# Children with Same-Sex Parents: Can access to household-based resources explain potential differences compared to children with different-sex parents?

Danielle Wondra
Department of Sociology – University of California, Los Angeles
dwondra@ucla.edu

DRAFT updated 09/27/13

**Abstract**

*While the vast majority of research on same-sex parenting has found no statistically significant differences between children raised by same-sex parents and those raised by different-sex parents (Biblarz and Savci 2010; Stacey and Biblarz 2001; Tasker 2005), the considerable limitations of this research have left the door open for serious criticism (e.g., Regnerus 2012). In this paper, I will address several weaknesses in previous studies: difficulties finding representative samples of same-sex parents; small sample sizes; inappropriate comparison groups; and lack of attention to the importance of family transitions in understanding children's well-being.*

*I use U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, the largest nationally representative sample available on same-sex couples, to compare the experiences of children with same-sex parents to those with different-sex parents. In doing so, I will ask how current family structure is associated with children's household-based resources (such as parents' educational attainment, age of mother at child's birth, and household income and earnings) and educational well-being when making theoretically appropriate comparisons: (a) same-sex parents to different-sex married parents, and (b) same-sex parents to different-sex unmarried parents. This paper will contribute to the debate between Regnerus' findings and those of many other scholars. Moreover, the results will inform advocacy for same-sex marriage by providing further evidence that sexual orientation should not be a basis for denying equal access to family formation.*

## Introduction

Research on differences between family types or family structures has been primarily concerned with the well-being of children, seeking to uncover which family types provide the best outcomes for children. Studies have shown that growing up with two biological, heterosexual, married parents provides the greatest stability and best overall outcomes for children (Brown 2004; Cherlin 2004; McLanahan and Sandefur 1994; Seltzer 2000; Sweeney 2010). From this, some scholars have extrapolated that children develop most appropriately when raised with gender-specific socialization—i.e., mothers give nurturing care, while fathers

encourage rough and tumble play (Parsons 1949; Parsons and Bales 1956; Popenoe 1993, 1996). However, these studies have tended to draw on research that compared children's outcomes in heterosexual, biological married-parent households to single-parent households (e.g., McLanahan and Sandefur 1994), and have not included a comparison to same-sex parents. As such, those who have used this evidence to argue that heterosexual, biological married parents provide children with superior outcomes to same-sex parents have conflated the effects of the number of parents (two parents are more likely to provide greater financial assets than one parent regardless of their gender) with marital status of parents (the stability that comes with legal marriage) (Biblarz and Stacey 2010). One reason same-sex parents have seldom been included in these comparisons is that not enough research has been conducted on families headed by same-sex parents.

Due to the increasing visibility of same-sex families, some academics as well as the media have expressed apprehension about the consequences for children raised by same-sex parents. Much of this moral panic has been based on misguided stereotypes about the immorality of gays and lesbians and their inability to be fit parents. In recent years, there has emerged a growing literature comparing the outcomes of children raised by same-sex parents to those raised by different-sex parents. The vast majority of these studies have found no statistically significant differences between children raised by same-sex parents and those raised by different-sex parents (see reviews by Biblarz and Savci 2010; Biblarz and Stacey 2010; Stacey and Biblarz 2001; Tasker 2005; for an exception see Regnerus 2012), while some have found that children raised by lesbian mothers actually fare better than those raised by different-sex parents (Biblarz and Stacey 2010; Patterson 1995; Stacey and Biblarz 2001).

However, as many scholars (e.g., Eggebeen 2012; Meezan and Rauch 2005; Nock 2001; Regnerus 2012) have pointed out, there are a number of limitations in the available research on

children raised by same-sex parents, some of which I discuss here. First, as discussed above, it is difficult to consistently define who is gay and lesbian, and to subsequently find a representative sample of gays and lesbians with children. Second, due to the relative rarity of the population, most studies are based on small samples of gays and lesbians who are parents. Third, many studies make inappropriate comparisons between family types. For example, comparing same-sex unmarried parents to different-sex biological married parents does not account for the benefits to children that the stability and legal recognition of marriage provides. Finally, some research neglects to address the role of past family transitions on the well-being of children, for example, whether children of same-sex parents have experienced the divorce of their biological parents. In the current study, I attempt to address each of these limitations.

In this paper, I ask how current family structure is associated with children's household-based resources and well-being when comparing children living with same-sex parents and children living with different-sex parents. Specifically, I compare (a) same-sex unmarried parents to different-sex unmarried parents, and (b) same-sex unmarried parents to different-sex married parents, while looking at many different aspects of household-based resources, such as parents' education, household income and earnings, age of parents when child was born, nativity and citizenship status of parents, residential stability and family stability. Furthermore, I ask how these household-based resources are associated with children's education well-being (i.e., normal progress through school), and whether these resources operate in the same ways across family types.

In what follows, I outline previous research that addresses the association between growing up with same-sex parents and multiple measures of child well-being. I then discuss in more depth the weaknesses found in previous research on children with gay and lesbian parents.

Finally, I describe the ways in which the current study contributes to the literature by attending to these weaknesses.

## Background

### *Same-Sex Families and Child Well-Being*

Many studies find no differences between children raised by same-sex parents and those by heterosexual parents. In terms of mental health, numerous studies agree that children of same-sex (mostly lesbian) parents are generally similar to children of heterosexual parents on measures of self-esteem, psychological well-being, and behavioral adjustment (Herek 2006; see reviews by Biblarz and Savci 2010; Biblarz and Stacey 2010; Stacey and Biblarz 2001; Tasker 2005). Considering educational attainment, Potter (2012) finds that any differences in children's math scores by parent type can be attributed to the family transitions that children in nontraditional households have experienced. Moreover, Rosenfeld (2010) uses 2000 Census data and finds no statistically significant differences in normal progress through school between children with same-sex parents as compared to those with heterosexual (married or unmarried) parents. The current study builds upon Rosenfeld's research, using more recent data that includes more-detailed measures of child's grade in school as well as additional measures of family change.

Where there are differences, children with lesbian mothers fare better on social and behavioral outcomes, including interest and success in school (Biblarz and Stacey 2010: 8). In a sociological reanalysis of 21 psychology studies, Stacey and Biblarz (2001) point out that children with lesbian mothers demonstrate flexibility around gender norms, such that sons and daughters exhibit fewer traditionally gendered behaviors. Furthermore, children of lesbian mothers are more likely to report being open to same-sex relationships and behaviors, as

compared to children with heterosexual mothers (Johnson and O'Connor 2002; Stacey and Biblarz 2001); however, they are no more likely to identify as gay or lesbian than children of heterosexual parents (Biblarz and Stacey 2010; Johnson and O'Connor 2002).

In contrast to the majority of other studies, Regnerus (2012) argues that children raised by same-sex parents fare worse on a number of well-being measures, as compared to those raised by intact, biological married parents. Specifically, he finds that, compared to intact, married, biological families, children raised by parents who have had a same-sex relationship in the past report lower levels of educational attainment, worse scores on feelings of security with family of origin, higher levels of depression, and greater difficulty in current romantic relationships (763). However, as many prominent social scientists have pointed out (Gates et al. 2012), there are major flaws in Regnerus' study design and methodology, which I discuss below. In this paper, I aim to contribute to the debate between Regnerus' findings and those of many other scholars. In doing so, I hope to help resolve some of these discrepancies.

### *Challenges in Research on Same-Sex Families*

*1. Difficulty finding representative sample*

As noted above, researchers studying same-sex families face a number of challenges. One major challenge in studying same-sex families is the difficulty of finding a representative sample. As many have pointed out, sampling strategies for research on same-sex families tend to be non-random and non-representative. Because research on same-sex families is relatively new in the field of family research (Allen and Demo 1995), it is rare to find a large-scale, nationally representative survey that includes questions both about sexuality and same-sex parenting. Due to persistent social stigma and discrimination against gays and lesbians, it can be difficult to find sufficient samples of gay and lesbian parents using probability sampling. As a result, most

studies of same-sex families use snowball or convenience sampling, potentially skewing the results and limiting the generalizability of the findings (Stacey and Biblarz 2001; Tasker 2005). The use of convenience sampling has resulted in studies that address the experiences of same-sex parents who are white and middle-class (Meezan and Rauch 2005), as they tend to be more socially visible and thus more likely to self-select into these studies. However, working-class or racial-ethnic minorities may understand sexuality in ways that differ from their white counterparts. For example, black gays and lesbians may see a public gay identity as incompatible with their racial-ethnic identity, while Latinos may view their sexuality as a component of private relationships, and thus may be less likely to participate in research that appears to study public gay identities (see Goldberg 2010: 12-13). This further highlights the fact that most current research on same-sex families is not representative because it does not accurately represent the experiences of working-class or racial-ethnic minority gays and lesbians. In the current study, I use the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, which provides a nationally representative sample of same-sex couples.

