother without an adult male in the household for about 4 years do not appear appreciably different on parameters of psychosexual and psychosocial development from children raised by heterosexual mothers, also without an adult male present.¹⁴⁵

These data . . . have practical considerations when courts become battlegrounds for child custody. The data reveal that whatever the considerations that contribute to the best interests of the child (and the parents) in such litigation, the mother's sexual orientation per se should not enter this judicial calculus.¹⁴⁶

The abstract of the article by Tasker and Golombok which reported on adults raised as children by homosexuals stated: "The commonly held assumption that lesbian mothers will have lesbian daughters and gay sons was not supported by the findings."¹⁴⁷ But this is an illegitimate conclusion from their study. Their results section stated:

The young adults from lesbian family backgrounds (four of seven sons and ten of [fifteen] daughters) were significantly more likely to report having considered the possibility of becoming involved in a same-gender sexual relationship, compared with only two of ten sons and one of eight daughters from the heterosexual family control group.¹⁴⁸

Moreover,

No significant difference was found between young adults from lesbian and heterosexual single-mother households in the proportion who had experienced sexual attraction to someone of the same gender (9 of 25 vs. 4 of 20 respectively). However, six young adults (five daughters and one son) from lesbian families who reported same-gender sexual attraction, had also been involved in a same-gender sexual relationship, whereas none of the participants from heterosexual single-parent backgrounds who reported same-gender sexual attraction had done so (Fischer's Exact: $p = .049$).¹⁴⁹ . . . With respect to sexual identity, the majority of young adults from lesbian backgrounds identified as heterosexual. Only two women were currently in a lesbian relationship and identified as lesbian.¹⁵⁰

Then the discussion section of Tasker and Golombok states:

[Y]oung adults from lesbian homes tended to be more willing to have a sexual relationship with someone of the same gender if they felt physically attracted to them. They were also more likely to have considered the possibility of developing same-gender sexual

¹⁴⁵ Green et al., *supra* note 8, at 182.

¹⁴⁶ *Id.* at 182-83.

¹⁴⁷ *Adults, supra* note 24, at 212.

¹⁴⁸ *Id.* at 211.

¹⁴⁹ *Id.* at 210.

¹⁵⁰ *Id.* at 211.

attractions or relationships. Having a lesbian mother, therefore, appeared to widen the adolescent's view of what constituted acceptable sexual behavior to include same-gender sexual relationships.¹⁵¹

The fact that more daughters than sons were willing to enter into same-gender relationships may be explained by the more obvious parallel with their mother's lesbian lifestyle.¹⁵²

The actual data in this study not only indicated a statistically significant greater percentage of sons and daughters of lesbian mothers having been involved in homosexual behavior and identifying as homosexuals as young adults, but further indicated that none of the sons and daughters of the heterosexual single mothers had been involved in homosexuality. Twenty-nine percent (five of seventeen) of the adult daughters of homosexual households compared to 0% in heterosexual single-mother households reported homosexual behavior and 13% (one of eight) of the adult sons of homosexual households compared to 0% of heterosexual single-mother households reported homosexual behavior. Then, even more importantly, 12% (two of seventeen) of adult daughters of homosexual households were actively involved in a homosexual relationship and considered themselves to be homosexuals compared to 0% of the daughters of heterosexual single-mothers being involved in homosexuality.

The studies with the most rigorous sampling and best scientific methodology indicate that 0.3% of adult females report having had homosexual behavior in the past year, 0.4% having homosexual behavior in the last five years, and 3% ever having homosexual behavior in their lifetime.¹⁵³ The finding of 12% active homosexual adult children among daughters of homosexuals in this methodologically flawed exploratory study¹⁵⁴ is at least three times the base rate of homosexuality in the general adult female population. It is therefore misleading for Tasker and Golombok to state in their article abstract that their findings contradicted the widely held belief that homosexual mothers will have more homosexual daughters than heterosexual mothers, when in fact their data suggested some potential scientific support for that hypothesis.¹⁵⁵ While it is true that a majority of the adult children of the homosexual mothers in their sample became heterosexual, a

¹⁵¹ *Id.* at 212.

¹⁵² *Id.* at 213.

