

## Politicized Science

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Published online: 13 August 2013  
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**Abstract** Publication of the study, *How Different are the Adult Children of Parents Who Have Same-Sex Relationships? Findings from the New Family Structures Study* (Regnerus, 2012), caused a firestorm in the scientific community. Unlike previous studies, it found differences between the children raised by parents who had experienced a same-sex relationship as compared to those raised by heterosexual parents. Most would acknowledge that policy-relevant social science is seldom value free and frequently gets politicized, but the Regnerus controversy illustrates that it is value dependent, with scientist deeply embedded in its politicization. The kind of science that gets conducted, how findings are interpreted and received, and the degree of critical scrutiny such studies receive is dependent upon scientists' sociopolitical views. Making every effort to apply the same standards when scrutinizing studies that provide politically palatable results as those that do not, and promoting rather than discouraging ideological diversity among researchers and their funders, are the best way to ensure value-pluralism and the integrity of science in the oft-politicized field of social science.

**Keywords** Gay parenting · Scientific groupthink · Bias · Politics and Science · Politically · Correct science

The study, *How Different are the Adult Children of Parents Who Have Same-Sex Relationships? Findings from the New Family Structures Study* (Regnerus 2012a), published in the premier academic journal *Social Science Research*, caused a firestorm in the scientific community (see Bartlett 2012). Unlike most previous studies, Regnerus found that children of parents who had experienced a same-sex relationship fared worse than children of heterosexual parents on measures of social, emotional, and psychological adjustment as

well as educational attainment, employment history, need for public assistance, substance abuse, and criminal justice system involvement.

The reaction to the Regnerus study was swift and harsh. Many of his academic colleagues said it was fatally flawed. Many questioned the motives of the author, reviewers, and journal editor. Did they have an anti-gay political agenda? Some insinuated conflicts of interest, perhaps even a tacit conspiracy among the study's author, its funders, and certain reviewers.

The study may be fatally flawed, or it may make a unique contribution to the literature despite its flaws. Whatever the case, its significance lies less in the study itself (since it is only one study in a corpus of research on lesbian/gay parenting) than in what the controversy tells us about the politicization of science, the ways in which scientists are deeply imbedded in that politicization, and how best to promote value-pluralistic science. It illustrates how different standards for assessing scientific worth are applied depending upon whether a study produces results consistent with the scientists' own political views.

Consider the following thought experiment (see Reich et al. 2007). *Suppose Regnerus had conducted an identical study (having the same methodological flaws) that had produced results consistent with previous studies, finding no differences between the children of lesbian/gay and heterosexual parents. Would this one study (among the over 60 studies on lesbian/gay parenting) receive the same criticism, or any criticism at all, from the academic community? Would 201 scholars send a letter to the Editors of Social Science Research objecting to the Journal's publication of the study (Gates et al. 2012)? Would Professor Sherkat (2012) publish a tough critique of the study and journal review process? Would the author's former department chair publish an OpEd saying that she was "furious" about her junior colleague's "pseudoscience" (Umberson 2012)? Would academics make allegations in blogs and other forums about the integrity of the author, journal editor, and editorial review process? Would*

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the University of Texas subject Regnerus to an intrusive investigation for possible scientific misconduct, triggered not by any proffered evidence of scientific fraud but because critics questioned the study design and results, all disclosed in the article? (The investigation found no evidence of scientific fraud or ethical misconduct, University of Texas, 2012).

Would there be the same outrage, the same “nastiness and vituperation,” as the journal editor described it (Wright 2012, p. 1339)? *We all know the answers to these questions*. There have been many publicized and often-cited studies on lesbian parenting that, as discussed below, contain significant methodological flaws and limitations. None were widely attacked by other scientists.

