



**ACADEMICIA**  
**An International  
 Multidisciplinary  
 Research Journal**  
 (Double Blind Refereed & Peer Reviewed Journal)



**DOI: 10.5958/2249-7137.2021.02165.0**

## EXPLORING THE COMPETENCE OF FAMILIES OF THE SAME-SEX COUPLES

**Ms. Shiwangi\***

\*SMAC Sanskriti University, Mathura,  
 Uttar Pradesh, INDIA

Email id: shiwangi.sobas@sanskriti.edu.in

### ABSTRACT

*The research focuses particularly on two important areas lacking from the existing literature: variables promoting perseverance in same-sex parented families; as well as health and wellbeing results for same-sex couples who experience separation, such as the negotiation of joint custody arrangements post-separation. The present article seeks to give a thorough review of the design and methodology of this longitudinal research and evaluate its relevance. The work, love, play research is a mixed format, three wave, longitudinal controlled trial of same-sex interested parents. The sample comprises lesbian, gay, bisexual as well as transgender families in Australia and New Zealand caring for any kids under the age of 18 years. The research will be performed over six years from 2008 to 2014. Quantitative data are to be gathered through three on-line questionnaires in 2008, 2010 and 2012 from the cohort of parents recruited in Wave. Qualitative data will be gathered through interviews with purposively chosen subsamples in 2012 and 2013. Data collecting started in 2008 and 355 participants to Wave One of the research have consented to participate in future polls. Work is now ongoing to expand this sample size. The methodology and survey tools are discussed. This research will make an essential addition to the current research on the same parented households.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Bisexual, Heterosexual, Same-Sex Parent, Transgender.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Families led by same-sex couples have achieved greater public visibility over recent years in the Western world, with increasing media and political attention focused on debates about gay

marriage, and lesbians' and gay men's reproductive rights, including access to in vitro fertilization and surgical rights. In addition, this is a developing academic study project that aims to improve the sociological and psychological knowledge of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) parents and their children's experiences[1]. While families led by same-sex partners have gained more public exposure in recent years, there will still be numerous difficulties for these families in coping with legal and societal settings that are not favorable of same-sex partnerships. The Work, Love, Play research is a major randomized trial of same-sex parenting. It seeks to explore various aspects of family life within this group and analyses how they evolve over time.

It is impossible to properly determine the number of families led by parents of the same sex in any nation. Data from the Australian Census of 2001 show that one in five lesbian couples and up to 5% of homosexual men have children living with them in their homes. This statistic may well underestimate the real number of parents who are attracted by the same sex because it does not include single parents and parents who have children who do not live at home with them. The United States Census Bureau also projected in 2000 that 1/3 of lesbians and 1/5 of homosexual families presently tend to raise children. Regardless of exact statistics, it is nevertheless evident that a significant percentage of lesbians and gay men may at some time in their life become parents[2]. Strengths of the research design also include longitudinal approach, which will enable understanding of changes with time within inner family connections and societal supports. The mixed approach design also allows for data triangulation. A high sample size was achieved by recruiting both homosexual males and lesbians.

Research indicates that homosexual couples and homosexuals attracted only parents in many respects. A significant percentage of lesbians and homosexual men have straight offspring. Many lesbian couples conceive their children via anonymous sperm donors obtained through fertility clinics or a known donor who could or cannot become a child's father or become a child's father. Donation of sperm to lesbians offers many homosexual men a chance to become parents, some of whom have continuing co-parenting/care agreements with the mother of the children. A lesser but growing number of homosexual men via surrogacy agreements have become parents. Lesbians and homosexual men may also support or adopt children in situations that are legally allowed. Many parents of the same sex have mixed families, which include children from prior partnerships and children conceived during one or both parents' relationships. This family diversity is challenging conventional, heterosexual, family conceptions or definitions[3].

The greatest difficulty for most homosexual family members is to address the legal and communal environment which usually does not accept same sex partnerships and frequently does not take various forms of the family into account. Normative conceptions of the family center on the biological relationship between children and their heterosexual parents. Non-biological parents of children conceived within the same sex frequently have limited tools to make sure they are legally recognized as a parent. Large families may also not recognize non-biological children or parents as part of their families[4]. Parenting families of the same sex may face discrimination in health, welfare, education and legal systems or suffer unfavorable attitudes from service providers while dealing with key milestones of life such as pregnancy, pre- and post-natal services, child care and schooling. Even if there are no obvious prejudices, involvement with official institutions such as childcare, schools and the health system

necessitates that homosexual parents constantly negotiate procedures that all homes are led by a heterosexual spouse. For example, most registration or child-related information forms do not include space for two moms or two dads. This implies that parents of the same sex have to haggle frequently with the service providers to make sure both parents are recognized. The process of 'out' on frequent times may be difficult for some parents and many worry about their children becoming homophobic or discriminatory at school[5].

