

## **Literature Review**

While the nuclear family is the most popularly depicted family type, it is far from the only one. Many families stray from that ideal, including queer communities. Whether they're a single-sex couple or a polyamorous family (polyfamily), they are approaching parenting and family structures differently than the heterosexual norm. This can create new values and definitions as these families navigate the institutions that prioritize hetero and monogamous norms.

This report details the demographic makeup of queer parents in America, compiled from several surveys. The data is clearly marked and made quite easy to read. The information is mainly laid out in infographics, though is additionally broken down. It shows that lesbians, bisexual women and bisexual men are the most likely to be parents out of the LGBTQ community. There is also an emphasis on how queer couples are more likely to adopt or foster than different-sex couples. This is important to show how queer families are much less reliant on blood or genetic family bonds.

This academic article discusses the ways in which polyamorous interview participants defined and protected their families. They interviewed 55 participants about their relationships and families. The study is intended to show how polyamorous families both defy and expand upon normative definitions of family. They discuss their wishes for their lives and how those are or are not getting fulfilled. Many of these wishes include wanting a larger or more comfortable home to hold their families. They also discuss their choices on whether they are out to larger social circles, including biological family and workplace environments. Many were reluctant to be out, due to fear of judgement or having to continually explain their lives.

Both articles show how Queer families are strengthening themselves and becoming a larger part of the American population. Though, they do both demonstrate that these populations are still experiencing discrimination and other barriers to success. The public report does not explain as much about how alternatively structured families are faring, though the academic article does. A main barrier to these families' lives is the limited amounts of money that they have. In the public report, it says that Queer families are more likely to be in poverty, compared to both heteronormative families and Queer people without children. In the academic article, it was a noted desire of many of the participants to have a large house that could host their polyfamily. These combined are one example of how the hopes and dreams of queer families aren't necessarily available to them.

## **Research Question**

How do queer people navigate barriers to family wellbeing and redefine the cultural ideals of family within their broader social circles?

**Hypothesis(es):**

- 1) Queer people and families will have individual ideals for their own family, but there will be common themes among them.
- 2) There will be difference between queer families that assume heteronormative patterns into their family and queer families that defy or break away from those norms.

**Data and Methods**

I plan on having a survey targeted towards Queer families. Use word of mouth and flyers/Instagram ads to get as many participants as possible. While it is targeting specifically Queer families, it could be useful to have queer people not currently in a family unit to still discuss what ideals and dreams they have for their lives. There would be specific questions asking about their status of family.

**Measurement of variables**

One variable is family ideals. This is both family structure and shared values within the family. Some questions to ask could include: How do participants want their family to be structured and what do they get out of the family? What ideals are held within that family? What do they want from family? What does family do for them? The answers could then be evaluated for similarities. Those similarities could then be compared to see what is most held by queer families.

The second variable is navigation. This is defined by queer families' success in comparison to their hetero/cis counterparts. This can be defined both by comparison to national averages and by perceived success compared to their counterparts. Some questions could include: How do they perceive their success in comparison to straight nuclear families? How do they perceive their family's structure to have affected their success? Do they experience discrimination based on their family's bonds? Could also ask for information such as success in the workplace and school.

The third variable is defining and redefining definitions of family. What rituals do they use to define their family? Are they out to their social circles? How do they want to define their family? Is their family more focused on biological relationships or chosen family? Is their family presented to the public differently than they practice?

These answers can all be used to evaluate queer families' definitions and how they stray from normal cultural expressions and definitions.

### **Sampling**

There will be a qualitative survey given to queer families. This survey will be spread through word of mouth. Maybe particularly contacting local LGBTQ groups and asking them to advertise the survey. This will allow the survey to get to many people who would be willing to answer who would fit into the target group of queer families.

### **Analytic Plan**

I plan on taking the data and finding similar categories within the answers. These will then be evaluated for trends in the data that are similar among answers and which are differing among the population.

### Reference Page

Wilson, Bianca D.M. and Lauren J.A. Bouton. 2024. *LGBTQ Parenting in the US*. UCLA School of Law, Williams Institute.

Pain, Emily. 2020. "Queer Polyfamily Performativity: Family Practices and Adaptive Strategies Among LGBTQ+ Polyamorists." *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* 16(3):277-292.