HHS4U Longitudinal   
Lesbian Family Study

**Seminar 2**

**Terms - Minds On**

**longitudinal**… A **longitudinal** survey is a correlational research **study** that involves repeated observations of the same variables over long periods of time — often many decades. It is a type of observational **study**.

**in text citation**… the APA style of citing where a source of information came from, specifically the author’s last name and the year the article or book was published

**lesbian**… a woman who is into other women (sexually oriented)

**conception**… the point in time when a child is being conceived.

**adolescent**… a person who is in the life stage of being a teen, important to differentiate between this term which is the name for the person in this stage and the name of the stage which is actually adolescence

**cohort**… someone who is in the same age group as you are, in this case the children who are now 17

**implications**… consequences, what might come from whatever it is you are looking at

**heterosexual**… being attracted to a person of the opposite sex

**homosexual**… being attracted to a person of the same sex

**same sex**… term often used to describe a couple where both partners are male or female

**DSM**… Diagnostic Statistical Manual (currently DSM5), describes the many types of mental health disorders currently being diagnosed by health professionals, it is a guide for doctors, psychologists, and benefits companies that standardizes illness – symptoms and so on

**psychosocial development**… the psychological and social development of an individual

**dearth**… lack thereof, not so much

**DI donor insemination**… when a man donates sperm to a sperm bank and or to another person, or couple of family who lack sperm but want to make a baby

**planned lesbian family**… when a lesbian couple decides they want to raise a child together and get pregnant and or adopt

**inter-individual difference**… the differences between groups (intra – within the group); in this case the differences between children raised by lesbians as one group and children raised in straight households

**minority status**… belonging to a group which is not the majority in the society in which you live ex. gay rather than straight

**mean age**… average age

**normative**… a term to describe the type of development a person is experiencing when things are going along as expected, when it comes to development, there are standard milestones and expectations, for example babies learn to sit up before they learn to crawl and crawl before they walk, this is normative development physically, this can also obviously be used to describe emotional development and or social development (psycho social development)

**appendix (report)**… the portion at the end of an APA research report where the tables are kept that are too large to be in the results or discussion portion but can be referred to, the reader can then flip to the back and see the table, also could include tools used by the researcher, example interview questions, or surveys

**somatic complaints**… physical

**independent variable**… when comparing an experimental group with a control group, the independent variable is the variable that you are manipulating or changing between groups – commonly used in science and social science experiments, in this case the independent variable would be whether or not the teen was being raised in a traditional heterosexual home (control group) versus a lesbian home (experimental group) see page 11 of the study, they also looked at gender for differences so that was another independent variable that was examined

**dependent variable**… the variable that is actually the measure or product that would show if there is a difference between a control group and an experimental group, in this case it would be the behaviours – such as being withdrawn, breaking rules, having attention problems, being aggressive and so on.

**Summary**

Write a five sentences summary of the research study. Try to be as comprehensive as you can in these five sentences. Include as much of the key information as possible. There will be a prize for the best one!

**Discussion Questions - Action***Introduction and Literature Review*

1. In 2005, approximately how many children lived in the US with two same sex parents? How many lived with or had one same sex parent?

* 270 313 American children were living in households headed by same-sex couples in 2005
* nearly twice that number had a single lesbian or gay parent

1. Prior to the 1960s, how did the medical and psychiatric community view homosexuality? How do you think the rest of society viewed it?

