

SAME-SEX PARENTS' HYPERVISIBILITY: EFFECTS OF PANOPTICISM AND  
REACTIONS TO INCREASED VISIBILITY

by

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## ABSTRACT

KATHLEEN VIVIAN BRADLEY-VOLZ. Same-sex parents' hyper visibility: effects of panopticism and reactions to increased visibility. (Under the direction of DR. CORAL WAYLAND)

The purpose of this project is to determine how same-sex parents in the Charlotte, NC area are affected by homophobia and restrictions on displays of affection. This research is unique to the study of gay parenting in its focus on comparing gay male parents with lesbian parents, without focusing on a comparison to heterosexual parents. Rather than concentrate on the children of gay and lesbian parents, this study looks at the parents' relationships to each other emotionally and sexually. 70 participants completed surveys which assessed parent and non-parent's awareness of panopticism and its influence on their behavior and actions. 10 same-sex parents were interviewed for an in-depth discussion of how they relate to a homophobic Panopticon. Individuals in a same-sex relationship without children were used as a control group. The control group allowed for an analysis based on how the parental status of same-sex couples affects the extent of homophobia and displays of affection between couples. For example,  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the parents interviewed regarded same-sex affection as more sexual than heterosexual affection. These parents feel that they need to be accountable to anyone in public, and that their affection will automatically be seen negatively. As such, many same-sex parents in the Charlotte, NC area cannot fully claim their identity as parents and queer individuals because of their de-sexualization and internalization of the homophobic Panopticon. A small minority, however, have rebelled against the Panopticon and have not allowed its gaze to determine where they are affectionate.

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## INTRODUCTION

Gay and lesbian parents in the United States find their identities as mothers and fathers and their ability/right to be parents continuously questioned by society. Societal views on gay and lesbian parents influences the laws created by those in power and further restricts same-sex parents' status as parents. They have no legal status as parents in the majority of the United States. When this research began, only 21 states and Washington D.C. allowed second parent adoption, a process in which one partner adopts the other partner's biological or adopted child without the parent losing her/his parental rights. Ten of those 21 states required that the partners be married, have a civil union or domestic partnership. North Carolina prohibited second parent adoption and same-sex marriage. In 2010 North Carolina's Supreme Court ruled that even Senator Julia Boseman's adoption of her former partner's biological child was invalid. Structural stigma, or legal and societal opposition to same-sex parents in North Carolina, can negatively affect these parents' relationship and their sense of self.

Due to real and perceived opposition to their parenting, some gay and lesbian parents police when they decide to 'come out' and identify as homosexual parents in order to lessen the impact of structural stigma. Although 'coming out' is a continuous process for gay and lesbian individuals, it occurs more frequently for same-sex parents and at times is unwanted. There are blogs, magazine articles, comment sections on websites and other resources which mention or spend a brief amount of time on the topic of the hyper visibility of gay and lesbian parents. It was commonly expressed by these same-sex parents that being 'out' day in and day out was an unexpected, and at times

undesired, part of life. The parents noted that ‘coming out’ for gay and lesbian parents is most frequent during pregnancy, interactions with the children’s school and day care, at the playground, during extracurricular activities, and while shopping. This was also the case with the same-sex parents in my study. According to psychotherapist Dr. April

Martin:

a “family that chooses to identify itself openly as a gay or lesbian parented family may expose itself to risks of homophobic insults, to loss of support from extended family, to loss of jobs or housing, and even to violence. For many families, openness about a parent’s homosexual orientation might also result in loss of custody or visitation with the child. Whether or not these dangers are real for a given family, the expectation that they could happen creates considerable anxiety. These are frightening prospects and require very difficult decisions” (Martin 1998).

Gay and lesbian couples who identify themselves as parents in societal situations are at the same time identifying themselves as homosexual. While same-sex parents may be more visible or easily identifiable as homosexual, homophobic panopticism intimidates and impedes same sex-parents from voluntarily ‘coming out’.

A deterrence to ‘coming out’ is more frequent in areas of the country that are more homophobic. The 2000 U.S. Census revealed that there is someone who identifies as gay or lesbian in almost every county in the United States. Yet, the rate at which these individuals are openly gay varies across the country. In a report for the Williams Institute, Gary Gates found that “congressional districts with the highest number and percentage of GLB individuals in the population tend to be more urban” and that “New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, and Boston have the largest GLB populations among metropolitan areas” (Gates 2006:1-2). Charlotte Magazine reported an analysis of data from the most recent U.S. census by Gary Gates, “which found that parenting among

same-sex couples is more common in the South than in any other U.S. region” (Boudin 2011). According to this data, Raleigh, North Carolina has the third highest number of same-sex couples raising children in the United States. Charlotte is only two and half hours west of Raleigh, but it ranks thirty-sixth out of fifty-two. Two same-sex parents interviewed for the article cited a more “conservative, religious presence” and that Charlotte “doesn’t feel as open to it (same-sex parenting)” (Boudin 2011). As such, same-sex parents in the Charlotte area will have a unique perspective on the effect of panopticism versus parents in less conservative areas of North Carolina.

Through numerous surveys and interviews of same-sex parents and non-parental same-sex couples in the Charlotte area, I found that panopticism, as proposed by Michel Foucault, had a major impact on these gay and lesbian parents. As a homophobic system of normalization, I argue that panopticism both de-sexualizes gay and lesbian parents and hypersexualizes them. Many same-sex parents in the Charlotte area have internalized this hypersexualization. Viewing their affection as more sexual than heterosexual affection, those parents restrict their public displays of affection and perform as though they are heterosexual. As such, many same-sex parents cannot fully claim their identity as parents and queer individuals because of their de-sexualization and internalization of the homophobic Panopticon. A small minority, however, have rebelled against the Panopticon and have not allowed its gaze to determine where they are affectionate.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND USAGE

Jeremy Bentham designed the Panopticon as an institutional building in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century which would “induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault 1995:201). Bentham designed the Panopticon as a circle of individual cells with a guard tower in the middle. The guard can see into the cells at all times, while the individuals in the cells would never be able to see each other or the guard. Those in the cells never know whether there is a guard present, but are always under the assumption and fear that one is watching them.

Used as a metaphor, Michel Foucault theorized that we live in a society of surveillance much like within the building of the Panopticon<sup>1</sup>. The norms, rules, and laws of society are adhered to even if police or other authorities are not present or visible. Disciplinary power begins to float freely and seeps into the psyche of society. Punishment and the exercise of power are internalized, and as such this power is mostly invisible.

