



# Contemporary Family Conceptions, the Impact of Law, Policy, and Culture on Contemporary Family Formations

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## Abstract

This study aims to investigate the meaning-making of parents and children, biological and non-biological family members when families are constructed in non-traditional ways. We will be addressing families constructed with known donors, step-parents; through adoption; in polyamorous and platonic family formation, and families of choice. Through this longitudinal ethnography, we hope to uncover the journeys of different families in their family construction. We ask what social and cultural norms shape their choices; how are their choices shaped by race, religion, gender, sexual identities, cultural norms, law, and geography? How do the stories and narratives constructed by different family members vary? What weight is given to biology, law, and cultural norms? What is the impact of family conception when navigating institutions such as schooling, healthcare, travel, immigration, and benefits? Thus we ask, who counts as family? What are the roles, expectations, and meanings assigned to those in non-traditional families over time? Why do our conceptions of family matter? And what are the implications for care, social support, policy, and childhood outcomes?

This project is a collaborative project, directed by the principal investigator Dr Penny Harvey, an Assistant Professor in Human Sexuality Studies at the California Institute of Integral Studies. While the project will be led and administered by Dr Harvey, there are six co-collaborators at various career levels, from masters students to post-docs. Each collaborator will focus on one to two family types through this co-collaboration. Data and findings pulled from the distinct family types will be collated to gain insight into the bigger picture of how wider systems such as healthcare, family recognition law and policy, immigration law, and welfare benefits impact both family wellbeing and choices and possibilities in family construction.

**Keywords:** Family, Policy, Gender, Sexuality