

The Regnerus Affair

Gay Marriage, the Supreme Court,
and the Politics of Sociology

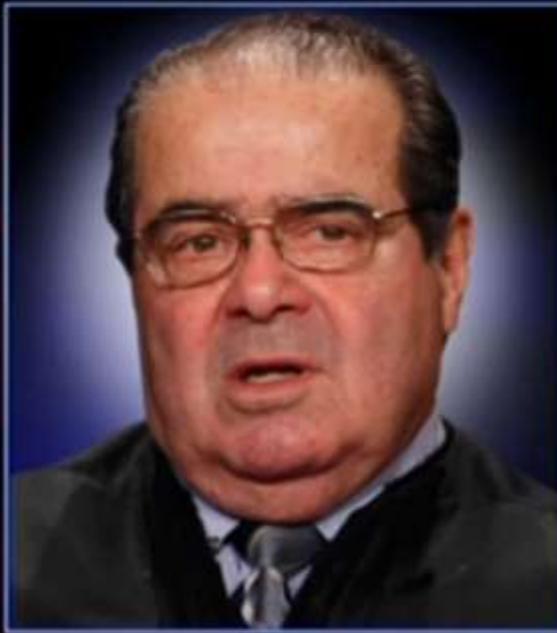
Philip N. Cohen



Francisco Goya
Victims of the Inquisition going to an Auto da Fé

March 28, 2013

The Daily Show with Jon Stewart



Antonin Scalia
Associate Justice

"And there's considerable disagreement among sociologists as to what the consequences of raising a child in a single-sex family, whether that is harmful to the child or not."

Supreme Court Arguments
on Same-Sex Marriage

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9 months earlier...

- Reporter, to me, June 7, 2012: “There's new study out on same sex parents by Regnerus at UTA. ... the methodology (nationally representative sample, etc) looked pretty solid.”



children from different families

From when you were born until age 18 (or until you left home to be on your own), did either of your parents ever have a romantic relationship with someone of the same sex?



Adopted



Divorced Later



Mother had
Lesbian Relationship



Intact Family



Father had
Gay Relationship



Single Parent



Step Family

children from different families

Intact Biological Family (IBF)

description:	child lived with his or her married, biological mother and father from birth to age 18
parents' relationship:	biological mother and father were married throughout child's childhood and remain married
number of respondents:	919 out of 2,988 young adult children surveyed
respondents' race:	68% white; 5% black; 17% hispanic; 10% other



Adopted



Divorced Later



Mother had
Lesbian Relationship



Intact Family



Father had
Gay Relationship



Single Parent



Step Family

Were ever touched sexually by a parent or other adult

- Score for Intact Biological Family (IBF)
- Score *was* statistically significantly different from IBF's score after controls
- Score *was not* statistically significantly different from IBF's score after controls



Table 2

Mean scores on select dichotomous outcome variables, NFSS (can read as percentage: as in, 0.42 = 42%).

	IBF (intact bio family)	LM (lesbian mother)	GF (gay father)	Adopted by strangers	Divorced late (>18)	Stepfamily	Single- parent	All other
Currently married	0.43	0.36	0.35	0.41	0.36*	0.41	0.37	0.39
Currently cohabiting	0.09	0.24*	0.21	0.07 [^]	0.31*	0.19*	0.19*	0.13
Family received welfare growing up	0.17	0.69*	0.57*	0.12 [^]	0.47*[^]	0.53*[^]	0.48*[^]	0.35[^]
Currently on public assistance	0.10	0.38*	0.23	0.27*	0.31*	0.30*	0.30*	0.23*
Currently employed full-time	0.49	0.26*	0.34	0.41	0.42	0.47 [^]	0.43 [^]	0.39
Currently unemployed	0.08	0.28*	0.20	0.22*	0.15	0.14	0.13[^]	0.15
Voted in last presidential election	0.57	0.41	0.73* [^]	0.58	0.63 [^]	0.57 [^]	0.51	0.48
Thought recently about suicide	0.05	0.12	0.24*	0.07	0.08	0.10	0.05	0.09
Recently or currently in therapy	0.08	0.19*	0.19	0.22*	0.12	0.17*	0.13*	0.09
Identifies as entirely heterosexual	0.90	0.61*	0.71*	0.82 [^]	0.83 [^]	0.81*[^]	0.83*[^]	0.82*[^]
Is in a same-sex romantic relationship	0.04	0.07	0.12	0.23	0.05	0.13*	0.03	0.02
Had affair while married/cohabiting	0.13	0.40*	0.25	0.20	0.12 [^]	0.32*	0.19 [^]	0.16 [^]
Has ever had an STI	0.08	0.20*	0.25*	0.16	0.12	0.16*	0.14*	0.08
Ever touched sexually by parent/adult	0.02	0.23*	0.06 [^]	0.03 [^]	0.10*	0.12*	0.10*	0.08*[^]
Ever forced to have sex against will	0.08	0.31*	0.25*	0.23*	0.24*	0.16*	0.16*[^]	0.11 [^]

Bold indicates the mean scores displayed are statistically-significantly different from IBFs (currently intact, bio mother/father household, column 1), without additional controls.