Following from this, constructing a representative sample of gays and lesbians requires the ability to measure sexual orientation consistently. However, because sexuality is fluid and complex, individuals may have significantly different understandings of their sexual orientation, in terms of how they conceptualize the connections among sexual identity, sexual behaviors and sexual attractions. Therefore, respondents may report attractions or behaviors that do not align with their sexual identity (Gates 2012b; Mosher et al. 2005). While white, middle-class American perceptions of sexual orientation tend to portray sexual identity as determined by one's object of sexual desire (sexual attraction), other race and class groups may see sexual identity as determined by gender conformity (Asencio 2011; Cantú 2009; Valocchi 1999). For

example, some believe a man can maintain his masculine gender identity and identify as heterosexual if he is the insertive partner, even if he has sex with another man.

Regnerus' (2012) study, using the New Family Structures Survey (NFSS), provides an example of problematic measurement of sexual orientation. Respondents were categorized as having a "gay" or "lesbian" parent if they indicated their mother or father had *ever* had a same-sex relationship. This classification strategy takes for granted that a parent who has ever had a same-sex relationship, a sexual *behavior*, is necessarily "gay" or "lesbian," sexual *identities*, which are sociopolitical constructs that are deeply personal. Respondents were not asked to indicate the sexual identity of their parents, nor were they asked how their parents would identify themselves. Therefore, while the NFSS attempts to construct a nationally representative sample, the problematic measurement of same-sex parents is a serious shortcoming in the data. In the current study, I take this into consideration and define "gay" or "lesbian" parents as self-identified same-sex couples with children.

*2. Small sample sizes*

Due to many of the same issues that lead to non-representative samples, it is also difficult to gather samples of gay and lesbian parents that are sufficiently large (Biblarz and Stacey 2010). Large-scale representative studies of family structures and processes tend to address only the experiences of families headed by different-sex parents or presumably heterosexual single parents. However, when considering that most studies of gay and lesbian parents consist of small convenience samples, it is clear that comparisons between these studies of same-sex parents and the much more robust studies of different-sex parents are not scientifically sound (Regnerus 2012). As Meezan and Rauch (2005: 101) note, "Other things being equal, the smaller the number of subjects in the groups studied, the harder it is to detect differences between those groups" (see also Hofferth 2005). When conducting research with the specific

intention of detecting any existing differences, sufficient sample sizes certainly are a crucial requirement for obtaining convincing results. The current study uses data from the American Community Survey, which provides the largest available representative sample of same-sex couples with children.

*3. Using appropriate comparison groups*

A third significant challenge in research on same-sex families is choosing appropriate comparison groups that consider the influence of not only family structure at one point in time, but also family structure histories and transitions (Eggebeen 2012; Meezan and Rauch 2005). As Sweeney (2010) asserts, using an appropriate counterfactual is crucial for attaining credible results when comparing family structures. Regnerus (2012) compares respondents with "gay" or "lesbian" parents to those raised in still-intact, biological married-parent families on a host of outcomes. It is important to note that comparing children raised by gay or lesbian parents (regardless of how that is defined) to those raised by intact, biological married parents is problematic because marriage itself—largely unavailable to same-sex couples—brings with it numerous social and institutional benefits that can affect children's well-being (Brown 2010; Cherlin 1978). We know from previous research that being raised by two biological parents who are cohabiting but not married is less advantageous for children as compared to being raised by two *married* biological parents (Brown 2004; Bumpass and Lu 2000; Bumpass, Sweet and Cherlin 1991; Manning and Brown 2006; Morrison and Ritualo 2000). Therefore, it is important to consider the potential skewing of results based on marriage when selecting comparison groups. To attend to this challenge, this paper compares children living with same-sex parents to children living with unmarried different-sex parents. I also compare same-sex parents to married different-sex parents in order to build upon much past research that makes this comparison.

*4. Accounting for family transitions*

Past family transitions are also important for understanding children's family experiences, as they create heterogeneity within family types. As Smock and Greenland (2010) point out, pathways to parenthood can influence children's experiences, regardless of the gender of their parents. Children born to heterosexual married parents who then experience their parents' divorce and subsequent transition of a parent into a same-sex relationship face the same risks of decreased well-being as do children whose parent may have entered into another heterosexual relationship (Eggebeen 2012). This experience is distinct from being born or adopted into an already established same-sex relationship. It is important to note that approximately 70 percent of children being raised by same-sex parents have experienced the divorce of their parents and have spent time in a single-parent home (Gates and Romero 2009), making them subject to the general hardships of family disruption and economic disadvantage (Brown 2004; McLanahan and Sandefur 1994). In fact, Potter (2012) finds that, while there are baseline differences in math scores between children with same-sex parents and those with married, biological parents, these differences are explained by family transitions the children had experienced. Taking these issues into consideration, I will use the current study to explore, to the extent possible, children's family structure histories, in order to gain a clearer picture of the transitions that preceded their current family structure and how these transitions may have impacted their experiences.

*A note on selectivity*

A major challenge for studying families in general is that of selection. Because individuals and families essentially make choices about family structures, such as whether a couple will marry or cohabit, it is difficult to disentangle the effects of family structure from the characteristics of people that may make them more likely to select into particular family

structures (Brown 2010; Hofferth 2005). For example, couples that are less committed to or perceive more problems within their relationships may opt to cohabit rather than marry (Bumpass, Sweet and Cherlin 1991; Clarkberg, Stolzenberg and Waite 1995). Likewise, these couples with less commitment and more problems are more likely to dissolve their relationships. As such, it is not necessarily the family structure of cohabitation that causes greater dissolution as compared to marriage, but rather the types of individuals or relationships that select into cohabitation versus marriage. Furthermore, we know that education and race-ethnicity both play a role in decisions to cohabit versus marry. For example, couples with less education are more likely to select into cohabitation compared to those with more education, and blacks—who are less likely to view marriage as a prerequisite for childbearing—are more likely to select into cohabitation compared to whites (Edin and Kefalas 2005; Smock and Manning 2004).

Selection effects can also help explain why couples who cohabit before they marry are more likely to divorce than couples who do not cohabit before marriage (Axinn and Thornton 1992; Lillard, Brien and Waite 1995). Individuals who hold attitudes that are more open to non-traditional family forms (i.e., cohabitation versus marriage) may also be more open to divorce. In turn, the experience of cohabitation itself may foster more favorable attitudes toward divorce (e.g., Axinn and Thornton 1992). However, Phillips and Sweeney (2005) find that the association between cohabitation and disruption of later marriage is not statistically significant for black and Mexican-American women, while it is significant for whites—suggesting racial variations in the way selectivity operates.

Selection effects may also help explain why studies have found that children living in same-sex families show positive outcomes that may not be a direct result of the sexual orientation of their parents. Certainly, same-sex couples who become parents after forming a same-sex relationship must make great efforts to have children, and therefore may be more

successful at parenting. Lesbian couples in particular may parent more effectively than different-sex couples both because of selection effects into parenting and also because of women's gendered socialization that tends to make them more effective at and more invested in parenting (Biblarz and Stacey 2010; Brown 2010). Stacey and Biblarz (2001: 177) also point to the fact that lesbian parents tend to be older and have higher levels of education than their heterosexual counterparts, thus creating an environment that is better suited for positive child development. It is important to keep in mind, however, that these findings are based on samples comprised largely of white, middle-class or affluent, highly educated lesbian women. Nevertheless, continued stigmatization around homosexuality and lack of access to marriage for many same-sex parents also makes same-sex relationships less stable and more likely to dissolve than heterosexual parents' relationships (Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan 2001).

**Research Questions**

The current study attempts to address these limitations through the use of the American Community Survey. Specifically, I will explore how current family structure is associated with children's access to household-based resources, which I conceptualize as sources of selectivity or differences between same-sex couples with children and different-sex couples with children that may produce differential outcomes for children that are not related to parents' sex composition or sexual orientation. Specifically, I compare (a) same-sex parents to different-sex unmarried parents, and (b) same-sex parents to different-sex married parents, while looking at many different aspects of household-based resources. I am particularly interested in family stability and past family change, as these important aspects are often overlooked in the literature.

Based on the majority of previous research, I expect to find some differences in household-based resources among children living with same-sex parents compared to those

living with different-sex parents. In particular, others (e.g., Gates and Romero 2009) have found that, among couples with children, same-sex couples are more likely to be non-white and have lower levels of education. I expect to find this as well. Due to the social benefits of marriage, it is feasible that children with different-sex *married* parents will have greater access to these resources as compared to those with unmarried parents. I expect to find that children of same-sex couples will have experienced more family instability and family transitions, such as divorce of a parent, as compared to children of different-sex married couples.