More personally, some lesbian and gay parents experience lack of support within their own extensive family network or, in some instances, outright hatred. Furthermore, if lesbians or homosexuals become parents, they may lose some of their links in the lesbian and homosexual society, an essential source of support and confirmation for many people who love same sex. Extensive research has shown that same-sex individuals have been marginalized and stigmatized by their sexual identity. This may lead to decreased social connectivity and has a detrimental effect on physical and mental health and access to healthcare attracted by the same sex. This may be exacerbated by parents of the same sex who feel insecure and suffer psychological anguish due to their worries about the effect of homophobia on their children. Researchers performed a research comparing lesbian and heterosexual moms' psychological well-being and the United States. The research showed that sexual orientation does not in itself contribute to lesbian women's mental health but to their legal and social environment. In the United States, lesbian moms reported more concern about their legal status as parents and had more depressive symptoms than lesbian mothers in Canada[6].

Despite such difficulties, there is a broad range of studies showing that developmental, social and emotional results are at least comparable to those of their heterosexual parents for kids raised in same sex homes. Studies show that there are mechanisms in the family, including relationship quality and parents' psychological well-being, which lead to a greater degree of well-being among children, regardless of their sexual orientation. In addition, recent studies have revealed that lesbian moms are more equal than heterosexual couples in organizing families and working duties that may lead to greater levels of happiness in the relationship. There are nevertheless significant gaps in the study on parent families of the same sex. First of all, the dominance of research aimed at results for children brought up in homosexual parenting homes implies that there are just a few studies on the health and well-being of same-sex parents. Factors which promote and increase resilience in homosexual households are similarly scarce. What allows a family to survive under difficult circumstances while others fight?

A significant gap in study pertains to the experiences of separation of parents of the same sex. Although it is widely established that at least one in three Australian heterosexual marriages ends in divorce, Australian research on the separation of homosexual couples or the experience and effect of separation on the health and well-being of parents and children has been extremely sparse. Approximately 20% of couples had split by the conclusion of the trial in a small Australian study of 25 lesbian parent households. A worldwide longitudinal study of lesbian moms who had children via donor insemination showed that by the time their children were 10 years old 38 per cent (n = 30) of pairs had split. Research has not, however, investigated whether separated spouses may get enough assistance or health and well-being results[7]. A number of research in heterosexual households have used the idea of resilience. Family resilience may be considered to balance stress and pressure with the skills and strengths of that family unit – or

"excellent results despite adversity." If demands or stresses exceed capacities and resources, there may be a family crisis or collapse. A resilient family may use their ability to handle demands, risks and stresses effectively[8].

The study of family resilience includes identifying variables protecting families against crisis or collapse (separation). These protective variables are identified in the research on family resilience at three different, but interconnected levels: individual, family and community levels. Individual level protection factors include: better parenting and income levels, good markers of mental health; excellent coping abilities and an overall feeling of positivity. Family level protection factors include: family cohesion, the quality of the connections between parents (including communication quality and negotiation of household and childcare duties) and the quality of interactions between parents and children. Protective factors at the Community level include: availability to resources and assistance, access to community networks, a feeling of connectedness to local communities and extended families and strong social networks. Formal institutional support and informal networks and support systems are essential at this level. Legal acknowledgment of partnerships has also been proven to promote resilience in the case of homosexual families. The increasing legitimacy with legalization makes it possible for the family to get greater official cash assistance and also offers up possibilities for social relationship development[9].

Some studies have looked at the resilience of homosexuals and lesbians, but few studied resilience in homosexual families. The Work, Love, Play (WLP) study investigates the extent to which the factors contributing to family stability are linked with resilience in families identified in previous research on heterosexual families when a parent or more identifies as being attracted to the same sex and which are more diverse in structure than traditional heterosexual family structures. The WLP research will also investigate variables that contribute to the resilience and well-being of families in social settings, characterized by legal and heterosexual community and prejudice against same-sex parents and children[10]. The research will also examine the experience of separation amongst same-sex couples with children. The objectives of the WLP study are given below.