An asterisk (*) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the group's coefficient and that of IBF's, controlling for respondent's age, gender, race/ethnicity, level of mother's education, perceived household income while growing up, experience being bullied as a youth, and state's legislative gay-friendliness, derived from logistic regression models (not shown).

A caret (^) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the group's mean and the mean of LM (column 2), without additional controls.

Table 3

Mean scores on select continuous outcome variables, NFSS.

	IBF (intact bio family)	LM (lesbian mother)	GF (gay father)	Adopted by strangers	Divorced late (>18)	Stepfamily	Single- parent	All other
Educational attainment	3.19	2.39*	2.64*	3.21 [^]	2.88*[^]	2.64*	2.66*	2.54*
Family-of-origin safety/security	4.13	3.12*	3.25*	3.77*[^]	3.52*	3.52*[^]	3.58*[^]	3.77*[^]
Family-of-origin negative impact	2.30	3.13*	2.90*	2.83*	2.96*	2.76*	2.78*	2.64*[^]
Closeness to biological mother	4.17	4.05	3.71*	3.58	3.95	4.03	3.85*	3.97
Closeness to biological father	3.87	3.16	3.43	–	3.29*	3.65	3.24*	3.61
Self-reported physical health	3.75	3.38	3.58	3.53	3.46	3.49	3.43*	3.41
Self-reported overall happiness	4.16	3.89	3.72	3.92	4.02	3.87*	3.93	3.83
CES-D depression index	1.83	2.20*	2.18*	1.95	2.01	1.91 [^]	1.89 [^]	1.94 [^]
Attachment scale (depend)	2.82	3.43*	3.14	3.12*	3.08[^]	3.10*[^]	3.05[^]	3.02[^]
Attachment scale (anxiety)	2.46	2.67	2.66	2.66	2.71	2.53	2.51	2.56
Impulsivity scale	1.90	2.03	2.02	1.85	1.94	1.86 [^]	1.82 [^]	1.89
Level of household income	8.27	6.08	7.15	7.93 [^]	7.42 [^]	7.04	6.96	6.19*
Current relationship quality index	4.11	3.83	3.63*	3.79	3.95	3.80*	3.95	3.94
Current relationship is in trouble	2.04	2.35	2.55*	2.35	2.43	2.35*	2.26*	2.15

Bold indicates the mean scores displayed are statistically-significantly different from IBFs (currently intact, bio mother/father household, column 1), without additional controls.

An asterisk (*) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the group's coefficient and that of IBF's, controlling for respondent's age, gender, race/ethnicity, level of mother's education, perceived household income while growing up, experience being bullied as a youth, and state's legislative gay-friendliness, derived from OLS regression models (not shown).

A caret (^) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the group's mean and the mean of LM (column 2), without additional controls.

Table 4

Mean scores on select event-count outcome variables, NFSS.

	IBF (intact bio family)	LM (lesbian mother)	GF (gay father)	Adopted by strangers	Divorced late (>18)	Stepfamily	Single-parent	All other
Frequency of marijuana use	1.32	1.84*	1.61	1.33 [^]	2.00*	1.47	1.73*	1.49
Frequency of alcohol use	2.70	2.37	2.70	2.74	2.55	2.50	2.66	2.44
Frequency of drinking to get drunk	1.68	1.77	2.14	1.73	1.90	1.68	1.74	1.64
Frequency of smoking	1.79	2.76*	2.61*	2.34*	2.44*	2.31*	2.18*	1.91 [^]
Frequency of watching TV	3.01	3.70*	3.49	3.31	3.33	3.43*	3.25	2.95 [^]
Frequency of having been arrested	1.18	1.68*	1.75*	1.31 [^]	1.38	1.38*[^]	1.35*[^]	1.34*[^]
Frequency pled guilty to non-minor offense	1.10	1.36*	1.41*	1.19	1.30	1.21*	1.17*[^]	1.17 [^]
N of female sex partners (among women)	0.22	1.04*	1.47*	0.47 [^]	0.96*	0.47* [^]	0.52*[^]	0.33 [^]
N of female sex partners (among men)	2.70	3.46	4.17	3.24	3.66	3.85*	3.23	3.37
N of male sex partners (among women)	2.79	4.02*	5.92*	3.49	3.97*	4.57*	4.04*	2.91 [^]
N of male sex partners (among men)	0.20	1.48*	1.47*	0.27	0.98*	0.55	0.42	0.44

Bold indicates the mean scores displayed are statistically-significantly different from IBFs (currently intact, bio mother/father household, column 1), without additional controls.

