
“Responsibility for household tasks is significantly higher among these [homosexual parented] children than among children of heterosexual cohabiting and married couples.” [19]

Study Conclusions

Sarantakos concluded, “Overall, the study has shown that children of married couples are more likely to do well at school in academic and social terms, than children of cohabiting heterosexual and homosexual couples.

In summary, family environments are definitely instrumental for the development of the attributes which encourage educational progress and social development among children. However, these environments are shown to vary significantly according to the life style of the parents, leading to adverse reactions among these children.” [20]

The research study by Sarantakos comparing children’s educational achievement and social adjustment as a function of the family structures of married couples, heterosexual cohabiting couples, and homosexual couples is a very rare type of study in the sense of including a homosexual couple comparison group.

Because Sarantakos found similar disadvantaged child outcomes in the cohabitating heterosexual couple group and homosexual cohabiting couple group compared to the married couple group, the best available additional research for courts to consider (in making child custody decisions) regarding the effects of family structure on child adjustment would be the research on cohabitation and single-parent family structures compared to married couple family structure.

Child Well-Being in Households of Married Couples Versus Single-Parent (Homosexual and Heterosexual) Families

Studies of single-parent families include a mixture of heterosexual single parents, “closet” concealed homosexual single parents, openly identified homosexual single parents, and bisexual single parents.

In the 2000 research review accompanying their research, Biblarz and Gottainer wrote,

“Evidence over the past 30 years shows that children raised in single-parent households generally have lower average levels of psychological well-being and socioeconomic achievement than those raised by two biological parents [S]tudies . . . show that children from both types of families [widowed single-mother families and divorced single-mother families] have higher rates of delinquency (running away or truancy) and emotional problems (depression or low self-esteem) and lowered school performance” [21]

Carlson and Corcoran’s 2001 review concluded, “Research shows that children reared in single-parent families do not fare as well as those reared in two-parent [heterosexual] families, on average, regardless of race, education, or parental remarriage; they are more likely to experience increased academic difficulties and higher levels of emotional, psychological, and behavioral problems.” [Citations omitted.] [22]

“Single-parent families have been associated with delinquent behavior, use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco, lower self-esteem, dropping out of high school, younger age at leaving home, and early sexual activity. Because parents influence their children in many and multifaceted ways, the theoretical mechanisms that may explain the effect of family structure on child outcomes are numerous. Four primary causal mechanisms that have been discussed in the literature are economic status, parental socialization, childhood stress, and maternal psychological well-being.” [Citations omitted.] [23]

“Single mothers report higher rates of depression and lower levels of psychological functioning than do other mothers. Mothers’ poor mental health has been shown to adversely affect child behavior.” [Citations omitted.] [24]

Adverse child outcomes are associated with deviations from the dual-gender parenting model. Research indicates that role models outside the household do not have the same advantageous influences on child development and child adjustment as mothers and fathers living under the same roof as the developing child. The review by Marsiglio, Amato, Day and Lamb (2000) of Furstenberg & Cherlin (1991) stated:

“Compared with fathers in two-parent households, nonresident fathers provide less help with homework, are less likely to set and enforce rules, and provide less monitoring and supervision of their children. If non-resident fathers rarely engage in authoritative parenting, then mere contact, or even sharing good times together, may not contribute in a positive way to children’s development.” [25]

Though negative effects of poverty and having single parents are interrelated, each is a risk factor with independent negative outcome effects for children. [26] Father presence is more relevant than family income for decreased delinquency. Delinquency is twice the rate where the father is absent. [27] When a child resides with a single mother and her cohabiting boyfriend, delinquency rates are higher than when mother lives alone with her child. [28] After taking into account many other facts (such as, race, income, residential instability, urban location etc), fatherless boys have twice the rate of incarceration as boys living with a father. [29]

Twice the percentage of children from one-parent families (16% to 29%) drop out of high school compared to mother/father families (8% to 13%). [30] There are more teens giving birth and dropping out of school in one-parent families than in two-parent married families. [31] Half of this effect is due to poverty and half due to lack of parent access and residential mobility. [32] Marriage produces better outcomes for children by providing a