This is not the first time that science has clashed with politics. There was the celebrated controversy (see Redding 1998) surrounding *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein and Murray 1996), a book about the heritability of intelligence and the libertarian or conservative policy implications thereof. The Regnerus case unfolded similarly to the controversy surrounding the publication of a meta-analysis of child sexual abuse studies that was published in the premier journal *Psychological Bulletin* (Rind et al. 1998). It reported a number of controversial findings, most especially that childhood sexual abuse often caused few long lasting psychological effects. The article caused outrage. The study was attacked as substandard, even though it followed standard meta-analytic techniques. Many questioned the authors’ motives and alleged scientific misconduct. As in the Regnerus case, the journal’s editor (who, like the Editor of *Social Science Research*, sent the paper out to six highly respected reviewers) was attacked and commentaries about the controversy were published (e.g., Lilienfeld 2002; Rind et al. 2000).

What does the Regnerus controversy show about the politics of doing science? Most would acknowledge that science, particularly policy-relevant social science, is seldom value free. But the Regnerus controversy illustrates that oftentimes it is *value dependent*. The kind of science that gets conducted on policy-relevant questions, how findings are interpreted and received, and the degree of critical scrutiny such studies receive frequently is dependent upon scientists’ sociopolitical views.

### Scientific Groupthink

In a commentary published in *Social Science Research*, Professor Barrett (2012) questions “how [the Journal editor] could have published such a problematic and *politically insensitive article*” (p. 1356, emphasis added). No statement could be more revealing of what this controversy is really about: a study having findings that, at least for social scientists, are politically incorrect.

The Regnerus case illustrates a sociopolitical groupthink operating in the social scientific community. Although

Professor Sherkat (2012, p. 1347) asserts that “family scholars tend to be conservative,” surveys of the professoriate consistently find faculties (including those in disciplines closest to family studies like sociology and psychology) to be very lopsidedly liberal (Klein and Stern 2009a), and few would argue that conservatives dominate the field (Glenn 2001). The political imbalance is particularly acute in the social sciences, with conservative-liberal ratios of between 8:1 and 30:1 in most disciplines (Klein and Stern 2009a), and particularly with respect to social issues (Inbar and Lammers 2012) like gay marriage.

Such homogeneity of sociopolitical views among social scientists almost invariably leads to “groupthink,” a phenomenon that occurs when group members have relatively homogeneous backgrounds or ideological views (Janis 1982). With this groupthink comes the negative stereotyping and discounting of conservative perspectives, the failure to consider conservative-friendly (as compared with liberal-friendly) question framing, outcome measure selection, and data interpretation, as well as self-censorship and pressure on dissenters (Klein and Stern 2009b). A national survey of psychology professors (published in *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, a leading academic journal of the *Association for Psychological Science*), found that one in four reported that they would be less likely to give a positive recommendation on a journal manuscript or grant application having a conservative perspective, and one in six would be less likely to invite conservative colleagues to participate in a symposium (Inbar and Lammers 2012). In sociology, Smith (2012) notes that:

The temptation . . . to advance a political agenda is too often indulged in sociology, especially by activist faculty in certain fields, like marriage, family, sex, and gender . . . Research programs that advance narrow agendas compatible with particular ideologies are privileged . . . the influence of progressive orthodoxy in sociology is evident in decisions made by graduate students, junior faculty, and even senior faculty about what, why, and how to research, publish, and teach . . . The result is predictable: Play it politically safe, avoid controversial questions, publish the right conclusions (Smith 2012, p. 3)

Regnerus did not, however, play it safe. He did not publish the right conclusions on a politically controversial topic. Politically-correct sociologists, on the other hand, enjoy certain privileges in a very politically conscious and liberal discipline (Jussim 2012). They can, for example, “paint caricature-like pictures based on the most extreme and irrational beliefs of those who differ from [their] ideologically without feeling any penalty for doing so,” and “can systematically misinterpret, misrepresent, or ignore research in such a manner as to sustain [their] political views and be confident that such misinterpretations . . . are unlikely to be recognized by [their] colleagues” (Jussim 2012, p. 504–505). And so it is with Regnerus, who

critics portray as a scientist corrupted by a right-wing, antigay agenda. They, on the other hand, are uncorrupted by a LGBT-rights agenda. Indeed, such an agenda may be seen as essential, with “the presupposition that ideological purity . . . [is] a pathway to empirical truth” (Horowitz 2001, p. 53), along with the belief “that social science should be an instrument for social change and thus should promote the ‘correct’ values and ideological positions” (Glenn 2001, p. 13). Recall the inquiry of the Journal editor about his commitment to gay rights.

