

'Gay men, gay men and more gay men': Traditional, liberal and critical perspectives on male role models in lesbian families

Victoria Clarke

Key words: discursive psychology, father figures, lesbian and gay psychology, lesbian parenting, male role models

The argument that children require role models of both sexes is a central theme in opposition to lesbian parenting. Challenges to this opposition have emphasised the ways in which children in lesbian families are compensated for the alleged deficit of a father. In this paper I provide an antidote to gender normalising discussions of male role models by exploring critical accounts of 'gays as role models'. The first half of the paper examines the deployment of traditional, liberal and critical discourse on male role models in relation to lesbian families. The second half provides a discourse analysis of excerpts from an interview with a lesbian couple raising three children, examining tensions in claiming gay men as positive role models for children in a lesbian family. I conclude by considering the costs and benefits of liberal and critical responses to claims about the necessity of male role models.

Introduction

Section 13(5) of the UK Human Fertilisation and Embryology (HFE) Act (1990) requires licensed clinics providing conception services to consider the best interests of the child before providing any 'treatment':

a woman shall not be provided with treatment services unless account has been taken of the welfare of any child who may be born as a result of the treatment (*including the need of that child for a father*), and of any other child who may be affected by the birth (emphasis added, quoted in Cooper & Herman, 1995, pp. 163-164).

Legislation such as this reinforces the common sense understanding of the importance of biological fatherhood and the heterosexual nuclear family (Donovan, 2000). The pre-eminence of (biological) fatherhood in legal and social policy contexts translates in popular discourse into arguments about the importance of 'father figures' or 'male role models'. Although (heterosexual) single mothers are prime targets of conservative claims about the necessity of male role models, in more recent times, lesbian mothers have also come under attack¹. In lesbian mother custody cases², and in debates about lesbians' access to fostering, adoption and conception services, opposition to lesbian parenting has centred on disturbances in children's sexual identity (as a result of absent or inappropriate role models). The HFE Act is currently under review and, unsurprisingly perhaps, a key focus of the media coverage is the welfare principle and lesbians' and single women's access to donor insemination. This coverage has illustrated the

¹ Even more recently the absence of a maternal influence has been a focus of concern in debates about gay male parenting (see Clarke, 2001).

² I refer here to lesbian mother custody cases involving women seeking custody of or access to children from former heterosexual relationships.

continuing cultural currency of arguments about male role models. For instance, the opening question of a recent studio discussion³ - part of an item on the Channel Four evening news - introduced male role models as a central issue for the review of the HFE Act: Krishnan Guru-Murthy: 'Ben Summerskill should ensure clinics make sure that a baby's gonna have a father figure?' I consider Ben Summerskill's response to this question below. When this question was directed to Dr Helen Watt, she argued for the importance of biological and social fatherhood: 'I think this is about the child's right to a father the child's right to a genetic father and also to a social father, it's even worse to deprive a child of a social father as well as a genetic father'. Fathers are presented as irreplaceable in this type of argument (Clarke & Kitzinger, 2005) - which is perhaps symptomatic of the resurgence of the father's rights movement - and are clearly understood as the producers of normalcy and appropriate sexual identities (Kelly, 2005). Fathers' rights groups and organisations in the UK - including the most prominent, *Fathers 4 Justice* - emphasise children's 'inalienable' right to a father and argue that in the arena of family law, the children's best interest principle (Children's Act [1989]) in practice means what is in the mother's best interest. They are critical of the Lord Chancellor's Department for failing to - in their view - enforce the will of parliament. Organisations such as *Fathers 4 Justice* have begun using highly visible tactics (including a 'dad's army'), more akin to those used in Australia and New Zealand, to promote fathers' rights (Smart, 2004; see www.fathers-4-justice.org). Smart (2004) argues that the fathers' rights movement in the UK has been given a huge boost by the involvement of Bob Geldof, who has become their mouthpiece in the media. In her view, the demands of organisations such as *Fathers 4 Justice* push family law back to simplistic notions of equality and reduce children to passive objects in a system designed to create 'equality' between adults.