"long-term contract," and a form of "co-insurance" of economic and social resources for the child. [33]

Mother or father absence is associated with lowered academic performance, more cognitive deficits, increased adjustment problems, greater susceptibility to delinquent peer group, more conduct problems, higher rates of illicit drug and alcohol use, higher rates of suicide and homicide, deficits in social problem solving competencies, deficits in social sensitivity, deficits in social role taking skills, a poor self concept, low self esteem, lowered self confidence, less sense of mastery, less self-assertiveness, delayed emotional and social maturity, increased sexual promiscuity, higher rates of effeminacy in boys and higher risks for psychosexual development problems. [34]

Single parents are at greater risk to develop poor quality relationships with their children, leading to greater rates of child maladjustment. [35]

Qualified Married Couples Provide for Critical Needs of Placed Children that a Household with a Homosexual Adult is Inherently Unable to Provide

The foster-parent or adoptive household with one or more homosexually-behaving members thereby deprives the placed child of significant positive contributions to the child's current adjustment and to the child's preparation for successful adulthood adjustment that are present in heterosexual homes.

The best interests of the child cannot be served by the simplistic proposal of merely screening a homosexually-behaving applicant for foster parenting, adoptive placement, or contested custody for the absence of psychiatric disorder, drug abuse, criminality, sexual relationship instability, etc., because the homosexual behavioral lifestyle is inherently deficient structurally of being capable of providing the best preparation for future heterosexual married life that the vast majority of children will aspire to as adults.

Whether granted "marital" status or similar legal recognition by the state or not, a household headed by a practicing homosexual simply cannot by its very nature provide a model of healthy heterosexual married family relationships.

Further, since the majority of children and adolescents who have participated in homosexual behavior as minors grow up as heterosexuals, it is premature and highly irresponsible to label a minor as "homosexual" as a rationale to place them in a homosexual household.

Therefore, it is clearly in the best interests of children to be placed with families where all adult members are exclusively heterosexual because this natural family structure inherently provides unique needed benefits and more psychologically stable families than is inherently characteristic of households with a homosexually-behaving adult.

Conclusion: Laws Prohibiting Homosexually-Active Persons from Serving as Adoptive, Foster, or Custodial Parents are in the Best Interests of Children Because they Eliminate

Avoidable Instability, Avoidable Stressors, and Avoidable Deprivations.

Because adopted, foster, and custodially-placed children unfortunately must face unavoidable stresses and losses in connection with the state's necessary intervention, and because foster children have substantially higher rates of psychological disorder and conduct disorder than the general population of children, the optimal future adjustment of placed children requires that the state eliminate all risk of sources of avoidable family instability, of avoidable stressors, and of avoidable deprivations.

Empirical research, clinical experience, and reasoning clearly demonstrate that households with a homosexually-behaving adult member inherently (1) are substantially less stable than heterosexual families, (2) impose unique harms of profound stressors on children, and (3) deprive children of the needed benefits of having relatively better psychologically adjusted adult family members who provide the needed benefits of both a mother and father figure in the home.

While the plaintiffs might speculate that a particular homosexually-behaving couple might in some circumstances be able to offer satisfactory or equivalent parenting functions for a child placed in its household and even be preferred in some scenario, even if that could be empirically established, it would be the rare exception and not the rule.

Further, such a placed child would still be exposed to the risks of harm by the stressors, relative couple instability, and deprivation of a mother or father that are inherent to the structure of the household with homosexual adult membership.

By analogy, in some exceptional circumstances, a convicted felon, a newly married couple of eighteen-year-old adolescents, or a ninety-five-year-old man might be able to offer satisfactory or equivalent parenting functions for a child placed in their household, but certain risks associated generally with the structure of that type of household justifies laws prohibiting such a foster, custodial, or adoptive placement.

It is rational for the state to exclude households with homosexual adults from child custody placement, adoption, or foster family licensure because the household with a homosexual adult member has an inherent structure that exposes the placed child to unique high risks family instability, for stress, and deprivation of needed benefits. These risks and harms are reasonably eliminated by laws or regulations prohibiting child placement in households with a homosexually-behaving adult member.

