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How different are the adult children of parents who have same-sex relationships? Findings from the New Family Structures Study

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ABSTRACT

The New Family Structures Study (NFSS) is a social-science data-collection project that fielded a survey to a large, random sample of American young adults (ages 18–39) who were raised in different types of family arrangements. In this debut article of the NFSS, I compare how the young-adult children of a parent who has had a same-sex romantic relationship fare on 40 different social, emotional, and relational outcome variables when compared with six other family-of-origin types. The results reveal numerous, consistent differences, especially between the children of women who have had a lesbian relationship and those with still-married (heterosexual) biological parents. The results are typically robust in multivariate contexts as well, suggesting far greater diversity in lesbian-parent household experiences than convenience-sample studies of lesbian families have revealed. The NFSS proves to be an illuminating, versatile dataset that can assist family scholars in understanding the long reach of family structure and transitions.

1. Introduction

The well-being of children has long been in the center of public policy debates about marriage and family matters in the United States. That trend continues as state legislatures, voters, and the judiciary considers the legal boundaries of marriage. Social science data remains one of the few sources of information useful in legal debates surrounding marriage and adoption rights, and has been valued both by same-sex marriage supporters and opponents. Underneath the politics about marriage and child development are concerns about family structures' possible effects on children: the number of parents present and active in children's lives, their genetic relationship to the children, parents' marital status, their gender distinctions or similarities, and the number of transitions in household composition. In this introduction to the New Family Structures Study (NFSS), I compare how young adults from a variety of different family backgrounds fare on 40 different social, emotional, and relational outcomes. In particular, I focus on how respondents who said their mother had a same-sex relationship with another woman—or their father did so with another man—compare with still-intact, two-parent heterosexual married families using nationally-representative data collected from a large probability sample of American young adults.

Social scientists of family transitions have until recently commonly noted the elevated stability and social benefits of the two-parent (heterosexual) married household, when contrasted to single mothers, cohabiting couples, adoptive parents, and ex-spouses sharing custody (Brown, 2004; Manning et al., 2004; McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994). In 2002, Child Trends—a well-regarded nonpartisan research organization—detailed the importance for children's development of growing up in "the presence of *two biological parents*" (their emphasis; Moore et al., 2002, p. 2). Unmarried motherhood, divorce, cohabitation, and step-parenting were widely perceived to fall short in significant developmental domains (like education, behavior problems, and emotional well-being), due in no small part to the comparative fragility and instability of such relationships.

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In their 2001 *American Sociological Review* article reviewing findings on sexual orientation and parenting, however, sociologists Judith Stacey and Tim Biblarz began noting that while there are some differences in outcomes between children in same-sex and heterosexual unions, there were not as many as family sociologists might expect, and differences need not necessarily be perceived as *deficits*. Since that time the conventional wisdom emerging from comparative studies of same-sex parenting is that there are very few differences of note in the child outcomes of gay and lesbian parents (Tasker, 2005; Wainright and Patterson, 2006; Rosenfeld, 2010). Moreover, a variety of possible advantages of having a lesbian couple as parents have emerged in recent studies (Crowl et al., 2008; Biblarz and Stacey, 2010; Gartrell and Bos, 2010; MacCallum and Golombok, 2004). The scholarly discourse concerning gay and lesbian parenting, then, has increasingly posed a challenge to previous assumptions about the supposed benefits of being raised in biologically-intact, two-parent heterosexual households.

1.1. Sampling concerns in previous surveys

Concern has arisen, however, about the methodological quality of many studies focusing on same-sex parents. In particular, most are based on non-random, non-representative data often employing small samples that do not allow for generalization to the larger population of gay and lesbian families (Nock, 2001; Perrin and Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, 2002; Redding, 2008). For instance, many published studies on the children of same-sex parents collect data from "snowball" or convenience samples (e.g., Bos et al., 2007; Brewaeys et al., 1997; Fulcher et al., 2008; Sirota, 2009; Vanfraussen et al., 2003). One notable example of this is the National Longitudinal Lesbian Family Study, analyses of which were prominently featured in the media in 2011 (e.g., *Huffington Post, 2011*). The NLLFS employs a convenience sample, recruited entirely by self-selection from announcements posted "at lesbian events, in women's bookstores, and in lesbian newspapers" in Boston, Washington, and San Francisco. While I do not wish to downplay the significance of such a longitudinal study—it is itself quite a feat—this sampling approach is a problem when the goal (or in this case, the practical result and conventional use of its findings) is to generalize to a population. All such samples are biased, often in unknown ways. As a formal sampling method, "snowball sampling is known to have some serious problems," one expert asserts (Snijders, 1992, p. 59). Indeed, such samples are likely biased toward "inclusion of those who have many interrelationships with, or are coupled to, a large number of other individuals" (Berg, 1988, p. 531). But apart from the knowledge of individuals' inclusion probability, unbiased estimation is not possible.

Further, as Nock (2001) entreated, consider the convenience sample recruited from within organizations devoted to seeking rights for gays and lesbians, like the NLLFS sampling strategy. Suppose, for example, that the respondents have higher levels of education than comparable lesbians who do not frequent such events or bookstores, or who live elsewhere. If such a sample is used for research purposes, then anything that is correlated with educational attainment—like better health, more deliberative parenting, and greater access to social capital and educational opportunities for children—will be biased. Any claims about a population based on a group that does not represent it will be distorted, since its sample of lesbian parents is less diverse (given what is known about it) than a representative sample would reveal (Baumle et al., 2009).

To compound the problem, results from nonprobability samples—from which meaningful statistics cannot be generated—are regularly compared with population-level samples of heterosexual parents, which no doubt are comprised of a blend of higher and lower quality parents. For example, Gartrell et al. (2011a,b) inquired about the sexual orientation and behavior of adolescents by comparing data from the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) with those in the snowball sample of youth in the NLLFS. Comparing a population-based sample (the NSFG) to a select sample of youth from same-sex parents does not provide the statistical confidence demanded of good social science. Until now, this has been a primary way in which scholars have collected and evaluated data on same-sex parents. This is not to suggest that snowball samples are *inherently* problematic as data-collection techniques, only that they are not adequate for making useful comparisons with samples that are entirely different with regard to selection characteristics. Snowball and various other types of convenience sampling are simply not widely generalizable or comparable to the population of interest as a whole. While researchers themselves commonly note this important limitation, it is often entirely lost in the translation and transmission of findings by the media to the public.

1.2. Are there notable differences?

The "no differences" paradigm suggests that children from same-sex families display no notable disadvantages when compared to children from other family forms. This suggestion has increasingly come to include even comparisons with intact biological, two-parent families, the form most associated with stability and developmental benefits for children (McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994; Moore et al., 2002).

Answering questions about notable between-group differences has nevertheless typically depended on with whom comparisons are being made, what outcomes the researchers explored, and whether the outcomes evaluated are considered substantial or superficial, or portents of future risk. Some outcomes—like sexual behavior, gender roles, and democratic parenting, for example—have come to be valued differently in American society over time.

For the sake of brevity—and to give ample space here to describing the NFSS—I will avoid spending too much time describing previous studies, many of whose methodological challenges are addressed by the NFSS. Several review articles,

and at least one book, have sought to provide a more thorough assessment of the literature (Anderssen et al., 2002; Biblarz and Stacey, 2010; Goldberg, 2010; Patterson, 2000; Stacey and Biblarz, 2001a). Suffice it to say that versions of the phrase "no differences" have been employed in a wide variety of studies, reports, depositions, books, and articles since 2000 (e.g., Crowl et al., 2008; Movement Advancement Project, 2011; Rosenfeld, 2010; Tasker, 2005; Stacey and Biblarz, 2001a,b; Veldorale-Brogan and Cooley, 2011; Wainright et al., 2004).

Much early research on gay parents typically compared the child development outcomes of divorced lesbian mothers with those of divorced heterosexual mothers (Patterson, 1997). This was also the strategy employed by psychologist Fiona Tasker (2005), who compared lesbian mothers with single, divorced heterosexual mothers and found "no systematic differences between the quality of family relationships" therein. Wainright et al. (2004), using 44 cases in the nationally-representative Add Health data, reported that teenagers living with female same-sex parents displayed comparable self-esteem, psychological adjustment, academic achievement, delinquency, substance use, and family relationship quality to 44 demographically "matched" cases of adolescents with opposite-sex parents, suggesting that here too the comparisons were not likely made with respondents from stable, biologically-intact, married families.