The aim of this paper is to provide an antidote to gender normalising discussions of male role models by providing a critical exploration of discourses on this topic. I provide an overview of traditional and liberal (normalising) discourse⁴ on male role models and explore the alternative critical accounts of 'gays as role models'⁵ offered by lesbian feminists and others. The second half of the paper offers a detailed examination of fragments from an interview with a lesbian couple, in which they discuss the male role models in their family. These fragments illustrate some of the tensions managed by the couple when claiming their gay male friends as positive male role models for their children. The fragments also provide concrete examples of the concept of male role models under negotiation.

Traditional discourse on male role models

³ The discussion was between the presenter, Krishnan Guru-Murthy, the Chief Executive of the lesbian, gay and bisexual equality and justice organisation Stonewall, Ben Summerskill, and the Director of the Linacre Centre for Healthcare Ethics (a Catholic think tank), Dr Helen Watt. This item was broadcast on 16 August 2005 and video-taped and transcribed by the author. A number of excerpts from this discussion are quoted in the paper.

⁴ I use the term discourse in its broadest sense to signal socio-cultural patterns of meanings that are constitutive of objects such as 'male role models' (Burman and Parker, 1993).

⁵ This is a reference to a paper by Dorothy Riddle (1978) about the ways in which lesbians and gay men can provide children with positive role models (see below).

Children need a male and a female... Men and women think differently and bring up children differently... My husband demonstrates to my son how to use strength gently... Imagine a boy living with two female parents... There's no male role model. How's that boy going to find his way in the world?⁶

In 1979, Lewis argued that the notion that a father or other models of maleness are “essential to the healthy psychological development of children” (1979, p.115) is a central tenant of traditional thinking about child development. Recent evidence suggests that ideas about the importance of father figures remain firmly entrenched in the larger socio-cultural context (see Clarke, 2001, Clarke & Kitzinger, 2005). The above quotation from the (now defunct) British talk show *Esther* demonstrates that children in lesbian families are presumed to lack male role models. Lesbian mothers are the subject of “fervent and aggressive attack” because they, especially when living with a partner and/or raising sons, are “making a clear statement that there is no role within the home for the father of the child/ren, if he exists” (Chrisp, 2001, p.203). Underlying claims about the importance of male role models and father figures is a conservative understanding of family – in this discourse ‘family’ means the marriage of a man and a woman and their children (Cooper & Herman, 1995).

Concerns about the absence of suitable role models in lesbian families first came to light in the context of lesbian mother custody cases and have been recycled in debates about lesbians fostering and adoption, access to conception services and more general public/media debates about lesbian (and gay) parenting (Harne et al., 1997, Clarke, 2001). The argument is that without a father figure or a male role model, children in lesbian families will suffer a confusion of gender identity and behaviour⁷. This means that boys will fail to develop along strong masculine lines and as a result will grow up homosexual and girls will develop into tomboys and lesbians (Harne, 1984). (Parallel arguments are made about the development of children in gay male families. See Clarke, 2001). Lesbians and gay men are thought to be incapable of providing proper role modelling for children (because of the disturbances in *their* sexual identity)⁸. In addition, in early custody cases, concern was also expressed about the risk of children being sexually abused by their homosexual parents or their parents’ homosexual lovers or associates (Rights of Women Lesbian Custody Group [ROWLCG], 1986).

In lesbian (and single heterosexual) mother custody cases judges have felt compelled to ‘find a father’ (Arnup & Boyd, 1995) and claims about the lack of a father or an appropriate substitute have been used to undermine lesbians’ petitions for custody. In one lesbian mother custody case, it was argued that a boy could only “develop along strong normal

⁶ *Esther*, BBC2, February 21, 1995, quoted in Saffron (1996, p.185).

⁷ Throughout this paper I use terms like ‘gender identity’ and refer to the three-pronged model of sexual identity (gender identity, gender role behaviour and sexual orientation) that underpins much of the research on lesbian parenting. This model assumes that gender and sexuality are, as Hicks (2005) argues, essential, measurable and transmittable (from parent to child). I take a social constructionist view of gender and sexuality - within this framework gender and sexuality are viewed as social practices, the effects of a range of discourses. In the current socio-cultural context sexuality and gender are intimately related – whether this is politically desirable is a matter for considerable debate.