¹⁵³ R. Turner, *Landmark French and British Studies Examine Sexual Behavior, Including Multiple Partners, Homosexuality*, 25 FAMILY PLANNING PERSPECTIVES 91, 91 (1993).

¹⁵⁴ *Adults, supra* note 24, at 211.

¹⁵⁵ *Id.* at 203.

disproportionate percentage became active in homosexual behavior as compared to the control group and to other general population norms.

The best research on homosexual behavior in the general adult population reports that between 1% to 2% of males report exclusive homosexual behavior over a several-year period, and nearly 5% of males report lifetime homosexual experiences.¹⁵⁶ Calculating percentages from the raw numbers provided by Miller from his interviews of forty homosexual fathers and fourteen of their children, he reported 15% of the daughters and 10% of the sons of homosexual fathers are homosexual, but he incorrectly concluded "there does not appear to be a disproportionate amount of homosexuality among the children of gay fathers"¹⁵⁷ when in fact his exploratory study findings for daughters of gay fathers is now recognized to be five times (500%) the incidence of homosexuality in the general adult population, and his findings for sons of homosexual fathers is two times (200%) the incidence of male homosexuality in the adult population.¹⁵⁸ At the time of his study, some investigators relied upon the non-random sample collected by Alfred Kinsey which gave a greatly inflated impression as to the base rate of homosexual behavior in the general population. By contrast, the more recent study by Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, and Mikach found 9% of the adult sons of gay fathers were homosexual in their adult sexual behavior and they concluded, more accurately, "the rate of homosexuality in the sons (9%) is several times higher than that suggested by the population-based surveys and is consistent with a degree of father-to-son transmission."¹⁵⁹

III. DISCUSSION

Because of the methodological limitations (such as sampling deficiencies and lack of anonymity of research participants) of past research on homosexual parenting, Harris and Turner argued that prior research "should be viewed as suggestive rather than conclusive."¹⁶⁰ Hare observed, "Although many descriptive papers have been written about lesbian parents, few scientific studies exist."¹⁶¹ In their study of the value of children to homosexual and heterosexual fathers, Bigner and

¹⁵⁶ ACSF Investigators, *AIDS and Sexual Behavior in France*, 360 NATURE 407, 408 (1992); John O. G. Billy et al., *The Sexual Behavior of Men in the United States*, 25 FAM. PLAN. PERSP. 52, 58 (1993); Anne Johnson et al., *Sexual Lifestyles and HIV Risk*, 360 NATURE 410, 411 (1992); Stuart N Seidman & Ronald O. Reider, *A Review of Sexual Behavior in the United States*, 151 AM. J. PSYCHIATRY 330, 339 (1992).

¹⁵⁷ Miller, *supra* note 4, at 546-47.

¹⁵⁸ See, e.g., Bailey et al., *supra* note 23, at 127-28.

¹⁵⁹ Bailey et al., *supra* note 23, at 127-28.

¹⁶⁰ Harris & Turner, *supra* note 7, at 104.

¹⁶¹ Jan Hare, *Concerns and Issues Faced by Families Headed by a Lesbian Couple*, 75 J. CONTEMP. HUM. SERVICES 27, 29 (1994).

Jacobsen acknowledge that their samples of homosexual and heterosexual fathers were not representative, and they called for more research for "replication with better controlled and more diverse samples."¹⁶²

Turner, Scadden, and Harris considered the methodological weaknesses in studies of homosexual parenting to be so substantial that "the limited information available must be considered as tentative, exploratory, and speculative."¹⁶³ Years later, with the exception of the study by Cameron and Cameron, every refereed journal article on homosexual parenting critiqued by this review contained seven to twelve or more serious methodological flaws, biases, limitations, and deficiencies which render it scientifically impossible to generalize or apply the reported findings to any other individual or population of individuals beyond the small study groups themselves. And because of the low base rate of homosexual parents in the general population, even the Cameron and Cameron study suffered from a woefully small sample of homosexuals.¹⁶⁴ At best, the scientist must still consider this body of published articles to be suggestive of possible leads to be systematically researched in future rigorously controlled research studies. At worst, these methodologically flawed articles are misleading, biased, politically motivated forms of propaganda, which irresponsibly assert conclusions which are not scientifically warranted.