However, small sample sizes can contribute to "no differences" conclusions. It is not surprising that statistically-significant differences would *not* emerge in studies employing as few as 18 or 33 or 44 cases of respondents with same-sex parents, respectively (Fulcher et al., 2008; Golombok et al., 2003; Wainright and Patterson, 2006). Even analyzing matched samples, as a variety of studies have done, fails to mitigate the challenge of locating statistically-significant differences when the sample size is small. This is a concern in all of social science, but one that is doubly important when there may be motivation to confirm the null hypothesis (that is, that there are in fact no statistically-significant differences between groups). Therefore, one important issue in such studies is the simple matter of if there is enough statistical power to detect meaningful differences should they exist. Rosenfeld (2010) is the first scholar to employ a large, random sample of the population in order to compare outcomes among children of same-sex parents with those of heterosexual married parents. He concluded—after controlling for parents' education and income and electing to limit the sample to households exhibiting at least 5 years of co-residential stability—that there were no statistically-significant differences between the two groups in a pair of measures assessing children's progress through primary school.

Sex-related outcomes have more consistently revealed distinctions, although the tone of concern about them has diminished over time. For example, while the daughters of lesbian mothers are now widely understood to be more apt to explore same-sex sexual identity and behavior, concern about this finding has faded as scholars and the general public have become more accepting of GLB identities (Goldberg, 2010). Tasker and Golombok (1997) noted that girls raised by lesbian mothers reported a higher number of sexual partners in young adulthood than daughters of heterosexual mothers. Boys with lesbian mothers, on the other hand, appear to display the opposite trend—fewer partners than the sons of heterosexual mothers.

More recently, however, the tone about "no differences" has shifted some toward the assertion of differences, and that same-sex parents appear to be *more* competent than heterosexual parents (Biblarz and Stacey, 2010; Crowl et al., 2008). Even their romantic relationships may be better: a comparative study of Vermont gay civil unions and heterosexual marriages revealed that same-sex couples report higher relationship quality, compatibility, and intimacy, and less conflict than did married heterosexual couples (Balsam et al., 2008). Biblarz and Stacey's (2010) review article on gender and parenting asserts that,

> based strictly on the published science, one could argue that two women parent better on average than a woman and a man, or at least than a woman and man with a traditional division of labor. Lesbian coparents seem to outperform comparable married heterosexual, biological parents on several measures, even while being denied the substantial privileges of marriage (p. 17).

Even here, however, the authors note that lesbian parents face a "somewhat greater risk of splitting up," due, they suggest, to their "asymmetrical biological and legal statuses and their high standards of equality" (2010, p. 17).

Another meta-analysis asserts that non-heterosexual parents, on average, enjoy significantly better relationships with their children than do heterosexual parents, together with no differences in the domains of cognitive development, psychological adjustment, gender identity, and sexual partner preference (Crowl et al., 2008).

However, the meta-analysis reinforces the profound importance of *who* is doing the reporting—nearly always volunteers for small studies on a group whose claims about documentable parenting successes are very relevant in recent legislative and judicial debates over rights and legal statuses. Tasker (2010, p. 36) suggests caution:

> Parental self-report, of course, may be biased. It is plausible to argue that, in a prejudiced social climate, lesbian and gay parents may have more at stake in presenting a positive picture. . ..Future studies need to consider using additional sophisticated measures to rule out potential biases. . .

Suffice it to say that the pace at which the overall academic discourse surrounding gay and lesbian parents' comparative competence has shifted—from slightly-less adept to virtually identical to more adept—is notable, and rapid. By comparison, studies of adoption—a common method by which many same-sex couples (but more heterosexual ones) become parents—have repeatedly and consistently revealed important and wide-ranging differences, on average, between adopted children and biological ones. In fact, these differences have been so pervasive and consistent that adoption experts now emphasize that "acknowledgement of difference" is critical for both parents and clinicians when working with adopted children and

teens (Miller et al., 2000). This ought to give social scientists studying gay parenting outcomes pause, especially in light of concerns noted above about small sample sizes and the absence of a comparable recent, documented improvement in outcomes from youth in adopted families and stepfamilies.

Far more, too, is known about the children of lesbian mothers than about those of gay fathers (Biblarz and Stacey, 2010; Patterson, 2006; Veldorale-Brogan and Cooley, 2011). Biblarz and Stacey (2010, p. 17) note that while gay-male families remain understudied, "their daunting routes to parenthood seem likely to select more for strengths than limitations." Others are not so optimistic. One veteran of a study of the daughters of gay fathers warns scholars to avoid overlooking the family dynamics of "emergent" gay parents, who likely outnumber planned ones: "Children born into heterosexually organized marriages where fathers come out as gay or bisexual also face having to deal with maternal bitterness, marital conflict, possible divorce, custody issues, and father's absence" (Sirota, 2009, p. 291).

Regardless of sampling strategy, scholars also know much less about the lives of *young-adult* children of gay and lesbian parents, or how their experiences and accomplishments as adults compare with others who experienced different sorts of household arrangements during their youth. Most contemporary studies of gay parenting processes have focused on the present—what is going on inside the household when children are still under parental care (Tasker, 2005; Bos and Sandfort, 2010; Brewaeys et al., 1997). Moreover, such research tends to emphasize *parent-reported* outcomes like parental divisions of labor, parent–child closeness, daily interaction patterns, gender roles, and disciplinary habits. While such information is important to learn, it means we know far more about the *current* experience of *parents* in households with children than we do about young adults who have already moved through their childhood and now speak for themselves. Studies on family structure, however, serve scholars and family practitioners best when they span into adulthood. Do the children of gay and lesbian parents look comparable to those of their heterosexual counterparts? The NFSS is poised to address this question about the lives of young adults between the ages of 18 and 39, but not about children or adolescents. While the NFSS is not the answer to all of this domain's methodological challenges, it is a notable contribution in important ways.

1.3. The New Family Structures Study

Besides being brand-new data, several other aspects about the NFSS are novel and noteworthy. First, it is a study of young adults rather than children or adolescents, with particular attention paid to reaching ample numbers of respondents who were raised by parents that had a same-sex relationship. Second, it is a much larger study than nearly all of its peers. The NFSS interviewed just under 3000 respondents, including 175 who reported their mother having had a same-sex romantic relationship and 73 who said the same about their father. Third, it is a weighted probability sample, from which meaningful statistical inferences and interpretations can be drawn. While the 2000 (and presumably, the 2010) US Census Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) offers the largest nationally-representative sample-based information about youth in same-sex households, the Census collects much less outcome information of interest. The NFSS, however, asked numerous questions about respondents' social behaviors, health behaviors, and relationships. This manuscript provides the first glimpse into those outcomes by offering statistical comparisons of them among eight different family structures/experiences of origin. Accordingly, there is much that the NFSS offers, and not just about the particular research questions of this study.

There are several things the NFSS is not. The NFSS is not a longitudinal study, and therefore cannot attempt to broach questions of causation. It is a cross-sectional study, and collected data from respondents at only one point in time, when they were between the ages of 18 and 39. It does not evaluate the offspring of gay marriages, since the vast majority of its respondents came of age prior to the legalization of gay marriage in several states. This study cannot answer political questions about same-sex relationships and their legal legitimacy. Nevertheless, social science is a resource that offers insight to political and legal decision-makers, and there have been enough competing claims about "what the data says" about the children of same-sex parents—including legal depositions of social scientists in important cases—that a study with the methodological strengths of this one deserves scholarly attention and scrutiny.

2. Data collection, measures, and analytic approach

The NFSS data collection project is based at the University of Texas at Austin's Population Research Center. A survey design team consisting of several leading family researchers in sociology, demography, and human development—from Penn State University, Brigham Young University, San Diego State University, the University of Virginia, and several from the University of Texas at Austin—met over 2 days in January 2011 to discuss the project's sampling strategy and scope, and continued to offer advice as questions arose over the course of the data collection process. The team was designed to merge scholars across disciplines and ideological lines in a spirit of civility and reasoned inquiry. Several additional external consultants also gave close scrutiny to the survey instrument, and advised on how best to measure diverse topics. Both the study protocol and the questionnaire were approved by the University of Texas at Austin's Institutional Review Board. The NFSS data is intended to be publicly accessible and will thus be made so with minimal requirements by mid-late 2012. The NFSS was supported in part by grants from the Witherspoon Institute and the Bradley Foundation. While both of these are commonly known for their support of conservative causes—just as other private foundations are known for supporting more liberal causes—the funding sources played no role at all in the design or conduct of the study, the analyses, the interpretations of the data, or in the preparation of this manuscript.

