Do Two Moms Make a Right? The Perceived Effect of

Parental Sexual Orientation on Child Social Success

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Abstract

In this study, perceptions of the effect of parental sexual orientation on children’s social success were explored. Participants from the population of undergraduate students from Longwood University read one of four scenarios about a child with either heterosexual parents, gay male parents, lesbian parents or parents who’s sexual orientation is not stated. After reading the entire scenario, the participants then filled out a questionnaire about the scenario, rating the perceived social success of the child on various questions. Seven questions from the questionnaire were selected that best measured perceived child social success. The seven questions were shown to have strong reliability as a measure of social success, and the responses from the seven questions were summed to create an average composite perceived child social success score for each experimental group. A significant difference was found between the average composite perceived child social success scores of the lesbian experimental group and the control group. Participants perceived children of lesbian parents to have lower social success than children of heterosexual parents. The results from this study showed that people perceived a difference in the social successes of children as a result of their parents’ sexual orientation, with children of lesbian parents receiving the most negative perceptions.

*Keywords:* parental sexual orientation, child, social success, perceived

Do Two Moms Make a Right?

The Perceived Effect of Parental Sexual Orientation on Child’s Social Success

The legalization of same-sex marriages in many states has brought the debate of whether or not parental sexual orientation has an effect on children has been brought to a new height. Historically, same-sex couples have faced bias from many groups including religious, social, and academic groups that are against homosexuality. In 1968 homosexuality was classified as an official diagnosis in the “sexual deviations” section of the DSM-II. The implementation of homosexuality as a disorder led to the denial of rights of people who are gay or lesbian (The American Psychological Association, 1973). Similar to race discrimination, people discriminate against people of different sexual orientations. This discrimination can even turn into an extreme social fear called homophobia. Considering there is a phobia for it, the discrimination that gay males and lesbians have faced and still face today can affect the perception people have of gay male’s and lesbian’s capabilities as parents. While cultures of the early twenty-first century are more accepting of the marriage of same-sex couples, it seems that a bias towards same-sex parents is still present. Do people perceive the parental sexual orientation to have an effect on how socially successful their child would be?

There are many differences in process of becoming parents between gay male and lesbian couples and heterosexual couples, the biggest one being that same-sex couples often have to go through many more steps to conceive or adopt a child. Same-sex couples normally have to use outside resources, such as artificial insemination or use of a surrogate mother, to conceive a child. Same-sex couples can also choose to adopt a child (Lobaugh, Clements, Averill, & Olguin, 2006). While heterosexual couples can, under most circumstances, naturally conceive a child, one can see the additional struggle gay male and lesbian couples have to go through just to become parents.

Despite the hefty process that must be completed by gay males and lesbian women in order to have a child, men and women perceived the child of same-sex parents would emulate their parents’ sexual orientation, and that boy’s traditional gender role behavior would be much more at risk if adopted by female same-sex parents (Lobaugh et al., 2006; Gato & Fontaine, 2013). Men also showed apprehension towards the gender role behavior of boys adopted by same-sex male parents. This highlights the existence of a bias towards children of same-sex families, specifically on the child’s sexual orientation and the gender role behaviors they exhibit (Gato & Fontaine, 2013).

While the sexual orientation of the child’s parents is perceived to have a difference on the behavior of the child past research has found that there is no difference in the well-being or adjustment between children raised in same-sex, female households and children raised in heterosexual households (Gato & Fontaine, 2013; Bos, Van Balen, & Van Den Boom, 2007). Same-sex parents are just as capable of being supportive parents and raising children with the same benefits as children raised by heterosexual parents. Children of same-sex female mothers were reported to have more prosocial behavior and reported less loneliness than children from heterosexual families. No difference was found in perceived self-competence between same-sex parent family types and heterosexual parent family types (Shechner, Lobel, & Shechner, 2011). This indicated that parental sexual orientation can have effects on children as the children of lesbian couples can exhibit more positive, prosocial behavior, and feel less lonely than children of heterosexual parents. Lesbian mothers also reported physically punishing their children less than heterosexual mothers and tended to engage in more domestic and imaginative play with their children than heterosexual mothers (Golombok et al., 2003). Despite these findings, lesbian mothers perceive greater difficulties for themselves and their children due to their sexual orientation (Mcnair, Dempsey, Wise, & Perlesz, 2001).