In this study, I also explore how children's family structure and access to household-based resources are associated with their progress through school. Similar to Rosenfeld (2010) and Potter (2012), I expect to find minimal differences between children of same-sex parents and those of different-sex parents. Where there are differences, I anticipate that differential access to household-based resources will help explain some of the discrepancy. Moreover, I suspect there will be an interactive effect between family structure and race-ethnicity and between family structure and education, such that the effect of family structure on children's educational well-being varies by race-ethnicity, and that the effect of parents' education varies across family structures.

The present study builds upon Rosenfeld's examination of children's educational well-being. Additionally, this research will help to resolve the disagreement between Regnerus' findings and much previous research on same-sex couples with children. Finally, this study will contribute to the literature by helping us better understand which factors play a role in creating differences between children with same-sex parents and those with different-sex parents.

## Data and Methods

To address some of the challenges presented by research on same-sex parents, I use data from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS), a nationally representative survey of households and individuals. The ACS is well suited for the current study because it is one of the few nationally representative surveys that provide data on same-sex couples and their children. Moreover, it provides the largest sample sizes available of same-sex couples, which is important for studying a population that is relatively rare.

For the current study, I restrict the sample to the 2008-2010 three-year estimates. (Please note: The 2008-2012 five-year estimates are scheduled to be available in December 2013. If possible, my plan is to estimate analyses with the five-year estimates for presenting at PAA.) Although ACS data are available before 2008, several important variables related to family history and family change were introduced to the survey in 2008. Three-year estimates allow for larger sample sizes and better examination of small subgroups, such as same-sex couples. The total sample size for the three years combined is over nine million individuals. To account for the complex sampling design of the ACS, I apply sampling weights and survey estimation techniques for all descriptive statistics and analyses, except where otherwise noted.

### *Measures*

*Family Structure: Couple-Headed Households*

The key variable of interest is family structure, namely same-sex couples and different-sex couples with children. To determine the existence of couples within a household, I use a variable that identifies the relationship of each individual to the household head. (Table 1 provides details on variables to be used in this study.) I created a measure of couples using the variable that identifies the relationship of each individual to the household head along with the sex of each person in the couple. Different-sex married couples are those respondents who

indicate a "husband/wife" relationship and where each partner is a different sex. Different-sex cohabiting/unmarried couples are those who indicate an "unmarried partner" relationship and where each partner is a different sex. Same-sex cohabiting/unmarried are those who indicate an "unmarried partner" relationship and where each partner is the same sex. These same-sex "unmarried partner" couples include same-sex couples who indicated a "husband/wife" relationship, but were recoded to "unmarried partner" by the Census Bureau. See Table 2 for the distribution of the three types of couples to be used in this analysis. This descriptive table includes only those respondents who reside in a couple-headed household with children under 18 years. The total sample size of couples is 836,232 couples (or 1,672,464 individuals) living in couple-headed households with children.

It is important to note here some limitations in the ways couples are measured in the ACS. First, the ACS provides information about same-sex *couples* rather than gay and lesbian *individuals*. The ACS does not ask respondents about their sexual orientation, so researchers are unable to identify gay or lesbian individuals who are raising children as single parents. As noted above, we are able to identify same-sex couples as those who report living with a spouse or unmarried partner of the same sex. However, with these data, we do not have to make assumptions about respondents' sexual orientation based on their reported sexual behaviors (as in Regnerus 2012).

*A note on the coding of same-sex couples*

Furthermore, due to the Census Bureau's policy of changing same-sex couples with a "husband/wife" designation to "unmarried partner" without publicly-available information on whose partner status was recoded, it is not possible to accurately distinguish between same-sex unmarried couples and same-sex married couples (O'Connell and Gooding 2007). Notably, this recoding rule is an improvement compared to previous years: Before 1990, the Census Bureau

changed same-sex couples with a "husband/wife" designation to different-sex married couples, making the assumption that respondents must have miscoded their own sex or their spouses' sex because same-sex marriage was not legal anywhere in the U.S. at the time.

The Census Bureau's recoding standard, however, presents the problem that some different-sex married couples that miscoded the sex of one of the spouses, although rare, are now coded as unmarried same-sex couples. Moreover, because same-sex couples represent such a small proportion of couples overall, measurement error within this subpopulation has the potential to skew the results tremendously. As such, Gates and Steinberger (2010) developed a strategy for avoiding potential measurement error as much as possible. While most ACS respondents completed the survey through a mail-in form, more than one third of ACS respondents (those who did not return the survey after a certain length of time) completed the survey through telephone or personal interviews. For the latter group, if respondents identify as a same-sex couple and also indicate a "husband/wife" in the question on relationship to householder, the computer-assisted survey asks them to verify their sex and the sex of their spouse. Nevertheless, even if they confirm they are same-sex spouses, the Census Bureau changes the partner's relationship to "unmarried partner." Therefore, Gates and Steinberger strongly advise researchers to exclude those same-sex couples that identified as spouses and were not in the group whose sex was verified.

In addition to the question on the relationship to householder, there is a second location in the questionnaire where respondents indicate their marital status. Some same-sex couples identified first as "unmarried partners" in the relationship question, but later reported one or both partners' marital status as "married." This too was recoded by the Census Bureau. For this recode, an allocation flag indicates the respondent's marital status was changed in some way. However, we cannot be sure about the reason for the recoded marital status (e.g., the question

could have been left blank), so this does not necessarily indicate a married same-sex couple. This also suggests that the marital status variable will be unreliable for determining whether respondents are divorced, separated, widowed or never married, because we do not know what the original response was before it was recoded. For reference, I have included here a replication of Gates and Steinberger's (2010: 11) Figure 1, which illustrates these issues. Quadrant 2 represents the group most at risk of measurement error. Despite these issues with measuring same-sex couples in the ACS, Gates and Steinberger argue that "the ACS data released since 2005 can provide the most accurate sample of same-sex couples" (p. 22).

**Figure 1. Interpretation of sub-groups of same-sex couples by response mode and marital status allocation (replicated from Gates and Steinberger 2010, p. 11).**

| | | Marital status allocation | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Not allocated | Allocated |
| Response mode | Mail-in | (1) Same-sex couples who used the "unmarried partner" designation | (2) A combination of same-sex spousal couples who use the "husband/wife" designation and different-sex married couples who miscoded the sex of one spouse |
| | CATI/CAPI (computer-assisted telephone/ personal interview) | (3) Same-sex couples who used the "unmarried partner" designation | (4) Same-sex couples who used the "husband/wife" designation |

To better understand the effects of these recodes, see Table 3 for a breakdown of children across households, including internal Census Bureau data on same-sex spousal couples before the data were recoded. Using internal Census Bureau ACS data (before same-sex spouses were recoded to unmarried partners), Lofquist (2012) reports on the likelihood, among same-sex couples, of reporting their marital status as married (as compared to separated, widowed, divorced or never married). Not surprisingly, same-sex couples that live in states where same-sex marriage is legal are more likely to report they are "married," compared to those in states where same-sex marriage is not legal. Among all same-sex couples, Asian and Hispanic (of any race) were more likely to report a "married" status, compared to white same-sex couples.

Furthermore, young same-sex couples (ages 15-24 and 25-34) were less likely to report being married, compared to those 45 to 54 years old. Among those same-sex couples who reported a spousal relationship (rather than an unmarried partner relationship), black same-sex couples were much less likely to report being married. Among those same-sex couples who identified as "unmarried partners," Asian couples were *more* likely to report being married, while other race respondents were much *less* likely to report being married, as compared to white same-sex couples.

While it is certainly problematic to have to exclude potentially "true" same-sex couples, the alternative is that, if different-sex married couples who miscoded a spouse's sex become recoded as same-sex unmarried couples, this will likely skew the picture in a much more detrimental way. Indeed, because I am investigating *differences* between same-sex couples with children and different-sex couples with children, and asking about the possible effect of differences in sex composition among parents, it is important to ensure that, to the extent possible, I am actually looking at same-sex couples and different-sex couples. Therefore, I have drawn on Gates and Steinberger (2010) to clean and adjust the data to eliminate as much potential measurement error as possible. Using these guidelines, I find that 1,235 same-sex couples with children—or 35.2% of the same-sex couples with children in the sample—fall into the group with potential measurement error. As Rosenfeld (2010: 757) noted about the Census data, which suffered from the same recoding issues as the ACS, "The census data are far from ideal for the subject under study here, but better data are nowhere on the horizon."

*Children in Couple-Headed Households*

In this study, I limit the sample of children to those under 18 years of age and living in a couple-headed household. Using the variable for individuals' relationship to household head, I identify biological children, adopted children, stepchildren, grandchildren, related children,

foster children, and unrelated children. See Table 2 for the distribution of child types. These data show that 1,596,501 children are living in couple-headed households with children. For the purposes of the current paper, I focus on biological, adopted and stepchildren.