Panopticism as a system of normalization and power influences individuals and compels them to remain within the culture’s gender roles, which retains its hold on the ‘normalcy’ of heterosexuality. Homosexuality is deemed illicit, while heterosexuality is licit. Drawing attention to one’s refusal to adhere to the gender and sexuality norms within a heteronormative society like the U.S. can and does result in severe social punishment. The level of punishment can range from dirty looks and under the breath

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<sup>1</sup>Hereafter, all references to Panopticism/Panopticon will refer to Michel Foucault’s theories of normalization and power, not to the physically structured Panopticon designed by Bentham.



comments to rape and murder. To combat these types of punishments, there has been an increase in normalization rhetoric.

Gay men and lesbians, especially those who are parents, are promoted as being just like heterosexuals. “Some gays and lesbians are being assimilated into a strange form of heterosexual identity and one that still privileges heterosexual norms...It is a performance of heterosexuality that is particularly oppressive for gays and lesbians since it involves self-policing and self-regulating of the most ‘innocent’ forms of sexual affection, such as holding hands or dancing together” (Johnson 2002:328). Johnson also describes a speech by John Gorton, a former Australian Prime Minister, in which he advocated for laws against gay males to be reformed. However, he was only in favor of this reformation if the gay males could pass as straight in public. “In Foucauldian terms, Gorton’s words are a classic statement of normalizing discourse, encouraging self-regulating behavior so intense that citizens are expected to police their most intimate feelings – barring public expressions of affection which heterosexuals would not normally think twice about displaying” (Johnson 2002:321).

Although Foucault theorized that panopticism flows through society at large, I propose that the extent that it is homophobic varies depending on the specific area a gay or lesbian parent lives in. Same-sex parents showing affection in public can immediately draw back the curtain of performative heterosexuality because their identity as non-heterosexual is apparent. Performative heterosexuality is similar to the vernacular term ‘passing’, which refers to gay and lesbian individuals ‘passing’ as heterosexuals. A person who is performing/passing as a heterosexual is typically ‘in the closet’ and is not openly gay, or she/he is hiding their non-normative sexuality in certain situations.

Performative heterosexuality in this study does not imply that same-sex couples and parents are acting like heterosexual couples in public. Rather, many have de-sexualized themselves in public and appear to be heterosexual. As stated previously, heterosexuality is the norm in the United States. If one does not ‘come out’ or appear to be openly gay, then it is assumed they are heterosexual. By same-sex parents restricting affection in public that could out them, or consciously dressing more gender normative than they typically would in certain less accepting areas, they are unconsciously engaging in performative heterosexuality.

In addition, same-sex parents’ sexuality in public shifts and fluctuates based on historical experiences and social interactions. As such, panopticism is not static, and performative heterosexuality is on a continuum. In areas where the homophobic Panopticon is not as oppressive or apparent, such as San Francisco or New York City, many same-sex parents do not feel compelled to hide their homosexuality and act as if they have no physical attraction to the same sex. However, areas where a homophobic panopticism seeks to punish non-normative sexualities results in performative heterosexuality by same-sex parents in public to appease the watching society.

Gregory Herek informs readers of *Stigma and Sexual Orientation: Understanding Prejudice against Lesbians, Gay Men, and Bisexuals* that the aforementioned population must deal with “enormous amounts of stress as a result of living in a heterosexist and homophobic society. Moreover, often they are tolerated by society only when they remain ‘closeted’” (Herek 1998). While gay and lesbian parents can limit the amount of stress they face by remaining ‘closeted’, this can also put more stress on them because they are presenting a heterosexual self in public. As stated previously, this is oppressive

due to the amount of self-policing and self-restricting of their non-sexual homosexual behavior and activity.

There has been more recent literature which acknowledges the lack of studies on the complexity of gay and lesbian parents' relationship within a homophobic patriarchal society. Clarke et al in *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans & Queer Psychology* note that "the conceptualization of sexuality in existing research is unsophisticated – little is known about the sexuality of participating parents other than their self-identification as lesbian or gay" (2010:213). A study conducted by Kent and El-Alayli cites a lack of research on non-sexual affection in relationships, especially same-sex relationships (2011:150). They conducted a study with lesbian women to ascertain whether displays of affection in public varied from those in private. Kent and El-Alayli found that due to a high degree of perceived marginalization, lesbian couples displayed less affection in public than in private. I propose that the marginalization perceived by the lesbian couples in Kent and El-Alayli's study was actually structural stigma as a result of a homophobic Panopticon.

Another important note is that gay men and lesbians tend to experience discrimination, homophobia, and violence unequally. The Williams Institute found that gay men "face the highest rates of physical assaults and other types of crimes against persons" with ten in 100,000 lesbians and twenty six in 100,000 gay men reporting being victims of hate-motivated crimes (Stotzer 2012:1). North Carolina's hate crime law does not include protections for gay men or lesbians. Although both gay men and lesbians do not have protections against discrimination and violence due to homophobia, the fact that gay men face higher rates of physical assaults influences gay male parents to restrict their public affection more than lesbian parents.

While any same-sex couple could feel the effects of homophobia and the disciplinary Panopticon, same-sex parents typically are not able to hide their sexual identity as easily or in as many places as same-sex couples without children could. The gaze of the guard in the watchtower is always upon gay and lesbian parents due to their hyper visibility. However, if they refrain from calling attention to themselves and their homosexuality, they might be saved from setting off the prison alarms. The panopticism of heteronormativity retains its hold even if there is no one there to see the same sex parents and 'punish' them. These parents have internalized the disciplinary power of the homophobic Panopticon and feel as though someone is always watching. Their lack of public affection reflects their perception of what is allowed by their panoptic area.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

One aspect of parenting in general which is acknowledged by gay and lesbian parenting research and dominates public policy is that parenting is gendered. “The argument that children need a mother and father presumes that mothering and fathering involve gender-exclusive capabilities” (Biblarz and Stacey 2010:4). This gendered parenthood has been constructed and perpetuated by heteronormative society and as such, gay and lesbian parents experience being parents in different ways. Heteronormativity identifies the father as a “disciplinarian, problem solver, and playmate who provides crucially masculine parenting” (Biblarz and Stacey 2010:4). The mother, on the other hand, “provides nurturance, security, and caretaking” (Biblarz and Stacey 2010:4). Although this binary production and delegation of child rearing roles may be seen with heterosexual parents, lesbian and gay parents do not have opposite sex/gender partners.

As there are no biological distinctions between male and female in these couples, there is less of a propensity to fall back on historical gender roles based on biology. Both gay and lesbian parents divide the family and household labor in a relatively egalitarian way (Clarke et al 2010; Kruczkowski 2012; Patterson 2000). This division is not strictly along the lines of who should take out the trash or wash the dishes, but also with parenting roles and responsibilities. This has been noted in same-sex parents taking turns disciplining the children, changing diapers, feeding, bathing, etc. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> While some heterosexual parents divide family and household labor in an egalitarian way, various studies have shown that traditional gender divisions of labor and power are typically reinforced among heterosexual couples once they become parents (Biblarz and Stacey 2010:12; Cowan & Cowan 1992; Kurdek 2001).