Additional research also demonstrated the lack of harm parental sexual orientation has on children; no differences were found by Robers, Poteat, and, Nore (2008) in the experiences of social victimization between children that are planned for by same-sex female couples and children of opposite-sex couples. Rivers et al. (2008), showed that children experienced the same amount of social victimization, or bullying, despite the sexual orientation of their parents. In relation, no difference was found in the intellectual functioning and behavioral adjustment between children of same-sex parents and children of opposite-sex parents (Flaks, Ficher, Masterpasqua, & Joseph, 1995). While there is some evidence to show that children of same-sex parents can receive harsher treatment by their peers due to their parent’s sexual orientation, overall the children of gay male or lesbian women to not experience more turmoil than the children of heterosexual parents (Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). This helps support the claim that there is no difference between the children of same-sex or opposite-sex parents in terms of intellectual functioning, ability to adjust their behavior, overall well-being, and the amount of social victimization they endure.

Other factors such as parental stress and the parents’ relationship adjustment have been found to be associated more with the child’s adjustment than parental sexual orientation. This implies that it does not matter what sexual orientation the parent is, it is other behavior of the parents, such as their stress levels and their relationship as a couple, that can have an effect on the child’s adjustment. Thus, it could be said that a same-sex couples with low stress levels and a healthy, happy, relationship as parents, and a heterosexual couples with the same stress levels and relationship together, would be equally successful (Forsell and Patterson, 2010). Is this the perceived reality?

There is a large gap in research on peoples’ perceptions of children with gay male and lesbian parents. This could be due to the nature vs. nurture argument about sexual orientation as people seek to find if there is a biological difference between different sexual orientations and if homosexuality is hereditary. There is an abundance of research showing little to no difference in children of same-sex parents, shown in the Bos et al. (2007) study, as well as the Rivers et al. (2008) study. This study seeks to explore if people perceive a difference in how socially successful a child is be depending on the sexual orientation of their parents.

The hypothesis of this research was that participants will perceive the child with gay male and lesbian parents to have lower social success than child with the heterosexual parents. While previous research showed that there is no actual difference between children with gay male, lesbian, or heterosexual parents, there still seems to be a bias present towards children with lesbian and gay male parents and their ability to successfully raise a child. Perceived social success will be measured by participant answers to various questions about a hypothetical child’s social success. While it has been shown that parental sexual orientation makes little difference in children’s lives in terms of wellbeing, people may still think that it does have an impact (Bos et al., 2007). This study hopes to uncover if there is a perceived difference in children’s social success depending on the sexual orientation of the parents.

**Method**

**Participants**

Longwood University undergraduate students signed up to participate in the study through Sona-systems, an online experiment management system. There were 134 total participants, but 14 participant’s data was not able to be used. Of those 14 participants, 13 failed the manipulation check and one failed to fill out the back side of the questionnaire. There were 120 participants total after the removal of participants’ data that was unusable. There were 100 females, 19 males, and 1 participant who identified their sex as other. Participant’s age ranged from 17 to 38 (Mage = 19.45, SDage = 2.05). There were 43 freshman participants, 30 sophomore participants, 24 junior participants, and 21 senior participants. Participants volunteered their participation in the study in exchange for one point of extra course credit awarded to psychology classes at Longwood University. There were 31 participants in the heterosexual experimental group, 31 participants in the gay male experimental group, 30 participants in the lesbian experimental group, and 28 participants in the control group.

**Procedures**

This study contained one independent variable with four levels. The independent variable was the sexual orientation of the parent, which is defined as either heterosexual, gay male, or lesbian. The four levels were lesbian parents (see Appendix A), gay male parents (see Appendix B), heterosexual parents (see Appendix C), and parents with no stated sexual orientation (see Appendix D). The dependent variable of the study was the perceived social success of the child, and is operationally defined as the perceived success of the hypothetical pre-teen in various social situations rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale. Each participant was exposed to only one level of the independent variable.