IV. THE QUESTION OF ADVERSE INFLUENCE OF HOMOSEXUAL PARENTING ON CHILDREN'S PSYCHOSEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

The exploratory studies to date suggest hypotheses for future, more methodologically sound research. Hoeffler's study of a small sample found that homosexual mothers' preferences for the play of their young boys and girls did not significantly differ for masculine or feminine toys, whereas heterosexual mothers had significantly higher preferences for feminine toys for their girls and masculine toys for their boys.¹⁶⁵ While the non-representative and small samples render this study only suggestive and the children were young (six to nine years of age) and not followed up into adulthood, this result suggests the need for methodologically sound studies to investigate differences in childrearing

¹⁶² Jerry J. Bigner & R. Brooke Jacobsen, *The Value of Children to Gay and Heterosexual Fathers*, 18 J. HOMOSEXUALITY 163, 171 (1989).

¹⁶³ Turner et al., *supra* note 16, at 56.

¹⁶⁴ Cameron & Cameron, *supra* note 3, at 761.

¹⁶⁵ Beverly Hoeffler, *Children's Acquisition of Sex-Role Behavior in Lesbian-Mother Families*, 51 AM. J. ORTHOPSYCHIATRY 536, 540 (1981).

between homosexual parents and heterosexual parents with regard to its effects upon the adulthood adjustment of their children.¹⁶⁶

In a study of children of homosexual and heterosexual mothers, Javaid theorized:

[R]earing in a lesbian household could affect children's views about sexuality, marriage, having children of their own or their attitudes towards the opposite sex The mothers' expectations and preferences for their children's sexual orientation and gender role would be likely to influence their children's learning of sex roles.¹⁶⁷

. . . .
Society's generally negative attitude towards a lesbian household, possibly creates a stigma; this could affect the children being raised in such a home. Although there may be no direct effects of lesbian rearing, there may be indirect effects on self-esteem, mediated through the external environment.¹⁶⁸

On the other hand, Golombok, Spencer, and Rutter observed that social-learning theorists and psychoanalytic theorists both expect that children reared in fatherless households will experience "greater difficulties in their psychosexual development" including more atypical sex role behavior and homosexuality.¹⁶⁹ And Hoeffler correctly observed, "Social learning theory also suggests that children who observe models that display and directly encourage less stereotypic sex-role behavior may themselves acquire less stereotypic sex-role behavior."¹⁷⁰ Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, and Mikach observed three theoretical possibilities: (a) individual children might acquire a sexual orientation at least in part, by imitating parents, (b) or homosexual parents may encourage behavior associated with a greater probable homosexual outcome or refrain from discouraging such behavior in their children, and (c) the fact that a child is reared by homosexual parents may make homosexuality a more acceptable alternative to them.¹⁷¹ As Golombok and Tasker pointed out:

[I]nsofar as sexual orientation results from social learning, the processes of reinforcement and modeling would also apply. . . . By virtue of their non-traditional family, the sons and daughters of lesbian mothers may hold less rigid stereotypes about what constitutes acceptable male and female sexual behavior than their peers in heterosexual families, and they may be more open to involvement in lesbian or gay relationships themselves. Thus, from a social learning theory perspective, children's sexual orientation may

¹⁶⁶ See related discussion by M. S. Lundy & G. A. Rekers, *Homosexuality: Development, Risks, Parental Values, and Controversies*, in HANDBOOK CHILD AND ADOLESCENT SEXUAL PROBLEMS 290-312 (G. A. Rekers ed., 1995).

¹⁶⁷ Javaid, *supra* note 63, at 237.

¹⁶⁸ *Id.* at 237-38.

¹⁶⁹ Golombok et al., *supra* note 32, at 552.

¹⁷⁰ Hoeffler, *supra* note 165, at 537.

¹⁷¹ Bailey et al., *supra* note 23, at 124-25.

be influenced by attitudes toward sexuality in the family in which they are raised.¹⁷²

....