Dr. George Rekers is Distinguished Professor of Neuropsychiatry and Behavioral Science Emeritus at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine in Columbia, South Carolina.

Professor Rekers was previously a Research Fellow in Psychology and Social Relations and a Visiting Scholar at Harvard University. He was awarded the Diplomate in Clinical Psychology from the American Board of Professional Psychology

and is an elected Fellow of the American Academy of Clinical Psychology.

In addition to his clinical psychology practice and expert courtroom testimony, Professor Rekers has published well over one hundred academic journal articles and book chapters and ten books, including the *Handbook of Child and Adolescent Sexual Problems* (Simon & Schuster) for which he served as the editor.

His work has been supported by fellowships, contracts, and grants exceeding one million dollars from private foundations and governmental entities, including the National Science Foundation and the National Institute of Mental Health.

Dr. Rekers has delivered many invited research presentations on child and family variables before committees of the United States Senate and House of Representatives, and has served as an invited expert for White House staff and several presidential cabinet agencies such as the Department of Health and Human Services.

He has delivered over two hundred invited lectures in universities and academic societies in dozens of countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and in Western and Eastern Europe.

Professor Rekers served as one of the multidisciplinary experts for the legal team that successfully defended the state of Florida's law prohibiting adoption of children by homosexually-behaving individuals all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, in the case *Lofton v. Secretary of the Department of Children and Family Services*.

He is a past recipient of the NARTH Sigmund Freud Award for his research contributions on child gender identity disorder.

End Notes

1. Carlson & Corcoran, supra note 97, at 779-80
2. Sotirios Sarantakos, Children in Three Contexts: Family, Education and Social Development, 21 Children Austl. 23, 23-31 (1996)

(Continued from page 14)

they held no weight. And I discovered that I didn't need to believe them any more to have a sense of self.

J.N. OK...so you're saying, as you began to follow God's will, you began to dispense with some of the assumptions and beliefs that went along with the idea that homosexuality reflected "who you are," in the very deepest sense.

M.G. Yes—I looked at things like political ideas, social ideas, and also, more interpersonal things. For example, the nature of the power dynamic between two guys is something about which I just had been naïve. Whenever I had disagreed with the man who was my partner at that time--before I gained the sense of my own connection to God, or my connection to myself, autonomous from someone else--I would just be talked into submission.

3. Id. at 23-24.
4. Id.
5. Id. at 23-24.
6. Id.
7. Id.
8. Id. at 24.
9. Id.
10. Id. at 25.
11. Id.
12. Id.
13. Id.
14. Id.
15. Id.
16. Id. at 25-26.
17. Id.
18. Id.
19. Id. at 28 (stating that "[p]arenting styles – control and punishment" scores among the three groups were not found to be significantly different).
20. Id. at 30.
21. Timothy J. Biblarz & Greg Gottainer, Family Structure and Children's Success, 62 J. Marriage & Fam. 533, 534 (2000).
22. Carlson & Corcoran, supra note 97, at 779 (2001).
23. Id. at 780.
24. Id. at 78.
25. Marsiglio, supra note 285, at 1184.
26. See Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially*, 126-27, (Doubleday 2000)
27. William Comanor & Llad Phillips, The Impact of Income and Family Structure on Delinquency 16 (Dept. Of Econ., University of California, Santa Barbara, Working Paper No. 7'95R, 1998)
28. Id. at 17.
29. See Gallagher, supra note 417, at 134.
30. See Id. at 133.
31. See Id. at 136.
32. See Id. at 134-37.
33. See generally Waite, supra note 322.
34. See generally, Biller, Fathers and Families supra note 285, at 194-233.
35. See Gallagher, supra note 417, at 128.

J.N. So due to your deepening relationship to God, you began to develop a separate, autonomous identity....

M.G. Exactly. That was the first thing I definitely noticed.

J.N. So how did God come into your life? How did that happen for you?

M.G. Well, he [God] did it, really. My father had died of a sudden heart condition and I thought that I had developed what he had. I had a sort of panic – a hypochondriac reaction. For about a month while I waited for test results, I thought that I was about to die.

