

Children of Homosexuals More Apt to Become Homosexual and Experience Parental Molestation: Surveys Over Three

Decades

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Abstract

In 1996 (Cameron & Cameron) we reported that adult children of homosexuals more frequently reported homosexual desires and sex with their parent(s). Schumm (2015) stated he would focus on “the multifaceted research of Sarantakos (1996) and any research that has corroborated his findings,” but neglected to include ours, though published contemporaneously with Sarantakos.

Keywords: child sexual abuse, children of homosexuals, sex with parents

In Schumm’s review of same-sex parenting studies, he noted (2015, p. 23) that the first author has been unjustly pilloried as ‘biased’ based upon our research into homosexuality. But

while focusing on “the multifaceted research of Sarantakos (1996) and any research that has corroborated his findings” (p. 1), and although he acknowledged our work in 2013 and again in 2015 (with Crawford), Schumm neglected to include our 1996 findings based on the first randomly-obtained sample of the adult children of homosexuals. Indeed, we were among the first to publish systematic evidence that homosexuals’ children more frequently reported (1) homosexual preferences and (2) sexual contact with their parents.¹

Sexual preferences: Four of six men, and three of 11 women with a homosexual parent (41%) claimed less than exclusively heterosexual desires, and six of the 17 (35%) self-identified as currently ‘homosexual or bisexual.’ Schumm reported 15 estimates of sexual preference/same-sex attraction by children of homosexual parents from nine different investigations (usually of volunteers) in his Table 2. The estimates ranged from 9 to 49% with a median of 29%. The four investigations of the adult children of homosexuals yielded eight estimates ranging from 13 to 53% with a median of 31.5%. Both medians are close to our 41 and 35%.

Sex with parent(s): Five (29%) of our 17 adults with a homosexual parent reported “physical sexual relations” with a parent, compared to 0.6% (28 of 4,623) of those who did not claim to have a homosexual parent. Schumm said “Sullins (2015c) in his re-analysis of Wainright et al. (2004) found a number of adverse results for children of same-sex parents, ...; perhaps the greatest surprise was that experiencing childhood sexual abuse from a parent was higher for children of married same-sex couples (38%) than for the other three groups (0 to 7%)” (p. 22).

There were apparently 17 lesbian parent families in Sullins (eight of which claimed to be ‘married’). Therefore, children in 3 (18%) of the 17 must have said ‘yes’ to “whether the responding adolescent had ever, *prior to the sixth grade*, been *forced* to give or receive a sexual

touch or to have intercourse by a parent *or caregiver*” compared to 4.8% of respondents without homosexual parents who said ‘yes.’

Had the question been framed a bit differently, the proportion admitting to sex with a parent might well have been greater. Children are usually aged 11-to-12 in 6th grade, and those who participate in sex with children often engage those older than the 10 years of age suggested by the question. Further, not all child sexual abuse (CSA) is “forced;” many, perhaps most, children who have sex with “a parent or caregiver” are not forced, but rather gently and cleverly seduced to make the child feel at least partially ‘responsible’ for the interactions. Potentially, a much larger fraction might have been found if the question had been ‘before age 18’ and/or phrased more neutrally as ‘had physical sex with,’ even as we asked in our survey.

On the other hand, “a parent or caregiver” could include many non-parents – babysitters, physicians, staff at a group home or retreat, etc. – not merely as Schumm reported “from a parent” or as Sullins reported “by parent.” Regnerus (2012) reported higher rates of ‘yes’ responses among those raised by homosexuals to the query has “a parent *or other adult* caregiver ever touched you in a sexual way, *forced* you to touch him or her in a sexual way, or *forced* you to have sexual relations?” (emphasis ours) Overall, 18.5% of those raised by homosexuals (23% of those with lesbian mothers, 6% of those with gay fathers) versus 2% of those with married biological parents said ‘yes.’ Our 29 versus 0.6% for “physical sexual relations” with parent(s) attempted to more precisely answer whether there was sex *with a parent* than the questions employed by either Sullins or Regnerus.