Table 4a shows the percent distribution of child type by couple type, where the units of analysis are children. Not surprisingly, same-sex cohabiting couples are least likely to be raising biological children, as compared to different-sex couples, and are most likely to be raising adopted children, grandchildren, foster children, and other related children. If I combine stepchildren with biological children living in same-sex couple households (under the presumption that biological children of one partner of a same-sex couple are likely stepchildren to the other partner), about 70% of children living in same-sex couple households are stepchildren.

However, another limitation of the ACS relates to the diversity of family types with children we are able to identify. The available measures allow me to determine each child's relationship to the household head, but *not* the relationship of the child to the householder's spouse or unmarried partner. As a result, for example, I can only identify stepfamilies if the householder indicates that a child in the household is his/her stepchild. Therefore, the ACS misses stepfamilies in which the householder is the biological parent of a child but the parent's partner is a stepparent to that child. While ACS data show that 4.3% of all children are reported as stepchildren, others have estimated that 7.2% of children were living with a married or cohabiting stepparent in 2004 (Kreider 2008).

Similarly, children who are reported as biological children of the householder are not necessarily biological children of the householder's partner, but these details are not available. These children could presumably be stepchildren or adopted children in relation to the other partner. This is especially true for same-sex couples, many of which have children from earlier

heterosexual relationships before they began same-sex partnerships (Gates 2012a). In this case, the biological children of the householder in a same-sex couple may be stepchildren or adopted children of the partner.

For example, in a household where the householder, as identified in ACS, is unrelated to his or her partner's biological child, it is not clear how the unrelated partner will refer to the child, particularly if the couple is not married. Cohabiting partners are typically less invested in their partners' children than their own biological children. Marsiglio (2004) has found that even stepfathers do not always claim their partners' children as their own. Some may refer to their partner's child as a stepchild (despite not being married) or may identify the child as an "unrelated" child. This can be influenced by the complex relationships with the child's biological father (in this example) or custody issues between the biological parents.

For children who are reported to be the adopted child of the household head, we cannot determine if the adoptive relationship is a second-parent adoption (i.e., biologically related to the householder's partner) or if the couple adopted the child together. Moreover, it is important to consider that the experience of adoption differs for same-sex couples as compared to different-sex couples. Among same-sex couples, adoption is a primary way of having children within the relationship, while among different-sex couples, adoption is typically a last resort option after being unable to conceive biological children (Bartholet 1993; Parry 2005). This is demonstrated by the share of same-sex couples compared to different-sex couples that are raising adopted children. ACS data from 2009 suggest that, among same-sex, unmarried-partner couples with children, 19% were raising adopted children (Gates 2012b). In comparison, only 2.3% of all children living in couple-headed households are adopted (see Table 2).

Moreover, I created measures of composition of children by household, where the unit of analysis is a couple. I created categories for types of couple households containing biological

children only, adopted children only, stepchildren only, grandchildren only, other related children only, foster children only, other nonrelated children only, a mix of own children (biological, adopted and step), a mix of own and not own children, and a mix of not own children. Table 4b shows the percent distribution of these child type compositions by couple type. Similar to the relationships seen in Table 4a, same-sex couples are least likely to be raising only biological children, as compared to different-sex couples, and are most likely to be raising only stepchildren, only grandchildren, only other related children, only foster children, or a mix of not own children.

*Household-Based Resources*

The ACS does not directly measure any aspects of children's well-being, such as children's depressive symptoms or behavioral outcomes, which are measured in other surveys. However, the ACS does provide numerous measures of what I refer to as "household-based resources," which I conceptualize broadly as providing access to various forms of capital—i.e., social, cultural, economic and human capital—and the benefits it confers (Bourdieu 1977). For example, parents' education is a resource for children, not only because higher levels of education allow for parents to earn a higher income, but also because well-educated parents are better able to help facilitate their children's success in school (Lareau 2003). Additionally, these household-based resources may act as sources of selectivity, such that heterogeneity within family types might account for children's well-being more so than the sexual orientation of parents.

I use the variables below as measures of household-based resources (see Table 1 for further detail on these variables). (Please note that I use "partners" here to indicate the householder and his/her partner.)

- Education of each partner: categorized as less than high school diploma (including those with GED, see Cameron and Heckman 1993), high school diploma, some college, college

degree or more. Alternatively, I will consider using the more-educated partner's education level.
- Household income
- Income-to-poverty ratio based on household income and number of individuals in the household
- Employment status of partners: whether householder and partner have been employed full-time/full-year in the past 12 months
- Housing tenure: whether housing unit is owned or rented
- Health insurance coverage: whether or not child has health insurance
- Citizenship status: whether householder or child is a U.S. citizen
- Nativity: whether householder or child was born in the U.S.
- English language ability: how well children speak English (very well/well vs. not well/not at all)
- Residential movement:
    - One, both, or neither partner changed residences in last 12 months
    - Child changed residences in last 12 months
- Family stability (which is shown to be associated with children's well-being [Fomby and Cherlin 2007]):
    - Householder divorced in past 12 months
    - Householder married in past 12 months
    - Householder was widowed in past 12 months
    - Householder has had any prior marriages
- Householder had co-resident child as a teenager—measured for all children in the household, even if they are not the child born to a teenage parent. (Research finds that maternal age is associated with child well-being, such that children born to teenage mothers for example fare worse than those born to older mothers [Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, Morgan 1987; Levine, Pollack and Comfort 2001]. However, past research has focused on heterosexual mothers.) Because the ACS does not include a variable for interview date beyond the year, these measures are approximate.

(See Table [X] (pp. 27-30) below for mean values of these variables.)

*Children's School Progress*

Although the ACS does not directly measure children's well-being, it is possible to measure children's progress through school. As noted above, Rosenfeld (2010) created a measure of age-grade appropriateness among children to investigate if children were making normal progress through school or, instead, if they had been held back a grade or more. As Rosenfeld explains, children's progress through school measures an aspect of child well-being that is also associated with parents' parenting styles: "Grade retention is an important childhood

outcome because retention in the primary grades is a strong indicator of a lack of childhood readiness … Grade retention is closely associated with more serious problems later in the life course" (p. 758). Progress through school could potentially differ for children living with same-sex unmarried parents compared to those living with married parents because of the benefits and stability that come with marriage. Unmarried couple relationships are at greater risk of disruption, which can certainly impact children's home lives and affect their success in school. Furthermore, as discussed above, because many children living with same-sex couples were born into a parent's prior heterosexual relationship, the majority of children being raised by same-sex couples have experienced the divorce or separation of their parents.

Modeled on Rosenfeld's (2010) study, I use child's age and current grade to create a proxy measure of grade retention based on age-grade appropriateness. Because the ACS does not include a variable for interview date beyond the year, these measures are approximate. I measure grade retention as a binary outcome, with "1" indicating child is making normal progress through school and "0" indicating the child has likely been retained at some point. The age-grade cut-offs I use to measure likely grade retention are as follows: Kindergarten, 7 years and older not making normal progress; grade 1, 8 years; grade 2, 9 years; grade 3, 10 years; grade 4, 11 years; grade 5, 12 years; grade 6, 13 years; grade 7, 14 years; grade 8, 15 years; grade 9, 16 years; grade 10, 17 years. Because I have restricted the sample to children under 18 years of age, I am able to measure grade-retention only up to the tenth grade. I also consider a child to have been retained or not making normal progress if s/he has not been enrolled in school in the past three months, but has not completed the grade that would indicate normal progress (as noted above).

***Methods***

Due to the limitations discussed above in measuring the type of children in households, I would argue that comparing stepchildren across family types may be the least problematic comparison between same-sex and different-sex households. We know for sure that the household is a stepfamily in some sense, whether married or unmarried, if the household head reports a child as a stepchild. To explore differences between the three family structures of interest, I estimate weighted means of the multiple measures of household-based resources for children living with same-sex unmarried couples, different-sex unmarried partners, and different-sex married couples, focusing on (1) biological children, (2) adopted children, and (3) stepchildren. I also estimate weighted means for (4) presumed stepchildren, which includes reported stepchildren, all biological children in same-sex couple households (most of whom are presumed to be a stepchild to the householder's partner), as well as likely stepchildren in different-sex married couple households (if couple married two or more years after the birth of child, then child is likely living in a stepfamily). Certainly, this measure of presumed stepchildren is not perfect, but attempts to compensate for the fact that the data contain only the relationship between the householder/reference person and the child. Moreover, I am interested in the experiences of children living in (5) households in which only biological children reside, and (6) households in which there is at least one biological child along with other types of children. For the purposes of the current paper, I will not be examining the experiences of grandchildren, foster children, or other related or unrelated children. I then conduct a test of the difference of means across the household-based resource measures to determine whether any observed differences between means are statistically significant when comparing children (1) living with same-sex unmarried partners vs. those living with different-sex unmarried partners,

and (2) children living with same-sex unmarried partners vs. those living with different-sex married partners.