2.1. The data collection process

The data collection was conducted by Knowledge Networks (or KN), a research firm with a very strong record of generating high-quality data for academic projects. Knowledge Networks recruited the first online research panel, dubbed the KnowledgePanel®, that is representative of the US population. Members of the KnowledgePanel® are randomly recruited by telephone and mail surveys, and households are provided with access to the Internet and computer hardware if needed. Unlike other Internet research panels sampling only individuals with Internet access who volunteer for research, the KnowledgePanel® is based on a sampling frame which includes both listed and unlisted numbers, those without a landline telephone and is not limited to current Internet users or computer owners, and does not accept self-selected volunteers. As a result, it is a random, nationally-representative sample of the American population. At last count, over 350 working papers, conference presentations, published articles, and books have used Knowledge Networks' panels, including the 2009 National Survey of Sexual Health and Behavior, whose extensive results were featured in an entire volume of the *Journal of Sexual Medicine*—and prominently in the media—in 2010 (Herbenick et al., 2010). More information about KN and the KnowledgePanel®, including panel recruitment, connection, retention, completion, and total response rates, are available from KN. The typical within survey response rate for a KnowledgePanel® survey is 65%. Appendix A presents a comparison of age-appropriate summary statistics from a variety of socio-demographic variables in the NFSS, alongside the most recent iterations of the Current Population Survey, the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), the National Survey of Family Growth, and the National Study of Youth and Religion—all recent nationally-representative survey efforts. The estimates reported there suggest the NFSS compares very favorably with other nationally-representative datasets.

2.2. The screening process

Particularly relevant for the NFSS is the fact that key populations—gay and lesbian parents, as well as heterosexual adoptive parents—can be challenging to identify and locate. The National Center for Marriage and Family Research (2010) estimates that there are approximately 580,000 same-sex households in the United States. Among them, about 17%—or 98,600—are thought to have children present. While that may seem like a substantial number, in population-based sampling strategies it is not. Locating minority populations requires a search for a probability sample of the general population, typically by way of screening the general population to identify members of rarer groups. Thus in order to boost the number of respondents who reported being adopted or whose parent had a same-sex romantic relationship, the screener survey (which distinguished such respondents) was left in the field for several months between July 2011 and February 2012, enabling existing panelists more time to be screened and new panelists to be added. Additionally, in late Fall 2011, former members of the KnowledgePanel® were re-contacted by mail, phone, and email to encourage their screening. A total of 15,058 current and former members of KN's KnowledgePanel® were screened and asked, among several other questions, "From when you were born until age 18 (or until you left home to be on your own), did either of your parents ever have a romantic relationship with someone of the same sex?" Response choices were "Yes, my mother had a romantic relationship with another woman," "Yes, my father had a romantic relationship with another man," or "no." (Respondents were also able to select both of the first two choices.) If they selected either of the first two, they were asked about whether they had ever lived with that parent while they were in a same-sex romantic relationship. The NFSS completed full surveys with 2988 Americans between the ages of 18 and 39. The screener and full survey instrument is available at the NFSS homepage, located at: www.prc.utexas.edu/nfss.

2.3. What does a representative sample of gay and lesbian parents (of young adults) look like?

The weighted screener data—a nationally-representative sample—reveal that 1.7% of all Americans between the ages of 18 and 39 report that their father or mother has had a same-sex relationship, a figure comparable to other estimates of children in gay and lesbian households (e.g., Stacey and Biblarz (2001a,b) report a plausible range from 1% to 12%). Over twice as many respondents report that their mother has had a lesbian relationship as report that their fathers have had a gay relationship. (A total of 58% of the 15,058 persons screened report spending their entire youth—up until they turned 18 or left the house—with their biological mother and father.)

While gay and lesbian Americans typically become parents today in four ways—through one partner's previous participation in a heterosexual union, through adoption, in-vitro fertilization, or by a surrogate—the NFSS is more likely to be comprised of respondents from the first two of these arrangements than from the last two. Today's children of gay men and lesbian women are more apt to be "planned" (that is, by using adoption, IVF, or surrogacy) than as little as 15–20 years ago, when such children were more typically the products of heterosexual unions. The youngest NFSS respondents turned 18 in 2011, while the oldest did so in 1990. Given that unintended pregnancy is impossible among gay men and a rarity among lesbian couples, it stands to reason that gay and lesbian parents today are far more selective about parenting than the heterosexual population, among whom unintended pregnancies remain very common, around 50% of total (Finer and Henshaw, 2006). The share of all same-sex parenting arrangements that is planned, however, remains unknown. Although the NFSS did not directly ask those respondents whose parent has had a same-sex romantic relationship about the manner of

their own birth, a failed heterosexual union is clearly the modal method: just under half of such respondents reported that their biological parents were once married. This distinguishes the NFSS from numerous studies that have been entirely concerned with "planned" gay and lesbian families, like the NLLFS.

Among those who said their mother had a same-sex relationship, 91% reported living with their mother while she was in the romantic relationship, and 57% said they had lived with their mother and her partner for at least 4 months at some point prior to age 18. A smaller share (23%) said they had spent at least 3 years living in the same household with a romantic partner of their mother's.

Among those who said their father had a same-sex relationship, however, 42% reported living with him while he was in a same-sex romantic relationship, and 23% reported living with him and his partner for at least 4 months (but less than 2% said they had spent at least 3 years together in the same household), a trend similarly noted in Tasker's (2005) review article on gay and lesbian parenting.

Fifty-eight (58) percent of those whose biological mothers had a same-sex relationship also reported that their biological mother exited the respondent's household at some point during their youth, and just under 14% of them reported spending time in the foster care system, indicating greater-than-average household instability. Ancillary analyses of the NFSS suggests a likely "planned" lesbian origin of between 17% and 26% of such respondents, a range estimated from the share of such respondents who claimed that (1) their biological parents were never married or lived together, and that (2) they never lived with a parental opposite-sex partner or with their biological father. The share of respondents (whose fathers had a same-sex relationship) that likely came from "planned" gay families in the NFSS is under 1%.

These distinctions between the NFSS—a population-based sample—and small studies of planned gay and lesbian families nevertheless raise again the question of just how unrepresentative convenience samples of gay and lesbian parents actually are. The use of a probability sample reveals that the young-adult children of parents who have had same-sex relationships (in the NFSS) look less like the children of today's stereotypic gay and lesbian couples—white, upper–middle class, well-educated, employed, and prosperous—than many studies have tacitly or explicitly portrayed. Goldberg (2010, pp. 12–13) aptly notes that existing studies of lesbian and gay couples and their families have largely included "white, middle-class persons who are relatively 'out' in the gay community and who are living in urban areas," while "working-class sexual minorities, racial or ethnic sexual minorities, sexual minorities who live in rural or isolated geographical areas" have been overlooked, understudied, and difficult to reach. Rosenfeld's (2010) analysis of Census data suggests that 37% of children in lesbian cohabiting households are Black or Hispanic. Among respondents in the NFSS who said their mother had a same-sex relationship, 43% are Black or Hispanic. In the NLLFS, by contrast, only 6% are Black or Hispanic.

This is an important oversight: demographic indicators of where gay *parents* live today point less toward stereotypic places like New York and San Francisco and increasingly toward locales where families are more numerous and overall fertility is higher, like San Antonio and Memphis. In their comprehensive demographic look at the American gay and lesbian population, Gates and Ost (2004, p. 47) report, "States and large metropolitan areas with relatively low concentrations of gay and lesbian couples in the population tend to be areas where same-sex couples are more likely to have children in the household." A recent updated brief by Gates (2011, p. F3) reinforces this: "Geographically, same-sex couples are most likely to have children in many of the most socially conservative parts of the country." Moreover, Gates notes that racial minorities are disproportionately more likely (among same-sex households) to report having children; whites, on the other hand, are disproportionately less likely to have children. The NFSS sample reveals the same. Gates' Census-based assessments further raise questions about the sampling strategies of—and the popular use of conclusions from—studies based entirely on convenience samples derived from parents living in progressive metropolitan locales.

2.4. The structure and experience of respondents' families of origin

The NFSS sought to provide as clear a vision as possible of the respondents' household composition during their childhood and adolescence. The survey asked respondents about the marital status of their biological parents both in the past and present. The NFSS also collected "calendar" data from each respondent about their relationship to people who lived with them in their household (for more than 4 months) from birth to age 18, as well as who has lived with them from age 18—after they have left home—to the present. While the calendar data is utilized only sparingly in this study, such rich data enables researchers to document who else has lived with the respondent for virtually their entire life up to the present.

For this particular study, I compare outcomes across eight different types of family-of-origin structure and/or experience. They were constructed from the answers to several questions both in the screener survey and the full survey. It should be noted, however, that their construction reflects an unusual combination of interests—the same-sex romantic behavior of parents, and the experience of household stability or disruption. The eight groups or household settings (with an acronym or short descriptive title) evaluated here, followed by their maximum unweighted analytic sample size, are:

1. IBF: Lived in intact biological family (with mother and father) from 0 to 18, and parents are still married at present ($N = 919$).
2. LM: R reported R's mother had a same-sex romantic (lesbian) relationship with a woman, regardless of any other household transitions ($N = 163$).
3. GF: R reported R's father had a same-sex romantic (gay) relationship with a man, regardless of any other household transitions ($N = 73$).