⁸ As other authors have noted the notion of role modelling maps on to the assumptions of social learning theory (e.g., Golombok et al., 2003).

masculine lines” (Anonymous, 1976, quoted in ROWLCG, 1986, p.110) in the custody of his father. In a case described by Stephens (1982), a report produced by the father’s psychiatrist noted that: “in the absence of a father or father-figure, male identification is not possible unless a substitute father is provided and this, within the setting of a homosexual environment, would not be satisfactory” (p.94)⁹.

Although it would often seem that it is the mere presence of a man (or maleness) that is important (Saffron, 1996), suitable male role models are implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) represented as heterosexual. Gay men are discounted as suitable role models because of their sexuality and because they are not believed to be appropriately masculine (Riddle, 1978). In the Christian Right (CR) anti-gay genre, gay men are represented as dangerous to children because of their paedophilic desires (Herman, 1997; see for example, Dobson & Bauer, 1990). Gay male sexuality is represented as masculinity out of control, aggressive and unrestrained, depraved and diseased. There does however appear to be something of a shift in the positioning of gay men in relation to fatherhood, partly as a result of the resurgence in the father’s rights movement. Kelly (2005), for example, documents a dispute in the Family Court of Australia between a lesbian couple and their gay male sperm donor over contact between the donor and the child – a boy. The donor was successful in his petition for contact – in the opinion of the judge the donor’s sexuality did not jeopardise his ability to be a producer of masculinity.

Liberal discourse on male role models

...the reality is that tens of thousands of lesbians who do arrange to become pregnant every year actually plan very carefully to have male role models for their children. I don’t know a single lesbian couple that doesn’t have males actively involved in bringing up their children, and of course the reality also is there are millions of children of heterosexual couples who have no father figure in their lives at all... all the latest credible evidence suggests that kids brought up in lesbian and gay households are just as well developed emotionally and just as well developed socially, have exactly the same sexual orientation as kids in the wider population (Ben Summerskill, Channel Four evening news, 16 August 2005).

The vast majority of psychological research accepts the notion that male role models are essential (e.g., Golombok et al., 1983, Hare and Richards, 1993, Kirkpatrick et al., 1981). Studies (such as those referred to by Ben Summerskill) have dealt with the issue of absent or inappropriate role models in lesbian families by investigating lesbian mothers’ attitudes toward men, children’s contact with adult men and the development of their sexual identity.

Psychological research challenges the assumption that children in lesbian families are “cut off from all contact with men” (Golombok et al.,

⁹ The child in this case was removed from his mother’s home and placed in the care of his father and his father’s new wife.

1983, p.561), and are “isolated in single-sex lesbian and gay communities” (Patterson & Redding, 1996, p.43). Researchers typically take pains to emphasise the mother’s role in instigating and maintaining contact between their child and the child’s father or other men. Kirkpatrick et al. (1981) was the first study to investigate children’s contact with men. They indicated that the lesbian mothers in their sample were more concerned than the heterosexual mothers that their children have opportunities for good relationships with adult men. Kirkpatrick (1987) reported further findings from this study including that the lesbian mothers had more adult male family friends and involved male relatives more often in children’s activities than did the heterosexual mothers. In a study widely regarded as one of the most important of its kind, Golombok et al. (1983; for a more recent example see Patterson et al., 1998) assessed children’s relationships with their fathers and contact with adult friends of their mothers in divorced lesbian mother families. They reported that children of lesbian mothers were more likely than children of heterosexual mothers to have contact with their fathers at least once a week. All of the children of lesbian mothers were reported to have contact with adult friends of their mothers. Two-thirds of the mothers indicated that their friends were a mixture of men and women (and a mixture of homosexual and heterosexual adults).