There is one aspect of same-sex parenting which has largely been ignored by anthropological studies and other disciplinary studies. The sexual, sensual and emotional connections between the parents is important to their relationship and should not be ignored. However, same-sex parents and gay and lesbian couples are typically de-sexualized within the media and by LGBT equality movements and groups in an effort to make their appearance more palatable to social/political conservatives.

“Studies in the past 10 years analyze the increasing, but still disciplined, public representations of gays and lesbians in mainstream mass media ... gays ascended to categories of voting bloc and market niche, all the while assimilating their group’s distinctions in order to blend into the mainstream ... depictions of same-sex parents, while becoming visible as open gay families and no longer outwardly bashed, are still problematically portrayed as either heterosexual clones or exotic threats” (Landau 2009:83).

Pro-LGBT groups focus on love, commitment, monogamy, and family. They push any same-sex parents that remain sexualized into the background. Jamie Landau argues that US print news stories, for example, are dominated by depictions of the children of gay and lesbian parents rather than their parents (2009:82). These depictions, she argues, are both visual and written and focus on the heteronormativity of the children. “These representations are homophobic by pushing gayness to the sidelines in silence” (Landau 2009:86).

One possible motivation for the focus on de-sexualized same-sex parents seems to be to counter the homophobic and anti-gay organizations and research which focused on the sexual acts between homosexual individuals. On one hand this has had positive effects and appears to have played a part in the recent increase in certain states legalizing same-sex marriage and pro-LGBT rulings by the Supreme Court. On the other hand, this

has led to a lack of research on same-sex couples and parents as sexual beings in a positive or objective manner.

### Gay Fathers

Gay fathers experience a certain invisibility as parents. Lewin (2009) explains that legal and social conventions assume that a mother is the most appropriate custodial parent, but gay male parents have the potential to explode the binary constructions of fatherhood. Giesler argues that gay fathers do this because “they violate two unspoken societal norms: gay men should not be trusted around children and women, not men, are the preferred primary nurturers of children” (2012:120).

There are also some individuals and groups who argue that men cannot provide the same degree of compassion and love to children as mothers can, due to supposedly innate qualities based on gender. As such, the paths to parenthood that are available to gay men “demand far greater motivation than heterosexual men or even women need to become parents. Gay men who clear this high bar are a select group who deviate from conventional hetero-masculinity and from cultural stereotypes about gay male lifestyles as well” (Biblarz and Stacey 2010:12). On the one hand they are confronted by conventional hetero-masculinity which dictates fathers are not gay, they should parent in a masculine way, and not be as active in the child rearing.

On the other hand, gay males who came of age during the solidification and existence of gay community and subculture following the Stonewall Riot in 1969 conceptualized gay identity as incompatible with parenthood. “Though there were certainly gay fathers during this time, gay identity in this era was overwhelmingly defined around *not* desiring socially normative roles” (Rabun & Oswald 2009:271; D’Emilio; Nimmons).

These men stated that “growing up gay, they did not conceive (of) fatherhood as a possibility. At a certain point, parenting became a reality for the participants, a paradigm shift that challenged the gender normative conceptions of fatherhood they previously held” (Giesler 2012:125). This paradigm shift strips these fathers of queer identification within their generational gay community, yet these gay fathers are still not accepted as normative within heteronormative society.

### Lesbian Mothers

Motherhood for lesbians in this literature was not at risk because of their sexuality – they did not conceive of motherhood as an impossibility. “For many lesbian couples, the decision to become parents figures centrally in each partner’s commitment to the relationship...the experience of a stable and singular involvement included initial conversations early on in the relationship about having a child” (Dalton and Bielby 2000:45). Patterson and Riskind point out that “lesbians who wanted to become parents were no more and no less likely than their heterosexual peers to intend to do so” (2010:330). In other words, their desire to have children was not contradicted by their sexual identity. Rather, they drew upon their identity as women to co-parent. While this may appear to be assimilation into the normative model of parenting and family while relying on their gender as a resource more so than gay fathers, they also challenge implicit heteronormative assumptions. “When lesbian couples construct themselves as two-parent families, they directly challenge normative conceptions of the traditional model of the two-parent family as it is socially and legally constructed from a biological model of reproduction” (Dalton and Bielby 2000:40).



While gay fathers face invisibility as parents due to the emphasis by heteronormative society on mothers, non-biological lesbian parents face invisibility due to the importance that is placed on a biological mother's connection with her child. A study conducted by Hequembourg and Farrell (1999) highlighted this and gave the example of the belief that breast-feeding establishes a unique bond between the biological mother and her child. A non-biological lesbian mother in Dalton and Bielby's study (2000) lamented the normative view that she could not or would not have the same bond with her child as her partner did because of biology. "And I was like, 'You know if I had adopted this baby and I was his adopted mother, no one would question that we were connected.' But it was like, 'Oh, because there's another mom therefore we can't be connected'" (Dalton and Bielby 2000:52-53).

A mother's connection to her child biologically positions family as an immutable and biological category much the same way that sex has been categorized. Family for gay and lesbian individuals is frequently not identified through bodily fluids, but rather by similar interests, ideals, desires, etc. The propensity for a non-biological lesbian mother to not be viewed in heteronormative society as that child's 'factual' and 'true' mother speaks volumes about the hierarchy of 'nature' and 'nurture'.

## METHODOLOGY

### Study Population, Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were utilized within this study. Snowball sampling was chosen as the sampling method due to the inability to develop a sampling frame with this population. Snowball sampling is useful when looking at social networks and specialized or specific groups that are difficult to find within sampling frames. This study compares gay male parents with female lesbian parents. Therefore, it is still necessary to minimize the within-group variance to maintain an equal representation of gender. I attempted to control for bias with this sampling method by accessing potential participants through numerous and diverse sources.

Same-sex parents are defined in this research as two people who identify as male or female in a committed relationship with another of the same gender identity (gay men and lesbian women). Same-sex parents are the aforementioned couples who are raising or have raised children, through means of surrogacy, artificial insemination, adoption, foster care, or children from a previous heterosexual relationship.<sup>3</sup> This study focused on same-sex parents in the Charlotte, North Carolina area.

In order to analyze the variables within the data from same-sex parents, a control group comprised of same-sex couples without children was included in this study. Individuals within a same-sex relationship without children will be identified throughout

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<sup>3</sup> These parents are referred to as same "sex" instead of same "gender" due to the widespread use of this term within current and historical research. However, the use of "sex" is not to denote any biological connotation. Transgender parents, non-gender parents and gender fluid or gender queer parents are not included as a population in this research due to potential variables which could confound the results of this study.

this study as same-sex couples. Gay and lesbian individuals who were not in a relationship did not qualify for this study, only those currently in a committed and monogamous relationship. These criteria are important due to the analysis of the homophobic Panopticon in the Charlotte area, as non-monogamous relationships would have variables that would confound the results of this study.