4. Adopted: R was adopted by one or two strangers at birth or before age 2 ($N = 101$).
5. Divorced later or had joint custody: R reported living with biological mother and father from birth to age 18, but parents are not married at present ($N = 116$).
6. Stepfamily: Biological parents were either never married or else divorced, and R's primary custodial parent *was* married to someone else before R turned 18 ($N = 394$).
7. Single parent: Biological parents were either never married or else divorced, and R's primary custodial parent did *not* marry (or remarry) before R turned 18 ($N = 816$).
8. All others: Includes all other family structure/event combinations, such as respondents with a deceased parent ($N = 406$).

Together these eight groups account for the entire NFSS sample. These eight groups are largely, but not entirely, mutually exclusive in reality. That is, a small minority of respondents might fit more than one group. I have, however, forced their mutual exclusivity here for analytic purposes. For example, a respondent whose mother had a same-sex relationship might also qualify in Group 5 or Group 7, but in this case my analytical interest is in maximizing the sample size of Groups 2 and 3 so the respondent would be placed in Group 2 (LMs). Since Group 3 (GFs) is the smallest and most difficult to locate randomly in the population, its composition trumped that of others, even LMs. (There were 12 cases of respondents who reported both a mother and a father having a same-sex relationship; all are analyzed here as GFs, after ancillary analyses revealed comparable exposure to both their mother and father).

Obviously, different grouping decisions may affect the results. The NFSS, which sought to learn a great deal of information about respondents' families of origin, is well-poised to accommodate alternative grouping strategies, including distinguishing those respondents who lived with their lesbian mother's partner for several years (vs. sparingly or not at all), or early in their childhood (compared to later). Small sample sizes (and thus reduced statistical power) may nevertheless hinder some strategies.

In the results section, for maximal ease, I often make use of the acronyms IBF (child of a still-intact biological family), LM (child of a lesbian mother), and GF (child of a gay father). It is, however, very possible that the same-sex romantic relationships about which the respondents report were *not* framed by those respondents as indicating their own (or their parent's own) understanding of their parent as gay or lesbian or bisexual in sexual *orientation*. Indeed, this is more a study of the children of parents who have had (and in some cases, are still in) same-sex relationships than it is one of children whose parents have self-identified or are "out" as gay or lesbian or bisexual. The particular parental relationships the respondents were queried about are, however, gay or lesbian in content. For the sake of brevity and to avoid entanglement in interminable debates about fixed or fluid orientations, I will regularly refer to these groups as respondents with a gay father or lesbian mother.

2.5. Outcomes of interest

This study presents an overview of 40 outcome measures available in the NFSS. Table 1 presents summary statistics for all variables. Why *these* outcomes? While the survey questionnaire (available online) contains several dozen outcome questions of interest, I elected to report here an overview of those outcomes, seeking to include common and oft-studied variables of interest from a variety of different domains. I include all of the particular indexes we sought to evaluate, and a broad list of outcomes from the emotional, relational, and social domains. Subsequent analyses of the NFSS will no doubt examine other outcomes, as well as examine the same outcomes in different ways.

The dichotomous outcome variables summarized in Table 1 are the following: relationship status, employment status, whether they voted in the last presidential election, and use of public assistance (both currently and while growing up), the latter of which was asked as "Before you were 18 years old, did anyone in your immediate family (that is, in your household) ever receive public assistance (such as welfare payments, food stamps, Medicaid, WIC, or free lunch)?" Respondents were also asked about whether they had ever seriously thought about committing suicide in the past 12 months, and about their utilization of counseling or psychotherapy for treatment of "any problem connected with anxiety, depression, relationships, etc."

The Kinsey scale of sexual behavior was employed, but modified to allow respondents to select the best description of their sexual orientation (rather than behavior). Respondents were asked to choose the description that best fits how they think about themselves: 100% heterosexual, mostly heterosexual but somewhat attracted to people of your own sex, bisexual (that is, attracted to men and women equally), mostly homosexual but somewhat attracted to people of the opposite sex, 100% homosexual, or not sexually attracted to either males or females. For simplicity of presentation, I create a dichotomous measure indicating 100% heterosexual (vs. anything else). Additionally, unmarried respondents who are currently in a relationship were asked if their romantic partner is a man or a woman, allowing construction of a measure of "currently in a same-sex romantic relationship."

All respondents were asked if "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?" Possible answers were: no, never; yes, once; yes, more than once; or not sure. A broader measure about forced sex was asked before it, and read as follows: "Have you ever been physically forced to have any type of sexual activity against your will?" It employs identical possible answers; both have been dichotomized for the analyses (respondents who were "not sure" were not included). Respondents were also asked if they

Table 1
Weighted summary statistics of measures, NFSS.

NFSS variables	Range	Mean	SD	*N*
Currently married	0,1	0.41	0.49	2988
Currently cohabiting	0,1	0.15	0.36	2988
Family received welfare growing up	0,1	0.34	0.47	2669
Currently on public assistance	0,1	0.21	0.41	2952
Currently employed full-time	0,1	0.45	0.50	2988
Currently unemployed	0,1	0.12	0.32	2988
Voted in last presidential election	0,1	0.55	0.50	2960
Bullied while growing up	0,1	0.36	0.48	2961
Ever suicidal during past year	0,1	0.07	0.25	2953
Recently or currently in therapy	0,1	0.11	0.32	2934
Identifies as entirely heterosexual	0,1	0.85	0.36	2946
Is in a same-sex romantic relationship	0,1	0.06	0.23	1056
Had affair while married/cohabiting	0,1	0.19	0.39	1869
Has ever had an STI	0,1	0.11	0.32	2911
Ever touched sexually by parent/adult	0,1	0.07	0.26	2877
Ever forced to have sex against will	0,1	0.13	0.33	2874
Educational attainment	1–5	2.86	1.11	2988
Family-of-origin safety/security	1–5	3.81	0.97	2917
Family-of-origin negative impact	1–5	2.58	0.98	2919
Closeness to biological mother	1–5	4.05	0.87	2249
Closeness to biological father	1–5	3.74	0.98	1346
Self-reported physical health	1–5	3.57	0.94	2964
Self-reported overall happiness	1–5	4.00	1.05	2957
CES-D depression index	1–4	1.89	0.62	2815
Attachment scale (depend)	1–5	2.97	0.84	2848
Attachment scale (anxiety)	1–5	2.51	0.77	2830
Impulsivity scale	1–4	1.88	0.59	2861
Level of household income	1–13	7.42	3.17	2635
Current relationship quality index	1–5	3.98	0.98	2218
Current relationship is in trouble	1–4	2.19	0.96	2274
Frequency of marijuana use	1–6	1.50	1.23	2918
Frequency of alcohol use	1–6	2.61	1.36	2922
Frequency of drinking to get drunk	1–6	1.70	1.09	2922
Frequency of smoking	1–6	2.03	1.85	2922
Frequency of watching TV	1–6	3.15	1.60	2919
Frequency of having been arrested	1–4	1.29	0.63	2951
Frequency pled guilty to non-minor offense	1–4	1.16	0.46	2947
N of female sex partners (among women)	0–11	0.40	1.10	1975
N of female sex partners (among men)	0–11	3.16	2.68	937
N of male sex partners (among women)	0–11	3.50	2.52	1951
N of male sex partners (among men)	0–11	0.40	1.60	944
Age	18–39	28.21	6.37	2988
Female	0,1	0.51	0.50	2988
White	0,1	0.57	0.49	2988
Gay-friendliness of state of residence	1–5	2.58	1.78	2988
Family-of-origin structure groups				
Intact biological family (IBF)	0,1	0.40	0.49	2988
Mother had same-sex relationship (LM)	0,1	0.01	0.10	2988
Father had same-sex relationship (GF)	0,1	0.01	0.75	2988
Adopted age 0–2	0,1	0.01	0.75	2988
Divorced later/joint custody	0,1	0.06	0.23	2988
Stepfamily	0,1	0.17	0.38	2988
Single parent	0,1	0.19	0.40	2988
All others	0,1	0.15	0.36	2988
Mother's education				
Less than high school	0,1	0.15	0.35	2988
Received high school diploma	0,1	0.28	0.45	2988
Some college/associate's degree	0,1	0.26	0.44	2988
Bachelor's degrees	0,1	0.15	0.36	2988
More than bachelor's	0,1	0.08	0.28	2988
Do not know/missing	0,1	0.08	0.28	2988
Family-of-origin income				
$0–20,000	0,1	0.13	0.34	2988
$20,001–40,000	0,1	0.19	0.39	2988
$40,001–75,000	0,1	0.25	0.43	2988
$75,001–100,000	0,1	0.14	0.34	2988
$100,001–150,000	0,1	0.05	0.22	2988

(*continued on next page*)

Table 1 (*continued*)

NFSS variables	Range	Mean	SD	*N*
$150,001–200,000	0,1	0.01	0.11	2988
Above $200,000	0,1	0.01	0.10	2988
Do not know/missing	0,1	0.22	0.42	2988

had ever had a sexually-transmitted infection, and if they had ever had a sexual relationship with someone else while they (the respondent) were married or cohabiting.