No wonder there is so little research by academics that arguably supports conservative policy perspectives. When such research is published, the Regnerus controversy illustrates how it may be received. Critics used the liberal norms and privileges of their discipline (Jussim 2012; Prentice 2012) to marginalize the Regnerus study. As discussed below, they have applied higher evaluative standards to the Regnerus study compared to equally limited or flawed studies producing politically-correct results.

### Groupthink Leads to Differential Scientific Scrutiny

*“If when a study yields an unpopular conclusion it is subjected to greater scrutiny, and more effort is expended towards its refutation, an obvious bias to ‘find what the community is looking for’ will have been introduced” (Loury 1994, p. 142) (emphasis added).*

Professor Sherkat (2012, p. 1348–1349) opined, authoritatively and with emphasis in the pages of *Social Science Research*, that “*nobody should expect to publish a paper in a journal of the tier of Social Science Research on crucial questions using data collected in this manner.*” But a point-by-point methodological comparison of the Regnerus study alongside previous lesbian parenting studies reveals the selective scrutiny applied by the critics of the Regnerus study.

Consider the *sample sizes* in previous studies: most studies comparing lesbian parents with heterosexual parents included 15 to 55 gay or lesbian participants, providing enough statistical power only to detect moderate to large differences and carrying a substantial risk of failing to detect relevant differences (Lerner and Nagai 2001; Marks 2012; Redding 2008; Schumm 2005). *The Regnerus study* included a sample of 236 adult children of parents (175 mothers, 73 fathers) who had a same-sex relationship and a total sample across all comparison groups of 2,988. Regnerus’ study was “better situated than virtually all previous studies to detect [small or moderate] differences,” which is what he found (Amato 2012, p. 772). Much of family, parenting, and child development research finds relatively modest differences or statistical “effect sizes” (Amato 2012), yet they often are important determinants of outcomes (Lerner and Nagai 2001).

Consider the *sample selection* in previous studies: mostly “convenience samples” of volunteers recruited through lesbian organizations, advertisements in lesbian publications, and/or through other study participants (“snowball sampling”). Only a few studies used random or national sampling techniques. Many had low response rates, and in most, the participants were not “blind” because they knew what the study was designed to investigate. *Regnerus* used a random national sample of data collected by a national research firm that has provided data for numerous studies (Regnerus 2012b; Schumm 2012b), including several published by a leading LGBT researcher (Herek 2009; Herek et al. 2010).

Consider the *representativeness of the samples* in previous studies: most were exclusively or overwhelmingly white, middle- and upper-middle class parents living in politically-liberal urban areas (e.g., often the San Francisco bay area), with educational and income levels substantially higher than those in the lesbian population or heterosexual comparison group (Lerner and Nagai 2001; Redding 2008; Schumm 2005). The participants in the *Regnerus study*, having been drawn from a large national random weighted-probability sample, represent a broad range of socioeconomic status, race, educational attainment, and geographic location. The sample was disproportionately minority (only 45 % were white) and female (67 %), yet the demographics of his sample are closer than that of other studies to the lesbian parenting population. National data indicates that roughly 40 % of children living with a lesbian mother are African-American or Hispanic (Regnerus 2012a).