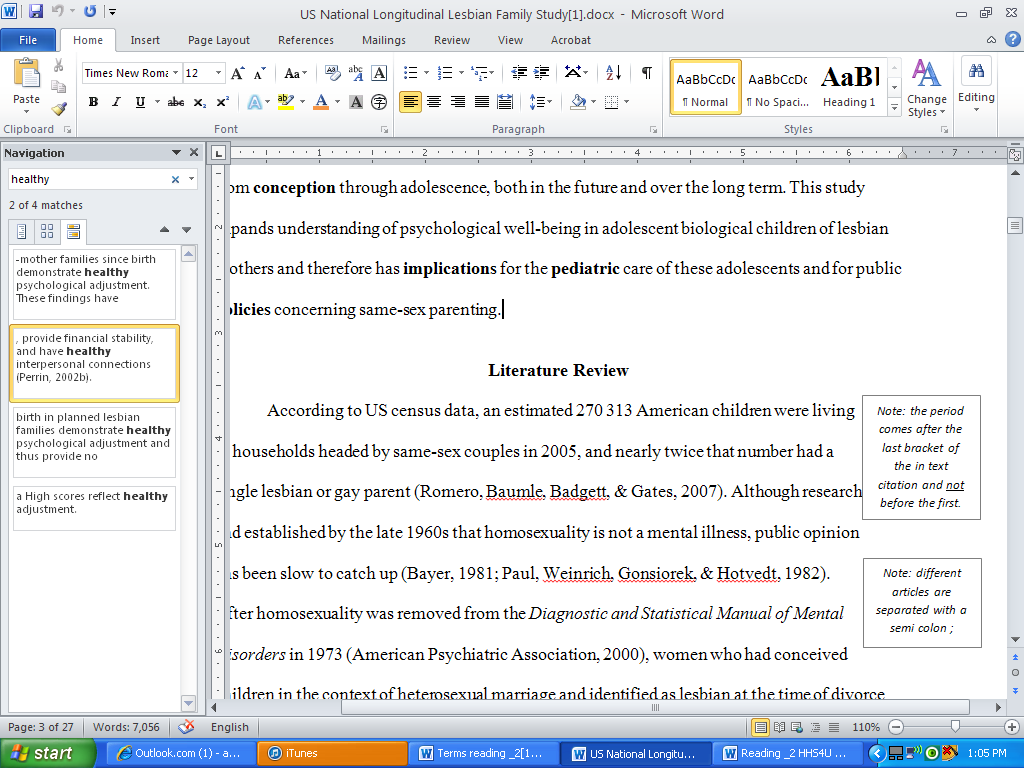
* research had established by the late 1960s that homosexuality is not a mental illness
* public opinion has been slow to catch up

1. Look at the first in text citation (see parenthesis in the first paragraph which shows the last name of the authors’ of the article being cited and the year it was published). How many authors wrote the article first cited in this study?

(Romero, Baumle, Badgett, & Gates, 2007) four

1. How many articles are referred to or cited in the second citation of this study?

* Two, see the authors are separated by one semi colon, which shows that the authors listed after the semi colon are from a new article



1. When was homosexuality removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders? Who publishes or authors this Manual?

* homosexuality was removed from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* in 1973
* (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) also called American Psychological Association

1. During this time period, of the early 1970s, how did most women who were lesbian happen to have children? Why do you think this was? Why would it have been difficult for them to keep custody of their children in the event of a divorce or separation? What were the concerns of the courts?

* They were in heterosexual relationships prior to coming out and likely had a child or children with their male partner
* There were not many out lesbian couples in North America in the early 1970s as it was still or had just recently been removed from the DSM, so it was considered abnormal and less socially acceptable at best and a mental illness and a crime at worst
* Also not many women had access to having a baby in the early 1970s in any other way, the first test tube baby was

<http://abcnews.go.com/Health/test-tube-baby-louise-brown-turns-35-medical/story?id=19764283>

Louise Brown, the world's first test-tube baby, was born at Oldham General Hospital in Britain on July 25, 1978. Elizabeth Jordan Carr was born December 28, 1981& was the [United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States)' first [baby](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baby) born from the [in-vitro fertilization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/In-vitro_fertilization) procedure and the 15th in the world.

* It would have been difficult for a lesbian to get a divorce and then win custody of her child or children because she would be treated as someone who is either mentally ill or abnormal, and or perhaps even a criminal, likely a sinner or person of negative standing, so the courts would be more likely to award custody to a father who would also be seen in a sympathetic light or as the one who was likely not to blame for the divorce in the first place
* There may have been concern about her ability to provide a good home for a child if she were mentally unstable, or not a good person

1. What have the early studies, and subsequent three decades worth of studies, shown regarding differences between children raised in homes by heterosexual or same sex parents in terms of psychosocial development?