Among continuous variables, I included a five-category educational achievement measure, a standard five-point self-reported measure of general physical health, a five-point measure of overall happiness, a 13-category measure of total household income before taxes and deductions last year, and a four-point (frequency) measure of how often the respondent thought their current relationship "might be in trouble" (never once, once or twice, several times, or numerous times). Several continuous variables were constructed from multiple measures, including an eight-measure modified version of the CES-D depression scale, an index of the respondent's reported current (romantic) relationship quality, closeness to the respondent's biological mother and father, and a pair of attachment scales—one assessing dependability and the other anxiety. Finally, a pair of indexes captures (1) the overall safety and security in their family while growing up, and (2) respondents' impressions of negative family-of-origin experiences that continue to affect them. These are part of a multidimensional relationship assessment instrument (dubbed RELATE) designed with the perspective that aspects of family life, such as the quality of the parent's relationship with their children, create a family tone that can be mapped on a continuum from safe/predictable/rewarding to unsafe/chaotic/punishing (Busby et al., 2001). Each of the scales and their component measures are detailed in Appendix B.

Finally, I evaluate nine count outcomes, seven of which are frequency measures, and the other two counts of gender-specific sexual partners. Respondents were asked, "During the past year, how often did you. . ." watch more than 3 h of television in a row, use marijuana, smoke, drink alcohol, and drink with the intent to get drunk. Responses (0–5) ranged from "never" to "every day or almost every day." Respondents were also asked if they have ever been arrested, and if they had ever been convicted of or pled guilty to any charges other than a minor traffic violation. Answers to these two ranged from 0 (no, never) to 3 (yes, numerous times). Two questions about respondents' number of sex partners were asked (of both men and women) in this way: "How many different women have you ever had a sexual relationship with? This includes any female you had sex with, even if it was only once or if you did not know her well." The same question was asked about sexual relationships with men. Twelve responses were possible: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4–6, 7–9, 10–15, 16–20, 21–30, 31–50, 51–99, and 100+.

2.6. Analytic approach

My analytic strategy is to highlight distinctions between the eight family structure/experience groups on the 40 outcome variables, both in a bivariate manner (using a simple *T*-test) and in a multivariate manner using appropriate variable-specific regression techniques—logistic, OLS, Poisson, or negative binomial—and employing controls for respondent's age, race/ethnicity, gender, mother's education, and perceived family-of-origin income, an approach comparable to Rosenfeld's (2010) analysis of differences in children making normal progress through school and the overview article highlighting the findings of the first wave of the Add Health study (Resnick et al., 1997). Additionally, I controlled for having been bullied, the measure for which was asked as follows: "While growing up, children and teenagers typically experience negative interactions with others. We say that someone is bullied when someone else, or a group, says or does nasty and unpleasant things to him or her. We do not consider it bullying when two people quarrel or fight, however. Do you recall ever being bullied by someone else, or by a group, such that you still have vivid, negative memories of it?"

Finally, survey respondents' current state of residence was coded on a scale (1–5) according to how expansive or restrictive its laws are concerning gay marriage and the legal rights of same-sex couples (as of November 2011). Emerging research suggests state-level political realities about gay rights may discernibly shape the lives of GLB residents (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2009; Rostosky et al., 2009). This coding scheme was borrowed from a *Los Angeles Times* effort to map the timeline of state-level rights secured for gay unions. I modified it from a 10-point to a 5-point scale (Times Research Reporting, 2012). I classify the respondent's current state in one of the following five ways:

- 1 = Constitutional amendment banning gay marriage and/or other legal rights.
- 2 = Legal ban on gay marriage and/or other legal rights.
- 3 = No specific laws/bans and/or domestic partnerships are legal.
- 4 = Domestic partnerships with comprehensive protections are legal and/or gay marriages performed elsewhere are recognized.
- 5 = Civil unions are legal and/or gay marriage is legal.

Each case in the NFSS sample was assigned a weight based on the sampling design and their probability of being selected, ensuring a sample that is nationally representative of American adults aged 18–39. These sample weights were used in every

statistical procedure displayed herein unless otherwise noted. The regression models exhibited few ($N < 15$) missing values on the covariates.

This broad overview approach, appropriate for introducing a new dataset, provides a foundation for future, more focused analyses of the outcomes I explore here. There are, after all, far more ways to delineate family structure and experiences—and changes therein—than I have undertaken here. Others will evaluate such groupings differently, and will construct alternative approaches of testing for group differences in what is admittedly a wide diversity of outcome measures.

I would be remiss to claim causation here, since to document that having particular family-of-origin experiences—or the sexual relationships of one's parents—causes outcomes for adult children, I would need to not only document that there is a correlation between such family-of-origin experiences, but that no other plausible factors could be the common cause of any suboptimal outcomes. Rather, my analytic intention is far more modest than that: to evaluate the presence of simple group differences, and—with the addition of several control variables—to assess just how robust such group differences are.

3. Results

3.1. Comparisons with still-intact, biological families (IBFs)

Table 2 displays mean scores on 15 dichotomous outcome variables which can be read as simple percentages, sorted by the eight different family structure/experience groups described earlier. As in Tables 3 and 4, numbers that appear in bold indicate that the group's estimate is statistically different from the young-adult children of IBFs, as discerned by a basic T-test ($p < 0.05$). Numbers that appear with an asterisk (*) beside it indicate that the group's dichotomous variable estimate from a logistic regression model (not shown) is statistically-significantly different from IBFs, after controlling for respondent's age, gender, race/ethnicity, level of mother's education, perceived family-of-origin's income, experience with having been bullied as a youth, and the "gay friendliness" of the respondent's current state of residence.

At a glance, the number of statistically-significant differences between respondents from IBFs and respondents from the other seven types of family structures/experiences is considerable, and in the vast majority of cases the optimal outcome—where one can be readily discerned—favors IBFs. Table 2 reveals 10 (out of 15 possible) statistically-significant differences in simple *t*-tests between IBFs and LMs (the pool of respondents who reported that their mother has had a lesbian relationship), one higher than the number of simple differences (9) between IBFs and respondents from both single-parent and stepfamilies. All but one of those associations is significant in logistic regression analyses contrasting LMs and IBFs (the omitted category).

Beginning at the top of Table 2, the marriage rates of LMs and GFs (those who reported that their father had a gay relationship) are statistically comparable to IBFs, while LMs' cohabitation rate is notable higher than IBFs' (24% vs. 9%, respectively). Sixty-nine (69) percent of LMs and 57% of GFs reported that their family received public assistance at some point while growing up, compared with 17% of IBFs; 38% of LMs said they are currently receiving some form of public assistance, compared with 10% of IBFs. Just under half of all IBFs reported being employed full-time at present, compared with 26% of

Table 2
Mean scores on select dichotomous outcome variables, NFSS (can read as percentage: as in, 0.42 = 42%).

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

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

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

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

Table 3
Mean scores on select continuous outcome variables, NFSS.

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

Bold indicates the mean scores displayed are statistically-significantly different from IBFs (currently intact, bio mother/father household, column 1), without additional controls.
An asterisk (*) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the group's coefficient and that of IBF's, controlling for respondent's age, gender, race/ethnicity, level of mother's education, perceived household income while growing up, experience being bullied as a youth, and state's legislative gay-friendliness, derived from OLS regression models (not shown).
A caret ($^{\wedge}$) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the group's mean and the mean of LM (column 2), without additional controls.

Table 4
Mean scores on select event-count outcome variables, NFSS.

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

Bold indicates the mean scores displayed are statistically-significantly different from IBFs (currently intact, bio mother/father household, column 1), without additional controls.
An asterisk (*) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the group's coefficient and that of IBF's, controlling for respondent's age, gender, race/ethnicity, level of mother's education, perceived household income while growing up, experience being bullied as a youth, and state's legislative gay-friendliness, derived from Poisson or negative binomial regression models (not shown).
A caret ($^{\wedge}$) next to the estimate indicates a statistically-significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the group's mean and the mean of LM (column 2), without additional controls.

LMs. While only 8% of IBF respondents said they were currently unemployed, 28% of LM respondents said the same. LMs were statistically less likely than IBFs to have voted in the 2008 presidential election (41% vs. 57%), and more than twice as likely—19% vs. 8%—to report being currently (or within the past year) in counseling or therapy "for a problem connected with anxiety, depression, relationships, etc.," an outcome that was significantly different after including control variables.