An asterisk (*) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the group's coefficient and that of IBF's, controlling for respondent's age, gender, race/ethnicity, level of mother's education, perceived household income while growing up, experience being bullied as a youth, and state's legislative gay-friendliness, derived from Poisson or negative binomial regression models (not shown).

A caret (^) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the group's mean and the mean of LM (column 2), without additional controls.

'No differences' survives

- Regnerus:
 - “The ‘no differences’ paradigm suggests that children from same-sex families display no notable disadvantages when compared to children from other family forms”
- But the research hypothesis is:
 - Children from same-sex families display notable disadvantages when compared to children from other family forms.
 - Failure to disprove supports the ‘no difference’ null hypothesis

Not raised in gay/lesbian families

- “Lesbian mothers” $N = 163$
 - 57% lived with mother’s partner 4+ months
 - 23% lived with mother’s partner 3+ years
- “Gay fathers” $N = 73$
 - 24% lived with father’s partner 4+ months
 - <2% lived with father’s partner 3+ years

'No differences' survives

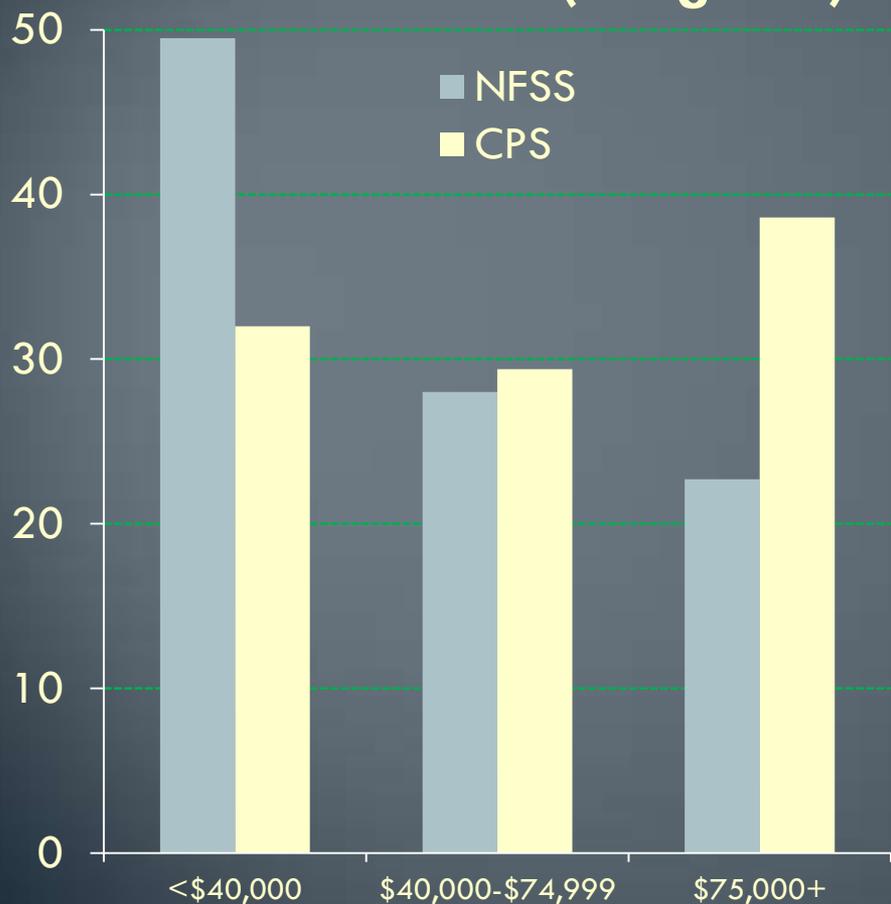
- Privileging sexual orientation
 - Mutually exclusive categories with LM/GF first
 - '...my analytical interest is in maximizing the sample size [of these groups]...'
 - E.g., IBF with one affair = LM/GF
- Recall bias
 - Children reporting parents' relationships
- Selection bias
 - Paid respondents saying 'yes' to the screener