In the analysis of children's progress through school, I examine the school progress of (1) biological children, (2) adopted children, (3) stepchildren, (4) related children (grandchildren and other related children), (5) nonrelated children (foster children and other nonrelated children), and (6) presumed stepchildren (including stepchildren and biological children in same-sex couple households, along with stepchildren in different-sex couple households). I will estimate a model with child-type as a categorical independent variable including categories (1) through (5) above. A second model will use category (6) in place of category (3) to test for differences, if any, in outcomes when using different definitions of stepchildren. With the dependent variable measuring the binary outcome of whether the child is progressing through school at a normative pace, I will be able to compare the results of, for example, stepchildren living in (a) same-sex couple households vs. different-sex unmarried couple households, and (b) same-sex couple households vs. different-sex married couple households (using same-sex couple households as the omitted variable in each of the models). Moreover, I can compare the outcomes of, for instance, biological children and stepchildren of same-sex parents to see how child-type might lead to a different educational outcome. I will include the multiple measures of household-based resources as independent variables. I will include controls for race-ethnicity of child, child's sex, whether child has a disability, and state of residence. Finally, I will include interactions between couple-type and child-type to investigate whether the effect of being a stepchild on educational outcomes operates in the same way for children with different parent types.

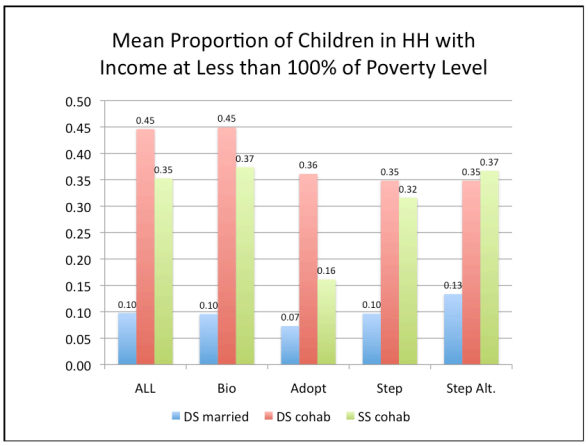
I examine whether the household-based resources predict children's progress through school in the same way for those living with same-sex parents as compared to different-sex parents. I introduce interactions between various variables and family structure to explore if, for

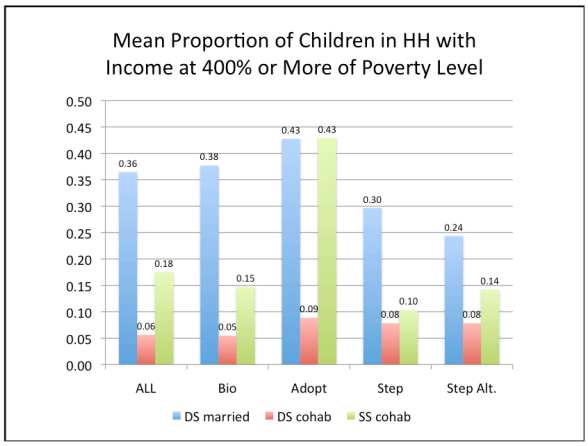
example, parents' education passes on benefits to children in the same way for children living with same-sex parents as it does for those living with different-sex parents. Overall, my goal is to explore whether family structure has an effect on children's educational progress independently of other factors, or rather, if access to various household-based resources can help explain why we might find differences between children living with same-sex parents and those living with different-sex parents that are not related to sexual orientation or the sex composition of parents.

**Preliminary Results and Discussion**

*Difference-of-Means Tests*

(See Table [X] below (pp. 27-30) for means and difference-of-means test.) Here I highlight some findings from the difference-of-means tests, beginning with the economic situations of children across the three types of couple-headed households. The figures below show the mean proportions of children living in couple-headed households with the lowest (less than 100% of poverty level) and highest (400% or more) income-to-poverty ratios. The first figure demonstrates that, across child types, children living with different-sex (DS) married parents are the least likely to be living below poverty level, as compared to DS cohabiting parents and same-sex (SS) cohabiting parents. For example, among biological children, 37% in SS couple households are living in households below the poverty level, as compared to just under 10% of those in DS married households and 45% of DS cohabiting households. There is no statistically significant difference between stepchildren in DS cohabiting and SS cohabiting households in terms of the proportion living in poverty, and this holds true for reported stepchildren, as well as for those who fall into the alternative stepchild category.

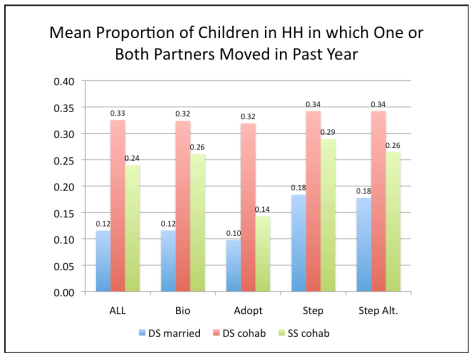


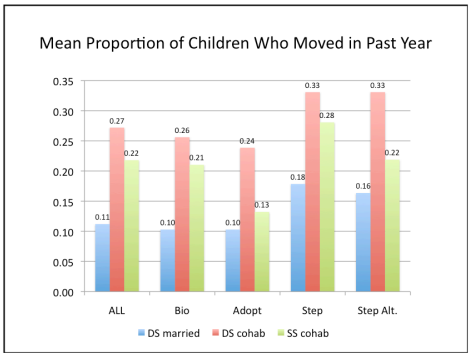




The second poverty figure shows a similar story. Children living in DS married households are by far the most likely to be economically advantaged, with household incomes at 400% or more of the poverty level. The one exception is among adopted children: adopted children in SS parent households are just as likely to be living at 400% or more of the poverty level as are adopted children in DS married households. This demonstrates that SS couple households who adopt tend to be financially stable and thus economically able to undertake the process of adoption. Moreover, this suggests that adopted children living in SS parent households are being provided with the stability that comes with economic advantage—a fact that would certainly support the push for greater access to adoption among same-sex couples.

Next, I examine the experiences of children in terms of family stability. The first of the two figures below illustrates the proportion of children who live in households in which one or both partners changed residences in the past year. Across child types, DS cohabiting households are the least stable in terms of couples' residential mobility. This is not surprising as DS cohabiting relationships are known to be less stable than DS married relationships on the whole. Moreover, we can see that children living in SS couple-headed households tend to experience greater instability in terms of couples' residential movement, as compared to those in DS married households. However, children with SS parents experience considerably less movement of

parents than those with DS cohabiting parents. Interestingly, adopted children in SS partner households are no more likely than those in DS married households to have experienced one or both partners changing residences.

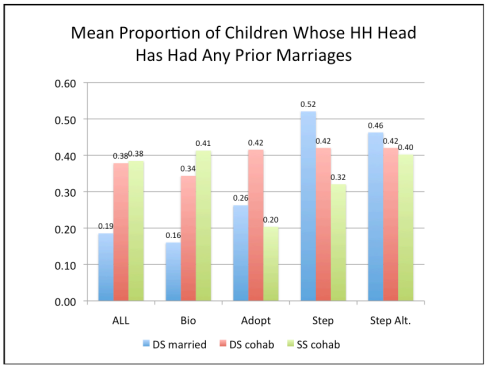



The second of the two figures above shows the proportion of children themselves who have changed residences in the past year. This figure illustrates a similar pattern to the partners' residential movement. Children living in DS married households tend to be the least likely to have moved in the past year, although adopted children in SS households are no more likely to have moved than those in DS married households. Across child types, children in DS cohabiting households were more likely to have moved in the past year than those in SS households, again suggesting that children with SS parents benefit from greater stability as compared to those in DS cohabiting households.

Furthermore, we can explore family instability by examining the proportion of children living in households in which the householder/reference person has had any prior marriages, as shown in the figure below. Among all children, those living in SS cohabiting households are equally likely as those in DS cohabiting households to live with a householder who has had at least one prior marriage, both around 38% of children, while children in DS married households are half as likely (19%). However, the pattern varies across child types. For example, among biological children, those in SS couple households were most likely to live with a householder

who has had any prior marriages (41%), as compared to 34% of those in DS cohabiting households and 16% of those in DS married households. Interestingly, among adopted children, those living in SS parent households were least likely to live with a householder who has had any prior marriages (20%), as compared to 42% of those in DS cohabiting households and 26% of those in DS married households.




On the whole, these figures suggest that children living in DS married households tend to be more economically advantaged and experience fewer family transitions as compared to those in SS cohabiting households. In fact, when considering family transitions, children with SS parents tend to have experiences that are more similar to children living in DS cohabiting households. This demonstrates the need to account for DS parents' marital status when comparing DS parents to SS parents. Moreover, the variations across child types confirm that family structure matters when considering children's family experiences. Not surprisingly, stepchildren tend to live in households that are more disadvantaged and less stable than biological children. The patterns found among adopted children living in SS parent households (i.e., appear to be more advantaged than adopted children in other households) suggests the need to further explore the experiences of adoption among children. Nevertheless, this provides powerful support for advocates seeking greater access to adoption for same-sex couples.