In concurrence with several studies of late, the NFSS reveals that the children of lesbian mothers seem more open to same-sex relationships (Biblarz and Stacey, 2010; Gartrell et al., 2011a,b; Golombok et al., 1997). Although they are not statistically different from most other groups in having a same-sex relationship *at present*, they are much less apt to identify entirely as heterosexual (61% vs. 90% of respondents from IBFs). The same was true of GF respondents—those young adults who said their father had a relationship with another man: 71% of them identified entirely as heterosexual. Other sexual differences are notable among LMs, too: a greater share of daughters of lesbian mothers report being "not sexually attracted to either males or females" than among any other family-structure groups evaluated here (4.1% of female LMs, compared to 0.5% of female IBFs, not shown in Table 2). Exactly why the young-adult children of lesbian mothers are more apt to experience same-sex attraction and behaviors, as well as self-report asexuality, is not clear, but the fact that they do seems consistent across studies. Given that lower rates of heterosexuality characterize other family structure/experience types in the

NFSS, as Table 2 clearly documents, the answer is likely located not simply in parental sexual orientation but in successful cross-sex relationship role modeling, or its absence or scarcity.

Sexual conduct within their romantic relationships is also distinctive: while 13% of IBFs reported having had a sexual relationship with someone else while they were either married or cohabiting, 40% of LMs said the same. In contrast to Gartrell et al.'s (2011a,b) recent, widely-disseminated conclusions about the absence of sexual victimization in the NLLFS data, 23% of LMs said yes when asked whether "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," while only 2% of IBFs responded affirmatively. Since such reports are more common among women than men, I split the analyses by gender (not shown). Among female respondents, 3% of IBFs reported parental (or adult caregiver) sexual contact/victimization, dramatically below the 31% of LMs who reported the same. Just under 10% of female GFs responded affirmatively to the question, an estimate not significantly different from the IBFs.

It is entirely plausible, however, that sexual victimization could have been at the hands of the LM respondents' biological father, prompting the mother to leave the union and—at some point in the future—commence a same-sex relationship. Ancillary (unweighted) analyses of the NFSS, which asked respondents how old they were when the first incident occurred (and can be compared to the household structure calendar, which documents who lived in their household each year up until age 18) reveal this possibility, up to a point: 33% of those LM respondents who said they had been sexually victimized by a parent or adult caregiver reported that they were also living with their biological father in the year that the first incident occurred. Another 29% of victimized LMs reported never having lived with their biological father at all. Just under 34% of LM respondents who said they had at some point lived with their mother's same-sex partner reported a first-time incident at an age that was equal to or higher than when they first lived with their mother's partner. Approximately 13% of victimized LMs reported living with a foster parent the year when the first incident occurred. In other words, there is no obvious trend to the timing of first victimization and when the respondent may have lived with their biological father or their mother's same-sex partner, nor are we suggesting by whom the respondent was most likely victimized. Future exploration of the NFSS's detailed household structure calendar offers some possibility for clarification.

The elevated LM estimate of sexual victimization is not the only estimate of increased victimization. Another more general question about forced sex, "Have you ever been physically forced to have any type of sexual activity against your will" also displays significant differences between IBFs and LMs (and GFs). The question about forced sex was asked *before* the question about sexual contact with a parent or other adult and may include incidents of it but, by the numbers, clearly includes additional circumstances. Thirty-one percent of LMs indicated they had, at some point in their life, been forced to have sex against their will, compared with 8% of IBFs and 25% of GFs. Among female respondents, 14% of IBFs reported forced sex, compared with 46% of LMs and 52% of GFs (both of the latter estimates are statistically-significantly different from that reported by IBFs).

While I have so far noted several distinctions between IBFs and GFs—respondents who said their father had a gay relationship—there are simply fewer statistically-significant distinctions to note between IBFs and GFs than between IBFs and LMs, which may or may not be due in part to the smaller sample of respondents with gay fathers in the NFSS, and the much smaller likelihood of having lived with their gay father while he was in a same-sex relationship. Only six of 15 measures in Table 2 reveal statistically-significant differences in the regression models (but only one in a bivariate environment). After including controls, the children of a gay father were statistically more apt (than IBFs) to receive public assistance while growing up, to have voted in the last election, to have thought recently about committing suicide, to ever report a sexually-transmitted infection, have experienced forced sex, and were less likely to self-identify as entirely heterosexual. While other outcomes reported by GFs often differed from IBFs, statistically-significant differences were not as regularly detected.

Although my attention has been primarily directed at the inter-group differences between IBFs, LMs, and GFs, it is worth noting that LMs are hardly alone in displaying numerous differences with IBFs. Respondents who lived in stepfamilies or single-parent families displayed nine simple differences in Table 2. Besides GFs, adopted respondents displayed the fewest simple differences (three).

Table 3 displays mean scores on 14 continuous outcomes. As in Table 2, bold indicates simple statistically-significant outcome differences with young-adult respondents from still-intact, biological families (IBFs) and an asterisk indicates a regression coefficient (models not shown) that is significantly different from IBFs after a series of controls. Consistent with Table 2, eight of the estimates for LMs are statistically different from IBFs. Five of the eight differences are significant as regression estimates. The young-adult children of women who have had a lesbian relationship fare worse on educational attainment, family-of-origin safety/security, negative impact of family-of-origin, the CES-D (depression) index, one of two attachment scales, report worse physical health, smaller household incomes than do respondents from still-intact biological families, and think that their current romantic relationship is in trouble more frequently.

The young-adult GF respondents were likewise statistically distinct from IBF respondents on seven of 14 continuous outcomes, all of which were significantly different when evaluated in regression models. When contrasted with IBFs, GFs reported more modest educational attainment, worse scores on the family-of-origin safety/security and negative impact indexes, less closeness to their biological mother, greater depression, a lower score on the current (romantic) relationship quality index, and think their current romantic relationship is in trouble more frequently.

As in Table 2, respondents who reported living in stepfamilies or in single-parent households also exhibit numerous simple statistical differences from IBFs—on nine and 10 out of 14 outcomes, respectively—most of which remain significant in

the regression models. On only four of 14 outcomes do adopted respondents appear distinctive (three of which remain significant after introducing controls).

Table 4 displays mean scores on nine event counts, sorted by the eight family structure/experience groups. The NFSS asked all respondents about experience with male and female sexual partners, but I report them here separately by gender. LM respondents report statistically greater marijuana use, more frequent smoking, watch television more often, have been arrested more, pled guilty to non-minor offenses more, and—among women—report greater numbers of both female and male sex partners than do IBF respondents. Female LMs reported an average of just over one female sex partner in their lifetimes, as well as four male sex partners, in contrast to female IBFs (0.22 and 2.79, respectively). Male LMs report an average of 3.46 female sex partners and 1.48 male partners, compared with 2.70 and 0.20, respectively, among male IBFs. Only the number of male partners among men, however, displays significant differences (after controls are included).

Among GFs, only three bivariate distinctions appear. However, six distinctions emerge after regression controls: they are more apt than IBFs to smoke, have been arrested, pled guilty to non-minor offenses, and report more numerous sex partners (except for the number of female sex partners among male GFs). Adopted respondents display no simple differences from IBFs, while the children of stepfamilies and single parents each display six significant differences with young adults from still-intact, biological mother/father families.

Although I have paid much less attention to most of the other groups whose estimates also appear in Tables 2–4, it is worth noting how seldom the estimates of young-adult children who were adopted by strangers (before age 2) differ statistically from the children of still-intact biological families. They display the fewest simple significant differences—seven—across the 40 outcomes evaluated here. Given that such adoptions are typically the result of considerable self-selection, it should not surprise that they display fewer differences with IBFs.

To summarize, then, in 25 of 40 outcomes, there are simple statistically-significant differences between IBFs and LMs, those whose mothers had a same-sex relationship. After controls, there are 24 such differences. There are 24 simple differences between IBFs and stepfamilies, and 24 statistically-significant differences after controls. Among single (heterosexual) parents, there are 25 simple differences before controls and 21 after controls. Between GFs and IBFs, there are 11 and 19 such differences, respectively.

3.2. Summary of differences between LMs and other family structures/experiences

Researchers sometimes elect to evaluate the outcomes of children of gay and lesbian parents by comparing them not directly to stable heterosexual marriages but to other types of households, since it is often the case—and it is certainly true of the NFSS—that a gay or lesbian parent first formed a heterosexual union prior to "coming out of the closet," and witnessing the dissolution of that union (Tasker, 2005). So comparing the children of such parents with those who experienced no union dissolution is arguably unfair. The NFSS, however, enables researchers to compare outcomes across a variety of other types of family-structural history. While I will not explore in-depth here all the statistically-significant differences between LMs, GFs, and other groups *besides* IBFs, a few overall observations are merited.

Of the 239 possible between-group differences here—not counting those differences with Group 1 (IBFs) already described earlier—the young-adult children of lesbian mothers display 57 (or 24% of total possible) that are significant at the $p < 0.05$ level (indicated in Tables 2–4 with a caret), and 44 (or 18% of total) that are significant after controls (not shown). The majority of these differences are in suboptimal directions, meaning that LMs display worse outcomes. The young-adult children of gay men, on the other hand, display only 11 (or 5% of total possible) between-group differences that are statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level, and yet 24 (or 10% of total) that are significant after controls (not shown).