1. It describes the features and variety of parent families of the same sex in Australia and New Zealand
2. Investigate the causes of breakdown in relationships and resiliency in parent families of the same sex
3. Examine changes in the stability and parenting of relationships between individuals
4. Exploring the effect on same-sex family parents of discrimination and homophobic societal views
5. Find obstacles to adequate provision of services to homosexual parent families across a variety of sectors, including community and health services
6. Develop methods for research findings to be translated into Good Practice Guidelines for use by providers in mainstream services and services aimed at homosexually attracted people and families in same sex families.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Design:

A mixed methodological research comprising three waves and longitudinal cohort studies of same-sex parents in Australia and New Zealand was planned to be performed between 2008 and 2014 over a period of six years. The sample includes lesbian, homosexual, bisexual and transgender parents who care for children under 18. In 2008, the first online survey gathered quantitative data, with two further online polls scheduled for 2010 and 2012. Qualitative data will be gathered via interviews in 2012 and 2013 using deliberately chosen subsamples and open-ended interviews. The key findings of interest for sub-studies are the following: increased understanding of variables that contribute to resilience in homely families and increased knowledge of the experiences of parents in partner separation and post-separation parenthood.

### 2.2 Sample:

The cohort sample includes participants from Australia and New Zealand who identify gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons as same-sex persons and presently active parents or children under 18 years of age. Alone parents who are attracted to the same sex are able to join. The method for sampling is restricted to one respondent per household. The self-finished survey asks that participants speak and write English. There is no sufficient census data available in Australia and New Zealand to determine the population size of the same-sex parents. In addition, prior investigations of this demographic group included relatively small samples and were mainly qualitative. As such, insufficient information is provided to perform a power calculation to establish a suitable sample size for this research. Data from Wave One were gathered from June to November 2008. During the time, the survey was carried out by 445 eligible individuals with 355 (80%) consenting to participate in the longitudinal research. In 2009/early 2010, further sampling and recruiting for particular categories started to increase the sample, with the objective of having at least 50 cases in all interest areas, including gender and location of residence.

Among the 445 first-round Wave One respondents, 85% (n = 377) lived in Australia and 15% (n = 68) in New Zealand. Most were lesbians (75 percent, n = 334) and 15 percent (n = 65) were homosexual, 8 percent (n= 36) were bisexual and 1 percent (3) were takatapui and 2 percent (n = 7) were transgender responses. The bulk of respondents (76 percent, n = 340) lived in urban regions within or outside of the country. Just under a quarter of the participants identified their homes as regional or rural/remote areas (23 percent n=102). Of the 355 people consented to be contacted for future polls, 301 were women, 49 were males and four identified their sex as "other". Objective cohort sub-samples for qualitative interview research in two particular areas of interest will be recruited from the Wave one cohort: determinants of resilience in homosexual families and the experience of parental separation for homosexual parent families.

### 2.3 Data Collection:

The surveys for 2008, 2010 and 2012 are done online. A survey hosting firm put up the questionnaire online, collects and maintains data on a secure server which is only available to researchers through a password for the Wave One survey (2008). The Wave One questionnaire included more than 100 questions and occupied around 30 to 60 minutes. Only relevant questions could be asked of each individual responder using the computerized format. Questions regarding present relations, for example, were not raised if an interviewer indicated that they are

now single in a prior inquiry. At the conclusion of the survey, participants were invited to participate and if so, to give contact information for future study. The respondents were told that this choice was optional and anonymous and that they could only participate in the Wave One research. Volunteer participants were sought for the Wave One survey through.

1. A sponsored banner of the website was posted on the 'Pink Sofa' website for three months.
2. Gay and Lesbian Health advertising Vitoria newsletters and websites and Brisbane Lesbian news "City- Lickers"
3. Business cards in size were created and distributed to community and health centers across Australia and New Zealand and to social supporting organizations of gay and lesbians.
4. Information on the study was posted in a series of e-mail lists including: Gay Dads Australia (and their state-based e-lists); Rainbow Families Council; ACT Queer; Australia's Lesbian Medical Association; Gay and Lesbian Researchers; GLBT Research Network of New Zealand; Auckland Gay and Lesbian Welfare; New Zealand Families; Gay & Lesbian Line; HOT News (South Australia); Pride and Hospitality (South Australia).
5. Informal advertising via e-mail to personal networks was created, and individuals were asked to forward it to friends and colleagues.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The poll covered a range of demographic questions such as sex, sexuality, age, location, training, employment, cultural/ethnic backgrounds, languages spoken and respondents' income and their spouse, when applicable. If the respondents answered that they are presently in a relationship, questions were asked regarding their relationship, including the time and the duration of cohabitation. They were also questioned whether they now had a parenting agreement with someone else. One open question asked respondents to describe the structure of their existing family. Respondents were questioned about the conception techniques and their relationship status at conception for each of their children. Options were provided for the promotion, adoption or other permanent care arrangements. The "Negotiation the Life Course" (NLC) study, a longitudinal study of Australian couples carried out by the Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute at the Australian National University and the School of Social Sciences at Queensland University, adapted a series of questions on the division of labor in the home. The NLC survey utilizes a CATI technique to gather information every three years from 1500 Australian respondents. The NLC's first wave took place in 1996 and 1997, followed by three waves in 2000, 2003 and 2006.