Psychologists have also sought to challenge stereotypes of children in lesbian families being raised in households in which “there is a negative attitude towards things masculine” (Golombok et al., 1983, p.570). Martha Kirkpatrick (1989) remarked that she assumed that the lesbian mothers in her study:

would be hostile to men, including the children’s father, and would deprive their children of male contact. I was wrong on all counts! ...they were much less angry and bitter toward men than the divorced heterosexual women and consequently provided more male contact for their children (pp.136-137).

Hare and Richards (1993) reported that the women in their study “clearly did not conform to the commonly held belief that most lesbians are separatists” (p.254). Golombok et al. (1983) assessed lesbian mother’s attitudes towards men (from “*definitely negative*” to “*sexual feelings*”, p.559). They indicated that only a very few of the lesbians in their study held “definitely negative” (p.570) attitudes towards men. Such claims draw on and reinforce a ‘good gay/bad gay’ hierarchy (Cooper & Herman, 1995). This hierarchy has also informed lesbian mother custody cases – particularly cases conducted in the 1970s and 1980s. In these cases, women counted as ‘good lesbian mothers’ if they embraced the importance of male role models. Women who were ‘bad lesbian mothers’ challenged patriarchal assumptions and as a result were more likely to lose custody of their children or have restrictions placed on their contact with their children (ROWLCG, 1986).

In research on the children of lesbian mothers, sexual identity is assumed to have three main components: gender identity (whether we think of ourselves as male or female), sex- (or gender-) role behaviour (the behaviours and attitudes associated with being male and female), and sexual orientation (our choice of sexual partner) (see Golombok, 2002, Patterson, 1992). Children’s gender identity and sexual orientation has been examined primarily using self-report measures. Sex-role behaviour has been measured by assessing whether children’s toy and activity preferences are

consistent with conventional sex-typed preferences (for instance, whether boys engage in rough-and-tumble play and play with 'masculine' toys like trucks and guns). Golombok et al. (1983) reported that the boys in their sample showed sex-role behaviour that would commonly be regarded as "characteristically masculine" (p.362) and the girls showed feminine-type behaviour. They give the example of a boy and a girl with scores close to the mean – the boy:

frequently played with both constructional and mechanical toys, often played football and went ice-skating. Occasionally in the school holidays he helped to cook and mended his own clothes. He read a variety of comics and watched adventure programmes on television (p.364).

The girl "read girl's comics and romantic books and watched pop music programmes on television. She often cooked but did not like sewing or knitting. Occasionally, she played table tennis" (p.364). Patterson (1992, pp.1031-2), in a widely cited review, summarised the results of research on sexual identity as follows: "no evidence has been found for significant disturbances of any kind in the development of sexual identity among these individuals". This research has been used countless times to support lesbian mothers' petitions for custody and to support lesbian and gay parenting in public debates about the right and fitness of lesbians and gay men to parent (see the above quotation from Ben Summerskill for instance). In a custody case in the early 1990s, the mother was successful because she demonstrated a desire for her son to be, as the judge put it, "brought up on a heterosexual basis, and... [to] see a good deal of his father" (B v B, 1991, p.411). Professor Russell-Davis, appearing on behalf of the mother, reported that fears about the psychosexual development of children in lesbian mothers are not substantiated in studies such as Golombok et al. (1983) and Green et al. (1986).

Feminists have critiqued the gender normalising assumptions embedded in this research. Fitzgerald (1999) argued that although psychological studies debunk myths and stereotypes about lesbian and gay parenting (as the above quotation from Ben Summerskill demonstrates) they acquiesce to hegemonic ideals of masculinity and femininity by measuring appropriate child development in terms of conformity to rigid gender norms. In relation to the earliest studies of lesbian mother families, Harne (1984) argued that they take as their premise that lesbianism is abnormal and can only be defined negatively against the heterosexual family. Such studies deny that lesbian and feminist influences may be good for children and that being brought up without a man may be beneficial (Harne, 1984).