In the NFSS, then, the young-adult children of a mother who has had a lesbian relationship display more significant distinctions with other respondents than do the children of a gay father. This may be the result of genuinely different experiences of their family transitions, the smaller sample size of children of gay men, or the comparatively-rarer experience of living with a gay father (only 42% of such respondents reported ever living with their father while he was in a same-sex relationship, compared with 91% who reported living with their mother while she was in a same-sex relationship).

4. Discussion

Just how different are the adult children of men and women who pursue same-sex romantic (i.e., gay and lesbian) relationships, when evaluated using population-based estimates from a random sample? The answer, as might be expected, depends on to whom you compare them. When compared with children who grew up in biologically (still) intact, mother–father families, the children of women who reported a same-sex relationship look markedly different on numerous outcomes, including many that are obviously suboptimal (such as education, depression, employment status, or marijuana use). On 25 of 40 outcomes (or 63%) evaluated here, there are bivariate statistically-significant ($p < 0.05$) differences between children from still-intact, mother/father families and those whose mother reported a lesbian relationship. On 11 of 40 outcomes (or 28%) evaluated here, there are bivariate statistically-significant ($p < 0.05$) differences between children from still-intact, mother/father families and those whose father reported a gay relationship. Hence, there are differences in both

comparisons, but there are many more differences by any method of analysis in comparisons between young-adult children of IBFs and LMs than between IBFs and GFs.

While the NFSS may best capture what might be called an "earlier generation" of children of same-sex parents, and includes among them many who witnessed a failed heterosexual union, the basic statistical comparisons between this group and those of others, especially biologically-intact, mother/father families, suggests that notable differences on many outcomes do in fact exist. This is inconsistent with claims of "no differences" generated by studies that have commonly employed far more narrow samples than this one.

Goldberg (2010) aptly asserts that many existing studies were conducted primarily comparing children of heterosexual divorced and lesbian divorced mothers, potentially leading observers to erroneously attribute to parental sexual orientation the corrosive effects of enduring parental divorce. Her warning is well-taken, and it is one that the NFSS cannot entirely mitigate. Yet when compared with other young adults who experienced household transitions and who witnessed parents forming new romantic relationships—for example, stepfamilies—the children of lesbian mothers looked (statistically) significantly different just under 25% of the time (and typically in suboptimal directions). Nevertheless, the children of mothers who have had same-sex relationships are far less apt to differ from stepfamilies and single parents than they are from still-intact biological families.

Why the divergence between the findings in this study and those from so many previous ones? The answer lies in part with the small or nonprobability samples so often relied upon in nearly all previous studies—they have very likely underestimated the number and magnitude of real differences between the children of lesbian mothers (and to a lesser extent, gay fathers) and those raised in other types of households. While the architects of such studies have commonly and appropriately acknowledged their limitations, practically—since they are often the only studies being conducted—their results are treated as providing information about gay and lesbian household experiences *in general*. But this study, based on a rare large probability sample, reveals far greater diversity in the experience of lesbian motherhood (and to a lesser extent, gay fatherhood) than has been acknowledged or understood.

Given that the characteristics of the NFSS's sample of children of LMs and GFs are close to estimates of the same offered by demographers using the American Community Study, one conclusion from the analyses herein is merited: the sample-selection bias problem in very many studies of gay and lesbian parenting is not incidental, but likely profound, rendering the ability of much past research to offer valid interpretations of *average* household experiences of children with a lesbian or gay parent suspect at best. Most snowball-sample-based research has, instead, shed light on *above-average* household experiences.

While studies of family structure often locate at least modest benefits that accrue to the children of married biological parents, some scholars attribute much of the benefit to socioeconomic-status differences between married parents and those parents in other types of relationships (Biblarz and Raftery, 1999). While this is likely true of the NFSS as well, the results presented herein controlled not only for socioeconomic status differences between families of origin, but also political-geographic distinctions, age, gender, race/ethnicity, and the experience of having been bullied (which was reported by 53% of LMs but only 35% of IBFs).

To be sure, those NFSS respondents who reported that a parent of theirs had had a romantic relationship with a member of the same sex are a very diverse group: some experienced numerous household transitions, and some did not. Some of their parents may have remained in a same-sex relationship, while others did not. Some may self-identify as lesbian or gay, while others may not. I did not explore in detail the diversity of household experiences here, given the overview nature of this study. But the richness of the NFSS—which has annual calendar data for household transitions from birth to age 18 *and* from age 18 to the present—allows for closer examination of many of these questions.

Nevertheless, to claim that there are few meaningful statistical differences between the different groups evaluated here would be to state something that is empirically inaccurate. Minimally, the population-based estimates presented here suggest that a good deal more attention must be paid to the real diversity among gay and lesbian parent experiences in America, just as it long has been among heterosexual households. Child outcomes in stable, "planned" GLB families and those that are the product of previous heterosexual unions are quite likely distinctive, as previous studies' conclusions would suggest. Yet as demographers of gay and lesbian America continue to note—and as the NFSS reinforces—planned GLB households only comprise a portion (and an unknown one at that) of all GLB households with children.

Even if the children in planned GLB families exhibit better outcomes than those from failed heterosexual unions, the former still exhibits a diminished context of kin altruism (like adoption, step-parenting, or nonmarital childbirth), which have typically proven to be a risk setting, on average, for raising children when compared with married, biological parenting (Miller et al., 2000). In short, if same-sex parents are able to raise children with no differences, despite the kin distinctions, it would mean that same-sex couples are able to do something that heterosexual couples in step-parenting, adoptive, and cohabiting contexts have themselves not been able to do—replicate the optimal childrearing environment of married, biological-parent homes (Moore et al., 2002). And studies focusing on parental roles or household divisions of labor in planned GLB families will fail to reveal—because they have not measured it—how their children fare as adults.

The between-group comparisons described above also suggest that those respondents with a lesbian mother and those with a gay father do not always exhibit comparable outcomes in young adulthood. While the sample size of gay fathers in the NFSS was modest, any monolithic ideas about same-sex parenting experiences in general are not supported by these analyses.

Although the NFSS offers strong support for the notion that there are significant differences among young adults that correspond closely to the parental behavior, family structures, and household experiences during their youth, I have not and will not speculate here on causality, in part because the data are not optimally designed to do so, and because the causal reckoning for so many different types of outcomes is well beyond what an overview manuscript like this one could ever purport to accomplish. Focused (and more complex) analyses of unique outcomes, drawing upon idiosyncratic, domain-specific conceptual models, is recommended for scholars who wish to more closely assess the functions that the number, gender, and sexual decision-making of parents may play in young adults' lives. I am thus not suggesting that growing up with a lesbian mother or gay father causes suboptimal outcomes *because of* the sexual orientation or sexual behavior of the parent; rather, my point is more modest: the groups display numerous, notable distinctions, especially when compared with young adults whose biological mother and father remain married.

There is more that this article does not accomplish, including closer examinations of subpopulations, consideration of more outcomes and comparisons between other groups, and stronger tests of statistical significance—such as multiple regression with more numerous independent variables, or propensity score matching. That is what the NFSS is designed to foster. This article serves as a call for such study, as well as an introduction to the data and to its sampling and measurement strengths and abilities. Future studies would optimally include a more significant share of children from planned gay families, although their relative scarcity in the NFSS suggests that their appearance in even much larger probability samples will remain infrequent for the foreseeable future. The NFSS, despite significant efforts to randomly over-sample such populations, nevertheless was more apt to survey children whose parents exhibited gay and lesbian relationship behavior *after* being in a heterosexual union. This pattern may remain more common today than many scholars suppose.

5. Conclusion

As scholars of same-sex parenting aptly note, same-sex couples have and will continue to raise children. American courts are finding arguments against gay marriage decreasingly persuasive (Rosenfeld, 2007). This study is intended to neither undermine nor affirm any legal rights concerning such. The tenor of the last 10 years of academic discourse about gay and lesbian parents suggests that there is little to nothing about them that might be negatively associated with child development, and a variety of things that might be uniquely positive. The results of analyzing a rare large probability sample reported herein, however, document numerous, consistent differences among young adults who reported maternal lesbian behavior (and to a lesser extent, paternal gay behavior) prior to age 18. While previous studies suggest that children in planned GLB families seem to fare comparatively well, their actual representativeness among all GLB families in the US may be more modest than research based on convenience samples has presumed.