Participants were assigned to experimental groups by the separate time blocks that groups of participants signed up for. The first group of participants was given one version of the scenario, which was picked using a random numbers table. The next group of participants was given the next version of the scenario, this pattern was continued.

Participants first read a scenario about a hypothetical 13 year old child, which contained information about the child’s family and school behavior. Each of the four experimental groups read scenarios identical in content except for the stated sexual orientation of the parents of the hypothetical child (see Appendices A through D). After the participants read the scenario completely, they were instructed to flip the scenario over, and complete the questionnaire (see Appendix E). The questionnaire contained 12 statements about the perceived social success of the child in the scenario. The participants were asked to rate their agreement with the statements on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). The questionnaire also asked demographical questions about the participant, such as age and sex, as well as a final question manipulation check in which the participants were asked to specify the sexual orientation of the parents in the scenario.

After the questionnaires were completed by participants, responses to each question were analyzed to see if there were any significant differences in responses between experimental groups on each question. Statements that best measured perceived social success of the child in the scenario were selected; seven of the twelve statements on the questionnaire were used to test the reliability of the questions in terms of measuring perceived child social success. The responses to these seven questions were also summed to create a composite of perceived social success of the child, an overall measure of social success.

**Results**

After all participants data was collected, seven questions were picked out of the questionnaire that best measure perceived child social success. The content of these questions were identified as the best measure of participants’ perceived social success of the child in the scenario. These were questions 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11 (see Appendix E). A Cronbach's alpha test of reliability was used to test the reliability of the seven questions selected to see how reliable they were as a measure of perceived child social success. The test showed strong reliability (α = .745). The sum of the scores of the seven selected questions formed a composite perceived child social success score for each participant. A One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the composite perceived child social success scores showed a significant difference between the four experimental groups, *F*(3,120) = 3.857, *p* = .011,  η2 = .091. A Tukey post-hoc analysis showed that the lesbian experimental group (M = 33.03, SD = 5.08, 95%CI[31.18,34.89]) had significantly different composite perceived child social success scores from the control group (M = 37.11, SD = 5.53, 95%CI[35.19,39.03]), *p* = .011. See Figure 1 for graphical results of the composite perceived child social success scores for the experimental groups.

A One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on each individual question of the questionnaire showed a significant difference in responses on question 10, which stated ‘This child can relate to their peers on relationships with their parents’, *F*(3,116) = 9.86, *p* < .001, η2 = .086. The ANOVA also showed a significant different in responses on question 12, which was ‘This child's social life is affected by their parent’s relationship’, *F*(3,115) = 5.84, *p* = .001, η2 = .047. A Tukey post hoc analysis on question 10, ‘This child can relate to their peers on relationships with their parents’, showed that the heterosexual experimental group (*M* = 4.94, *SD* = 1.031, 95%CI[4.56,5.31]) was significantly different from the gay male experimental group (*M* = 3.35, *SD* = 1.279, 95%CI[2.89,3.82]), *p* < .001, and the lesbian experimental group (*M* = 3.50, *SD* = 1.570, 95%CI[2.91,4.09]), *p* < .001. The Tukey post hoc test also revealed that the control group (*M* = 4.43, *SD* = 1.399, 95%CI[3.89,4.97]) was significantly different than the lesbian experimental group, *p* =.044, as well as the gay male experimental group, *p* = .013. See Figure 2 for graphical representation of the results for question 10, ‘This child can relate to their peers on relationships with their parents’. A Tukey post hoc analysis on question 12, ‘This child's social life is affected by their parent’s relationship’, found a significant difference between the heterosexual experimental group (*M* = 2.70, *SD* = 1.512, 95%CI[2.14,3.26]), and the lesbian experimental group (*M* = 4.17, *SD* = 1.599, 95%CI[3.57,4.76]), *p* = .001. The lesbian experimental group in question 12, ‘This child's social life is affected by their parent’s relationship’, was also shown to be significantly different from the control group (*M* = 2.86, *SD* = 1.433, 95%CI[3.02,3.60]), *p* = .007. See Figure 3 for graphical results of question 12, ‘This child's social life is affected by their parent’s relationship’.