The Work, Love, Play research is the first large-scale study undertaken in Australia and New Zealand by same sex family members. Its importance rests in its significant contribution to national and worldwide family resilience literature. Furthermore, because the experience of separation among homosexual parent families has not before been studied, this study will fill a large vacuum in international literature. The research will also provide a significant addition to evidence on the health and well-being of parents and their children attracted by the same sex. Other features of the research include bigger samples compared to prior studies by lesbian and homosexual male parents. There is few published research on homosexual male parents and prior studies of lesbian parents tended to be qualitative studies exploring small samples.

The combined approach (qualitative and quantitative) to this research is suitable for investigating the notion of resilience in parent households of the same sex. Because little research has been carried out on this subject, the gathering of qualitative data will allow additional investigation and explanation of the main themes arising from the study Waves 1 and 2. The projective, longitudinal design of the research provides the chance to examine the separation experience of a same-sex parent sample, including an assessment of pre- and post-separation variables and parental well-being. In addition, the design allows the study of family well-being in Australia over time, and in areas where since Wave One the rules on same-sex parenting have altered. For example, 83 responders from Victoria, Australia have consented to take part in the future research waves. New rules that allow two moms to appear on a birth certificate and provide potential lesbian parents wider use of reproductive technologies came into effect in January 2010 in this State.

The WLP study has several drawbacks. There is no sample framework for lesbian and homosexual parents to generate a random selection of participants for the research. The unlikely sampling techniques employed in this research may generate some partiality in the sample, as individuals more related to social networks and support networks are likely to be exposed to data regarding the study. Unfortunately, this implies that the sample may be underrepresented for individuals who are more socially isolated, or who have worse mental health. The online survey technique also implies that a response rate cannot be determined since it is not known how many individuals viewed and refused to participate in the research.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In this research, the current Wave One sample had a very high level of education. This is not unusual. Most gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) studies in Australia use samples who have greater average levels of education than the overall population. It is not apparent whether this represents an actual greater degree of knowledge among Australians who openly recognize that same sex is attracted to them, or if individuals from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, especially online research, are less inclined to engage in study. Similarly, the sample included a low proportion of non-English speakers. Again, in Australian studies this is not unusual and does not focus particularly on a cultural group. The ethnic variety in Australia and New Zealand makes it difficult for all individuals from a wide range of cultural backgrounds to properly reflect their experiences. It is difficult to acquire sufficient numbers to guarantee representation within the total sample without a broad targeting of certain cultural groups. It should be emphasized that experiences of same-sex attracted parents in Australia and New Zealand may vary in various socioeconomic and cultural groupings.

#### REFERENCES:

1. L. Gahan, "Separated same-sex parents: Troubling the same-sex parented family," *Sociol. Res. Online*, 2018, doi: 10.1177/1360780418754699.
2. J. J. Power *et al.*, "Understanding resilience in same-sex parented families: The work, love, play study," *BMC Public Health*, 2010, doi: 10.1186/1471-2458-10-115.
3. A. Titlestad and J. A. Pooley, "Resilience in Same-Sex-Parented Families: The Lived Experience of Adults with Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Parents," *J. GLBT Fam. Stud.*, 2014, doi: 10.1080/1550428X.2013.833065.

4. H. Von Doussa *et al.*, "Building healthcare workers' confidence to work with same-sex parented families," 2016, doi: 10.1093/heapro/dav010.
5. D. Dempsey, "Same-sex parented families in Australia," *CFCA Pap.*, 2013.
6. D. Breshears and C. L. De Beer, "Same-Sex Parented Families' Negotiation of Minority Social Identity in South Africa," *J. GLBT Fam. Stud.*, 2016, doi: 10.1080/1550428X.2015.1080134.
7. M. G. Welsh, "Growing up in a same-sex parented family: The adolescent voice of experience," *J. GLBT Fam. Stud.*, 2011, doi: 10.1080/1550428X.2010.537241.
8. S. Tang, "Same-sex partnering and same-sex parented families in Singapore," in *Family and Population Change in Singapore: A Unique Case in the Global Family Changes*, 2018.
9. S. R. Crouch, R. P. McNair, E. B. Waters, and J. J. Power, "What makes a same-sex parented family?," *Med. J. Aust.*, 2013, doi: 10.5694/mja12.11234.
10. A. Hardie, "Picture books with same-sex parented families: Unintentional censorship," *Int. J. Learn. Divers. Identities*, 2014, doi: 10.18848/2327-0128/CGP/v20i01/48559.