Although the findings reported herein may be explicable in part by a variety of forces uniquely problematic for child development in lesbian and gay families—including a lack of social support for parents, stress exposure resulting from persistent stigma, and modest or absent legal security for their parental and romantic relationship statuses—the empirical claim that no notable differences exist must go. While it is certainly accurate to affirm that sexual orientation or parental sexual behavior need have nothing to do with the *ability* to be a good, effective parent, the data evaluated herein using population-based estimates drawn from a large, nationally-representative sample of young Americans suggest that it may affect the *reality* of family experiences among a significant number.

Do children need a married mother and father to turn out well as adults? No, if we observe the many anecdotal accounts with which all Americans are familiar. Moreover, there are many cases in the NFSS where respondents have proven resilient and prevailed as adults in spite of numerous transitions, be they death, divorce, additional or diverse romantic partners, or remarriage. But the NFSS also clearly reveals that children appear most apt to succeed well as adults—on multiple counts and across a variety of domains—when they spend their entire childhood with their married mother and father, and especially when the parents remain married to the present day. Insofar as the share of intact, biological mother/father families continues to shrink in the United States, as it has, this portends growing challenges within families, but also heightened dependence on public health organizations, federal and state public assistance, psychotherapeutic resources, substance use programs, and the criminal justice system.

Appendix A. Comparison of weighted NFSS results with parallel national survey results on selected demographic and lifestyle variables, US adults (in percentages)

	NFSS 2011, *N* = 941 (18–23)	NSYR 2007–2008, *N* = 2520 (18–23)	**NFSS** 2011, *N* = 1123 (24–32)	**Add Health** 2007–2008, *N* = 15,701 (24–32)	**NFSS** 2011, *N* = 2988 (18–39)	**NSFG** 2006–2010, *N* = 16,851 (18–39)	**CPS ASEC** 2011, *N* = 58,788 (18–39)
Gender							
Male	52.6	48.3	47.3	50.6	49.4	49.8	50.4
Female	47.4	51.7	52.8	49.4	50.6	50.2	49.6

Appendix A (*continued*)

	NFSS 2011, *N* = 941 (18–23)	NSYR 2007–2008, *N* = 2520 (18–23)	**NFSS** 2011, *N* = 1123 (24–32)	**Add Health** 2007–2008, *N* = 15,701 (24–32)	**NFSS** 2011, *N* = 2988 (18–39)	**NSFG** 2006–2010, *N* = 16,851 (18–39)	**CPS ASEC** 2011, *N* = 58,788 (18–39)
Age							
18–23					28.9	28.6	28.2
24–32					41.2	40.6	42.1
33–39					29.9	30.9	29.8
Race/ethnicity							
White, NH	54.2	68.3	60.2	69.2	57.7	61.6	59.6
Black, NH	11.0	15.0	13.0	15.9	12.6	13.3	13.2
Hispanic	24.9	11.2	20.7	10.8	20.8	18.6	19.5
Other (or multiple), NH	10.0	5.5	6.2	4.2	8.9	6.5	7.8
Region							
Northeast	18.9	11.8	16.5		17.6		17.5
Midwest	18.7	25.6	23.3		21.1		21.2
South	34.3	39.1	39.6		36.7		37.0
West	28.2	23.5	20.6		24.6		24.4
Mother's education (BA or above)	28.4	33.3	24.6	21.9	25.3	22.2	
Respondent's education (BA or above)	5.3	3.8	33.7	30.0	26.5	24.2	
Household income (current)							
Under $10,000	21.0		9.7	5.6	11.9	9.5	5.7
$10,000–19,999	13.3		9.1	6.9	9.2	13.1	7.4
$20,000–29,999	11.6		10.3	10.1	10.5	13.5	9.5
$30,000–39,999	8.0		11.0	11.1	9.6	13.4	9.4
$40,000–49,999	6.5		12.8	11.8	9.9	8.5	9.1
$50,000–74,999	14.9		22.3	24.3	19.2	19.5	20.3
$75,000 or more	24.7		24.9	30.2	29.8	22.7	38.6
Ever had sex	66.5	75.6	90.6	93.9	85.6	91.2	
Never been married	89.3	92.8	45.7	50.0	51.7	52.3	54.4
Currently married	8.0	6.9	44.9	44.6	40.6	39.2	37.9
Church attendance							
Once a week or more	18.4	20.2	22.1	16.0	22.3	26.2	
Never	32.3	35.6	31.2	32.1	31.7	25.8	
Not religious	21.1	24.7	22.5	20.2	22.0	21.7	
Self-reported health							
Poor	1.8	1.5	1.0	1.2	1.5	0.7	
Fair	8.4	9.2	11.0	7.9	10.7	5.3	
Good	28.7	26.7	37.6	33.5	33.9	24.9	
Very Good	39.6	37.5	35.7	38.2	37.3	40.9	
Excellent	21.5	25.2	14.8	19.1	16.7	28.3	
Never drinks alcohol	30.5	21.9	22.4	26.1	25.4	18.7	

Appendix B. Construction of outcome indexes

B.1. CES-D (depression) index (8 items, $\alpha = 0.87$)

Respondents were asked to think about the past 7 days, and assess how often each of the following things were true about them. Answer categories ranged from "never or rarely" (0) to "most of the time or all of the time" (3). Some items were reverse-coded for the index variable (e.g., "You felt happy."):

1. You were bothered by things that usually do not bother you.
2. You could not shake off the blues, even with help from your family and your friends.
3. You felt you were just as good as other people.
4. You had trouble keeping your mind on what you were doing.
5. You felt depressed.
6. You felt happy.
7. You enjoyed life.
8. You felt sad.

B.2. Current romantic relationship quality (6 items, $\alpha = 0.96$)

Respondents were asked to assess their current romantic relationship. Answer categories ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5):

1. We have a good relationship.
2. My relationship with my partner is very healthy.
3. Our relationship is strong.
4. My relationship with my partner makes me happy.
5. I really feel like part of a team with my partner.
6. Our relationship is pretty much perfect.

B.3. Family-of-origin relationship safety/security (4 items, $\alpha = 0.90$)

Respondents were asked to evaluate the overall atmosphere in their family while growing up by responding to four statements whose answer categories ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5):

1. My family relationships were safe, secure, and a source of comfort.
2. We had a loving atmosphere in our family.
3. All things considered, my childhood years were happy.
4. My family relationships were confusing, inconsistent, and unpredictable.

B.4. Family-of-origin negative impact (3 items, $\alpha = 0.74$)

Respondents were asked to evaluate the present-day impact of their family-of-origin experiences by responding to three statements whose answer categories ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5):

1. There are matters from my family experience that I am still having trouble dealing with or coming to terms with.
2. There are matters from my family experience that negatively affect my ability to form close relationships.
3. I feel at peace about anything negative that happened to me in the family in which I grew up.

B.5. Impulsivity (4 items, $\alpha = 0.76$)

Respondents were asked to respond to four statements about their decision-making, especially as it concerns risk-taking and new experiences. Answer categories ranged from 1 (never or rarely) to 4 (most or all of the time):

1. When making a decision, I go with my 'gut feeling' and do not think much about the consequences of each alternative.
2. I like new and exciting experiences, even if I have to break the rules.
3. I am an impulsive person.
4. I like to take risks.

B.6. Closeness to biological mother and father (6 items, $\alpha = 0.89$ and 0.92)

Respondents were asked to evaluate their current relationship with up to four parent figures—who they reported living with for at least 3 years when they were 0–18 years old—by reporting the frequency of six parent–child interactions. For each parent figure, these six items were coded and summed into a parental closeness index. From these, I derived indices of closeness to the respondent's biological mother and biological father. Response categories ranged from never (1) to always (5):

1. How often do you talk openly with your parent about things that are important to you?
2. How often does your parent really listen to you when you want to talk?
3. How often does your parent explicitly express affection or love for you?
4. Would your parent help you if you had a problem?
5. If you needed money, would you ask your parent for it?
6. How often is your parent interested in the things you do?

B.7. Attachment (depend, 6 items, $\alpha = 0.80$; anxiety, 6 items, $\alpha = 0.82$)

For a pair of attachment measures, respondents were asked to rate their general feelings about romantic relationships, both past and present, in response to 12 items. Response categories ranged from "not at all characteristic of me" (1) to "very characteristic of me" (5). Items 1–6 were coded and summed into a "depend" scale, with higher scores denoting greater comfort with depending upon others. Items 7–12 were coded and summed into an anxiety scale, with higher scores denoting greater anxiety in close relationships, in keeping with the original Adult Attachment Scale developed by Collins and Read (1990). The measures employed were:

1. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on others.
2. I am comfortable depending on others.
3. I find that people are never there when you need them.
4. I know that people will be there when I need them.
5. I find it difficult to trust others completely.
6. I am not sure that I can always depend on others to be there when I need them.
7. I do not worry about being abandoned.
8. In relationships, I often worry that my partner does not really love me.
9. I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like.
10. In relationships, I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me.
11. I want to merge completely with another person.
12. My desire to merge sometimes scares people away.

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