... Identification with significant others is believed to be important for enabling an individual either to neutralize a homosexual potential or to construct a homosexual identity. . . children raised in lesbian families would be expected to be more likely than children in heterosexual families to adopt a lesbian or gay identity themselves as a result of their exposure to lesbian lifestyles, and often to gay lifestyles as well.¹⁷³

In their own empirical study, Golombok, Spencer, and Rutter reported, "In the households where the (lesbian) mother lived with her lover (either in an exclusive relationship or in a commune), the couple showed open affection to one another in all but two cases. Moreover, in all cases, the mothers and their lovers openly shared the same bedroom."¹⁷⁴ In their study of effects of parenting by homosexual mothers, Kirkpatrick, Smith, and Roy provided some detail from the histories of some of the children which "illustrate some common themes," which included a description of a five-year-old daughter about whom they stated, "Sara is said to have walked in several times during sexual activity between the mother and her later lover. . . . At four, Sara asked her mother if girls can marry girls and was told they could choose either a male or female lover."¹⁷⁵

Miller's study of forty homosexual fathers and fourteen of their children aged fourteen to thirty-three years similarly found "open displays of affection between the father and his gay lover or friends"¹⁷⁶ but also stated that none of the gay fathers reported any incestuous behavior toward their children, even though he also reported,

The daughter and son of one gay father regularly joined him and his lover in the relative intimacy of a nude dip in their Jacuzzi. These children reported being relaxed about the affection and appeared well-adjusted. This small number of cases cannot prove that children are unaffected by displays of homosexual intimacy . . .¹⁷⁷

But others have reported homosexual incest, as in the case of a boy reported by Halpern who had been adopted at the age of twelve years by

¹⁷² *Parents*, *supra* note 24, at 4.

¹⁷³ *Id.* at 4-5.

¹⁷⁴ Golombok et al., *supra* note 32, at 559.

¹⁷⁵ Martha Kirkpatrick et al., *Lesbian Mothers and Their Children: A Comparative Study*, 51 AM. J. ORTHOPSYCHIATRY 545, 549 (1981).

¹⁷⁶ Miller, *supra* note 4, at 550.

¹⁷⁷ *Id.*

a gay man who lived with his sexual partner, and who was subsequently homosexually abused by that adoptive father.¹⁷⁸

Pagelow observed that past court child custody decisions have granted homosexual mothers conditional custody, "i.e., they may have legal custody on the condition that they do not cohabit with an unrelated adult female."¹⁷⁹ However, more rigorous research is necessary to address various hypotheses. For example, [1] children have greater well-being and fewer adjustment problems if the child is not placed with a homosexual parent (a common sense assumption), and [2] if a child is placed with his or her biological parent who is now a homosexual, such children will have greater well-being and fewer adjustment problems if the homosexual parent refrains from cohabiting with a sexual partner, and if the homosexual parent refrains from exposing the child to the parent's sexual behavior.

Golombok, Spencer, and Rutter also reported that whereas 70% of the homosexual mothers studied expressed openness to the possibility that their children might develop a homosexual orientation and lifestyle, thereby expressing no preference regarding their children's sexual orientation, that none actually preferred their child become a homosexual and 30% preferred that their child become a heterosexual.¹⁸⁰ These investigators also pointed to this issue of concern for a child's sexual orientation which is often raised with regard to homosexual parenting:

[T]here is the concern that children's exposure to atypical models of sexual behaviour (e.g. seeing their mother in bed with another woman), or their experience of sexual advances from a homosexual parent may lead them to adopt a homosexual-orientation. The basis for this concern stems from the evidence that there is an increased rate of homosexual behavior among boys and girls in single-sex boarding schools; from retrospective accounts that adults with atypical sexual behaviour had often experienced incest or sexual advances in childhood along with other unusual features of their upbringing; and from isolated reports of boys copying the transvestite behaviour of their fathers."¹⁸¹

Understandably, there has been interest in the potential effects of childrearing by a homosexual parent and the sexual orientation of that parent's child. The available research is only suggestive, and not conclusive, on this question given the limitations of the existing studies. Thus, this is still an open question for further, more rigorous research.

In what appears to be the first exploratory follow-up study of a group of previously studied children of homosexuals followed into young

¹⁷⁸ Judith Halpern, *Family Therapy in Father-Son Incest: A Case Study*, 68 J. CONTEMP. SOC. WORK 88, 89 (1987).

¹⁷⁹ Pagelow, *supra* note 78, at 192.