'No differences' survives

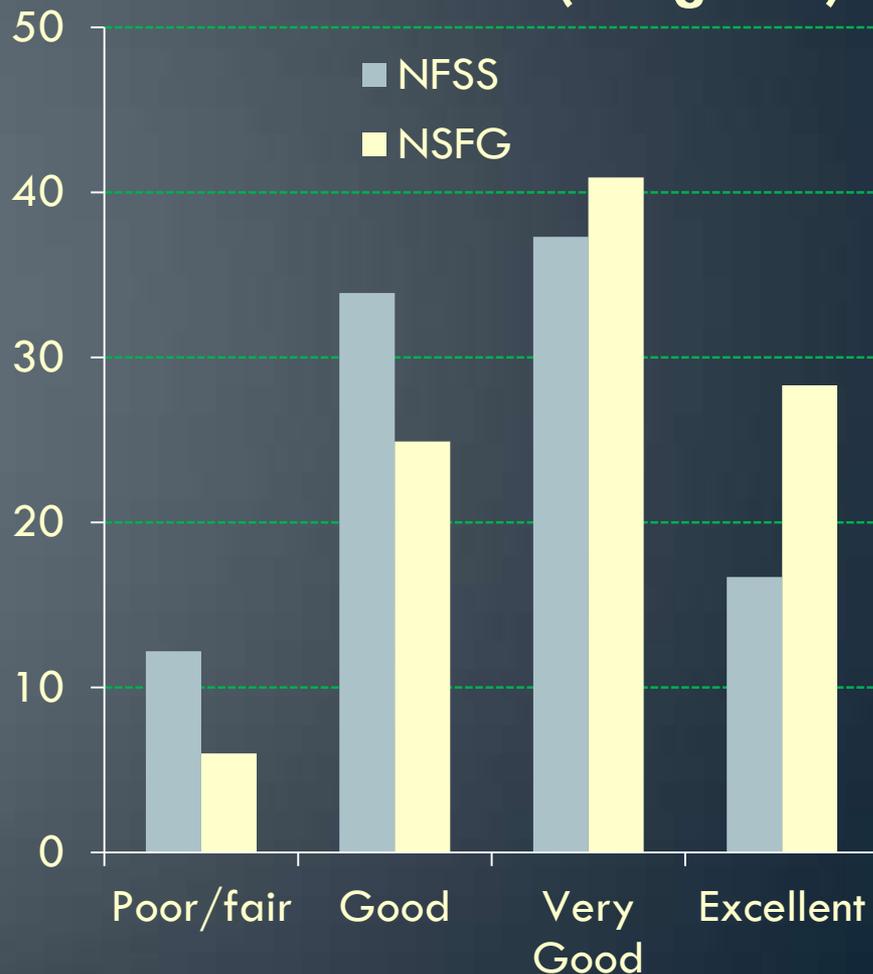
- Likely errors, e.g.
 - 23% of adopted respondents are in same-sex relationships, but 83% are “entirely heterosexual”
 - Mothers >80 at time of birth ($N=2$)
 - Arrested prior to age 4 ($N=9$)
 - First vaginal sex at age 0 ($N=1$)
- Quality?
 - Paper submitted before data collection ended
 - Random answers
 - Knowledge Networks sample