**Discussion**

Many significant and surprising results were found in this study. A significant difference in responses between experimental groups was found on Question 10 when all responses to all questions on the questionnaire were analyzed. Question 10 was ‘This child can relate to their peers on relationships with their parents’. Participants who read the scenario where the child had heterosexual parents rated the child significantly higher on this question than participants who read the scenario in which the child had gay male parents or lesbian parents. This means the participants agreed more strongly that the child with heterosexual parents is able to relate to their peers on relationships with their parents more than the child with gay male parents or lesbian parents. There was also a significant difference in response for question 10 between the control group and both the gay male and lesbian experimental groups. The control group on average rated stronger agreement that the child in the control scenario could relate to their peers on relationships with their parents, just as the heterosexual group did. As a result of no sexual orientation stated for the parents in the control scenario, participants may have assumed that the parents were heterosexual, since the majority of parents in our society are heterosexual. The results from question 10 show that participants perceived that children with heterosexual parents can relate to their peers on relationships with their parents more than children with gay male and lesbian parents.

There was also a significant difference in responses between experimental groups on Question 12. Question 12 stated ‘This child’s social life is affected by their parent’s relationship’. Participants who read the scenario where the child had lesbian parents rated the statement significantly higher than participants who read the scenario where the child had heterosexual parents, as well as participants who read the control scenario where no parental sexual orientation is stated. This showed that participants perceived children with lesbian parents to be more affected by their parent’s relationship than children with heterosexual parents.

A composite score of seven questions from the questionnaire that best measured perceived child social successes were picked to test the reliability of the questions in measuring perceived social success. The results of the ANOVA using the composite perceived child social success scores showed that the lesbian experimental group and the control group were significantly different. The control group showed to have similar scores to the heterosexual group, showing that participants may have perceived the parents in the control scenario to be heterosexual. The mean composite responses of the lesbian experimental group were lower than that of the control group, meaning that participants perceived the child of lesbian parents to have lower social success than children of heterosexual parents.

These results partially support the hypothesis that participant would perceive the child with gay male and lesbian parents to have lower social success than the child with the heterosexual parents. The heterosexual group was shown to have significantly different results on question 10 with the gay male and lesbian experimental groups, as well as on question 12 with the lesbian experimental group. The control group was also significantly different than the gay male and lesbian experimental groups on question 12 and with the lesbian experimental group on question 10. It is assumed many participants perceived the parents in the control scenario to be heterosexual; this further supports the hypothesis that participants in either the control or heterosexual experimental group perceived the child to have higher social success than the children in the gay male and the lesbian experimental group.

The One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) done on the composite perceived child social success scores partially supported the hypothesis that participants would rate the child with gay male and lesbian parents to have lower perceived social success than the child of heterosexual parents. The composite score of the lesbian experimental group was significantly lower than that of the control group. Due to the control group being generally perceived as a child with heterosexual parents, it can be said that participants perceived children of lesbian parents to have lower social success than children of heterosexual parents.

In a study by Gato and Fontaine (2013), the researchers found similar results in terms of biases towards children with gay male and lesbian parents. Men and women perceived that the children of gay male parents and children of lesbian parents would eventually emulate the sexual orientation of the parents, essentially saying that children will eventually adopt the parent’s sexual orientation as their own sexual orientation. Men specifically showed apprehension towards how well boys would learn gender-role behaviors when adopted by gay male couples. While these results also show a bias towards to future successes of children who have gay male parents and lesbian parents, it is important to keep in mind that this study was conducted outside the United Stated, in Portugal. The predominant religion in Portugal is Catholicism, which has historically held a bias towards gay males and lesbians. The strong religious beliefs of many people from Portugal could heavily effect of they perceive children of gay male parents and children of lesbian parents (Gato & Fontaine, 2013). In the United States, there is more diversity of religions, ancestry, and other factors that can play into our moral beliefs.

