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# **Open Letter to University of Texas Regarding Professor Mark Regnerus' Alleged Unethical Anti-Gay Study**

by [Scott Rose](#) on June 24, 2012

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*In an open letter to the president of University of Texas Scott Rose methodically lays out the case that*

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*Professor Mark Regnerus has engaged in unethical so-called scientific research in a study about children of gay parents funded by Robert George*

Via Certified Mail Return Receipt Requested

June 21, 2012

William Powers, Jr.  
President  
University of Texas, Austin  
Office of the President  
Main Building 400 (G3400)  
Austin, Texas 78713-8920

In Re: *Scientific Misconduct Complaint against UTA's Mark D. Regnerus*

Dear President Powers:

I have filed, through the "EthicsPoint" [online system](#), a complaint against University of Texas, Austin's Dr. Mark D. Regnerus for **Scientific Misconduct** in violation of UTA's [Academic Dishonesty Policy](#), which forbids use of misinformation to hurt others.

Please respond promptly to this letter, which is being published at [www.TheNewCivilRightsMovement.com](http://www.TheNewCivilRightsMovement.com)

Here are some facts of the case:

1) This is **not** a complaint that UTA Mark D. Regnerus is active politically. The complaint rather is that Regnerus accepted money from political persons and groups to further their political goals, and [in preparing a study for them](#), rushed it through production for their use in the 2012 elections, though Regnerus himself has stated in [a video interview](#) given to the Daily Texan's Hannah Jane Decius that his methodology for the study **does not work "to the long-term benefit of science."** In other words, in order to retain a large grant from political organizations, **a)** Regnerus knowingly failed to uphold acceptable standards for his discipline, and **b)** knowingly rushed through his study in time for his funders to use it in the 2012 elections, instead of **c)** working professionally to produce a study that would work "to the long-term benefit of science." ***In that, Professor Regnerus's behavior is antithetical to the raison d'être of a university.***

2) UTA Professor Mark D. Regnerus alleges that he carried out a study comparing **a)** young adult children of "intact biological families," with **b)** young adult children raised by homosexual parents up to the 1990s. However, to find study subjects, Regnerus worked through the company [Knowledge Networks](#), which has a limited list of potential survey respondents from the general public. Regnerus had prior knowledge that Knowledge Networks would not be able to connect him with an adequate sampling of young adult children of gay parents raised by those gay parents up to the 1990s. Regnerus additionally knew that companies other than Knowledge Networks exist, which companies, with far greater likelihood would have been able to find him the class of study subjects he purported to want to compare to young adult children raised by "intact biological families." Regnerus fraudulently classed as a present-day young adult raised by a "gay" parent up until the 1990s, anybody from Knowledge Networks list who said that their parent had *ever* had a "romantic relationship" with a same-sex partner. In other words, a study subject's parent could have had a one-night stand with a same-sex partner, and Regnerus would count that person as having been raised by a homosexual parent. Regnerus told Decius that he "assumed" that if the person knew of their parent's same-sex "romantic relationship," that it would have been "substantial."

[Interview with Professor Mark Regnerus](#) from [The Daily Texan](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Is that how scientists work, by “assuming” and not verifying? Please note that one of Regnerus’s study conclusions is that family stability is good for children. That was hardly news. Yet, Regnerus set up his screening questionnaire, such that those people he surveyed and counted as having been raised by a gay parent, were virtually **certain** to have experienced family instability, as they *knew* of a parent having a same-sex affair.

Given that Regnerus’s funder Robert George has a long history of telling dehumanizing lies about gay people, and given that Robert George wrote the anti-gay pledge signed by Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, it would not be credible if Regnerus claimed he had no awareness that Robert George constantly seeks to dehumanize and to discredit gay people by whatever means. Regnerus screened those of his survey respondents to be classed as having been raised by gay parents, in such a way that those respondents were guaranteed to have experienced family instability, and then he compared them against persons raised in “intact biological families” which he knew to have far less family instability, and subsequently, he reported that unlike most previous studies on gay parenting, his study shows that gay parenting produces bad child outcomes.