* studies have shown that there are no significant differences in psychosocial development between children who are reared in lesbian and heterosexual households
* 3 decades of cross-sectional research show that the psychological adjustment of children is unrelated to their parents' sexual orientation

1. Before we go on, what are the different ways that same sex couples or individuals can become parents?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Lesbians | Gay Men |
| Donor insemination  Surrogacy  Adoption  Earlier relationship with a male | Surrogacy  Adoption  Earlier relationship with a female |

1. Has there been a lot or little amount of research in this area? Why are the same sex couples in this study based on women?

* there has been a dearth or lack of longitudinal studies on lesbian families and limited data on adolescents who have been living in lesbian or gay households since birth
* this study wanted to examine the first generation of lesbian planned families, essentially a first time phenomenon

1. What are the four key areas of development examined in this study?
2. psychological adjustment
3. peer relationships
4. family relationships
5. progress through school
6. What do the authors site regardless of sexual orientation of parents, for healthy outcomes for young children?

children do better when their parents are

* compatible
* share responsibilities
* provide financial stability
* have healthy interpersonal connections

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1. How does this change for adolescents? Why do the authors think it is important to research how adolescents are doing more so than younger children?

* during adolescence, peer relations become more important, for children family is more important  
  teenagers develop a sense of identity, more of an appreciation of individual differences between groups, and more awareness of minority status
* essentially, they are more aware of being in a different type of family and are more aware of the fact that not everyone is cool with it, and this matters as their relationships with peers are important

1. Why is this study different from the ones done in the 90s with adolescents raised by lesbians?

* The earlier studies are not looking at planned lesbian families, they are working with families headed by lesbians who were in previously straight relationships, we just didn’t have the technology for donor insemination, technically you could have sex with a friend to get pregnant but there was a lot less societal support for this as well
* This study provides a unique first time opportunity to study intentional lesbian families

1. What was interesting about the longitudinal study conducted in the UK?

* when the did their third follow-up, the 18 young adults with lesbian mothers and the 20 who were raised by single heterosexual mothers showed higher levels of self-esteem than the 32 reared in 2-parent heterosexual households

1. What was the issue that could have confounded the American Add Health study?

* this group studied forty-four teens who lived with 2 mothers and compared them with 44 who were raised by a mother and a father. No differences between the 2 groups were found in peer relations, academic performance, personal adjustment, and health-related risk behaviours; however, the parents' sexual orientation was not specified in the Add Health survey, so the analyses may be **confounded** by the inclusion of women who live together but do not identify as lesbian
* confounded means basically confused, so the results could be confused by this other variable which was not controlled

*Method, Results and Discussion*

1. What research problem or question prompted this study?

* are there any differences between the health and well-being of children raised by lesbians or children raised by heterosexual parents?

1. After completing their secondary research (literature review) what hypothesis do you think this pair was looking to prove?

* likely that there is going to be no significant difference between the two main groups

1. Who are the groups being compared in this particular field research? What are the sample sizes? What specific variables are they studying?

* They broke the sample group with lesbian parents into sub groups based on (1) sperm donor status (having a known, as-yet-unknown, or permanently unknown donor); (2) parental relationship continuity (whether the offspring's mothers are together or separated); and (3) experiences of stigma
* they started off with 154 lesbian women in 84 families (70 birth mothers, 70 co-mothers, and 14 single mothers; this dropped to 78 families with 79 children
* 28 of the teens know who their sperm donor is, 50 remaining don’t know for now 19 and or ever 31--------------- when you see n= that is how to refer to the size of a group you are studying
* 31 of the kids had moms who were still a couple, 40 had separated-mothers, and 6 were in single-mother families (the percent who broke up was 57, slightly higher than the norm)
* They were on average 17 but did range from 16 to 18
* The comparison group included 49 girls and 44 boys all aged 17, total n=93

1. What method or methods did they use to gather their data? What did the CBCL measure specifically? What were the independent and dependent variables listed?