Consider the *comparison groups* used in previous studies: many did not have any matched or heterosexual control groups, most that did had non-representative lesbian and heterosexual samples, and the few extant studies of gay fathers had particularly small sample sizes (Lerner and Nagai 2001; Marks 2012; Redding 2008; Schumm 2005). *The Regnerus study* compared 8 different family types that included 75 children of fathers who had experienced a gay relationship. Because family stability may be a key factor in determining child outcomes and because lesbian couples may experience higher levels of relationship instability (Regnerus 2012a, b; Schumm 2005), the choice to use as a comparison (or “control”) group intact biological families, which are the most stable, is not unreasonable (Regnerus 2012b).

Consider *how “gay” or “lesbian” parents were identified* in previous studies. Most studies included participants who had been in an openly lesbian relationship (Lerner and Nagai 2001; Redding 2008; Schumm 2005), defined relative to only one period in the child’s life (e.g., at age 17, or for a five-year period) (Marks 2012; Schumm 2012b). Many studies have confounded family structure and parental sexual orientation. As one commentator noted, “visible lesbian parenthood is such a recent phenomenon that most studies are necessarily of the children of a transitional generation of self-identified lesbians and gay men who become parents in the context of

heterosexual relationships that dissolved before or after they assumed a gay identity . . . [making] it impossible to fully distinguish the impact of a parent's sexual orientation on a child from the impact of such factors as divorce, re-mating, the secrecy of the closet, the process of coming out, or the social consequences of stigma" (Stacey and Biblarz 2001). Regnerus used as the selection criteria for the "gay" and "lesbian" samples those children whose parents had reported having had a same-sex relationship. This unique way of defining sexual orientation captures an important subpopulation of lesbian parents not tapped in previous studies that may better represent the reality of lesbian family life in America (Johnson et al. 2012; Schumm 2010). Regnerus' national probability sample suggests that planned, stable lesbian families are "relatively scarce" (Regnerus 2012a, p. 766).

Regnerus is said to have confounded family structure, family stability, and sexual orientation/identification in a way that does not permit reliable comparisons. In his study, 91 % of the adult children in the "lesbian" sample had lived with their mother while she was in the same-sex relationship; 23 % had lived for 3 years or longer with their mother and her romantic partner. Forty-two percent of the adult children in the "gay" sample had lived with their father while he was in a same-sex relationship, and although only 2 % had done so for at least 3 years while he lived with his partner, this figure matches national data (Regnerus 2012a, citing Tasker 2005). Thus, most had lived with their parent at the time he/she was having a same-sex relationship and many did so while the parent was living with their same-sex partner, thus permitting inferences about relationships between children's exposure to "the lesbian lifestyle" and the kinds of outcomes in adulthood that Regnerus assessed. When a parent models for their child being involved in a same-sex relationship, does this influence the child's sexual orientation, making him or her more likely to explore possible feelings of same-sex attraction? Are parents with same-sex attraction more likely to sexually abuse their children? If lesbian and bisexual populations have higher rates of substance abuse, sexual promiscuity, or mental health problems (as some empirical studies show, see Redding 2008 for a review), does this adversely affect the mental health of their children or provide a suboptimal home environment? Whatever their merit and however distasteful, these are the questions that have consistently been raised in court cases and policy debates (Patterson and Redding 1996), and they are the issues of concern to the public (see Cultural Cognition Project at Yale Law School 2009).

Consider the *outcomes measured* in previous studies. Most studied emotional or gender identity/sexual orientation development only in childhood or adolescence (Marks 2012; Redding 2008). Regnerus studied emotional and sexual orientation development, but with respect to longer-term outcomes in adulthood, as well as "the societal concerns of intergenerational poverty, collegiate education and/or labor

force contribution, serious criminality, incarceration, early childrearing, drug/alcohol abuse, or suicide that are frequently the foci of national studies on children, adolescents, and young adults" (Marks 2012, p. 743).