Elsewhere, I have explored three key ways in which lesbian mothers (and their relatives) participating in television talk shows and documentaries respond to arguments about the importance of male role models (Clarke, 2002a, 2002b, Clarke & Kitinger, 2005). First, participants offered up male role models such as grandfathers, uncles and nephews as filling the gap created by the absent father. Second, participants emphasised the (inescapable) presence of men in the world. In so doing, they parodied (and attempted to undermine) the view that lesbians hate men and seek to isolate their children in all-female environments. Both of these arguments present compensations for the lack of a father. Third, the participants normalised fatherlessness in lesbian mother families by emphasising the similarities

between lesbian families and single mother families. Ben Summerskill uses both a compensation and a normalising argument in his response to Krishnan Guru-Murthy's question about father figures. Liberal discourse on male role models – both that which underpins psychological research and pro-lesbian discourse in public debates – emphasises the fundamental similarities between lesbian and heterosexual families. Liberal or normalising strategies do not challenge the assumption that male role models are a necessity; instead, they serve to normalise lesbian families, to fit them into mainstream notions of what counts as family.

Critical Discourse on Role Models

Krishnan Guru-Murthy: But the point of that being that there will be plenty of lesbians who don't want a father figure anywhere near the child...

Ben Summerskill: But but they have father figures around those family lives. The idea, I mean it's some sort of lesbian separatist fantasy of the nineteen seventies that that there should be no men involved in the upbringing of children (Channel Four evening news, 16 August 2005).

I now explore critical and lesbian feminist discourse on role models, to show some alternative ways of engaging with this issue¹⁰. My aim is to highlight, through comparison, the limitations of the strategies outlined above. Critical accounts are based on a rejection of claims about the necessity of male role models. For instance, Johnson and O'Connor (2002) reported that only a few of the participants in their survey of lesbian and gay parents were concerned about the absence of role models of one gender.

Lesbian feminists have dismissed concern over the absence of a male role model in lesbian families as a "bogus issue" (Pollack, 1987, p.323), obscuring far more complex social issues, such as poverty (Chrisp, 2001). The real issue for some lesbians is the lack of a male income: "the reason that we fall down sometimes as lesbian mothers is not because fathers aren't around, it's because there's not enough resources around" (lesbian mother, quoted in Chrisp, 2001, p.204). According to Radford (1991), the emphasis placed on male role models in custody disputes is a way of punishing women for daring to choose to live and raise children independently of men and male control. Judgements made in custody cases according to 'the best interests of the child' actually reflect the best interests of a heteropatriarchal culture (Rowen, 1991). Polikoff (1987) highlighted what she saw as the hypocrisy of the courts, arguing that they do not value the child's need for a male influence enough to require a father to visit his children. Her view was that if policy makers were truly concerned with a male presence they would penalise fathers who did not visit their children.

¹⁰ This discussion draws on both academic and popular literature on lesbian parenting written from a (broadly defined) lesbian feminist perspective. I am using the term critical to denote accounts that challenge the status quo, particularly normative constructions of gender and sexuality. Liberal accounts are critical in the sense that can be used in the service of positive social change; however, they create change at the expense of furthering traditional understandings of gender, family and parenting.

Saffron (1996, p.186) argued that the assumption that every child needs a male role model “seems to suggest that any model of maleness is preferable to none” and that the presence of a male is more important than the quality of his parenting. Male presence is the producer of masculinity and of ‘normal’, heterosexual children (Kelly, 2005). This point is illustrated by a lesbian mother custody case where the judge awarded custody to the father even though he had been convicted of murdering another ex-wife because of a dispute about visitation (Ward v. Ward, 1996, cited in Connolly, 1998). Arguments about the necessity of male role models suggest that boys in lesbian families are less inherently male or lack some mystical male quality (Deaner, 1997).