* the Achenbach comparison group (control group) consisted of CBCL Child Behaviour Checklist reports completed by the moms of the 49 girls and 44 boys,
* structured interviews (pre developed questions) with the lesbian group when the moms were pregnant, and when the kids were aged 2, 5, 10 and 17
* questionnaires with the moms when the kids were 2, 5, 10 and 17
* the kids were interviewed at 10 and completed an online survey at 17 using codes instead of names
* when they looked at comparing the groups they only used the maternal reports made by the lesbian moms when their children were 17
* the CBCL Child Behaviour Checklist measures provides information about an adolescent's social functioning and identifies symptoms that are associated with behavioural and emotional problems
* the CBCL was completed in 2 sections

1. the first measured adolescent competence on 4 scales: activities, social, school/academic, and total competence. High competency scores indicate superior functioning
2. the second section focused on behavioural or emotional problems rated on 8 syndrome scales (anxious/depression, withdrawn, **somatic** complaints, social problems, thought problems, attention problems, rule-breaking behaviour, and aggressive behaviour)

* so the dependent variables were the 8 scales of problems and the 4 scales of psychosocial development
* the independent variables were
  + whether or not the mom was a lesbian inter group differences (control or comparison group – no, experimental group – yes) and gender
  + or intra group differences between the kids whose moms were lesbians, ex. Known donor, or unknown, kids whose moms stayed together versus those who didn’t, and whether or not there were differences between kids who had been stigmatized or not

1. What were the results? Where were the groups similar and where did they differ?

* there were some inter group differences, not for gender though
* the differences were examined and broke out this way
  + the 17-year-old NLLFS girls and boys were rated significantly higher in social, school/academic, and total competence
  + and significantly lower in social, rule-breaking, aggressive, and externalizing problem behaviour than the comparison group
* intra group differences were looked at
  + no differences between known and unknown donor kids
  + no differences between kids whose moms were still together vs broken up
  + no differences between kids who reported being stigmatized versus those who did not
  + but differences between kids whose moms reported they had been stigmatized
    - these kids scored higher on internalizing negative behaviours and total behaviour problems

1. Do you think their hypothesis was proven?

* essentially yes, if the hypothesis is that the children of lesbians were not worse off, because in fact their results were more positive when you looked at intergroup differences
* however, if the hypothesis was that there would be no differences, it was mostly proven but there were slight differences that did appear both inter and intra as already mentioned
* IMPORTANT ADD IN QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DISCUSSION FOR NEXT TIME, discuss it here though at least, have everyone look at this section and tell me what the point of the discussion part of the report is for, and or accomplishes

1. How did they share their findings with the rest of the world?

* Published in the journal of pediatric medicine

**Reflection Questions - Consolidation**

1. In your opinion, does it make a difference in terms of healthy development, if an adolescent is in one or more minority groups? Why or why not? Add any other observations you think are relevant.

* In general likely yes, because they care about what their peers think, although according to this study not significantly

1. What implications does this have for the whole question of what type of family we are raised in, if we consider adolescent development? Is this fair or unfair in your opinion?

* Well, it is easier to be raised in a family that is the majority, when it comes to caring about your peers as a teen

1. What are some stereotypes that exist in our society around same sex parenting?

* That the children will
  + somehow be negatively impacted, turned gay or lesbian
  + or be confused about sexual orientation
  + that they may suffer because the world is discriminatory so even though a person might not be against lesbians they might think they should not be parents because the children might be bullied

1. Did this study reinforce or counter these stereotypes regarding children raised by same sex parents?

* Counter, and if anything turned them upside down, because the children of the lesbians were higher functioning and less problematic

1. What makes a good parent? See question 11 – do you agree, disagree? Are they missing anything?

* they are compatible
* share responsibilities
* provide financial stability
* have healthy interpersonal connections
* think about the 6 functions of the family

1. Which of the steps of the method of inquiry are the easiest – and why? The most challenging – and why? The most interesting – and why? The most important to the outcome – and why?

* vary by student opinion
* making sure that the study actually studies what it is supposed to and also that the tools and design are well put together and that the hypothesis is something that can be proven or disproven

1. What type of study could come next?

* Similar longitudinal study with families in Canada
* Similar longitudinal study with gay families in Canada as well
* Similar longitudinal study with families in Canada that looks at post 2006 changes that make same sex marriages legal – more sanctioned by society
* Others if student have ideas

1. What question(s) should I have asked and missed?