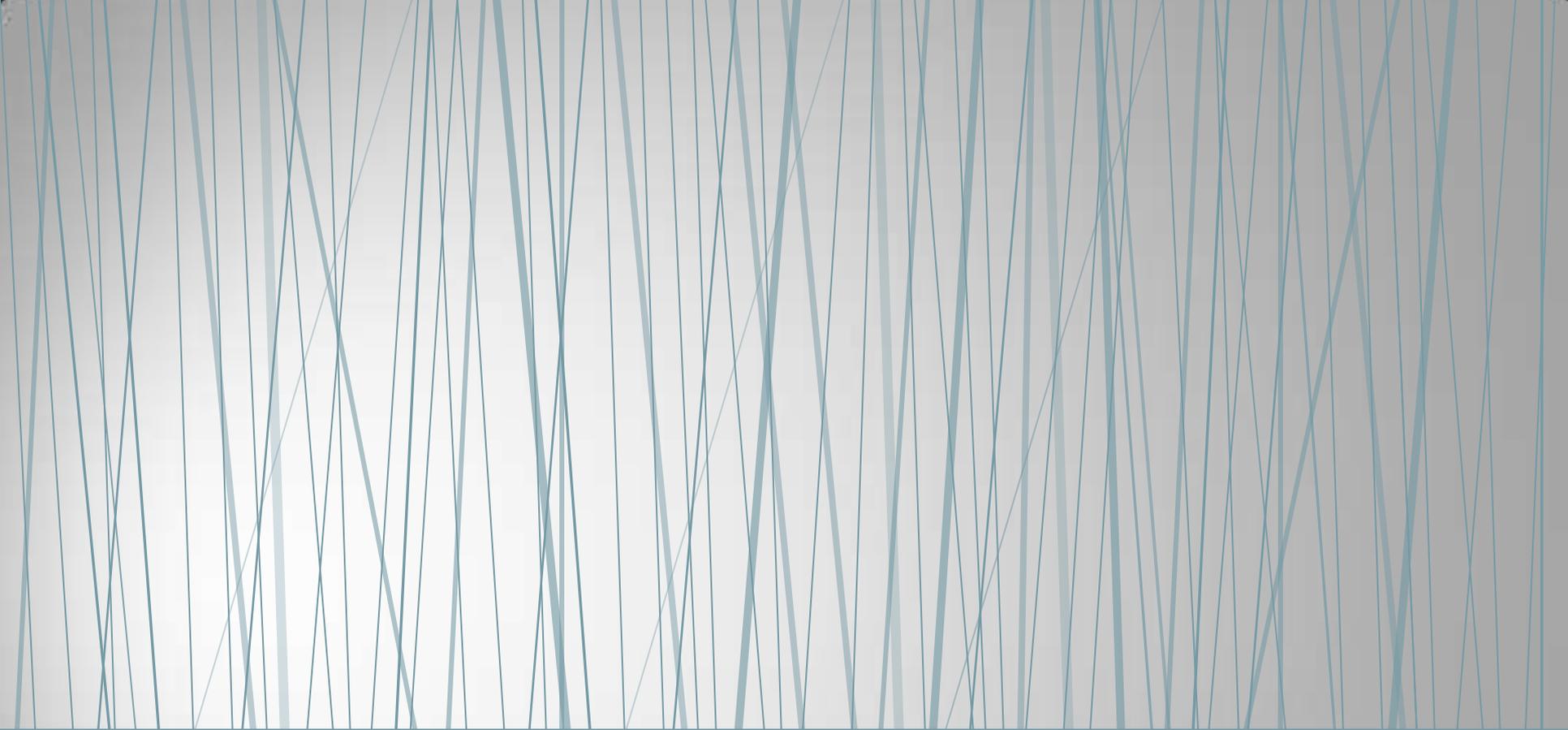
‘...the NFSS compares very favorably with other nationally-representative datasets.’

**Current household income
NFSS and CPS (weighted)**



**Current self-reported health
NFSS and NSFG (weighted)**





How the sausage is made

Public records document releases

September 2010

“At the request of Brad Wilcox, I am sending you a description of ‘The New Family Structure Study.’”



– *Luis Tellez, President of the Witherspoon Institute*
September 2010

The plan

- Wilcox: "...sample 1 000 young adults from same-sex households, 1 000 young adults from adopted households, and 1 000 young adults from heterosexual households..."
- Telez [to Regnerus]: "It would be great to have this before major decisions of the Supreme Court but that is secondary to the need to do this and do it well... I would like you to take ownership and think of how you want it done... but of course, here to help."

Regnerus to Wilcox, September 2010

OK, so let me process some of this. I need to have my stuff together before I approach Mark Hayward [director of UT's Population Research Center].

We want to run this project through UT's PRC. I'm presuming 10% overhead is acceptable to Witherspoon. YES ...

And per your instruction, I should think of this as a planning grant, with somewhere on par of \$30-\$40k if needed. YES

I would like, at some point, to get more feedback from Luis and Maggie [Gallagher?] about the 'boundaries' around this project, not just costs but also their optimal timelines ... and their hopes for what emerges ... including the early report we discussed in DC.

Dear Mark: This sounds right on target. ... Thanks, Brad.

Regnerus's pitch to scholars

*So my job here is more managerial than intellectual – to pull together a small team of ideologically diverse scholars who are serious about doing good science on this important subject. ... This is *not* some right-wing conspiracy (I myself am moderate and largely apolitical)...*

Tellez's pitch to the Bradley Foundation

... to examine whether young adults raised by same-sex parents fare as well as those raised in different familial settings. This is a question that must now be answered – in a scientifically serious way – by those who are in favor of traditional marriage. ... Our first goal is to seek the truth, whatever that may turn out to be. Nevertheless, we are confident that the traditional understanding of marriage will be vindicated by this study as long as it is done honestly and well.

Seeking legitimacy

- Wilcox to Regnerus: “Yes, I think you have to keep in mind that even getting a report from UT w/ Paul Amato on board is a huge achievement.”
- Tellez to a potential research contractor: “...you set me off in the search for that major university and it appears we have found it.”
- Regnerus to consultants: “while the initial funding source is conservative, they’re actually pursuing (and are already getting) additional financial support from across the spectrum.”

Seeking legitimacy

The funding sources played no role at all in the design or conduct of the study, the analyses, the interpretations of the data, or in the preparation of this manuscript.