*Multivariate Analyses*

Preliminary analyses of multivariate regression suggest that there are baseline differences between children in SS parent households and DS married households. When estimating logistic regression models for factors predicting grade-retention among children, a basic model using only couple type as the independent variable shows that children in DS married households are less likely to have been retained in school compared to those in SS parent households. Children in SS households were similarly likely to have been retained as those in DS cohabiting households. However, once I include multiple predictor variables, including householder's education, child's race and age, and family transition measures, the differences among the couple types disappears. I estimated predicted probabilities that children have been retained based on the logistic regression model that shows the best fit with the data. Further, I conducted pair-wise comparisons between the predicted probabilities by child type and couple type. I find that there are no significant differences between children in SS parent households and those in DS married or DS cohabiting households, once accounting for multiple household-based resources and child characteristics (race, age, sex, disability). This suggests that whatever differences are found between children in SS households compared to DS households are likely attributable to differences in children's and parents' characteristics, access to household-based resources, and experiences of family transitions.

[Please note: In the final paper, I will include a table presenting the preferred grade-retention model, as well as figures of predicted probabilities based on this preferred model. If possible, all analysis will be based on the 2008-2012 five-year data estimates.]

**Conclusion**

In this study, I build upon past research that looks at the well-being of children in same-sex couple households compared to different-sex couple households. Using nationally representative data with large sample sizes, I address some of the limitations in previous studies on this issue. Moreover, I compare children raised by same-sex parents to children raised by different-sex parents, while also taking into account children's past family transitions, to the extent possible, through measures of family stability and family change.

Through this study, I hope to shed light on the discrepancy in the literature between Regnerus' (2012) generally negative findings on the well-being of children raised by same-sex parents as compared to the consistently positive findings of dozens of previous studies. I improve upon Regnerus' study by using a measure of same-sex parents that includes only same-sex couples raising children rather than any parent who has ever had a same-sex relationship. While this does not allow for the examination of gay and lesbian single parents in the current study, it attends to the issue of conflating sexual behavior and sexual orientation that many (Gates et al. 2012) have identified as a major flaw in Regnerus' study.

Finally, this study builds upon Rosenfeld (2010) and Potter (2012), both of which found no differences in educational progress for children living with same-sex parents compared to those living with different-sex parents. The current study provides a broader look at grade retention as compared to Rosenfeld's in that I have access to measures of each school grade, whereas Rosenfeld had measures only for grades 1-4 and 5-8. Moreover, the ACS provides measures of family stability and family change (changes in the family in the past year) that were not available to Rosenfeld through the 2000 Census. All in all, I hope to contribute to the current body of research by providing a better understanding of how children's experiences living with same-sex parents as compared to different-sex parents.

**Table [X]. Weighted Means of Various Household-Based Resources for Children under 18 years Living in Couple-Headed Households, with Tests for Statistically Significant Difference of Means. ACS 2008-2010, 3-year estimates.**

| Household Resource<br>Couple type | All Children | Child Types | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Biological | Adopted | Stepchild | Stepchild alternative* |
| **Child Age** | | | | | |
| DS married | 8.535 [ab] | 8.468 [b] | 9.500 [a] | 11.947 [ab] | 11.622 [ab] |
| DS cohab | 7.094 | 6.609 | 8.051 | 9.502 | 9.502 |
| SS cohab | 8.235 | 8.271 | 7.591 | 10.419 | 8.521 |
| **Race-Ethnicity** | | | | | |
| White, non-Hispanic | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.618 [ab] | 0.633 [ab] | 0.538 [b] | 0.649 [a] | 0.545 [b] |
| DS cohab | 0.444 | 0.427 | 0.397 | 0.454 | 0.454 |
| SS cohab | 0.517 | 0.520 | 0.500 | 0.512 | 0.519 |
| Hispanic | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.210 [b] | 0.205 [b] | 0.181 [b] | 0.180 | 0.250 [b] |
| DS cohab | 0.333 | 0.350 | 0.340 | 0.312 | 0.312 |
| SS cohab | 0.238 | 0.239 | 0.220 | 0.255 | 0.241 |
| Black, non-Hispanic | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.074 [a] | 0.066 [a] | 0.107 [b] | 0.110 [a] | 0.134 [a] |
| DS cohab | 0.143 | 0.143 | 0.184 | 0.162 | 0.162 |
| SS cohab | 0.155 | 0.160 | 0.128 | 0.200 | 0.165 |
| Asian, non-Hispanic | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.056 [ab] | 0.057 [a] | 0.109 [ab] | 0.019 [a] | 0.025 [a] |
| DS cohab | 0.016 | 0.016 | 0.014 | 0.013 | 0.013 |
| SS cohab | 0.024 | 0.018 | 0.064 | 0.006 | 0.017 |
| Other, non-Hispanic | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.042 [a] | 0.039 [a] | 0.065 | 0.042 [b] | 0.046 |
| DS cohab | 0.063 | 0.064 | 0.065 | 0.058 | 0.058 |
| SS cohab | 0.067 | 0.062 | 0.088 | 0.027 | 0.058 |
| **Householder education** | | | | | |
| Less than HS | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.157 [ab] | 0.145 [ab] | 0.113 [ab] | 0.151 | 0.211 [b] |
| DS cohab | 0.313 | 0.322 | 0.280 | 0.280 | 0.280 |
| SS cohab | 0.187 | 0.205 | 0.055 | 0.234 | 0.208 |
| HS diploma | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.186 [b] | 0.178 [ab] | 0.163 [ab] | 0.249 [b] | 0.243 [ab] |
| DS cohab | 0.269 | 0.263 | 0.256 | 0.280 | 0.280 |
| SS cohab | 0.199 | 0.220 | 0.059 | 0.183 | 0.216 |
| Some college | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.302 | 0.300 | 0.305 [ab] | 0.378 | 0.364 [a] |
| DS cohab | 0.327 | 0.328 | 0.339 | 0.335 | 0.335 |
| SS cohab | 0.320 | 0.325 | 0.215 | 0.336 | 0.327 |
| College or more | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.356 [ab] | 0.377 [ab] | 0.419 [ab] | 0.221 [b] | 0.182 [ab] |
| DS cohab | 0.090 | 0.086 | 0.125 | 0.105 | 0.105 |
| SS cohab | 0.294 | 0.250 | 0.671 | 0.247 | 0.249 |

| Household Resource<br>Couple type | All Children | Child Types<br>Biological | Adopted | Stepchild | Stepchild alternative* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Household Income** | | | | | |
| DS married | 97159.4 [ab] | 98354.4 [ab] | 107828 [ab] | 84572.7 [ab] | 76163.8 [b] |
| DS cohab | 53888.2 | 51036 | 59652.3 | 59601.3 | 59601.3 |
| SS cohab | 84696.2 | 77198.7 | 141032 | 70823.6 | 76458.1 |
| **Income-to-poverty ratio** | | | | | |
| Less than 100% | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.098 [ab] | 0.096 [ab] | 0.073 [ab] | 0.096 [a] | 0.134 [a] |
| DS cohab | 0.446 | 0.449 | 0.361 | 0.348 | 0.348 |
| SS cohab | 0.353 | 0.374 | 0.161 | 0.316 | 0.367 |
| 100-199% | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.190 [b] | 0.185 [ab] | 0.162 [b] | 0.211 | 0.246 [b] |
| DS cohab | 0.297 | 0.296 | 0.322 | 0.331 | 0.331 |
| SS cohab | 0.216 | 0.233 | 0.136 | 0.274 | 0.238 |
| 200-399% | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.348 [ab] | 0.343 [ab] | 0.337 | 0.397 | 0.377 [a] |
| DS cohab | 0.201 | 0.200 | 0.228 | 0.243 | 0.243 |
| SS cohab | 0.256 | 0.246 | 0.274 | 0.307 | 0.253 |
| 400% or more | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.364 [ab] | 0.377 [ab] | 0.427 [b] | 0.296 [a] | 0.244 [ab] |
| DS cohab | 0.056 | 0.055 | 0.089 | 0.078 | 0.078 |
| SS cohab | 0.175 | 0.147 | 0.429 | 0.103 | 0.142 |
| **HH Employed FTFY** | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.650 [ab] | 0.659 [a] | 0.653 | 0.727 | 0.637 [ab] |
| DS cohab | 0.532 | 0.510 | 0.592 | 0.621 | 0.621 |
| SS cohab | 0.573 | 0.551 | 0.675 | 0.668 | 0.565 |
| **Own/Rent Housing Unit** | | | | | |
| Own home | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.760 [ab] | 0.759 [ab] | 0.843 [b] | 0.690 [ab] | 0.629 [ab] |
| DS cohab | 0.374 | 0.346 | 0.388 | 0.413 | 0.413 |
| SS cohab | 0.594 | 0.545 | 0.816 | 0.521 | 0.542 |
| Rent home or no payment | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.240 [ab] | 0.241 [ab] | 0.157 [b] | 0.310 [ab] | 0.371 [ab] |
| DS cohab | 0.626 | 0.654 | 0.612 | 0.587 | 0.587 |
| SS cohab | 0.406 | 0.455 | 0.184 | 0.479 | 0.458 |
| **Child Has Health Insurance** | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.922 [a] | 0.924 [a] | 0.947 [ab] | 0.918 | 0.896 [a] |
| DS cohab | 0.882 | 0.888 | 0.864 | 0.855 | 0.855 |
| SS cohab | 0.890 | 0.877 | 0.975 | 0.907 | 0.880 |
| **HH Is U.S. Citizen** | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.878 [ab] | 0.874 [b] | 0.946 [ab] | 0.943 [b] | 0.886 [b] |
| DS cohab | 0.823 | 0.809 | 0.812 | 0.855 | 0.855 |
| SS cohab | 0.914 | 0.888 | 0.979 | 0.973 | 0.898 |
| **Child Is U.S. Citizen** | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.968 | 0.969 | 0.959 [a] | 0.958 [ab] | 0.958 [ab] |
| DS cohab | 0.977 | 0.980 | 0.955 | 0.948 | 0.948 |
| SS cohab | 0.975 | 0.974 | 0.977 | 0.997 | 0.977 |