J.N. OK, so you had anxiety attacks. You thought you were going to have a heart attack like your father, and that put a fear into you.

(Continued, next page)

M.G. It put total fear, because my dad died when he was just walking on the beach. And then I did a stupid thing and I looked on the internet and tried to diagnose myself on the internet.

J.N. Which was just increasing your anxiety, because now you find yourself having every possible symptom you've ever imagined...

M.G. Exactly. (Laughs) So I basically figured every step I take now is my last one, and I waited for the test, and finally found out that I didn't have it.

J.N. (nodding) It is often said that what really brings us to God, is fear about our mortality... having an experience when we find ourselves doubting our very survival.

M.G. There you go. So I found out I didn't have this heart condition, and I thanked God. This was the first moment in my entire life when literally every concept that my mind had ever entertained—my whole existence—was completely reevaluated.

J.N. So it was first fear, then gratitude, and then "metanoia"...an awakening to your true identity.

M.G. That was the moment. There was no more doubt. And on a fundamental level, it was the end of an intense war between myself and God.

J.N. You made peace?

M.G. It was instant peace.

J.N. Wonderful. Absolutely fantastic.

M.G. And in that experience, all of a sudden, I kind of rejoined all the other parts of humanity that I had been fighting with.

J.N. You rejoined the living.

M.G. Yes, but at that time, I didn't fully understand it as such. I just felt I had rejoined something so primal. This gave me a sense of autonomy, so that slowly, I grew to further understand what it all meant.

J.N. I jumped in and used the words "joined the living," but what would be your own words? How would you describe the experience?

M.G. The first thing that came to me was that sense of freedom, of personal autonomy; then when I started to read the Gospels and specifically what Jesus wrote, that's when I started to gain an understanding of actually what was happening to me--the notion of a new life. In the Gospels, Jesus was giving up his life for my sake -- giving me a new life and all those concepts I had never been exposed to before.

J.N. You were not raised in a religious family?

M.G. Well, I was raised in a Christian family, but it was really all presented as a fairytale. My dad was not Christian; he undermined

all of the more divine truths that they tried to teach us. He just kind of turned them into silly stories and nice things to celebrate at Christmas time.

J.N. Was your mother religious?

M.G. Yes. She was Christian, non-denominational. She took us to Unity churches where they had Father-God, Mother-God and like that. I think she was a good woman who also had a need to please her husband--a man who was very agnostic and was a hippie from Berkeley in the '60's.

J.N. So tell me—what are your psychological understandings of your situation?

M.G. Well, as I said, the first thing that happened to me was that growing sense of autonomy. Then I began to notice how the power dynamics work within gay relationships.

J.N. Male-to-male.

M.G. Male-to-male -- I saw that there always is a power difference, where two men actually can't come to some sort of mutual agreement without one side actually dominating the other. And that was when I started to recognize that. My relationship with my partner began to come to an end, because we would literally come to an impasse when we would not agree. He didn't know what to do when that happened, because he was used to me just backing down.

J.N. So you were changing now?

M.G. After we split, I was beginning to develop more autonomy. But it wasn't just about the relationship; there was still some very fundamental thing that was wrong. For quite awhile, I was willing to look at every possible thing it might be-- except for the homosexuality. I literally sat there, I was in tears and was praying, and then I said, "What is it? I can't understand -- what is it that's still wrong?"

And it was almost like it was obvious. I just wrote this down on my computer screen -- "I am straight." I wrote that down, and when I wrote that down, I just couldn't believe it. I felt like I was breaking the law, you know.

J.N. A breakthrough of understanding...

M.G. And yet it was so terrifying; I felt like millions of people were just laughing at me, condemning me, for writing those words.

J.N. It was like, "How dare you say you are straight!"

M.G. Yes. But from that point on, I realized that that was the truth. Then I had to work out why I had these desires and where they came from.

J.N. In other words, "If I am straight, then why do I have these attractions?"

M.G. Right.

J.N. That's exactly the first step of conversion therapy, which

is the conviction, "I am straight."