Lesbian feminists have challenged traditional views and celebrated lesbians and gay men as positive role models for children (Goodman, 1977, Riddle, 1978). Riddle (1978, p.51; see also Johnson & O’Connor, 2002) argued that “gay men have the potential for modelling a less traditional sex role for boys”. Pollack (1987, p.322) similarly claimed that having lesbians and gay men “as open role models for children is beneficial to the children, to the breakdown of sexism and sex-role stereotyping, and to the elimination of negative societal attitudes towards homosexuality”. In relation to custody cases, Pollack (1987, p.322) maintained that lesbian mothers’ courtroom “strategies would be very different if we chose to emphasize the value of the independent model provided by lesbians” (see also Saffron, 1998). However, lesbian feminists have disagreed about whether men have any (positive) role in the lesbian family. Copper (1987, pp.238-9) suggested that the radical lesbian mother who wants to have contact with men needs:

to make her own determination as to which males she will allow into her life, as well as the degree of access these males will have to her home and person. However, no woman should assume that the males *she* trusts can be trusted by any other female, including female children, or that another woman should trust them, because she does. The presence of males in the life of her female child demands that a radical mother not only live by this maxim, but that she does so openly, with the full and early knowledge of her female child.

Copper (1987, p.236) maintained that for every child who is well fathered there are “a million who were conceived irresponsibly or abandoned or raped or physically terrorized or emotionally denied by their fathers”. Cruikshank (1980, p.155) noted that some lesbian mothers want their children to grow up in an “all-lesbian atmosphere”. This is perhaps the lesbian separatist ‘fantasy’ that Ben Summerskill refers to. For Saffron (1996, p.187), one of the clear advantages of lesbian mother families is that children are protected from the worst excesses of maleness and are taught alternative ways of relating to men. Goodman (1980, p.165) maintained that lesbian families destroy the ‘Divine Rule of the Father’ and provide children with an environment free of heterosexual male aggressive demands and behaviours. The lesbian family “provides a positive female nurturing experience based on female psychic force and power” (Goodman, 1980, p.163). Hornstein (1984) presented donor insemination as a liberating new choice for lesbians that challenges patriarchal definitions of family and deals a “blow to the power of fathers” (The Feminist Self Insemination Group, quoted in Klein, 1984, p.388).

Much of this writing emerged before the lesbian and gay 'baby boom' and the phenomenon of planned lesbian and gay families. It is now increasingly common for lesbians and gay men to find ways to parent or to create families together (Golombok, 2002). Gay men often act as sperm donors for lesbians and are involved in co-parenting arrangements with lesbians. Gay men are viewed as an obvious choice as sperm donors or co-parents because they share a common history of oppression and understand the complexities of choosing to parent within a lesbian and gay context (Donovan, 2000, Ryan-Flood, 2005). The participants in Dunne's (2000) study had a clear preference for gay male sperm donors because they were thought to represent an alternative form of masculinity. Benkov (1994) argued that although queer families are not formed independently of the idealisation of the tradition model of family, lesbians and gay men create family forms that push the boundaries of the nuclear family.

Lesbian feminist texts are limited because they sometimes position all men as heterosexual or fail to acknowledge the positive role models that gay (and bisexual) men might offer children. Lesbian feminist arguments about male role models are frequently based on a celebration of gay men's non-traditional sexual identities. As such, there is often an (implicit) assumption that gay men's performance of maleness is essentially different from heterosexual men's. This assumption, whether made in an anti- or a pro-gay environment, is limiting, and there is a need to acknowledge the range of different ways in which gay men (and men in general) might perform masculine identities (Atkins, 1998, Speer, 2001). To a certain extent, the lesbian feminist accounts outlined in this paper represent a particular moment in history and such accounts are virtually absent from contemporary LGBTQ discourse.

Tensions in claiming gay men as positive male role models in one lesbian family

In this section I further explore critical discourse on male role models through an analysis of data from an interview with a lesbian couple. The data for this analysis are drawn from a broader study of lesbian and gay parenting (see Clarke, 1999, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, Clarke & Kitzinger, 2004, 2005, Clarke et al., 2004). Although most of the lesbian parents interviewed for the broader study discussed male role models, this paper will concentrate on Sonja and Lori, a couple co parenting Sonja's biological children from a previous marriage¹¹. I discuss two fragments of data from the interview. These fragments are interesting not only because they provide an example of two lesbian parents negotiating the category 'male role model', but also because they tell us something about how this category is traditionally understood within the larger socio-cultural context. The interview also provides an intriguing example of the concerns lesbian parents attend to when invoking, what can be very broadly glossed as lesbian feminist

¹¹ Sonja and Lori were recruited through snowball sampling and interviewed in their home (the interview lasted around two hours). They were both white, able-bodied and in their thirties. Lori was employed full time and Sonja was employed part time and a part time student. Both worked in what can be glossed as 'caring' professions.

discourse on male role models.