In a study done by Mcnair et al. (2002), it was reported that many lesbians reported lying about their sexual orientation in a variety of difference circumstances, such as to their children’s teachers or on questionnaires that could possibly affect treatment and services. Lesbian expecting mothers also reported anticipating greater difficulty for themselves and their children. In comparison to the results of this study, the lesbian experimental group tended to be the most significantly different, in questions 10, 12, and in composite perceived child social success scores. It seems that people perceive a bias towards lesbian parents and the lesbian parents themselves feel the effects of that bias, thus they anticipate greater difficulty for themselves as well as for their child in the future (Mcnair et al., 2001).

In a study done by Stacey and Biblarz (2001), there was some evidence to show that children with gay male and lesbian parents are exposed to homophobic teasing and ridicule over their parent’s sexual orientation, which can become very hard to manage and deal with. These results support those of this study, that people perceive there to be a difference in the social successes of children with gay male and lesbian parents and heterosexual parents, and also goes on to show the effects that can occur in real life for children of gay male and lesbian parents, such as teasing and bullying.

There were a few limitations to this study; the most prevalent was the last question on the questionnaire that served as a manipulation check (see Appendix E). Since there was only a blank after the question ‘What was the sexual orientation of the pre-teen’s parents?’ many participants put ‘heterosexual’ in the control group. This may have caused the general thought that participants perceived the parents in the control group as heterosexual, instead of writing ‘not stated’ as an answer. Participants should have been given four choices as answers for the manipulation check: heterosexual, gay male, lesbian, or not stated. This could affect how participants view the sexual orientation of the not stated group. Also, many participants put the actual sex of the parents as an answer for the manipulation check, which also could have been avoided if participants were given a choice of answers and only had to choose an answer.

A deceptive title could have also been used to help avoid participants thinking that all scenarios were about gay male parents or lesbian parents. Participants also put gay male and lesbian down as the answer to the manipulation check in the control group, possibly indicating that because participants knew the study was about parental sexual orientation, they had a pre-existing notion that the study would automatically be about either gay male or lesbian parents, even when the sexual orientation was not stated. A deceptive title could have helped to avoid participant bias and helped participants focus on scenario and questionnaire alone. A deceptive title would also help to avoid participants feeling as if they should rate the statements in a certain way to present themselves in a more positive light or to rate the statements in a way that would ‘help’ the researcher.

The results of this study raised many questions. Is there a difference in perception of gay male parents versus lesbian parents? The composite perceived child social success scores showed only a significant difference between the lesbian experimental group and the control group, not the gay male experimental group. More research would need to be conducted on people’s perceptions of gay men and lesbians; people may sum gay males and lesbians together into one group. The results from this study show a difference in the perception of gay males and lesbians and the perceived effect that their sexual orientation has on their child’s social success.

When assessing if people perceive a difference in the social success in children of gay male, lesbian, or heterosexual parents, if a difference is shown, does it have an effect on the actual social success of the child? In other words, does the negative bias that is sometimes associated with children with gay male and lesbian parents have any effect on the actual successes of the child? Previous research has shown that children with gay male parents and children with lesbian parents are just as adjusted and successful as children of heterosexual parents, if not more successful in some cases, as seen in a study done by Shechner et al. (2011), where children of lesbian parents were shown to have more positive, prosocial behavior. It seems that even if a negative bias of children with gay male and lesbian parents is present, it does not seem to be affecting children with gay male and lesbian parents and their successes. More research would need to be conducted to determine if the bias towards lower social success of children with gay male parents and children with lesbian parents has an effect on the actual social success of the child.

Do parental factors, such as sexual orientation, even matter in terms of social success of the child? Many people have been successful completely independent of their parents. Perhaps what should be studied is what characteristics of parents have a potential or perceived effect on the success of their children. If these factors were determined, they could be implemented by parents all over the world to further the successes of their children. The future focus of research on gay male, lesbian, and heterosexual parents and their children should focus on the sexual orientation or other parental factors can help the child increase their successes, as opposed to simply focusing on whether there is a negative effect present. This could lead to results that could actually be implicated to help further the success of children in the future.

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*Figure 1*. Graphical results of composite perceived child social success scores of each experimental group. Significant differences between experimental groups are indicated by stars.

Significant Difference between Control Group

Significant Difference between Heterosexual Group

*Figure 2*. Graphical results for average rating of agreement for each experimental group to question 10, ‘This child can relate to their peers on relationships with their parents’.