In fact, in his written study, he wrote that the idea that children of gay parents do not have worse outcomes than those of heterosexual parents “must go.” In sum, Regnerus dishonestly stacked the deck against gay parents, in a way favorable to the results his funders had paid him to produce. Nor was that the only way that Regnerus stacked the deck against his faux gay parents. Regnerus surveyed a disproportional number of children from broken African-American and Hispanic households, likely to be non-affluent families. He subsequently attributed to gay parents bad child outcomes that in reality were due to lack of financial resources. As an example, if a survey respondent said they are currently on public assistance, that counted as a “bad” outcome. Yet, unemployment at the time of the survey was such that there was, in the economy overall, one job opening for every five job seekers; we know that the ratio is worse among the poor. Additionally, Knowledge Networks incentivized survey participants, by offering them \$5 to take the screener, and \$20 to take the full survey. Obviously, those stingy payments would be more attractive to unemployed than to employed people.

3) Regnerus took a “planning grant” of \$35,000 from the Witherspoon Institute, where Robert George of the anti-gay National Organization for Marriage is a Senior Fellow. That Regnerus took a \$35,000 “planning grant” from Robert George/The Witherspoon Institute strongly implies that George/Witherspoon

and George's The Bradley Foundation might have withheld full study funding, had Regnerus's study plan not suited their political timetable and purposes. In particular, one wonders if Regnerus offered some sort of formal or informal guarantee to complete the study in time for the funders' political exploitations of it for the 2012 election.

Many observers have noticed the extraordinarily short timetable by which Regnerus completed his study. And, [as reported by](#) Philip N. Cohen, sociologist Neal Caren noticed from **a)** the study design document online at the University of Texas and **b)** the article history dates listed by the journal [Social Science Research](#) that Regnerus handed his study into the journal *before* he had assembled all of his data. That increases one's suspicion that Regnerus was under pressure to get the study completed for his funders in time for their political exploitation of it in the 2012 elections.

4) Regnerus knew, or should have known, that [Robert George](#) of NOM and the Witherspoon Institute is disreputable due to clear and demonstrated intent to lie about and to inflict harm on sexual minorities. The Southern Poverty Law Center repeatedly has noted that NOM falsely [conflates homosexuals with pedophiles](#), for the purpose of demonizing all homosexuals to the society. NOM routinely denies gay people's humanity. For example, NOM's William Duncan led a symposium session at Liberty University titled "[Homosexuals or Homo Sapiens: Who Deserves Protected Class Status?](#)" NOM's Maggie Gallagher has [lied](#) about statistics involving gay youth suicide in Massachusetts, attempting to gain political advantage for her group at the expense of gay people and their rights. Robert George's NOM has sponsored rallies where NOM-approved speakers have yelled through megaphones that [homosexuals are "worthy to death."](#)

NOM repeatedly has made false allegations against the gay community in courts of law, and been [rebuked](#) by judges for having made them. NOM documents released through court order in March, 2012 described [NOM's plans to "drive a wedge" and to "fan hostility"](#) between African-Americans and gay Americans, to divide "key Democratic constituencies." NOM also has resorted to fanning the flames of anti-Muslim and [anti-Semitic sentiment](#) in order to further its anti-gay political goals. NOM's Robert George once sent his representative Thomas Peters [to attend a conference in Poland hosted by the notorious anti-Semite and Holocaust denier Father Tadeusz Rydzyk](#). NOM's strategy document also detailed intent to hire a person dedicated solely to finding children raised by gay parents, who would be willing to discredit their gay parents on camera. At the time of the court ordered document release, people scoffed, imagining that NOM would have no means of luring children of gay parents into denouncing their parents. Yet, it appears that the rush-job, stacked-deck-Regnerus study was contrived for political purposes to make it seem as though persons raised by gay parents had given "testimony" against all gay people.