The data are analysed using techniques from discourse analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, Edwards & Potter, 1992), an increasingly popular method in LGBT psychology (see, for example, Peel, 2001). Unlike other qualitative approaches such as thematic analysis, the aim of discourse analysis is not to summarise a body of data but to provide a detailed analysis of particular discursive phenomena. Discourse analysis focuses on talk as interpretative practice; talk is viewed as action oriented and constitutive of reality. Examples of discursive research include Potter's (1997) analysis of the use of the expression 'I dunno' in fragments of talk from an interview with Princess Diana, a counselling session and from an episode of the US television sitcom *Friends*. Abell and Stokoe (2001) used extracts from the BBC *Panorama* interview with Princess Diana to explore the production of situated identities. As well as exploring discursive phenomena such as 'I dunno' and situated identities, discursive techniques are used to explore topics of interest to the researcher such as tensions in claiming gay men as positive role models for children in a lesbian family.

This first fragment of data comes after a portion of the interview in which the interviewer asked about the children's relationship with their father. The interviewer introduces the topic of male role models:

Fragment 1: Sonja and Lori (VC LM04 17/03/99)

- 1 Int: What do you think about the whole argument about male role
2 models and
3 Sonja: erm
4 Int: father figures and
5 Sonja: I think they st- have role models everywhere anyway
6 Int: mm
7 Sonja: on television
8 ?: mm
9 Sonja: and I think they have ro- they have- what role models do they
10 have as far as well they have their father which is every two
11 weeks you know I think he is a disastrous role model to be
12 honest
13 Int: Huh
14 Sonja: He's
15 Lori: He [portrays the male]
16 Sonja: [He's sexist] he's a typical erm arrogant (pause)
17 woman- oh I don't know
18 Lori: You can see whe- where
19 Sonja: Yeah
20 Lori: where Tom is now you can see that his model- his role model is
21 his dad...
22 (approx. 30 lines omitted)
23 Sonja: But he sort of goes there and gets that. But other r- role models
24 who do they have
25 ...
26 Sonja: Only g[a(h)y me:n I'm af(h)raid.]
27 Lori: [huh huh huh ga(h)y m(h)]en
28 Int: [hh hmmm]

29 Sonja: [Ga(h)y m(h)en hh] and more ga(h)y m(h)en
 30 ?: [hh]
 31 Int: [huh] hmm
 32 ...
 33 Sonja: Yeah but they get on with them all really well don't they 'n they
 34 ...
 35 Sonja: Yeah.
 36 Lori: Well it's just like (pause) everyday teachers at school and
 37 Sonja: Yeah
 38 Lori: their friends' parents you know there- there's always dads
 39 around there
 40 Sonja: Yeah
 41 ...
 42 Lori: erm I don't think Peter is as influenced as perhaps Tom and
 43 [Ginny]
 44 Sonja: [mmm]
 45 Lori: are.
 46 Sonja: Yeah I think they have plenty I mean the close men we have
 47 are all gay aren't they in fact I don't think we have any
 48 heterosexual male friends particularly.
 49 ...
 50 Well apart from the ones you see at university and you have
 51 people at work but we don't
 52 Lori: But they're not like part of the family [life are they]
 53 Sonja: [mm no ((inaudible))]

One of the things happening in this portion of the interview is Sonja and Lori reporting the men their children have contact with – men on television, their father, Sonja and Lori's adult gay male friends, school teachers, and their friends' fathers. What is interesting about their response is that the interviewer did not ask if their children have male role models, rather she asked for their views on 'the whole argument about' (line 1) male role models. This phrasing implicitly invokes a perspective on male role models that is prevalent in the larger society (that male role models are a necessity). The phrase 'the whole argument' suggests that this perspective is easily summarised and familiar, and requires no explanation. Sonja responds as if the interviewer *had* asked a question about whether her children lack male role models because she is a lesbian. Sonja's use of 'anyway' (line 5) indirectly acknowledges a deficit in their family structure (she could have said, 'despite living in a lesbian family'). On lines 9-10, Sonja voices the question that she feels compelled to answer ('what role models do they have'). She then proceeds, with Lori's assistance, to report all the male role models in her children's lives.