*-- Mark Regnerus,
from the paper*

I served as a fellow and as the director of the program on marriage, family, and democracy at the Witherspoon Institute from 2004 to 2011. These positions were honorific ... I also provided my perspective to Witherspoon Institute staff about ... the New Family Structures Study. However, I never served as an officer or a staffer at the Witherspoon Institute, and I never had the authority to make funding or programmatic decisions at the Institute.

*-- W. Bradford Wilcox
'For the Record' blog post, October 2012*

Seeking media

- August 2011, as data collection began, Regnerus to Tellez

I spent the day yesterday with Brad and a couple other researchers (Glenn Stanton, Focus [on the Family]...), and spent some time discussing public/media relations for the NFSS project. ... Brad thinks we should invite three journalists then – an NPR reporter, an Atlantic monthly writer, and an AP journalist (I can't remember the names of the last two – Brad does...).

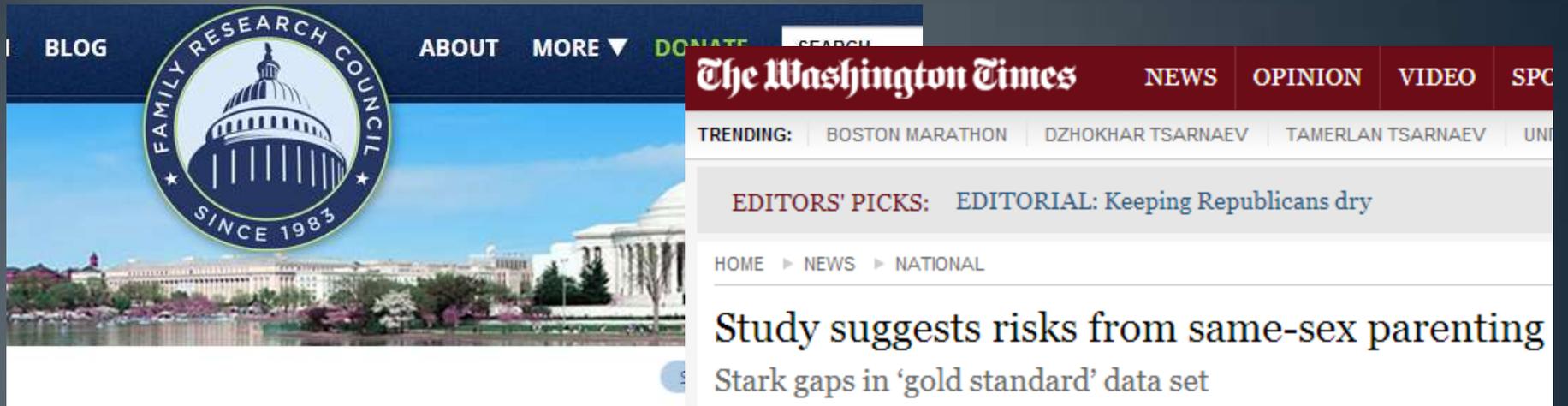
The image features a background of thin, vertical, light blue lines of varying lengths and positions, creating a textured, rain-like effect. A solid teal horizontal bar spans the width of the image, positioned in the lower half. The word "Impact" is written in a white, bold, sans-serif font with a thin black outline, located in the lower-left corner of the teal bar.

Impact

Off the press

- Paper published online: June 10, 2012
- Cited in American College of Pediatricians *amicus* brief supporting DOMA: June 11, 2012
- Sowing seeds of doubt and controversy

'Traditional-marriage' response



The Washington Times NEWS OPINION VIDEO SPC

TRENDING: BOSTON MARATHON DZHOKHAR TSARNAEV TAMERLAN TSARNAEV UNI

EDITORS' PICKS: EDITORIAL: Keeping Republicans dry

HOME NEWS NATIONAL

Study suggests risks from same-sex parenting

Stark gaps in 'gold standard' data set



THE FOUNDRY

TRENDING LEADERSHIP for AMERICA ARCHIVES VIDEO MOBILE

Guns Immigration North Korea U.S. Budget Margaret Thatcher Jim DeMint

New Research on Children of Same-Sex Parents Suggests Differences Matter

New Research On Same-Sex Parenting

Mainstream media response

The image is a screenshot of the TIME Health & Family website. At the top right, the logo reads "TIME Health & Family". Below it, navigation links include "Magazine", "Video", "LIFE", and "TIME 100". A main menu features "NEWSFEED", "U.S.", "POLITICS", "WORLD", "BUSINESS", "TECH", "HEALTH" (highlighted in red), "SCIENCE", and "ENT". A secondary menu lists "Home", "Medicine", "Diet & Fitness", "Family & Parenting", "Love & Relationships", "Mental Health", and "Policy &".