M.G. Right.

J.N. So what you are saying is, "You're not a homosexual; you're a heterosexual with a homosexual problem."

M.G. Exactly. And it's nice to hear that that's the same approach you take, because obviously, that's the truth. I mean, the whole gay identity is completely a fabrication.

J.N. A social construct. And when you see it that way, then you begin to ask, now, why do I have these same-sex attractions?

M.G. That's right. For me, a lot of it actually was helped by meditation. I joined a community here-- it's nonsectarian, but they have some ties with Buddhism.

J.N. What kind of meditation is that?

M.G. Simple; you're in the upright position and you stay focused on your breath.

J.N. And then, whatever thought comes up, you look at it.

M.G. Exactly. And so each thing that comes up, you know, is not much more than a thought, and you get eventually deeper and deeper in your mind and you notice bigger thoughts and bigger constructs. Eventually, those slip away as well. This was neat, because the same thing began to happen with the same-sex desires.

At the same time that that was happening, I was also reading your articles where you were talking about the False Self. That one really resonated with me, because it was right in line with what I had already begun to uncover in meditation -- that we have a True Self, and that, to me, was the Self that I had already recognized as being this authentic, autonomous Self-with-God.

J.N. The Self that was God-inspired, and that was realized through your meditation.

M.G. Exactly. I was holding on to that True Self, and then recognizing all the False Selves and seeing them just fall away.

J.N. Very interesting. So you started to look at all these Self-constructs from the perspective of the True Self.

M.G. When I read your piece on the False Self, and also when you were talking a lot about masculinity and the craving for masculinity, it was just so clear that that was exactly what had taken place with me. At that same time, I had already been doing a lot of reading and had tried to be more knowledgeable about all the issues which I used to believe in, which I no longer did believe in, politically. I was starting to understand the larger issue of how our culture dampened masculinity. I had already been examining these notions about masculinity from the perspective of liberalism, socialism and humanistic psychology. I understood that masculinity needed to be

equal to femininity, but I had adopted feminist ideas. So when I read your piece, it just made perfect sense about masculinity. When I look back at my father, the way he was afraid of masculinity...he taught me to be afraid, too. As a result, when I was nine years old and my mom was crying about him, I became her protector against him, and against the "evil forces" of masculinity.

J.N. So it seems that this, for you, was the origin of the False Self—a refusal to claim the masculinity within you. This is a common pattern among the men I see. They have a negative image of what it means to be male, they ally themselves with their mothers against their dads, and in doing so, they never fully embrace their own masculine identity.

M.G. Absolutely. I didn't want to associate with something that could hurt a woman like I thought it hurt my mom.

J.N. Because your mom was your secure attachment figure.

M.G. That's right.

J.N. And without your mom, when you're a small child, you are "nothing."

M.G. That's right.

J.N. And so in a sense, it's not that you were just protecting Mom, but you were protecting yourself from annihilation, too.

M.G. Yes, exactly--like you put it in your essay. Exactly.

J.N. Um-hmm.

J.N. So yours was what we call the Classic Triadic family-- you say you had an over-involved mother and a distant, detached father.

M.G. Yes. And then of course, just as you described, as puberty takes place, the body is full of sexual energy, and already, I'm craving the masculinity, because I obviously need to have it in myself. But at the same time, I don't want it, because I'm afraid of it. All that makes perfect sense-- and yet the real clincher there, when I look back on it, is this fabricated gay identity [offered by society]. I can remember very clearly when I was 14, a friend of mine coming to me and explaining to me that I was gay.

J.N. That label answers everything, doesn't it?

M.G. Exactly. And that's the problem, right there.

J.N. It's a quick and easy answer to a very complicated problem.

M.G. That's right. If we continue to feed this identity to people, they'll never solve their problems.

J.N. Because the gay self-label is like putting a coating over a disordered aspect of your life.

The National Association for Research & Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH) is committed to freedom of choice in therapy for individuals with unwanted same-sex attractions.

M.G. Yes, it's like a sugar coating. And it's really insidious, when you realize that in my work as editor of a gay magazine for young people, I was doing this to teenagers! That's what made me eventually stop.