| Household Resource<br>Couple type | All Children | Child Types<br>Biological | Adopted | Stepchild | Stepchild alternative* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **HH Is Native-Born** | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.778 [ab] | 0.772 [ab] | 0.888 [ab] | 0.898 [ab] | 0.815 |
| DS cohab | 0.782 | 0.767 | 0.771 | 0.817 | 0.817 |
| SS cohab | 0.856 | 0.812 | 0.950 | 0.970 | 0.830 |
| **Child Is Native-Born** | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.958 [b] | 0.963 | 0.820 [b] | 0.952 [ab] | 0.950 [ab] |
| DS cohab | 0.975 | 0.979 | 0.938 | 0.945 | 0.945 |
| SS cohab | 0.956 | 0.970 | 0.853 | 0.996 | 0.973 |
| **Child's English Proficiency** | | | | | |
| Speaks only English | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.778 [ab] | 0.771 [b] | 0.875 [b] | 0.865 [b] | 0.791 [ab] |
| DS cohab | 0.764 | 0.744 | 0.751 | 0.764 | 0.764 |
| SS cohab | 0.838 | 0.805 | 0.903 | 0.897 | 0.818 |
| Speaks well or very well | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.205 [ab] | 0.213 [b] | 0.113 [b] | 0.125 [b] | 0.196 [ab] |
| DS cohab | 0.215 | 0.233 | 0.231 | 0.216 | 0.216 |
| SS cohab | 0.146 | 0.180 | 0.092 | 0.101 | 0.169 |
| Speaks not well or not at all | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.016 | 0.016 | 0.011 | 0.011 [ab] | 0.014 |
| DS cohab | 0.021 | 0.023 | 0.018 | 0.019 | 0.019 |
| SS cohab | 0.016 | 0.015 | 0.005 | 0.002 | 0.013 |
| **Child Has Disability** | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.031 [ab] | 0.027 [a] | 0.085 | 0.057 | 0.053 |
| DS cohab | 0.044 | 0.040 | 0.077 | 0.055 | 0.055 |
| SS cohab | 0.066 | 0.052 | 0.116 | 0.078 | 0.055 |
| **Couple's Residential Movement (past year)** | | | | | |
| Neither partner moved | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.884 [ab] | 0.884 [ab] | 0.902 [b] | 0.817 [a] | 0.822 [ab] |
| DS cohab | 0.675 | 0.676 | 0.681 | 0.658 | 0.658 |
| SS cohab | 0.760 | 0.739 | 0.857 | 0.711 | 0.736 |
| Only HH moved | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.006 [a] | 0.005 [a] | 0.006 | 0.011 | 0.009 [a] |
| DS cohab | 0.017 | 0.016 | 0.020 | 0.018 | 0.018 |
| SS cohab | 0.021 | 0.025 | 0.015 | 0.009 | 0.023 |
| Only partner moved | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.006 [ab] | 0.005 [a] | 0.006 [b] | 0.021 | 0.019 [a] |
| DS cohab | 0.055 | 0.049 | 0.073 | 0.049 | 0.049 |
| SS cohab | 0.039 | 0.043 | 0.018 | 0.029 | 0.041 |
| Both partners moved | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.104 [ab] | 0.105 [ab] | 0.086 [b] | 0.151 | 0.150 [ab] |
| DS cohab | 0.253 | 0.259 | 0.226 | 0.275 | 0.275 |
| SS cohab | 0.180 | 0.193 | 0.110 | 0.251 | 0.200 |
| **Child Moved in Past Year** | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.112 [ab] | 0.103 [ab] | 0.103 [b] | 0.178 [a] | 0.163 [ab] |
| DS cohab | 0.272 | 0.256 | 0.239 | 0.331 | 0.331 |
| SS cohab | 0.218 | 0.210 | 0.132 | 0.281 | 0.219 |

| Household Resource<br>Couple type | All Children | Child Types<br>Biological | Adopted | Stepchild | Stepchild alternative* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **HH Marriage Ended in Past Year** | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.001 [ab] | 0.001 [a] | 0.001 [a] | 0.010 [b] | 0.009 [ab] |
| DS cohab | 0.036 | 0.034 | 0.040 | 0.041 | 0.041 |
| SS cohab | 0.027 | 0.032 | 0.024 | 0.012 | 0.030 |
| **HH Married in Past Year** | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.0254 [ab] | 0.0215 [a] | 0.0184 | 0.1292 [a] | 0.1304 [a] |
| DS cohab (omitted here) | | | | | |
| SS cohab | 0.0050 | 0.0043 | 0.0083 | 0.0000 | 0.0038 |
| **HH Any Prior Marriages** | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.186 [a] | 0.161 [ab] | 0.263 [ab] | 0.521 [a] | 0.463 [a] |
| DS cohab | 0.378 | 0.344 | 0.415 | 0.420 | 0.420 |
| SS cohab | 0.385 | 0.413 | 0.204 | 0.321 | 0.402 |
| **HH Had Co-Resident Child as Teenager** | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.056 [ab] | 0.062 [ab] | 0.014 | 0.027 [ab] | 0.154 [b] |
| DS cohab | 0.181 | 0.223 | 0.053 | 0.050 | 0.050 |
| SS cohab | 0.107 | 0.166 | 0.023 | 0.013 | 0.148 |
| **Presence of Subfamily in Household** | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.063 [b] | 0.019 | 0.024 [ab] | 0.018 | 0.023 |
| DS cohab | 0.051 | 0.023 | 0.030 | 0.020 | 0.020 |
| SS cohab | 0.078 | 0.024 | 0.005 | 0.030 | 0.024 |
| **Child Retained in School** | | | | | |
| DS married | 0.044 [a] | 0.039 [a] | 0.073 | 0.068 | 0.067 [b] |
| DS cohab | 0.070 | 0.063 | 0.067 | 0.086 | 0.086 |
| SS cohab | 0.073 | 0.061 | 0.079 | 0.060 | 0.061 |
| **Total N** (unweighted) | | | | | |
| DS married | 1,470,472 | 1,274,634 | 36,847 | 58,308 | 187,681 |
| DS cohab | 8,696 | 91,638 | 1,344 | 8,696 | 8,696 |
| SS cohab | 4,033 | 2,266 | 589 | 304 | 2,570 |
| ALL | 1,594,314 | 1,368,538 | 38,780 | 67,308 | 198,947 |

*Note: All means are weighted; N values are unweighted.*

** - Stepchild alternative category includes identified stepchildren, all biological children with same-sex parents, and biological children who are likely living in stepfamilies with different-sex married parents*

[a] *- indicates statistically significant difference between means for SS cohab and DS married (at p < 0.05 level)*

[b] *- indicates statistically significant difference between means for SS cohab and DS cohab (at p < 0.05 level)*

## References


Allen, Katherine R., and David H. Demo. 1995. "The Families of Lesbians and Gay Men: A New Frontier in Family Research." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 57(1):111–127.

Asencio, Marysol. 2011. "'Locas,' Respect, and Masculinity." *Gender & Society* 25(3):335 –354.

Axinn, W. G, and A. Thornton. 1992. "The relationship between cohabitation and divorce: selectivity or causal influence?" *Demography* 29(3):357–374.

Badgett, M. V. Lee, and Jody L. Herman. 2011. "Patterns of Relationship Recognition by Same-Sex Couples in the United States."