Surveys completed by same-sex parents and the control group of same-sex couples were used for quantitative data. An original questionnaire was utilized to assess each same-sex parent and non-parent's awareness of panopticism and its influence on their behavior and actions. Participants self-reported items which incorporated a variety of nominal, ordinal and interval variables, as well as Likert scale questions.

Scaled questions include how many times per day the respondent and his/her partner have physical contact at home or in public, how visible they feel they are as homosexual with various people in public, and how frequently they or their partner police their affection in various situations. Participants were also asked to list places they encounter questions about their family and places they do not go with their family. Demographic questions were included.

Survey questions which were specifically for same-sex parents were changed to be more accurate for same-sex couples. For example, same-sex couples were asked how visible they felt as homosexual in public with their straight friends versus with their gay friends. Parents were asked how visible they felt with their child versus with their child and partner. The questionnaire allowed for an assessment of same-sex parents' and couples' frequency of affection in various locations, motivations for affection,

satisfaction with their sexual, emotional and romantic relationship with their partner, among other probing questions.

There were a total of thirty same-sex parents and forty same-sex partnered individuals without children along various socio-economic lines, ages and ethnicities who completed surveys for this study (a total of 70 participants). I attempted to control for gender and have an equal division of male and female respondents, however there were only four out of thirty same-sex parents who were male. The gender distribution was more equal within the same-sex couples. 17 out of 40 respondents were male, and 23 out of 40 respondents were female.

The ethnicity of either parent can play a vital role in the weight of the Panopticon that a homosexual parent feels. Therefore, participants were asked to denote their ethnicity and their partner's ethnicity. Same-sex parents who were both Caucasian made up 56.67% of same-sex parents surveyed. While this study was more ethnically diverse than previous research, a wider sample group is necessary to analyze race and ethnicity's intersection with same-sex parents and Panopticism. As such, race and ethnicity are not discussed in the study results.

A sample of 10 same-sex parents were also interviewed to provide qualitative data. LGBT organizations and sport teams in the Charlotte area, gay and lesbian parenting support groups, as well as LGBT friendly religious organizations were resources for this sample group. The qualitative data reinforces the quantitative data with personal stories of same-sex parents' navigation through a homophobic Panopticon in the Charlotte area. The interview questions relate to those on the surveys, but allow for a more in depth discussion of how same-sex parents relate to a homophobic Panopticon.

Same-sex parents who were interviewed were asked open and closed ended questions. Respondents were asked in what ways the presence of family members or friends impact the type or amount of physical contact shown with their partner, in what ways their level of affection shown changes with certain locations, and how certain places or situations impact their presentation of femininity or masculinity. They also discussed if they feel that society accepts them as parents the same way as heterosexual parents, if they have been treated differently by the LGBT community since becoming a parent, and to discuss verbal or physical altercations they have encountered as same-sex parents. There were a total of thirty one questions, however, some questions had two parts.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed for an in depth assessment. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, however, any off topic discussions were paraphrased. Data from interviews was entered into MAXQDA and analyzed. The questionnaire data was entered into SPSS. This allowed for statistical analysis of quantitative data.

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

While the status of LGBT equality has changing dramatically across the country since I began this research over a year ago, gay and lesbian parents in the Charlotte area still experience hypervisibility within a homophobic Panopticon. Same-sex parents who had internalized the notion that non-heterosexual affection is hypersexualized still feel compelled to police their affection in public. The last question that was answered by each individual surveyed and interviewed was: “If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about being a same-sex parent (or couple for those without children) in the Charlotte area or about how society views or treats you as a same-sex parent (or couple), what would it be”?

Forty percent of parents surveyed and interviewed stated that they wanted to be treated equally. This could include marriage equality, but only 13.33% of parents singled out marriage equality specifically. For example, general equality included: “to be equal in society’s eyes”, “that people see our family just as they see their own”, and “to be treated no different than anyone else”. Statements singling out marriage equality included: “I want to be able to marry my partner of 20 years in the state we live in” and “for my marriage status not to change when I cross state lines. We’ve gone for a trip and over the course of a few days we’ve been legally married and not legally married 5 times”.

On the other hand, societal changes to be made were more diverse from non-parental same-sex couples. The highest identified aspect was from 20% of the couples, who viewed acceptance as most important. Some verbalized normalizing rhetoric, such as “we are just like straight people”, “look right by us cuz we are just like you!”, or “we’re

the same as everyone else, so treat us that way when we show affection”. The second highest occurrence at 17.5% was a call for no judgement. Non-parental same-sex couples asked that “more people wouldn’t judge us for who we are”, “bible thumpers need to stop being judgmental. Love is love”, or “church acceptance needs to be more constant in churches other than welcoming ones right now”.

Once same-sex marriage was legalized in North Carolina, I followed up with the parents I had interviewed to ascertain if they felt fully incorporated into society now that they could marry. Each parent stated that they were ecstatic for the LGBT community, to be able to legally marry their partner, or have their marriage legally recognized: “I just can’t believe North Carolina has marriage equality now. I never thought I would see this in my lifetime”; “It’s all I can talk about! My wife and I- I can actually say that now and not have it be meaningless here- went to a party full of queens, studs, femmes, flamers, even breeders! Everyone couldn’t stop smiling. It was the happiest party I’ve ever been to”.

The parents I spoke with also stated that there is still a lack of overall equality. Although they felt equal as a couple due to marriage equality, they did not feel equal as parents: “Do you think the ignorant people around here care if my husband and I are legally married? All they care about is that there are two men raising a son and a daughter. We’ve had people accuse us of molesting our son, or wanting to, because we’re gay. And somehow we’re supposed to want to molest our daughter too because we’re gay. I mean, these people make no sense! Besides, the dumbasses who are against us raising kids don’t think our marriage is valid anyways”. Many cited society’s views against same-sex parents, and specifically those who live in the Charlotte area. Although

the parents who participated in this study have access to marriage equality if they choose, those who policed their affection still feel compelled to do so because of the homophobic discourse in the Charlotte area.

Other participants cited a lack of legal protection as parents: “My wife is finally my wife in our own state, but I’m still not our children’s legal mother. How messed up is that? I mean, a straight woman could put any guy she slept with as the father of her child on the birth certificate, but I can’t be listed anywhere as our children’s legal parent. My wife and I chose the sperm together!” Another parent stated that equality in school forms, sports forms, and gendered holidays (Mother’s Day and Father’s Day) is still needed. Homosexuality and same-sex parenting is “deciphered on the basis of its relation to the law” (Foucault 1990:83). Legal inequality speaks volumes to a society that “dictates its law to sex” (Foucault 1990:83).