J.N. So you were editor of a gay magazine..

M.G. That's right. I had been slowly gaining an understanding about my gay identity, yet I just didn't want to say anything about that yet, at my job. But then, I would read stories about gay-affirming books going into grade schools, and that's when I realized that this had to stop. Obviously, I'm just one guy, but maybe by saying this now, I can help somebody.

When I think about my own life, if I had never been fed that gay identity, and if we had a clear moral approach to the issue in our society-- it [the attractions to males] would have been just something that I would have dealt with early on.

J.N. Right.

M.G. It's insane. I just don't understand it. I'll tell you that when I first looked at the NARTH site, I felt so guilty. Of course, I already knew about it -- I was an activist, and always just had catalogued you guys in with all the "right-wing hate groups." I knew who you were, because I had to keep abreast of all the "hateful people" out there.

Honestly, when I got to the point of clicking on an article at the NARTH site, I felt like I was breaking the law; like I almost shouldn't even read it. I could only read a few words and then I would have to stop.

J.N. Reading NARTH materials was like a taboo to you.

M.G. It was so horrible. It was unbelievable -- and it makes me realize just how overpowered I was -- and how so many other people are, too.

J.N. Feeling that kind of social control is like being in a cult, isn't it?

M.G. It is like a cult. I mean, right now you see how they're talking about me like I actually died -- that's what they [gay activists] are saying. There was a headline in a gay newspaper, "The Life and Death of a Gay American" -- they're talking about me.

J.N. So do you have same-sex attractions now? What do you do when they come up?

M.G. They don't come up very often, actually. When I'd go through a meditation process, a thought would come to me, or a desire. Rather than grabbing onto it or craving it, I would just "let it be." My authentic self was growing and the False Self and the craving would then eventually just disappear.

J.N. So you see it as a battle between True and False Selves?

M.G. Yes.

M.G. It's already there.

J.N. It's in your nature.

M.G. And it's so different from the homosexuality.

J.N. Please explain how.

M.G. You described it best -- homosexuality puts you into a False Self. It's all in your mind -- and this is something obviously I've been very focused on -- it's literally all in your mind. The difference between it and heterosexuality is huge, but I don't think a lot of homosexual people recognize this, because they're so used to this life of sexuality created in the mind that they don't know the difference.

J.N. Now, when you say "in the mind," gay men will say "It's in my body. When I see a hot-looking guy, that's not my mind-- I feel that zap in the body."

M.G. Well, they'll say that. Yet, what that zap is, is a message from God that you want something outside you that you need to actually develop in yourself.

J.N. That's the "reparative" element. Homosexuality is an effort to repair an integral part of your nature by seeking something outside yourself that is missing within.

M.G. Exactly. If I would see some attribute of masculinity that initially drew me toward it, I would say, "Well, I have two choices here: my first choice is to go for it, clutch it and feel that masculinity. Or, the second choice, is: stop, pause, recognize it and say 'No, I don't need it. In fact, I already have it.'"

J.N. So in your situation, you're bringing that truth about the False Self and homosexuality into the meditation with you. And when you say meditation, this not a different, altered state -- it's just a "coming to the truth." Meditation is creating the occasion to stop the external distractions and just to "come to the truth," and that truth, for you, was God-inspired.

M.G. That's exactly right. But I have to say, the meditation organization annoyed me because they're anti-Christian. That was something I just had to deal with, and I prayed about it a lot. I sensed God was telling me: "No, don't stop this, this is good for you-- just take from it what's good for you."

I don't want to make it sound like you can change without God, because I don't think you can. I don't know, maybe you guys have success with people who are without God....

J.N. Well, we do have success with people who are not religious, but as a Catholic, I believe the Holy Spirit is working in their lives, as well. Many men become more religious as they go through the therapy process. It's not my role as a psychologist to introduce religious ideas, but clients themselves will often gradually begin to seek out knowledge of a creator as they grow in humility and in transparency. In fact, receptivity to a relationship with God often seems to be part of the larger emotional maturation process.

Michael, thank you very much for your insights into the change process. ■