*On most methodological issues*, from sample size and participant selection to the outcomes measured, the Regnerus study is arguably superior to many studies of lesbian parenting though it is far from ideal. While Regnerus' definitions of the "lesbian" and "gay" samples and comparison groups used are certainly debatable, it can be persuasively argued that these features of the Regnerus study make it a unique contribution to the extant literature. Because of the difficulty in identifying and recruiting sufficiently-sized representative samples of children raised in lesbian households, no sample is ideal. The samples and comparison groups used in previous studies, to be sure, are limited in ways different than the Regnerus sample. Yet flawed studies, when taken together, may provide convergent validation (precisely because they employ varying study designs and are flawed in *different* ways) for shared results or elucidate shared shortcomings in study designs.

### Ideological Diversity is the Antidote to Scientific Groupthink

No one knows how many research programs [social scientists] have failed to launch, or how many research discoveries they have failed to make, as a result of the skew in the distribution of [political] views within their discipline (Tetlock 2012, p. 520).

According to recent Gallup Polls, 41 % of the population is politically conservative (Gallup 2011) and 45 % oppose gay marriage (Newport 2011). Sherkat (2012) finds it inappropriate, however, that half of the peer reviewers on the Regnerus paper were "bona fide conservatives . . . on public record of opposing marriage rights for LGBT persons" (p. 1347). Most sociologists and lesbian parenting researchers are political liberals who support gay marriage. No doubt so were most of the reviewers on previously published studies, yet this ideological imbalance does not bother Sherkat. He believes that Regnerus "made a decision to push a conservative political agenda in his academic work" (Bartlett 2012), but does not complain that most lesbian parenting researchers are liberal and that some are gay or lesbian. Perhaps, Sherkat (2012, p. 1349) observes, the fundamental problem is that the editorial board of *Social Science Research* is "too old, straight, white and male." But then were the reviewers for previous lesbian parenting studies—that produced politically correct results—too gay and too female?

Some also find it questionable that Regnerus was funded by conservative foundations (Massey 2012; Sherkat 2012), though they do not complain about studies funded by liberal organizations (see Schumm 2012b). There is nothing wrong with a researcher receiving funding from politically-tilted organizations, provided they do not allow the funding source to corrupt their science. I doubt that the *Bradley Foundation* and *Witherspoon Institute* funded Regnerus' study because they knew him to be a corrupt researcher who conducts results-driven research. Rather, it is likely that conservative foundations funded the study because they felt that Regnerus' approach of using a large, random sample might well produce results differing from those of previous studies using relatively small, non-representative samples that affirm the null hypothesis of "no differences" (see Schumm 2012a). That is what occurred.

But, contrary to the critics' concerns about the political conservatism of Regnerus and his funders, the Regnerus study illustrates the value of *ideological diversity* among both researchers and funders. The allegedly conservative researcher Regnerus, funded by advocacy organizations opposing gay marriage, conducted a study producing findings useful to gay-marriage opponents. Many previous studies were funded and/or conducted by those favoring gay-marriage, and they produced findings useful to the gay-marriage cause.

It is not surprising, nor is it indicative of nefarious scientific misconduct, that researchers of different ideological persuasions would produce findings consistent with their own ideology (Shermer 2005). It is human nature to frame research questions and interpret findings in ways that confirm one's political beliefs. Such biases are the norm, even among scientists (see Kunda 1990; Lewandowsky et al. 2012; MacCoun 1998, 2004; Redding 1999). This is particularly true when it comes to research on social issues (see MacCoun 1998; Suedfeld and Tetlock 1992) because social scientists, many of whom were attracted to social science because of its progressivist ideology, often have values invested in the issues they research. Thus, we see that most of the research on lesbian parenting has been conducted by scientists who are supportive of LGBT rights and/or gay or lesbian, while most of those critical of the research are opposed to lesbian marriage or adoption rights. One can find such ideological tilt throughout social science research. For instance, how researchers interpret data on the relative contributions of hereditary versus environment to intelligence, or on biological factors in personality styles, seems to be partly a function of their political views (Hull 1988; Pastore 1949; Redding 1998).