One male parent stated that he and his partner are not going to get married, but that should not have any correlation with whether they are the legal parents of their child. He also stated that, “I will never be like ‘just another parent’ until people stop seeing me as a child molester. Point blank. It’s that easy. I don’t know when or if that will ever happen down here”. There were several parents who pointed out that they still are not able to be troop leaders for Boy’s Scouts, even though they are more qualified than other parents who are straight. According to one father, “I get so frustrated thinking about my neighbor who knows nothing about the outdoors and doesn’t care to learn anything, being able to lead our son’s Boy Scout troop just because he’s straight. I can’t even have the chance to prove myself, though, because there’s this misconception that gay people are child molesters”.



Panopticism as a system of normalization and power influences individuals and compels them to remain within the culture's gender roles, which retains its hold on the 'normalcy' of heterosexuality. Some gay and lesbian individuals have internalized homophobia and the label of abnormality or delinquency. Public displays of affection (PDA) are limited or prohibited in many cases because same-sex parents with children are already more visible as homosexual. When surveyed, same-sex parents felt most visibly gay with their family in public. Even when their partner was absent and they were alone with their child in public, there was a 10% increase in feeling visibly gay from when they were by themselves (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2). The more visibly gay a parent felt, the more she/he was likely to police their affection:

“When I'm by myself, I don't feel like I stand out that much. My clothes are pretty normal, like, I look like a lot of the straight guys. But when I'm at a store with our son, I feel like there's people staring at us. Nobody has ever said anything to me, but I see the dirty looks and have heard people say 'pervert' or 'fag molester'. It makes me really nervous to hold my boyfriend's hand when we're with our son in public. I don't think it affects how I interact with our son, but sometimes I think it might and I don't want to think that. I wish our sexuality wouldn't be seen as abnormal by the people around here. Being gay doesn't mean I like little kids in a perverted way”.

Table 1.1: Scale of *same-sex parents'* feeling of being 'out' (N=30)

	1. Not Visible	2	3	4	5- Very Visible
By yourself	13.33%	10%	20%	10%	46.67%
With you and your partner	0%	6.67%	13.33%	16.67%	63.33%
With you and your child(ren)	10%	13.33%	10%	10%	56.67%

With you, your partner, and your child(ren)	0%	13.33%	6.67%	6.67%	73.33%
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Table 1.2: Scale of *same-sex couples* ' feeling of being 'out' (N=40)

	1. Not Visible	2	3	4	5- Very Visible
By yourself	20%	7.5%	12.5%	17.5%	42.5%
With you and your partner	7.5%	2.5%	17.5%	22.5%	50%
With you and your straight friends	12.5%	5%	20%	15%	47.5%
With you and your gay friends	2.5%	10%	5%	15%	67.5%

The percentages included in the tables above represent combined male and female participants. The degree that the participants felt 'out' in various situations changed according to their gender and parental status (see Tables 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, and 3.2). For example, gay male parents were the only participants who had 100% markings for feeling very 'out' with their partner and children. All other categories of participants had at least one marking in each category (#1-5, as visible in the tables above). The percentages for male same-sex couples who felt hyper visible increased steadily with each category. When alone, 47.06% felt "very 'out'". This increased to 52.94% with their partner, 64.71% with their straight friends, and 76.5% with their gay friends. On the other hand, the same amount of male same-sex parents felt hyper visible when alone or with their

children (25%), but the percentage increased when they were with their partner (50%).

Non-parental gay male couples were the only group who felt more visibly gay when with their straight friends (compared with same-sex parents and their children or non-parental lesbian couples with their straight friends).

Table 2.1: Scale of male *same-sex parents'* feeling of being 'out' (N=4)

	1. Not Visible	2	3	4	5- Very Visible
By yourself	25%	0%	2%	0%	25%
With you and your partner	0%	0%	25%	25%	50%
With you and your child(ren)	25%	50%	0%	0%	25%
With you, your partner, and your child(ren)	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%

Table 2.2: Scale of male *same-sex couples'* feeling of being 'out' (N=17)

	1. Not Visible	2	3	4	5- Very Visible
By yourself	5.88%	5.88%	17.65%	23.53%	47.06%
With you and your partner	5.88%	0%	11.76%	29.41%	52.94%
With you and your straight friends	0%	0%	17.65%	17.65%	64.71%
With you and your gay friends	0%	5.88%	0%	17.65%	76.50%

Lesbian parents felt more visibly gay in every situation in comparison to female same-sex couples. When alone, only 39.13% lesbian couples felt hyper visible, compared with 50% of lesbian parents feeling hyper visible by themselves. The amount of lesbian couples who felt very visibly gay almost doubled from when they were with their straight friends (34.78%) to when they were with their gay friends (60.9%). Conversely, the amount of female same-sex couples who felt very visibly gay increased slightly from when they were alone with their children (61.54%) to when their partner and children were with them in public (69.23%).

Table 3.1: Scale of female *same-sex parents'* feeling of being 'out' (N=26)

	1. Not Visible	2	3	4	5- Very Visible
By yourself	11.54%	11.54%	15.38%	11.54%	50%
With you and your partner	0%	7.69%	11.54%	15.38%	65.38%
With you and your child(ren)	7.69%	7.69%	11.54%	11.54%	61.54%
With you, your partner, and your child(ren)	0%	15.38%	7.69%	7.69%	69.23%

Table 3.2: Scale of female *same-sex couples*’ feeling of being ‘out’ (N=23)

	1. Not Visible	2	3	4	5- Very Visible
By yourself	30.43%	8.7%	8.7%	13.04%	39.13%
With you and your partner	8.7%	4.35%	21.74%	17.39%	47.83%
With you and your straight friends	21.74%	8.7%	21.74%	13.04%	34.78%
With you and your gay friends	4.35%	13.04%	8.7%	13.04%	60.9%

Due to the hypervisibility felt by same-sex couples in the Charlotte area, many parental and non-parental individuals that I surveyed stated that they limit or refrain from showing affection in public in areas that are more hostile towards the LGBT community: “I don’t know how others will react and that scares me. I’ve been egged before and beat up”, “Well, if we’re in an unfriendly environment I don’t feel as safe to be openly gay or show affection with my partner. I’m not sure if heterosexual parents will be offended if their kids see us”. Same-sex parents, however, were more likely to *always* police their affection in various situations than same-sex couples. The percentage of same-sex parents who *always* policed their affection was at least 20% in every situation. The amount of same-sex couples, though, who *always* policed their affection only reached 20% when they were in front of children in public: “I only do that in front of children cuz I have no right to flaunt it in front of other peoples’ kids”, “Only around children. Just because I don’t believe in exposing children to sexual encounters of any kind until it’s age

appropriate”, “We police as we believe it is not important to cause a spectacle or make parents explain ‘us’”.