5) Regnerus [told](#) The Daily Texan reporter Hannah Jane Deciutis that he did not seek funding for this study from the National Institute of Health because "I had a feeling when we started this project that it would not survive the politics of, in my opinion, the peer review system at the National Institute of Health – and it takes so long to get money from them, and there are revisions and revisions; ***I understand that works to the long-term benefit of science***, but some scholars don't feel like going that route." That statement from Regnerus verifies a suspicion that **a)** he produced this study according to a timetable of political convenience to his funders, in order that **b)** the study should be ready for illicit demonization of gay people during the 2012 elections, and not in the interest of **c)** science carried out to a world-class standard. Regnerus further excused himself from seeking funding for the study from NIH, saying "I don't have a shop with grant after grant." It therefore is **striking** that Regnerus previously has worked with NIH, apparently when he did not have to rush a study to have it ready for political exploitation. Regnerus's study *Race and Religion in Adolescent Sexual Norms and Conduct*, for example, [was funded through NIH](#). That is to say, Regnerus took easy money through Robert George to produce a commissioned, half-baked study for him, for political exploitation and demonization of sexual minorities, though he had already successfully negotiated carrying out a study for the National Institute of Health, which would have compelled him to live up to professional standards in his research.



6) Regnerus published his study in Social Science Research, edited by James Wright, who has written demeaningly of gay people and their relationships in some of his published work. Additionally, Wright published Regnerus's paper simultaneously with a paper by Loren Marks that also seeks to discredit past studies that showed positive results of gay parenting. Loren Marks is a NOM/Robert George collaborator. In a Proposition 8-related case in California, the anti-gay-rights side intended to use Marks as an expert witness, but under questioning Marks admitted that he had not read studies from which he was quoting, and that he did not know anything about same sex parenting. [His testimony was disallowed](#). There was evident collusion between Wright and anti-gay-rights groups, to publish together two studies that those anti-gay groups could use for the 2012 elections to demonize gay people, the better to attract support for Mitt Romney, who has [signed](#) NOM/Robert George's anti-gay "pledge."

7) Although in his written study, Regnerus states that he cannot claim causation between gay parents and bad child outcomes, in certain of his mass market media appearances talking about the study, he says that he found that children raised by gay parents had bad outcomes, leaving the viewers to suppose he is blaming the bad outcomes on the parents' alleged homosexuality. [Regnerus made one such appearance on ABC television](#). His misrepresentation of his own study there, corresponds to the uses of his study currently being made by anti-gay hate groups and his funders.

For example, [the Family Research Council is an SPLC-certified anti-gay hate group](#). Robert George is a Board member of FRC. FRC's Senior Fellow for Policy Studies Peter Sprigg [has been widely saying](#) that Regnerus's study proves that there is causation between gay parents and bad child outcomes. Not only does Regnerus not publicly correct Sprigg; he appears on television reinforcing Spriggs' erroneous notions about the study to the public. The SPLC classifies as a hate group an organization that tells documented falsehoods about gay people. Robert George's Family Research Council, however, goes far beyond telling lies. For instance, when Congressman Brad Sherman proposed a congressional resolution against the "Kill the Gays" law in Uganda, and against Uganda's generally inhumane abuses of homosexuals, FRC spent \$25,000 lobbying against the resolution, on grounds it constituted "pro-homosexual promotion." Meanwhile in Uganda, tabloids were publishing names and addresses of known homosexuals and calling for them to be executed; some executions of homosexuals were carried out. Robert George's and FRC's willingness to be an accessory to man's inhumanity to man is one reason that the University of Texas, Austin Professor Mark Regnerus should have been concerned about creating *even the appearance* of political collusion with such monsters.