Indeed, studies in cognitive and social psychology, along with work in the relatively new field of "science studies" (see Jasonoff 2004; Latour and Woolgar 1979), demonstrate that "science has always been politicized" (Gauchat 2012, p. 168). Politics inevitably enter into the scientific endeavor as a consequence of the sociopolitical, parochial, financial, or career interests of researchers, funders, and professional organizations

as well as those of the larger scientific community and polity (Jasonoff 2004; Latour and Woolgar 1979). Scientists' values and interests influence how they define and conceptualize social and behavioral issues, the data collection and analysis methods chosen, the data obtained as a function of experimenter effects or study demand characteristics, how results are interpreted, how scientists scrutinize and evaluate a study's quality, and whether there are incentives or disincentives to advance research findings in policy advocacy. Even meta-analyses on the same studies produce differing results as a function of the analysts' ideological views (Miller and Pollack 1994), peer reviews vary significantly according to whether the paper matches the reviewer's own theoretical perspective (Abramowitz et al. 1975; Gaffan et al. 1995; Mahoney 1977), scientists tend to overlook methodological flaws in studies they feel are important whereas they tend to detect such flaws in other studies (Wilson et al. 1993), and people evaluate studies (and the researchers conducting the studies) more positively and find them to be more persuasive when the results support their policy views and more skeptically when they do not (Ditto and Lopez 1992; Kahana et al. 2011; Lord et al. 1979; MacCoun and Paletz 2009; Redding and Reppucci 1999) – including studies about homosexuality (Munro 2010).

Because biases are endemic to the scientific enterprise, the Regnerus case illustrates how research conducted or funded by those outside the sociopolitical mainstream, insofar as social scientists are concerned, may be the only way that "politically incorrect" research challenging the scientific consensus gets done. Theoretical or ideological homogeneity among researchers tends to produce myopic, one-sided research whereas ideological diversity fosters a more dynamic climate that encourages unorthodox, diverse (and, sometimes politically-incorrect) research. Not only do those in the political minority bring diverse perspectives to the research endeavor, but also their very presence has a debiasing and perspective-widening effect on the rest of the scientific community. "Recent studies find that individuals embedded in attitudinally heterogeneous networks are more aware of opposing rationales . . . . Being surrounded by network members with diverse attitudes . . . leads people to carefully reconsider any available attitude-relevant information" (Bloom and Levitan 2011, p. 646). If social scientists were embedded in ideologically diverse networks of other scientists, they would be more likely to consider and test alternative hypotheses and perspectives on the social issues they research.

### Science and Scientists in the Policy Debate

"Social scientists are never more revealing of themselves than when challenging the objectivity of one another's work. In some fields almost any study is assumed to have a more or less discoverable political purpose" (Moynihan 1979, p. 19).

Especially with controversies like the Regnerus one, it is no wonder that policymakers of all political persuasions often are skeptical about policy research coming from the academy (Redding 2012; Suedfeld and Tetlock 1992), or that conservatives' trust in science has dipped to an all-time low (Gauchat 2012). This is what happens when policy-relevant research fails to be politically inclusive in that virtually everyone funding and doing the research comes from the same political perspective (see MacCoun and Paletz 2009). Research shows that the public is more likely to accept research findings “if they perceive that there are experts of diverse values on both sides of the debate” (Kahana et al. 2011, p.169).

But the Regnerus study is the latest in a small but growing number of studies and methodological reviews challenging the conclusion advanced by many researchers (including myself, see Patterson and Redding 1996; Redding 2008) and professional organizations (including the *American Medical Association*, *American Psychological Association (APA)*, and *National Association of Social Workers*) that there are few or no relevant significant differences in outcomes among the children raised by heterosexual versus homosexual parents.