Significant Difference between Control Group

Significant Difference between Heterosexual Group

*Figure 3*. Graphical results for average rating of agreement for each experimental group to question 12, ‘This child’s social life is affected by their parent’s relationship’.

Appendix A

**Please read the following scenario fully and carefully. You will then be given a variety of statements about the pre-teen in the scenario.**

Taylor is a 13 year old who is in the 7th grade. The pre-teen has a good relationship with their parents and has a close knit group of friends they have known since childhood. Taylor plays the clarinet in band, and loves playing soccer and basketball in gym class. Taylor is usually responsible about getting homework done, but sometimes needs to be reminded to stay on task. Taylor’s parents are a homosexual female couple, who have been together for 15 years. Taylor feels embarrassed by them sometimes, as many middle-schoolers often do.

**Please turn this paper over and rate the statements about the scenario.**

Appendix B

**Please read the following scenario fully and carefully. You will then be given a variety of statements about the pre-teen in the scenario.**

Taylor is a 13 year old who is in the 7th grade. The pre-teen has a good relationship with their parents, and has a close knit group of friends they have known since childhood. Taylor plays the clarinet in band, and loves playing soccer and basketball in gym class. Taylor is usually responsible about getting homework done, but sometimes needs to be reminded to stay on task. Taylor’s parents are a homosexual male couple, who have been together for 15 years. Taylor feels embarrassed by them sometimes, as many middle-schoolers often do.

**Please turn this paper over and rate the statements about the scenario.**

Appendix C

**Please read the following scenario fully and carefully. You will then be given a variety of statements about the pre-teen in the scenario.**

Taylor is a 13 year old who is in the 7th grade. The pre-teen has a good relationship with their parents, and has a close knit group of friends they have known since childhood. Taylor plays the clarinet in band, and loves playing soccer and basketball in gym class. Taylor is usually responsible about getting homework done, but sometimes needs to be reminded to stay on task. Taylor’s parents are a heterosexual couple, who have been together for 15 years. Taylor feels embarrassed by them sometimes, as many middle-schoolers often do.

**Please turn this paper over and rate the statements about the scenario.**

Appendix D

**Please read the following scenario fully and carefully. You will then be given a variety of statements about the pre-teen in the scenario.**

Taylor is a 13 year old who is in the 7th grade. The pre-teen has a good relationship with their parents, and has a close knit group of friends they have known since childhood. Taylor plays the clarinet in band, and loves playing soccer and basketball in gym class. Taylor is usually responsible about getting homework done, but sometimes needs to be reminded to stay on task. Taylor’s parents have been together for 15 years. Taylor feels embarrassed by them sometimes, as many middle-schoolers often do.

**Please turn this paper over and rate the statements about the scenario.**

Appendix E

For Researcher Use Only: Condition \_\_\_\_\_\_ Participant number \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Sex (circle one) Male Female Other

Year (circle one) Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Other

**Please answer the following questions about the scenario you just read.**

**Please circle your answer on the 7-point Likert scale for the questions below.**

1. This child fits in at school.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Neutral Strongly

Disagree Agree

2. This child is popular in school.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Neutral Strongly

Disagree Agree

3. This child's social life is negatively affected by their parents’ sexual orientation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Neutral Strongly

Disagree Agree

4. This child behaves well in school.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Neutral Strongly Disagree Agree

5. This child is outgoing.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Neutral Strongly Disagree Agree

6. This child can relate to their peers on issues at home.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Neutral Strongly Disagree Agree

7. This child would work well in a group.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Neutral Strongly Disagree Agree

8. This child would be a good leader.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Neutral Strongly Disagree Agree

9. This child feels disconnected from their peers.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Neutral Strongly Disagree Agree  
  
10. This child can relate to their peers on relationships with their parents.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Neutral Strongly Disagree Agree

11. This child is well liked by their teachers and other adults.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Neutral Strongly Disagree Agree

12. This child's social life is affected by their parent’s relationship.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Neutral Strongly Disagree Agree

13. What is the sexual orientation of the pre-teen’s parents? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_