To sum up the case: 1) Regnerus admits that the way he carried out his NOM-Robert George-funded study was *not in the best long-term interest of science*; 2) Regnerus converted from evangelical Protestantism to Catholicism; his Church is very aggressively involved worldwide in fighting against gay rights, including in the United States, where in June – July 2012, while making use of Regnerus's study, NOM and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops are joined in running the "Fortnight of Freedom" event; 3) in his [Christian Trinity College biography](#), Regnerus says that he thinks his anti-gay-rights faith should inform his research and all his work; 4) Regnerus admits in his *written* study that he cannot claim any causation between having a gay parent and a bad child outcome, but, nonetheless; 4) he appears on ABC television, unambiguously suggesting that his study did show that homosexual parents are dangerous to children, and, his activity in misrepresenting his study that way to the public is 5) totally in line with the manner that NOM and Regnerus's funder George's other anti-gay groups are promoting Regnerus's study. 6) In multiple ways, Regnerus's study was designed fraudulently to stack the deck against "gay" parents to make them look dangerous to children, which enhances NOM's anti-gay propaganda by which homosexuals are conflated with pedophiles. 7) Regnerus rushed his study to publication, apparently to meet a deadline set for him by his funders, and certainly against the interest of maintaining scientific integrity in the study. 8) Regnerus took a \$35,000 "planning grant" from Witherspoon/Robert George, which obviously implies that had Witherspoon/George not liked the study plan, it would not have funded the study. 9) Sociologists from Brigham Young University were involved in the study design. This might in part explain why the study

design was so heavily stacked against gay parents, in favor of “intact biological families.” BYU has an “Honor Code” that forbids members of the university community from doing anything that suggests that homosexuality is morally acceptable. To include BYU personnel in a study of gay human beings, is akin to asking the Ku Klux Klan to design a study about Jews.

Recently in the United States, anti-gay preachers have called [for homosexuals to be placed in concentration camps](#), and others [for them to be killed](#). Others have given their adult parishioners “special dispensation” [to break the bones of gay-seeming children](#). In that connection, note that the 3-year-old Ronnie Paris, Jr. was [beaten to death by his father](#), who thought he seemed gay. In still other churches, adults have laughed while [a 4-year-old](#) sang “Ain’t no homos gonna make it into heaven.” Robert George and his NOM and FRC are militantly opposed to sexual-orientation-specific anti-bullying protections in the nation’s schools. This year in Brooklyn, public school eighth grader [Kardin Ulysse](#) was relentlessly bullied as gay, though it not certain that he is. He and his parents complained many times to school administration, who did nothing. In a last anti-gay bullying attack, Kardin was set upon by attackers yelling “*Faggot!*” and other anti-gay pejoratives at him; he was left blinded in one eye. Within the last year, Robert George’s NOM had [very actively anti-gay hate-mongered in Brooklyn](#), during the special election to replace Congressman Anthony Wiener.

With that as background, *why are you not sanctioning the University of Texas, Austin’s Professor Mark D. Regnerus for – 1) creating a study designed so as to be guaranteed to make gay people look bad, through means plainly fraudulent and defamatory; 2) humiliating your institution in front of the world*, by admitting he took money from an anti-gay political organization for his study, rather than from the National Institute of Health, even though, by his own admission, doing so was not “in the long-term best interest of science”; 3) unethically rushing his study to completion to meet a deadline convenient to his funders’ political goals for the study; 4) misrepresenting his written study to an ABC-TV audience, in ways certain to make his political funders happy with him. 5) The University of Texas, Austin, has an academic dishonesty policy that [forbids](#) using misinformation in an attempt to hurt others.

Sincerely,

Scott Rose

*The University of Texas logo image courtesy of Wikipedia*

New York City-based novelist and freelance writer [Scott Rose](#)’s LGBT-interest by-line has appeared on Advocate.com, PoliticusUSA.com, The New York Blade, Queerty.com, Girlfriends and in numerous additional venues. Among his other interests are the arts, boating and yachting, wine and food, travel, poker and dogs. His “Mr. David Cooper’s Happy Suicide” is about a New York City advertising executive assigned to a condom account.

