

We are Family. Same-Sex Families in the Italian Context

Federica Bertocchi, Luca Guizzardi

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1. Authors information

Federica Bertocchi

Department of Sociology and Business Law, University of Bologna,
Italy

Luca Guizzardi

Department For Life Quality Studies, University of Bologna, Italy

2. Contact authors'

Federica Bertocchi

E-mail: federica.bertocchi@unibo.it

Luca Guizzardi

E-mail: luca.guizzardi@unibo.it

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Federica Bertocchi*, Luca Guizzardi**

Corresponding author:
Luca Guizzardi
E-mail: luca.guizzardi@unibo.it

Corresponding author:
Federica Bertocchi
E-mail: federica.bertocchi@unibo.it

Our national institute of statistics, Istat, thanks by the last census in 2011, has calculated 7.531 same-sex couples of which 529 with children. This value corresponds to a 0,09% of the total of newborns (546.607) of that year.

Much ado about nothing...

Until 2016, Italy was one of the few European countries which had not a discipline on same-sex couples. Thanks to the so-called 'Cirinnà Law', now, in Italy, gay and lesbian couples have a juridical and public recognition. The law recognizes all the rights as well as the duties of marriage except the mutual obligation of fidelity and the step-child adoption. These two rights were not included in the law because, otherwise, part of Parliament would not vote it: it would be introduced gay marriage. Eight months later, only 2.802 same-sex couples have contracted a civil union (data from *La Repubblica*, 7 May 2017).

Much ado about nothing...

In the end, both the struggle for the public recognition of family composed by two daddies or two mothers and the struggle for the public recognition of couples composed by two men or two women concern very small numbers, many few individuals. But, is it true? From a statistic point of view, it is undoubtedly true; but from a relational point of view, it is not true. Every child has parents and grandparents, uncles and aunts, cousins. That is to

* Department of Sociology and Business Law, University of Bologna, Italy.

** Department For Life Quality Studies, University of Bologna, Italy.

say that every child is son or daughter, grandson or granddaughter, nephew or niece, cousin. In the same way, every groom or bride is a brother-in-law or a sister-in-law, son-in-law or a daughter-in-law, even if the groom marries an other groom or a bride marries an other bride. We have to bear the generative grammar of relations in mind. We can suppose, for examples, that those 529 children have 2.116 grandparents, 2.116 uncles and aunts, 1.587 cousins – even if we could split that kinship group in half: on the one hand, the natural one, on the other hand, the...? What kind of kinship bond?

So, this special issue of *Italian Sociological Review* represents an attempt to analyze and to understand the different processes and peculiarities that concern gay and lesbian families in the Italian context. Each contribution studies in depth a specific dimension of the same-sex families. Together, they all make an outline of the colorful rainbow of all families.

The section opens with Federica Bertocchi's article *The state of studies and research on the homosexual parent family in Italy* and Luca Trappolin's article *Pictures of lesbian and gay parenthood in Italian sociology. A critical analysis of 30 years of research*. Reflecting on the state of the studies on homosexual parent families in our country, both of them give us a very complex and interesting state of the art. Bertocchi's contribution underlines the need to overcome the Italian legal vacuum which has serious consequences for both the children and adults involved. As far as Trappolin is concerned, he states that the research on homosexuality has shifted from an initial lack of interest in lesbian and parenthood to the inclusion of such issue at the center of the debate.

The social processes of kinship formation in lesbian and gays families are investigated by Luca Guizzardi. In his article *In september, they will start to ask: "So you all come here for Christmas?"*. *Rainbow families and the gift of kinship*, the author tries to pinpoint the reason why the mothers and the fathers want to build up kinship network and kinship connections. Through the kinship structure, all the members are asked to agree to be publicly recognised as close-relatives of the new born. But, as the article poses, the dilemma of the members is to feel joy or shame about it, so they can accept or refuse to be part of kinship group.

Chiara Bertone, in her article *Good and healthy parents. Non-heterosexual parenting and tricky alliances*, explores the appeal of medical frames in collective self-representation of LGBTQI's advocates, drawing on international literature to read our national context. The main problematic implications of this appeal, as Bertone discusses, is about who can get voice as legitimate expert and which model of good parenting can be sustained.

Thanks to Jean Baudrillard's theory on simulation process, Debora Viviani, in her article *It is not mine. Surrogacy between natural body and artificial body*, develops an interesting analysis about the construction of social and personal

identities of the mothers. In particular, Vivani identifies new social as well as sociological pressing issues about motherhood medicalization and women's body.

Last but not least, *Inclusion of homoaffective families in education services and schools in Italy: a pedagogical issue*, by Alessandra Gigli, where she outlines the increasing interest of pedagogy in LGBT parenting, started in 2010. Even if pedagogy itself has made progress, pedagogical scientists have to go further and toward the fight against stigmatisation, discriminations and homophobia.

Federica Bertocchi and Luca Guizzardi
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