¹⁸⁰ Golombok et al., *supra* note 32, at 560-61.

¹⁸¹ *Id.* at 553 (citations omitted).

adulthood, Golombok and Tasker found that these young adults raised by homosexual mothers were significantly more likely to have had a sexual relationship with someone of the same gender, more likely to currently be in an active homosexual relationship, and more likely to consider themselves homosexual than young adults raised by heterosexual mothers, and that none of the adult children from heterosexual families had experienced a homosexual relationship.¹⁸² These investigators reported,

We found that young adults whose mothers had reported greater openness in showing physical affection to their female partner when their children were school age ($r = .74, p < .001$) and young adults whose mothers had reported a greater number of lesbian relationships when their children were school age ($r = .60, p < .01$) were more likely to report same-gender sexual interest.¹⁸³

Because of methodological limitations to this study, the conclusions of Golombok and Tasker should be taken as research hypotheses for future, more methodologically sound research.

The greater proportion of young adults from lesbian families than from heterosexual families who reported consideration of, and involvement in, same-gender sexual relationships suggests an association between childhood family environment and these aspects of sexual development. Moreover, the association found in lesbian families between the degree of openness and acceptance of lesbian and gay relationships and young adults' same-gender sexual interest indicates that family attitudes toward sexual orientation, that is, as accepting or rejecting of gay and lesbian lifestyles, constitute one of the many influences that may shape development in either a heterosexual or a homosexual direction. It seems that growing up in an accepting atmosphere enables individuals who are attracted to same-sex partners to pursue these relationships. This may facilitate the development of a lesbian or gay sexual orientation for some individuals.¹⁸⁴

With regard to exclusively homosexual parenting for children, Golombok, Spencer, and Rutter acknowledged, "It remains very possible that there are effects on development (although they have not yet been empirically shown) of being brought up in a home that lacks any contact with men, in which there is a negative attitude towards things masculine, and in which there is active proselytizing of a homosexual way of life."¹⁸⁵ Moreover, Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, and Mikach observed,

No existing theory of parent-to-child environmental transmission of sexual orientation has received unambiguous empirical support. . . . Parent-to-child environmental transmission cannot presently be

¹⁸² *Parents, supra* note 24, at 3-7; see also *Adults, supra* note 24, at 210.

¹⁸³ *Parents, supra* note 24, at 7.

¹⁸⁴ *Id.* at 9.

¹⁸⁵ Golombok et al., *supra* note 32, at 569-70.

rejected . . . because of methodological limitations of existing studies, and because analyses from relevant epidemiological studies . . . do not sensitively gauge the importance of relatively rare factors such as having a gay or lesbian parent.¹⁸⁶

Unlike the non-random sampling of the Kinsey surveys and the biased "convenience" sampling of all the other studies reviewed in this paper, Cameron and Cameron reported a random sample of the population of six metropolitan areas in the United States, which permitted legitimate comparisons between homosexuals and heterosexuals. This large, anonymous, random sample of six metropolitan areas in the U.S. unfortunately yielded few homosexual parents, so the results too are exploratory and suggest hypotheses for future study.¹⁸⁷

The study by Cameron and Cameron suggested that homosexual parenting is associated with disproportionate rates of homosexual orientation development, undesirable sexual experiences, a first sexual experience that was homosexual, and gender dissatisfaction.¹⁸⁸ These investigators found that less than 6% of the males and 3% of the females in the general population claimed to be bisexual or homosexual, but by comparison, 75% of the adult male children and 57% of the adult female children reared by homosexual parents claimed that they had developed a bisexual or homosexual orientation.¹⁸⁹ "Our results suggest that the sexual preference or orientation of the parent influences the preference of the child, and that whatever the mechanism, homosexual parents are associated disproportionately with homosexual children."¹⁹⁰

Additionally, at least 35% of the adults who reported having been reared by a homosexual parent became homosexual themselves, and an additional 12% became "less than exclusively heterosexual", thus a total of 47% of the children of homosexual parents claimed a less than exclusively heterosexual orientation.¹⁹¹ On that basis, Cameron and Cameron concluded, "Since less than 3% of the adult population is homosexual . . . homosexual parent(s) have a disproportionate fraction of children who become homosexual."¹⁹² However, the small number of homosexual parents in this investigation render even this random designed study to be only suggestive and not conclusive.