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[olivelevel](#) 6p · 2 weeks ago

-6

I'm glad this letter is going to be read by scientists, who typically have better skills at sorting out good arguments from



bad. You're just trying to shut up people whose research you disagree with. This is not how universities and scientific debate work. By using politics to try to shut up people you disagree with instead of engaging them in debate you hurt the academic environment of free discussion and inquiry. I could spend a lot of time discussing the fallacious arguments in your letter, instead I'll just comment generally that it is a disgusting piece of ad hominem trash.

Reply [5 replies](#) · active 2 weeks ago



[Scott Rose](#) 82p · 2 weeks ago

+2

To Readers: Commenter "OliveLevel" has a history of making anti-gay comments on this site.

Reply



[bgryphon](#) 65p · 2 weeks ago

+2

In other words, you accuse the author of failing at scientific debate but refuse to actually enter any rational argument yourself. Sort of suggests you don't have anything constructive to add.

Reply



[Scott Rose](#) 82p · 2 weeks ago

+1

If you don't understand that this "study" was bought-and-paid for political propaganda, I don't what to tell you. The funder of the anti-gay political propaganda, NOM's Robert George, is not exactly known for his integrity. The SPLC repeatedly has called NOM out for promulgating the known falsehood that homosexuals are all pedophiles. This Robert-George-bought-and-paid-for-Regnerus study continues that particular demonization of gays and lesbians. Robert George's NOM had a political strategy of 'driving a wedge' and "fanning hostility" between African-Americans and gay Americans. The Regnerus study has been resoundingly criticized on scientific grounds. The only people who approve of it are known religious reich wing gay bashing organizations. FRESH SCANDAL IN THE ANTI-GAY REGNERUS-MARKS STUDIES: <http://tinyurl.com/6ljldth>

Reply



[bgryphon](#) 65p · 2 weeks ago

+2

I was replying to "olive level" ..... follow the trail.

Reply



[Scott Rose](#) 82p · 2 weeks ago

0

Ach so!

Reply



[Scott Rose](#) 82p · 2 weeks ago

+5

From Commenter Kathy Gallagher:

As a scientist-practitioner, I cannot understand how his research was approved by his university's IRB (institutional review board), or how it was published by Social Science Research. However, he is a sociology professor, not a psychologist, so he is not an authority on how gay parents affect the psychological well-being of a child. Since his sociological specialty is religion (according to the U TX website), he is practicing out of his specialty. I would encourage all to ask both his university and the journal to look into his methodology and the motivation for his "findings."

Reply

[Scott Rose](#) 82p · 2 weeks ago

+5

From Commenter Norman Murphy ·

As a sex researcher and psychologist, we know where he got his data and that part was strictly rigged. If you are going to make true comparisons, you compare persons who grow up throughout their lives in true same-sexed couple relations and heterosexual couple relations to take out the affects of not being raised throughout your life in one or the other, divorced parents in either case, or you account for the variance that results from having families that do not meet the full criteria in the study. Having taught advanced multivariate analysis among other statistical modeling, it is obvious that Mark Regnerus is not playing fair and probably does not have a full deck to play with as he is being supported by right wing evangelicals and other wing nuts who commissioned his research. He might as well go to work for the Family Research Council and ally himself directly with the Camerons and others known to be total bigots, liars, and frauds.

Reply

[Scott Rose](#) 82p · 2 weeks ago

+4

Commenter Charley Sullivan · Works at University of Michigan

The problem isn't in the data, it's in the research design that yielded the data. If he doesn't know that, then why does he have a tenured position at a major research institution? In other words, no axe? My ass! If he were my student writing a dissertation, he'd be re-designing that study. Period.

Reply

[Str8Grandmother](#) 90p · 2 weeks ago

+3

One additional item of correction. The poor were not induced with simply \$5 or \$20 they got use of a free computer and one months free internet access to complete the survey. Scott read the Survey Design document page 11

<http://www.prc.utexas.edu/nfss/>

I think you could do an additional follow up letter with additional complaints. I think that one of the biggest errors Regnerus did was claiming a GOLD STANDARD for opposite sex biological married parents. when interviewed by the National Review

June 11, 2012 National Review Kathryn Jean Lopez

Lopez: How is it different than a child growing up with a single mother raising him or a single father raising her? Or a grandmother or . . . there are all kinds of scenarios, of course? Why focus on same-sex households?