Yet, Sherkat (2012, p. 1346) notes, with seeming disapproval, that Regnerus “cultivat[ed] popular media reporting on the study,” with its findings swiftly being used in an anti-gay marriage court brief filed by a Christian political group. He does not complain, however, about the American Psychological Association's (APA) use of studies in its briefs supporting lesbian parenting or marriage rights. Indeed, scientists who do research on policy issues arguably have an obligation to “give [it] away” (Miller 1969) to policymakers and the public. But it is dangerous for science, policymaking, and the public's trust in science when scientists are encouraged to do so only when the science supports liberal positions but are discouraged from doing so, or risk disapprobation from their colleagues, when the findings do not. Sadly, this is often the case (Jussim 2012; Redding 2001, 2012; Tetlock 2012). Scientists should go where the science takes them, not where their politics does.

Where does the science take us with respect to the policy implications of the extant research on lesbian parenting? Despite their methodological limitations, taken together, the over sixty studies on lesbian parenting probably demonstrate that children are *not* disadvantaged by growing up in lesbian households (Redding 2008). Yet, even if future studies were to show, for example, that children raised by lesbian parents are more likely to be raised in somewhat less stable home environments,<sup>1</sup> such findings should probably be *irrelevant* to the

<sup>1</sup> To the extent some studies have found negative outcomes among the children of lesbian parents, as did the Regnerus study, these may be due to the greater family instability experienced by these children rather than any negative effect per se of being raised by lesbian parents (see Potter 2012). Of course, however, if gay marriage becomes widely legal and common among lesbian couples, this may have a stabilizing effect on lesbian families (Redding 2008).

policy debate,<sup>2</sup> unless there were substantial effect sizes across multiple measures of long-term adjustment, which even the Regnerus study does not show. As Amato (2012, p. 774) points out, “the state does not regulate family life on the basis of parental characteristics that correlate—usually quite modestly—with child outcomes.”

### The Fate of Social Science

“You do not get good science by being politically correct” (Horowitz 1996, p. 54, quoting Alan Wolfe).

The same month that the Regnerus study was published, Irving Louis Horowitz died (Martin 2012). He was a giant in the field of sociology, known as a groundbreaking though controversial theorist and empiricist on a range of topics. Horowitz was so concerned that research in the social sciences was becoming corrupted by political agendas (Horowitz 1993) that he founded the journal *Society*, partly to provide an outlet for politically-incorrect social science that might not see the light of day in other respectable journals.

Horowitz probably would not have been surprised by the furor over the Regnerus study. As ground zero of the culture wars, family issues research often is politicized (see Glenn 2001). The furor would have distressed him profoundly, however, as it ought to any social scientist *qua* scientist. To attack a study based on the political incorrectness of its findings or its author's and funder's politics is scientifically irrelevant and *ad hominem*. Rather, studies must stand or fall on the weight of their methodological reliability and validity.

Otherwise, “the very integrity of the social-science research process is threatened . . . [we] cannot allow social-science scholarship to be policed and selectively punished by the forces of activist ideology and politics” (Smith 2012, “An Academic Auto-da-Fé,” para. 15). Making every effort to apply the same standards when scrutinizing studies that provide politically palatable results as when scrutinizing those that do not, and promoting rather than discouraging

<sup>2</sup> Indeed, a recent national survey by the Cultural Cognition Project at Yale Law School found that although “[a] majority of Americans say that their position on gay and lesbian adoption is centered on the welfare of children... few say they would change their minds if shown convincing contrary evidence” to what they believe to be true on how lesbian parenting affects children (Cultural Cognition Project 2012, p. 16). This is likely because opposition to gay marriage and parenting is really animated by a deeper concern—the sense that homosexuality is disgusting and immoral. Thus, regardless of what the research may otherwise show about the effects of lesbian parenting on children, many people will conclude that it is better for children to be raised in heterosexual households because they do not want children exposed to the lesbian “lifestyle”, nor do they want to increase the “risk” that children will develop a homosexual orientation if they are raised by lesbian parents (Redding 2008).

ideological diversity among researchers and their funders, are the best ways to ensure value-pluralism in guiding the scientific endeavor and the integrity of science in the oft-politicized field of *social science*.

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