The main content area is divided into sections. On the left, there is a "Committed" logo with the tagline "Life, love and the pursuit of sanity" and a "Do Child LIVE SCIENCE" banner. On the right, the "The New York Times" logo is visible, along with a "Health" section header. Below this, a search bar is present with the text "Search Health 3,000+ Topics" and a "Go" button. A navigation bar includes "WORLD", "U.S.", "N.Y. / REGION", "BUSINESS", "TECHNOLOGY", "SCIENCE", and "HEALTH".

The primary article featured is titled "Debate on a Study Examining Gay Parents". Below the title, there are several article teasers: "10 Ways to Raise Happy Kids", "6 Signs of a Successful Marriage", and "Good For Your Health". At the bottom, a blue banner highlights an article: "Article: Study Questioning Same-Sex Parenting Draws Fire".

Marriage-rights response

ANALYSIS

Opinion: Editor Of Anti-Gay Regnerus Study A Menace To LGBT Families And Community

by SCOTT ROSE • 6:13 PM NOVEMBER 12, 2012



James Wright allowed the Mark Regnerus anti-gay study to be



JOHN M. BECKER

sci
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MARCH 11, 2013

EXPLOSIVE DOCUMENTS REVEAL SHAM REGNERUS "STUDY" RIGGED FROM THE START

ADVOCATE.COM

SOCIETY ▶ EDUCATION

Auditor Says Lesbian and Gay Parenting Study "Bullshit"

THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE

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FEATURED CONTENT



news
How Texas Is Executing the Mentally Retarded



food
Art of Dining: Digestible Feats Makes Meaning Out of



music
Bluegrass, New Grass: Old Settler's Music Fest

news

New Documents Contradict Regnerus Claims on Gay Parenting Study

Emails reveal close collaboration between Regnerus and Witherspoon Institute

200 researchers respond...

Letter drafted by Gary Gates, criticizing the study and the review process.

Silke Aisenbrey, Katherine R. Allen, Eric Anderson, Nielan Barnes, Amanda K. Baumle, Debbie Becher, Mary Bernstein, Natalie Boero, H.M.W Bos, Lisa D Brush, Neal Caren, Mary Ann Clawson, Dan Clawson, Philip N. Cohen, D'Lane Compton, Shelley J. Correll, David H. Demo, Catherine Donovan, Sinikka Elliott, Louis Edgar Esparza, Laurie Essig, Myra Marx Ferree, Tina Fetner, Jessica Fields, Melissa M. Forbis, Gary J. Gates, Naomi Gerstel, Katherine Giuffre, Gloria González-López, Theodore Greenstein, Jessica Halliday Hardie, Mark D. Hayward, Melanie Heath, Amie Hess, Melanie M. Hughes, Shamus Rahman Khan, Michael Kimmel, Sherryl Kleinman, Charles Q. Lau, Jennifer Lee, Jean Lynch, Gill McCann, Tey Meadow, Sarah O. Meadows, Eleanor M. Miller, Debra Minkoff, Beth Mintz, Dawne Moon, Mignon R. Moore, Chandra Muller, Nancy A. Naples, Peter M. Nardi, Alondra Nelson, Jodi O'Brien, Katherine O'Donnell, Ramona Faith Oswald, Joseph M. Palacios, C.J. Pascoe, Dudley L. Poston Jr., Nicole C. Raeburn, Kimberly Richman, Barbara J. Risman, Sharmila Rudrappa, Stephen T. Russel, Virginia Rutter, Natalia Sarkisian, Saskia Sassen, Liana C. Sayer, Michael Schwalbe, Michael Schwartz, Christine R. Schwartz, Pepper Schwartz, Denise Benoit Scott, Richard Sennett, Eve Shapiro, Eran Shor, Wendy Simonds, Sarah Sobieraj, Judith Stacey, Arlene Stein, Verta Taylor, Debra J Umberson, Suzanna Danuta Walters, Jacqueline S. Weinstock, Amy C. Wilkins, Cai Wilkinson, Kristi Williams, Kerry Woodward.

ASA response

- Requests from sections on Family, Sexualities, Medical Sociology, Mental Health, Sex & Gender (?) to ASA Council for an amicus brief
- Council approved at August 2012 meeting
 - Submitted February 2013

Nos. 12-144, 12-307

In the Supreme Court of the United States

DENNIS HOLLINGSWORTH, ET AL.,
Petitioners,

v.

KRISTIN M. PERRY, ET AL.,
Respondents.

UNITED STATES,
Petitioner,

v.