The question used by Regnerus also included “parent *or other adult caregiver*” with two “forced” clauses which may have colored answers to the first clause. Both of the questions in Sullins and Regnerus employed the notion common among CSA investigators that ‘sexual abuse’

has only occurred if the child did not want or like it or was ‘forced.’ The law assumes that an illegal act occurred if sexual interaction between an adult and a child happened. How the child feels or claims to feel or whether he/she took the initiative is irrelevant.²

Of course, our estimates of sexual preferences and sex with parents – being based on the reports of only 17 adults – have a large standard error. But at least we know sex with a parent was claimed rather than inferred from partly ambiguous questions. In our study (Cameron & Cameron, 1998) of 40 consecutive appeals cases involving homosexual versus heterosexual parental custody of children, one of the 32 lesbians was recorded as having engaged in child molestation, but of a neighbor’s, not her own, child; also, one of eight gay fathers was recorded as having molested his child. By comparison, none of the 152 heterosexual parents in the 40 appeals cases or in another consecutive set of 38 heterosexual versus heterosexual custody cases was recorded as having committed child molestation.

We are in the midst of analyzing approximately 3 years (2011-2014) of consecutive U.S. news stories about CSA published online by *Google News* that could be coded as either homosexual (adult and child the same sex) or heterosexual (adult and child opposite sex). About 22% of the relationships between perpetrator and victim(s) could not be determined, but of the rest, ~5% of the victims were molested by parent(s), ~2% by their mother’s boyfriend, ~2% by adult babysitters, ~2% by daycare/nursery workers, and ~5% by physicians, psychologists, and counselors. Still others were abused by youth group leaders or group home staff. So what fraction of CSA can be attributed to parents, *per se*, depends, in the Regnerus and Sullins investigations, on what the respondent considered a “caregiver” or “other adult caregivers.” In our experience, we find our 0.6% (1 of 154) of those raised by non-homosexual parents reporting sex with a parent

more plausible than the 1 of 50 (2%) suggested by Regnerus or the 1 of 20 (~5%) suggested by Sullins.

OUR DATASETS OFFER REASONABLE ESTIMATES

Weighted to match population parameters, Regnerus (2012) estimated that 1.7% of the nation's children have one or more homosexual parents. Our two random surveys of a combined 5,182 adults in 1983-84 yielded unweighted estimates of 1.6 and 1.7%. How did our estimates wind up being so close to that reported by Regnerus? Perhaps we were 'lucky,' and our high non-completion and rejection rates with 'neutral questions' yielded estimates which just happened to approximate estimates based on more complete and sophisticated sampling three decades later. But perhaps the congruence is evidence that not only were our findings generally 'true,' but that our technique of sampling was about as 'good' as those done with 'the theoretically best' techniques – as we argued a decade ago (Cameron & Cameron, 2003). In an era of ever increasing rejection rates across the globe (Sindreu, 2015), this constitutes a bit of evidence that high rejection rates may not always make as much of a difference as thought.

Our systematic sample of ~1,400 obituaries of homosexuals, from the exhaustive online archive of obituaries reported in the *Bay Area Reporter*, indicates that “whereas conventional marriage carries the expectation of children for a majority of men and women, only 6% of partnered gays and 27% of lesbians died as parents.” Sullins (2015) reported on the 1997-2013 NHIS national probability sample of 1,598,006 persons including 1,387 male couples, of which – in the raw data – 176 (8%) were raising children, and 1,384 female couples, of which 406 (29%) were raising children. (His proportionally-weighted estimates were 12% for male couples and 27% for female couples respectively.) Our earlier investigation (Cameron & Cameron, 1996) included

a similar obituary survey of 986 consecutive Washington, DC obituaries from the *Washington Blade* (1988-1993): 6% of the gays, and 27% of the lesbians were listed as having children.

The general congruence of these findings may suggest that (1) the effects on children of parenting by homosexuals have remained fairly stable across the last few decades, and (2) techniques other than strict random or probability sampling can profitably be employed, particularly with populations that are difficult to canvas.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Endnotes

¹A respondent was considered to have a homosexual parent if they said so in one or both of two direct questions about having a homosexual parent, or in a behavioral measure, reported sex with the parent of their same sex (“at their initiative or yours”).

²The senior author had a client who, though adult and married, continued to have sex with her father — a relationship she considered ‘consensual’ from its beginnings in her childhood, but would have been criminal nonetheless.

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