Regnerus: Yes, many scenarios are possible, and for kids whose mothers had a same-sex relationship, they were more likely to experience a variety of scenarios, including living with grandparents. Why the focus on same-sex households? That was the key research question, basically. We wanted to know if the "no differences" thesis that has become almost an assumption in scholarly circles was true when put to the test of a large, nationally representative sample and a detailed survey of lots of different outcomes.

Lopez: So are young adults from step- and single-parent families much different? What is the gold standard?

Regnerus: Yes, adults who lived in step- and single-parent families exhibit a variety of differences, on average, from the gold standard of a married mom and dad (who are still together when the respondent is an adult). It calls into question, in fact, the common "wait till the kids are out of the house to divorce" mentality.

Lopez: What is the reigning academic view of children in same-sex families? How does this study depart from that view? Do you anticipate engagement from academia?

Regnerus: No substantive differences, on things that matter. That's been the emergent view. This study definitely affirms

that there is a gold standard. Yes, I anticipate engagement from scholars, and that is fine and welcome. I think there is plenty we can agree on.

<http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/302455/mom-a...>

His study did not compare children raised in an intact stable lesbian or gay homes to children raised by bio intact heterosexual parents. He is falsely claiming a Gold Standard.

BTW Scott you should save copies of these files on your computer not just rely on them always being available on line. We have seen this before how website owners remove webpages once they are exposed.

IMHO claiming a Gold Standard is scientifically unethical, it is. And you should add this charge if you have not done so already.

Also I was wondering why the survey found so many sexual minorities in Texas. I would have to compare the census to this research but it seemed to me at first glance that the sexual minorities were over represented in Texas. They got most respondents from California and then number 2 was Texas.

Reply



[Str8Grandmother](#) 90p · 2 weeks ago

+2

Also about the welfare question. Here it is

Q36 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)?

People who are struggling often times move in with other family members for a time in order to get back on their feet. If your aunt and 3 kids who was on welfare moved in with you you would have to answer "Yes" to the above question. I do not feel that a mother getting WIC, which is free milk and cheese to pregnant women and the child for a short time after their birth is necessarily an indication of "being on welfare" Look what Regnerus writes about that how he again takes broad data from being on welfare, to your mom works but doesn't make enough so you get a free lunch. Takes a category that is perceived as negative "Welfare" and stacks it with services the working poor need and rely on, free student lunch and WIC. And for what it is worth we should as a society help those children with dairy products and a free school lunch. What kind of society are we?

Reply [1 reply](#) · active 2 weeks ago



[Scott Rose](#) 82p · 2 weeks ago

0

Thank you very much for your comments.

Reply



[LOrion](#) 60p · 2 weeks ago

+1

Forwarded to Rachel@msnbc.com, talk@talkingpointsmemo.com, gayvoices@huffingtonpost.com

Reply



[rkent9](#) 1p · 1 week ago

+3

Scott, while I agree that the entire study was the blatantly biased with agenda-based motivations, I do want to caution you on your statement: "Is that how scientists work, by "assuming" and not verifying?" As a journalist, your words have power so it is very important to point out that, yes, that is exactly how scientists work. Modern science is largely based on using or creating models (mathematically predictive or simply conceptual) to explain relationships. Models are based on

assumptions, e.g. assuming conditions A & B are valid, the model will predict an outcome of Y. If the assumptions are not valid, then the model is garbage. So, yes, scientists do work by assuming, however good scientists check to see whether their assumptions are valid. Dr. Regnerus assumed many, many things but I doubt he has ever seriously tested their validity.

Reply

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"The players in this drama of frustration and indignity are not commas or semicolons in a legislative [thesis](#); they are people, human beings, citizens of the United States of America."

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