Bartholet, Elizabeth. 1993. *Family Bonds: Adoption and the Politics of Parenting*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Biblarz, Timothy J, and Evren Savci. 2010. "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Families." Journal of Marriage and Family 72(3):480–497.

Biblarz, Timothy J., and Judith Stacey. 2010. "How Does the Gender of Parents Matter?" *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72(1):3–22.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction." in *Power and Ideology in Education*, edited by Jerome Karabel and A.H. Halsey. New York: Oxford University Press.

Brown, S. L. 2004. "Family structure and child well‐being: the significance of parental cohabitation." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66(2):351–367.

Brown, Susan L. 2010. "Marriage and Child Well-Being: Research and Policy Perspectives." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72(5):1059–1077.

Bumpass, L. L, J. A Sweet, and A. Cherlin. 1991. "The role of cohabitation in declining rates of marriage." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 913–927.

BUMPASS, LARRY, and HSIEN-HEN LU. 2000. "Trends in cohabitation and implications for children's family contexts in the United States." *Population Studies* 54(1):29–41.

Cameron, Stephen V., and James J. Heckman. 1993. "The Nonequivalence of High School Equivalents." Journal of Labor Economics 11(1):1–47.

Cantu, Lionel. 2009. *The Sexuality of Migration: Border Crossings and Mexican Immigrant Men*. edited by Nancy Naples and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz. NYU Press.

Cherlin, A. 1978. "Remarriage as an incomplete institution." *American journal of Sociology* 634–650.

Cherlin, Andrew J. 2004. "The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage." Journal of Marriage and Family 66(4):848–861.

Clarkberg, M., R. M Stolzenberg, and L. J Waite. 1995. "Attitudes, values, and entrance into cohabitational versus marital unions." *Social Forces* 74(2):609–632.

Edin, K., and M. Kefalas. 2005. *Promises I can keep: Why poor women put motherhood before marriage*. Univ of California Pr.

Eggebeen, D. J. 2012. "What can we learn from studies of children raised by gay or lesbian parents?" *Social Science Research* 41(4):775–778.

Fomby, Paula, and Andrew J. Cherlin. 2007. "Family Instability and Child Well-Being." *American Sociological Review* 72(2):181–204..

Furstenberg, F. F, J. Brooks-Gunn, and S. P Morgan. 1989. *Adolescent mothers in later life*. Cambridge Univ Pr.

Gates, G. J. and Steinberger, M. D. (2010 [2009]). "Same-sex unmarried partner couples in the American Community Survey: The role of misreporting, miscoding, and misallocation," Paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the Population Association of America, Detroit, MI, April 20, 2009.

Gates, Gary J. 2012a. "Family Formation and Raising Children Among Same-sex Couples." National Council on Family Relations, 51(1).

_____ 2012b. "LGBT Identity: A Demographer's Perspective." Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review 45:693–714.

Gates, Gary J. et al. 2012 (forthcoming). "Letter to the editors and advisory editors of Social Science Research." *Social Science Research*.

Gates, Gary, and Adam P. Romero. 2009. "Parenting by Gay Men and Lesbians: Beyond the Current Research." Pp. 227–244 in *Marriage and Family: Perspectives and Complexities*, edited by Elizabeth Peters and Claire M. Kamp Dush. Columbia University Press.

Goldberg, Abbie E. 2010. *Lesbian and gay parents and their children: research on the family life cycle*. 1st ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Herek, G. M. 2006. "Legal recognition of same-sex relationships in the United States: A social science perspective." *American Psychologist* 61(6):607.

Hofferth, Sandra L. 2005. "Secondary Data Analysis in Family Research." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67(4):891–907.

Johnson, S. M., and E. O'Connor. 2002. The gay baby boom: The psychology of gay parenthood. NYU Press.

Kreider, Rose M. 2008. "Living Arrangements of Children: 2004."

Lareau, A. 2003. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. Univ of California Pr.

Levine, Judith A., Harold Pollack, and Maureen E. Comfort. 2001. "Academic and Behavioral Outcomes Among the Children of Young Mothers." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63(2):355–369.

Lillard, Lee A., Michael J. Brien, and Linda J. Waite. 1995. "Premarital Cohabitation and Subsequent Marital Dissolution: A Matter of Self-Selection?"." *Demography* 32(3):437–457.

Lofquist, Daphne. 2012. "Same-sex Couples' Consistency in Reports of Marital Status."

Manning, Wendy D., and Susan Brown. 2006. "Children's Economic Well-Being in Married and Cohabiting Parent Families." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 68(2):345–362.

Marks, Loren. 2012. "Same-sex parenting and children's outcomes: A closer examination of the American psychological association's brief on lesbian and gay parenting." *Social Science Research* 41(4):735–751.

Marsiglio, William. 2004. "When Stepfathers Claim Stepchildren: A Conceptual Analysis." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66(1):22–39.

McLanahan, S., and G. D Sandefur. 1994. *Growing up with a single parent: What hurts, what helps*. Harvard Univ Pr.

Meezan, William, and Jonathan Rauch. 2005. "Gay Marriage, Same-Sex Parenting, and America's Children." *The Future of Children* 15(2):97–115.

Morrison, D. R, and A. Ritualo. 2000. "Routes to children's economic recovery after divorce: Are cohabitation and remarriage equivalent?" *American Sociological Review* 560–580.

Mosher, W.D., A. Chandra, and J. Jones. 2005. Sexual behavior and selected health measures: Men and women 15-44 years of age, United States, 2002. Advance data from *Vital and Health Statistics* 362, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Health Statistics.

Musick, Kelly, Paula England, Sarah Edgington, and Nicole Kangas. 2009. "Education Differences in Intended and Unintended Fertility." *Social Forces* 88:543-572.

Nock, Steven L. 2001. "Affidavit of Steven Nock. Halpern et al. v. Canada and MCCT v. Canada. Ontario Superior Court of Justice, Divisional Court. (See items 115 [p.39] and 141 [p.47])." (http://marriagelaw.cua.edu/Law/cases/Canada/ontario/halpern/aff_nock.pdf).

O'Connell, Martin and Gretchen Gooding. 2007. "Editing Unmarried Couples in Census Bureau Data." HHES Working Paper. Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division, U.S. Census Bureau. http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps07/twps07.html

Parry, Diana C. 2005. "Women's Experiences with Infertility: The Fluidity of Conceptualizations of 'Family'." *Qualitative Sociology* 28(3):275–291.

Parsons, Talcott, and Robert F. Bales. 1956. Family Socialization and Interaction Process. Routledge.

Parsons, Talcott. 1949. "The social structure of the family." Pp. 173–201 in The family: its function and destiny., edited by Anshen, Ruth Nanda. Oxford, England: Harper.

Patterson, Charlotte J. 1995. "Families of the baby boom: Parents' division of labor and children's adjustment." Developmental Psychology 31(1):115–123.

Phillips, Julie A., and Megan M. Sweeney. 2005. "Premarital Cohabitation and Marital Disruption among White, Black, and Mexican American Women." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67(2):296–314.

Popenoe, D. 1993. "American family decline, 1960-1990: A review and appraisal." Journal of Marriage and the Family 527–542.

Popenoe, David. 1996. Life Without Father: Compelling New Evidence That Fatherhood and Marriage Are Indispensable for the Good of Children and Society. New York: Martin Kessler Books.

Potter, Daniel. 2012. "Same-Sex Parent Families and Children's Academic Achievement." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 74(3):556–571.

Regnerus, Mark. 2012. "How different are the adult children of parents who have same-sex relationships? Findings from the New Family Structures Study." *Social Science Research* 41(4):752–770.

Rosenfeld, M. J. 2010. "Nontraditional families and childhood progress through school." *Demography* 47(3):755–775.

Seltzer, Judith A. 2000. "Families Formed Outside of Marriage." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62(4):1247–1268.

Smock, P. J, and W. D Manning. 1997. "Cohabiting partners' economic circumstances and marriage." *Demography* 34(3):331–341.

Smock, Pamela J., and Fiona Rose Greenland. 2010. "Diversity in Pathways to Parenthood: Patterns, Implications, and Emerging Research Directions." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72:576-593.

Stacey, Judith, and Timothy J Biblarz. 2001. "(How) Does the Sexual Orientation of Parents Matter?" *American Sociological Review* 66(2):159–183.

Sweeney, M. M. 2010. "Remarriage and stepfamilies: Strategic sites for family scholarship in the 21st century." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72(3):667–684.

Tasker, F. 2005. "Lesbian mothers, gay fathers, and their children: A review." Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics 26(3):224.

Valocchi, S. 1999. "The Class-Inflected Nature of Gay Identity." *Soc. Probs.* 46:207.

Weeks, Jeffrey, Brian Heaphy, and Catherine Donovan. 2001. *Same Sex Intimacies: Families of Choice and Other Life Experiments*. Routledge.