On the other hand, same-sex parents were more likely to *never* police their affection in any situation. One parent explained that, “My wife and I did police our affection before having children because of her fears and being uncomfortable in certain situations, but one of the conditions of having kids was that we wouldn't change or limit ourselves for other people when it could harm our kids or ourselves”. Approximately twice as many same-sex parents *never* policed their affection in comparison with same-sex couples (see Tables 4.1 and 4.2).

Table 4.1: How frequently *same-sex parents* police their affection (N=30)

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
In front of adults in public	13.33%	16.66%	30%	13.33%	26.67%
In front of adults in private <sup>4</sup>	33.33%	23.33%	6.67%	16.67%	20%
In front of children (not theirs) in public	16.67%	13.33%	23.33%	20%	26.67%
In front of children (not theirs) in private	30%	6.67%	13.33%	23.33%	26.67%
With family members present	26.67%	6.67%	26.67%	16.66%	23.33%

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Private’ is any location where the general public is not present, such as a friend or family member’s home, a private gathering, etc.

Table 4.2: How frequently *same-sex couples* police their affection (N=40)

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
In front of adults in public	7.5%	27.5%	42.5%	15%	7.5%
In front of adults in private	17.5%	25%	35%	17.5%	5%
In front of children in public	7.5%	25%	27.5%	20%	20%
In front of children in private	12.5%	22.5%	35%	17.5%	12.5%
With family members present	22.5%	12.5%	40%	7.5%	17.5%

Same-sex parents, therefore, are more likely to either defy the Panopticon or submit to it. Throughout the surveys and interviews, it was also evident that male and female same-sex parents in the Charlotte area experience panopticism and hypervisibility in very distinct and different ways. All of the male parents stated that they policed their affection in public because of concerns for safety. One parent who lives in Gaston County stated, “I don’t want to be seen as a pervert, child molester, hear nasty comments, or have our child be part of something negative”.

Another parent who lives in Mecklenburg County stated that he and his partner do not feel safe showing affection in “the country. In Charlotte we do whatever we want to do. We hold hands, kiss on the cheek or mouth, sometimes I smack his butt. When we go outside of Charlotte though I’m afraid of being verbally or physically assaulted. It’s

important for our kids to see us being affectionate parents, but they also are aware that there's areas with ignorant and dangerous people". The very real threat of assault at higher rates for male same-sex parents increases their feeling of hypervisibility and restricts their affection within a homophobic Panopticon. The majority of non-parental gay male couples in this study (65%) did not police their affection in public. Those who did police their affection only did so in front of children they did not know or in areas they did not feel safe in.

When analyzed by gender and parental status (see Tables 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, and 6.2), lesbian parents were more likely to always police their affection in private if children or family members were present (26.92% for both). Yet, they were more likely to *never* police their affection with adults in private (26.92%). Male same-sex parents' willingness to display affection, on the other hand, were more affected by adults in public (50%) and children in public (75%). They were more likely to never police their affection in private locations, whether children were present or not. It may be that due to the intense policing of affection in public, the male parents feel more compelled to freely show affection in private areas regardless of who is present. One gay male parent explained that, "It's so exhausting to constantly be on the look out for homophobes and bigots. We have to change how we physically interact with each other so much in public, our friends and family know not to mess with us in the privacy of their homes or ours. None of the people we hang out with have a problem with us being gay, or their kids seeing us kiss or hold hands. If they did have a problem with it, we wouldn't be hanging out with them".



Conversely, only half of the female same-sex parents policed their affection in public. Of those, 'respect for others' was tied with 'safety' at 23.08% each as the highest reasons for lesbian parents to police their PDA. All but one of the female same-sex parents interviewed limited their PDA in front of children that were not theirs while in public, and occasionally policed their affection in front of adults in public, due to 'respect'. The lesbian parents interviewed and surveyed who limited their PDA out of respect for others thought that this was commendable and positive. For example, "I don't want to offend anyone. Not everyone is okay seeing gay stuff. I don't want to put someone else in a situation that makes them uncomfortable" or "Parents should be able to explain to their kids about homosexuality on their time, not because they see me and my partner kissing".

However, in reality, the homophobic discourse/rhetoric of panopticism and its disciplinary power has been internalized by these gay and lesbian parents. This is part of the "cycle of prohibition", which Foucault identified as another key aspect of power. According to Foucault, the cycle of prohibition declares that one cannot go near, touch, consume, experience pleasure, speak, or show oneself; "ultimately thou shalt not exist, except in darkness and secrecy. To deal with sex, power employs nothing more than a law of prohibition. Its objective: that sex renounce itself. Its instrument: the threat of a punishment that is nothing other than the suppression of sex" (Foucault 1990:84). A quarter of the parents interviewed regarded same-sex affection as more sexual than heterosexual affection, simply on the basis of it being non-heterosexual. Even when this affection was holding hands or other typically non-sexual touches, it was still identified as sexual if done by a gay male or lesbian. These parents feel that they need to be

accountable to anyone in public, and that their affection will automatically be seen negatively.

Table 5.1: How frequently male *same-sex parents* police their affection (N=4)

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
In front of adults in public	25%	25%	0%	0%	50%
In front of adults in private	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
In front of children (not theirs) in public	0%	0%	0%	25%	75%
In front of children (not theirs) in private	75%	0%	0%	0%	25%
With family members present	26.67%	6.67%	26.67%	16.66%	23.33%

Table 5.2: How frequently male *same-sex couples* police their affection (N=17)

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
In front of adults in public	11.76%	17.65%	41.18%	17.65%	11.76%
In front of adults in private	11.76%	23.53%	35.29%	17.65%	11.76%
In front of children in public	5.88%	17.65%	29.41%	23.53%	23.53%
In front of children in private	5.88%	17.65%	41.18%	17.65%	17.65%
With family members present	11.76%	11.76%	52.94%	5.88%	17.65%

Table 6.1: How frequently female *same-sex parents* police their affection (N=26)

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
In front of adults in public	11.54%	15.38%	34.62%	15.38%	23.08%
In front of adults in private	26.92%	23.08%	7.69%	19.23%	23.08%
In front of children (not theirs) in public	19.23%	15.38%	26.92%	19.23%	19.23%
In front of children (not theirs) in private	23.08%	7.69%	15.38%	26.92%	26.92%
With family members present	19.23%	7.69%	26.92%	19.23%	26.92%

Table 6.2: How frequently female *same-sex couples* police their affection (N=23)

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
In front of adults in public	4.35%	34.78%	43.48%	13.04%	4.35%
In front of adults in private	21.74%	26.09%	34.78%	17.39%	0%
In front of children in public	8.7%	30.43%	26.09%	17.39%	17.39%
In front of children in private	17.39%	26.09%	30.43%	17.39%	8.9%
With family members present	30.43%	13.04%	30.43%	8.7%	17.39%

Although the disciplinary power of panopticism has resulted in many same-sex parents in the Charlotte area internalizing a label of abnormality consciously and unconsciously, it has also been slightly productive. Half of the lesbian parents stated that they did not police their affection in public. For example, “I don’t police affection with my partner because I love her” or “We don’t like to hide how we feel about each other”. Another parent explained that, “I’m not gonna change how affectionate I am because of other people. I’m not a big affectionate person, but my partner is. So I make a conscious effort to hold her hand more because that’s her personality. I change for her to make her happy, but I’m not gonna change for anyone else no matter what they think”.