This study also reported a disproportionate percentage (29%) of the adult children of homosexual parents had been specifically subjected to

¹⁸⁶ Bailey et al., *supra* note 23, at 125.

¹⁸⁷ Cameron & Cameron, *supra* note 3, at 761.

¹⁸⁸ *Id.* at 762-64.

¹⁸⁹ *Id.* at 763.

¹⁹⁰ *Id.* at 769.

¹⁹¹ *Id.*

¹⁹² *Id.*

sexual molestation by that homosexual parent, compared to only 0.6% of adult children of heterosexual parents having reported sexual relations with their parent. "Having a homosexual parent(s) appears to increase the risk of incest with a parent by a factor of about fifty."¹⁹³ This finding, and the findings reviewed by Cameron and Cameron suggest a "disproportionate association between homosexuality and pedophilia [and] a correspondingly disproportionate risk of homosexual incest. . . for children reared by homosexuals."¹⁹⁴ Sixty-seven percent of the males who had been reared by homosexual parents reported a homosexual first sexual experience compared to 8.5% of the males reared by heterosexual parents.¹⁹⁵ Pointing out a parallel with other studies of sexual victimization of boys, these investigators reported that 67% of the small number of boys who had reported having been molested by their fathers also became bisexual or homosexual themselves.¹⁹⁶

Moreover, while the adults reporting having been reared by a homosexual parent constituted only 0.3% of the total random sample, they reported 10% of the undesired homosexual experiences imposed upon them as a child for the entire study sample.¹⁹⁷ Children reared by homosexual parents also experience disproportionately higher rates of having both homosexual and heterosexual relations with other caretakers, relatives, and other authority figures.¹⁹⁸ "Males appeared to fare especially poorly in terms of experiencing sexually undesirable events when parented by a homosexual."¹⁹⁹

Further, Cameron and Cameron reported that children reared by homosexual mothers and fathers indicated disproportionate levels of gender dissatisfaction.²⁰⁰ Specifically, 5.3% of the total random sample of men wanted to be girls as they grew up as a child, compared to 25% of men who had been parented by a homosexual.²⁰¹ Similarly, 25.2% of the total sample of women had wanted to be a boy while growing up, compared to 42.9% of the women who had been parented by a homosexual mother or father. Also, 6.4% of the women in the total sample reported that they had not wanted to be a girl compared to 12.5% of the women who had been parented by a homosexual mother or father.²⁰²

¹⁹³ *Id.* at 772.

¹⁹⁴ *Id.* at 771.

¹⁹⁵ *Id.* at 764.

¹⁹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁹⁸ *Id.* at 772.

¹⁹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰⁰ *Id.*

²⁰¹ *Id.* at 764.

²⁰² *Id.*

V. CONCLUSION

But even though the Cameron and Cameron study was better designed, the small number of homosexual parents in that study make all their results suggestive rather than conclusive. Their findings, however, indicate that the effects of homosexual parenting are still an open question, scientifically speaking, and warrant further research.²⁰³ In the limited body of published journal articles on homosexual parenting and its effect upon child development, many of the studies fail to include comparisons with comparable family groups of married and single-parent heterosexual parents.

With the exception of the study by Cameron and Cameron, the few studies available are biased with regard to subject selection in that they generally report on a small group of research subjects which are not randomly selected and which do not constitute a scientifically representative sample of homosexual parents and their children. Furthermore, although the research designs of the available studies are replete with numerous other methodological deficiencies, many of the authors make illegitimate generalizations or unwarranted conclusions from their flawed research studies. Thus, although the available research to date essentially constitutes a number of poorly designed, exploratory pilot studies, both the authors of the studies and many reviewers of the studies have concluded substantially more from these methodologically flawed studies than was warranted scientifically.

In fact, the specific effect of homosexual parenting on child development remains an open question. Until methodologically rigorous research studies are conducted, empirical research has essentially nothing definitive to offer decision-makers in child custody, foster home placement, adoption, or artificial insemination cases. Until such sound scientific studies become available, such decision-making should remain in the realms of ethics, morality, and law.

²⁰³ *Id.* at 774.