EDITH SCHLAIN WINDSOR, IN HER CAPACITY AS
EXECUTOR OF THE ESTATE OF THEA CLARA SPYER,
AND BIPARTISAN LEGAL ADVISORY GROUP OF
THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Respondents.

*On Writs of Certiorari to the United States
Courts of Appeals for the Ninth and Second Circuits*

BRIEF OF *AMICUS CURIAE* AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION IN SUPPORT OF RESPONDENT KRISTIN M.
PERRY AND RESPONDENT EDITH SCHLAIN WINDSOR

ASA response

- Research director Wendy Manning, with statement by Pres. Cecilia Ridgeway.

When the social science evidence is exhaustively examined—which the ASA has done—the facts demonstrate that children fare just as well when raised by same-sex parents ... Unsubstantiated fears regarding same-sex child rearing do not overcome these facts and do not justify upholding DOMA and Proposition 8.

Defenses against liberal academia

NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE

JULY 19, 2012 4:00 AM

The Gay-Parenting Witch Hunt

An activist files a frivolous ethics complaint.

patheos

Hosting the Conversation on Faith

In Appreciation of Mark Regnerus

June 28, 2012 By [Bradley Wright](#) 1 Comment

The Chronicle Review

Home > Opinion & Ideas > The Chronicle Review

E-mail Print Comments (240) Share

July 23, 2012

An Academic Auto-da-Fé

A sociologist whose data find fault with same-sex relationships
progressive orthodoxy

the weekly
Standard

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POLITICS &
GOVERNMENT

YOU ARE HERE: [MAGAZINE](#) / REVENGE OF THE SOCIOLOGISTS

THE MAGAZINE

Revenge of the Sociologists

The perils of politically incorrect academic research

JUL 30, 2012, VOL. 17, NO. 43 • BY [ANDREW FERGUSON](#)

“An Academic Auto-da-Fé”

—Christian Smith

Mark Regnerus’s Dissertation Chair

The Chronicle online, July 23, 2012

‘Whoever said inquisitions and witch hunts were things of the past? A big one is going on now. ... Regnerus published ideologically unpopular research results on the contentious matter of same-sex relationships. And now he is being made to pay. In today's political climate, and particularly in the discipline of sociology—dominated as it is by a progressive orthodoxy—what Regnerus did is unacceptable. It makes him a heretic, a traitor—and so he must be thrown under the bus.’

Social Science Research response

- Internal audit by Darren Sherkat, Southern Illinois U.
 - Reviewers were social conservatives and/or consultants
 - Slipshod, superficial reviews returned almost immediately
 - Credulous editor accepted reviews and didn't scrutinize conflicts
- Editor James D. Wright's response
 - Too many reviews to administer
 - Controversy sells
 - Luck of the draw

'moderate and largely politically neutral'

- Regnerus, when the study was published:

Q: Is there a political take-home message in the study?

A: No. As I stated in the article, "this study cannot answer political questions about same-sex relationships..."

Q: Come on. You can't surmise what people will make of this study politically?

A: You know, I don't think it easily lends itself to one particular answer to any of the politicized questions that are circulating about gay marriage, or parental rights, etc.

‘moderate and largely politically neutral’

- Regnerus et al., amicus brief, February 2013:

The Largest Population-Based Studies Do Not Confirm the “No Differences” Conclusion About Child Outcomes Among Same-Sex Parents.

'moderate and largely politically neutral'

- Regnerus et al., amicus brief, February 2013:

...confident assertions of “no difference” ought to be viewed with suspicion. ...With so many significant outstanding questions about whether children develop as well in same-sex households as in opposite-sex households, it remains prudent for government to continue to recognize marriage as a union of a man and a woman, thereby promoting what is known to be an ideal environment for raising children.

March 28, 2013

The Daily Show with Jon Stewart



Antonin Scalia
Associate Justice

"And there's considerable disagreement among sociologists as to what the consequences of raising a child in a single-sex family, whether that is harmful to the child or not."

Supreme Court Arguments
on Same-Sex Marriage

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Clear conclusions: This case

- Wilcox and Regnerus engaged in systematic deception
- The journal peer review process failed
- The puny defenses of naive, liberal academia were easily overrun by a well-financed interest group with operatives on the faculty

Clear conclusions: Larger problems

- PhDs with consequences: ideology loves legitimacy
- Think tanks love PhDs, who convert money into news
- The media love university-based reports
 - e.g., National Marriage Project
- PhDs and tenure are peer-reviewed statuses, even if not all our work is peer reviewed.

It's OK to take a stand

- Do:
 - Care about human well-being and suffering, exploitation and injustice
 - Engage the media and the public
 - Formally separate your science from your politics
- Don't:
 - Lie, cheat, or steal
 - Conceal your politics in your science