Of the parents who stated they did not police their affection, the majority live in Rowan County or Mecklenburg County. Although Rowan County is more conservative than Mecklenburg County, and is one of the counties mentioned that the male parents did not feel safe showing PDA, the female parents did not fear for their safety there. It is possible that this is due an increase in positive visibility through the Salisbury Pride Festival held yearly. None of the female same-sex parents cited any concern for being seen as a child molester. The lesbian parents who were concerned for their safety in other areas cited fears of sexual harassment and sexual abuse, versus the male parents who were fearful of physical assault.

There was also a small number of lesbian parents (4 out of 26) who actively rebelled against the Panopticon and consciously made the decision to show affection despite homophobic people and/or areas. One parent explained, “Years ago my girlfriend and I were jumped by a bunch of guys and beat up. They left hurt too cuz I fought back, but I’ve also been raped twice for being gay. My girlfriend and I moved from West

Virginia to Myrtle Beach but it still didn't stop and she committed suicide. She hung herself because of society's prejudice. I vowed that I wouldn't let her death be in vain and haven't policed my affection since then".

One parent stated, "I don't care what people think. It's my life. It's now or never. I'm not going to live forever". Another parent explained that "Sometimes we show affection just to make a point that we should be able to do what we want to. Like, we'll be at a store and I might not normally touch my partner. But then we'll hear somebody talking smack about how I look like a dyke or how fags are gonna burn in hell. That kind of stuff really pisses us off, so we make sure to hold hands in front of those people or put our arms around each other. It's not like we're grinding or anything perverted, although it's probably the same to those ignorant assholes. It makes us feel better though, like the homophobes aren't getting the best of us, ya know?"

## DISCUSSION

The field of anthropology and women's and gender studies would benefit from a wide range of additional research on same-sex parents. This research relied on self-reporting from the respondents. Results may differ based on participant observations throughout a longer research period. It would also be beneficial to increase the geographic area of study. Researchers could compare regions of the United States to each other and/or states. Does panopticism affect same-sex parents internationally in the same way as it does in America? How does panopticism vary from country to country or cultural areas? Researchers need to be conscious of the variables attributed to racial differences in the U.S. also. For example, heterosexual interracial couples are still marginalized in the South. Interracial same-sex parents may face more barriers to freely showing affection. Class differences and access to resources are also important factors for future research.

I acknowledge that this study focused on binary gendered parenting by same-sex couples. While this was done purposefully to obtain the most accurate results, research with non-binary parents is also important and should be carried out. Psychoanalytic approaches/analysis and Queer Theory would also be very useful for an alternative discourse on same-sex parents. How would gay and lesbian parents navigate the Panopticon with a non-fixed and fluid identity? How does a non-monogamous relationship impact the homophobic Panopticon? To what extent are the male same-sex parents affected by the homophobic Panopticon because of pedophilia discourse?

In this study I found that the effects of Panopticism and reactions to

hypervisibility were gendered. This is due to our society being gendered binarily, to the importance that is placed on so called proper displays of masculinity and femininity, to the differences in punishment if a male or female steps out of the proscribed roles, and to the gendered aspect of homophobia. If the gendering of our society changes in the future, the operation of the Panopticon may also change.

As a homophobic system of normalization, panopticism both de-sexualizes gay and lesbian parents and hypersexualizes them. Many same-sex parents in the Charlotte area have internalized this hypersexualization. Viewing their affection as more sexual than heterosexual affection, those parents restrict their public displays of affection and perform as though they are heterosexual. As such, same-sex parents cannot fully claim their identity as parents and queer individuals because of their de-sexualization and internalization of the homophobic Panopticon.

Same-sex parents should rid themselves of the shackles of panopticism and be free to be themselves. As Foucault has argued, we as a society will never be free of Panopticism because we live in a disciplinarian civilization. However, there are various permutations of the Panopticon that chastise and seek to penalize minorities according to the status quo of each culture in a given time period. I argue that the homophobic Panopticon in its present state is only as powerful as you allow it to be, as is evidenced by the minority of same-sex parents who actively rebelled against the Panopticon. The homophobic Panopticon's power is sustained and fed by the LGBT community changing their behavior according to the normalizing discourse that it spews and expects. The homophobic Panopticon is a bully. We need to ignore the bully in the watchtower and

live our lives as if it is not there. It will wither away in time without its source of nutrition.

Being invisibly gay and having no sexuality is just as bad as being gay and having no other identity. The gay part of being a gay parent is just as important as the parent aspect. LGBT people, with or without children, will always see the world from a different point of view, in part because of their sexuality and where that places them in society. I am not just my sexuality, because there is more to me than that. However, it is not something to be denied or forgotten either. Our identities are made of a multitude of things which makes each person view the world in a different way.



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## APPENDIX A: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SAME-SEX PARENTS

1. How many times per day do you have any kind of physical contact with your partner at HOME?

- 0
- 1-3
- 4-7
- 8-11
- 12+

2. How often do you put thought into what your clothes say about your gender?

- Every day
- Multiple times per week
- Multiple times per month
- Every once in awhile
- Never

3. What are the places you feel most comfortable going with your family? Why?

4. How many times per day do you have any kind of physical contact with your partner in PUBLIC?

- 0
- 1-3
- 4-7
- 8-11
- 12+

5-8. The following scales will be to rate your feeling of being "out" in public in various scenarios, with 1 being "not visible" and 5 being "very visible".

	1	2	3	4	5
By yourself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
With you and your partner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	1	2	3	4	5
With you and your child(ren)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
With you, your partner, and your child(ren)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9-12. How important is it that you are perceived to be heterosexual in public?

	Unimportant	Low Importance	Neutral	Important	Very Important
By yourself	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
With you and your partner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
With you and your child(ren)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
With you, your partner, and your child(ren)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. What kind of places do you or your partner typically encounter questions about your family? (These could be questions such as “where’s their mother/father”, “who is the real parent”, questions about surrogacy, IVF, adoption, etc. These inquiries could be positive, neutral or negative).

14. How many children do you have and what are their ages?

15. Are there questions you or your partner are asked that you don’t think straight parents are asked? Why do you think that is?

16-20. The following questions concern how frequently you or your partner police your affection as a couple:

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
In front of adults in public.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In front of adults in private.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In front of children (not yours) in public.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In front of children (not yours) in private	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
With family members present.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. What is your age category?

- Under 25
- 26-31
- 32-36
- 37-41
- 42-51
- 52-61
- 62-71
- 72-81
- 82+

22. What is the most common question you're asked about your family? How does it make you feel?

23. On average, how long are you in public with your partner per day?

- 0

- 1 hour or less
- 2-4 hours
- 5-7 hours
- 8+ hours

24. How would you describe your spiritual, religious, or non-theological position, identity or world view?

25. What kind of physical contact do you have with your partner in PUBLIC?

26. What is the gender identification of you and your partner?

27. What is the ethnicity of you and your partner?

28. If you police affection with your partner in certain venues or situations- what is your reasoning for this? If you don't police your affection- what is your reasoning for this?

29. What county do you live in?

30. On average, how often do you conform to gender-norms?

For example, wearing types and colors of clothes that are typical for your gender. Society associates men and women with certain occupations, ways of standing and walking, gesturing, communicating, etc.

1    2    3    4    5

Never      All of the time

31. If you conform to gender-norms: in what ways do you do so, and why?

32. Does being a parent make you want to be more or less open about your sexuality? Why?

33. If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about being a same sex parent or about how society views or treats you as a same sex parent, what would it be?



**APPENDIX B: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SAME-SEX COUPLES  
WITHOUT CHILDREN**

1. How many times per day do you have any kind of physical contact with your partner at HOME?

- 0
- 1-3
- 4-7
- 8-11
- 12+

2. How often do you put thought into what your clothes say about your gender?

- Every day
- Multiple times per week
- Multiple times per month
- Every once in awhile
- Never

3. What are the places you feel most comfortable going with your partner? Why?

4. How many times per day do you have any kind of physical contact with your partner in PUBLIC?

- 0
- 1-3
- 4-7
- 8-11
- 12+

5-8. The following scales will be to rate your feeling of being "out" in public in various scenarios, with 1 being "not visible" and 5 being "very visible".

	1	2	3	4	5
By yourself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	1	2	3	4	5
With you and your partner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
With you and your straight friends	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
With you and your gay friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9-12. How important is it that you are perceived to be heterosexual in public?

	Unimportant	Low Importance	Neutral	Important	Very Important
By yourself	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
With you and your partner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
With you and your straight friends	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
With you and your gay friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. What kind of places do you or your partner typically encounter questions about you and your partner's relationship? (These inquiries could be positive, neutral or negative).

14. Do you want to have children in the future? Why or why not?

15. If you want to have children: do you expect your physical affection with your partner in public to change once you have children? Why or why not?

16-20. The following questions concern how frequently you or your partner police your affection as a couple:

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
In front of adults in public.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In front of adults in private.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In front of children in public.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In front of children in private	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
With family members present.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. What is your age category?

- Under 25
- 26-31
- 32-36
- 37-41
- 42-51
- 52-61
- 62-71
- 72-81
- 82+

22. What is the most common question you're asked about you and your partner? How does it make you feel?

23. On average, how long are you in public with your partner per day?

- 0
- 1 hour or less

- 2-4 hours
- 5-7 hours
- 8+ hours

24. How would you describe your spiritual, religious, or non-theological position, identity or world view?

25. What kind of physical contact do you have with your partner in PUBLIC?

26. What is the gender identification of you and your partner?

27. What is the ethnicity of you and your partner?

28. If you police affection with your partner in certain venues or situations- what is your reasoning for this? If you don't police your affection- what is your reasoning for this?

29. What county do you live in?

30. On average, how often do you conform to gender-norms?

For example, wearing types and colors of clothes that are typical for your gender. Society associates men and women with certain occupations, ways of standing and walking, gesturing, communicating, etc.

1     2     3     4     5  


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 Never      All of the time

31. If you conform to gender-norms: in what ways do you do so, and why?

32. If you want to have children: do you think becoming a parent will make you want to be more or less open about your sexuality?

33. If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about being a same-sex couple in the Charlotte area or about how society views or treats you as a same-sex couple, what would it be?

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SAME-SEX PARENTS

1. In what way(s) does the presence of family members or friends impact the type or amount of physical contact you show with your partner?
2. How does the presence of children other than your own affect your willingness to be affectionate with your partner?
3. In what ways does your level of affection shown change with the location you are in (with and without children present)?
4. Describe the kind of affection that is shown in front of your child(ren) at home.
5. What kind of comments have you heard by others in public areas about you or your partner? How does this make you feel?
6. What has been said to you or your partner in public because of your perceived or shown sexuality? (If the respondent has been told positive or negative views, what is the outcome? If no one has said anything to the respondent or partner, is there fear that something will be said?)
7. What kind of affection (if any) is off limits in public or in private? What are the reasons for this?
8. How often do strangers see you, your partner and child(ren) and ask about the child's parent(s)? (Where's their father/mother, who is the real mom/dad, etc.)
9. How do certain places or situations impact your presentation of masculinity or femininity? Does this depend on who you are with?
10. What kind of questions do you expect to be asked in public about your family?  
What kinds of locations change the types of questions?

11. How does the presence of family members of you or your partner impact your level of affection shown?
12. Do you feel that society accepts you as a parent in the same way as heterosexual parents?
13. What has been your experience with physical assault based on your perceived or shown sexuality?
14. What are the factors that decrease or prohibit you and your partner being intimate at home?
15. How do you introduce your partner to strangers?
16. Have you been treated differently by the LGBT community since becoming a parent?
17. How does the location or type of situation affect how you introduce your partner?
18. How has your perception of your sexuality changed since becoming a parent?
19. Tell me about any heterosexual parent activities that you don't feel comfortable participating in. What are the reasons for this?
20. What do you feel has and hasn't validated you as a parent in this area?
21. How do you or your partner's feelings towards intimacy change because of different environmental factors? (for example, homophobic comments or actions)
22. How has your visibility as non-heterosexual in public changed since becoming a parent?
23. Do you think that your experience as a same sex parent would be different in another part of the country? How so?

24. What motivations for having a child and/or fears about having a child did you have beforehand?
25. How do you and your partner decide how to present your family with your children's school (parent teacher conferences, PTA, drop off and pick up at school, etc.)? What are the reasons if one of you is the sole person interacting with the school?
26. How do negative or positive reactions to your sexuality affect your sex life?
27. In what ways do negative or positive experiences as same-sex parents impact your affection at home between you and your partner?
28. Did you have children with your current partner or from a previous relationship?
29. If from a previous relationship, what changes have you noticed in how accepted you feel in public? Your relationship with your partner?
30. How do you feel about heterosexual couples versus non-heterosexual couples engaging in public displays of affection?
31. If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about being a same sex parent or about how society views or treats you as a same sex parent, what would it be?