Sonja and Lori's response highlights the extent to which – even in an interview with an 'out' lesbian feminist researcher (see Clarke et al., 2004) – they feel compelled to 'defend' their parenting and their family. For instance, they do not take issue with the importance of male role models *per se*. However, this response is not easily categorised as defensive – they are critical of the children's father, jointly working up an account of him as a sexist (heterosexual) man and as such indirectly challenging the assumption that the mere presence of a man is sufficient. In the omitted lines, Sonja and

Lori express concern about the impact the children's father has on their older son, Tom. Sonja searches for heterosexual men in their lives ('I don't think we have any heterosexual male friends particularly well apart from...', lines 47-48, 50) and in so doing attends to and reinforces the cultural dictate that appropriate male role models are heterosexual. Lori responds by drawing a contrast between their gay male friends who are 'part of the family life' (line 52) and their heterosexual friends who are not. This contrast shows that while Lori accepts the notion that male role models should be more than 'casual droppers in' (Kilroy, 1997, quoted in Clarke & Kitzinger, 2005), she does not simply resort to listing all the men in their family and the wider environment as potential male role models.

On line 26, Sonja's use of 'I'm afraid' is ironically apologetic, treating having only gay men as role models for her children as something for which an apology or account might normatively be considered due (though not offered here). Her ironic apology and laughter indicate that she is making a joke, one that defies normative views about male role models. Both Lori and the interviewer collude in the joke, by laughing, and by Lori repeating and laughing through 'gay men' (line 27). Her joke a success, Sonja underscores it by saying 'gay men and more gay men' (line 29). Sonja then retreats from this celebratory and defiant position and *defends* having gay men as role models for her children (this is indicated by the use of a contrast structure launched by 'but' on line 33). Her use of extreme case formulations ('all really well', line 33) indicates perhaps that she is anticipating being challenged. The notion of extreme case formulations was developed by the conversation analyst Pomerantz (1986) to describe occasions where speakers selected an extreme point on a relevant descriptive dimension (for example, 'all' rather than 'most' or 'some' and 'really' rather than 'quite'). Extreme case formulations are used to strengthen claims and are often used during moments of interactional conflict or tension. Sonja's joke tells us that gay men are not considered appropriate role models for children and highlights the implicit heterosexuality embedded in the concept of male role models.

I now explore a second fragment of data that follows on immediately from the fragment presented above. This fragment starts with Sonja concluding that the men in their family life are 'really just gay men' (but then softening this claim by referring to 'friends' dads... and stuff like that', line 56). Lori works hard to portray their gay male friends as 'just men'. Sonja initially supports this account but her support is rapidly withdrawn and she challenges Lori's version of events, relaying a story about one of their friends, Ben, who visited their house with his effeminate and camp lover.

Fragment 2: Sonja and Lori (VC LM04 17/03/99)

- 54 Sonja: So it's really just gay men.
 55 ...
 56 (Or meet) their friend's dads isn't it and stuff like that.
 57 ...
 58 Lori: But like th- the gay men are still I mean they don't portray a a
 59 domineering image do they a ma[le image]
 60 Sonja: [No] they're not as no
 61 [they're-]
 62 Lori: [There aren't] those issues there.

63 Lori: But they're certainly not [on the other extreme are they]
64 Sonja: [I think some of them yeah]
65 Lori: They're not on the other extreme where they like come in really
66 effeminate 'n,
67 Int.?: mm
68 Lori: it be an iss- you know thing like that.
69 Sonja: N[o]
70 Lori: ['Cos] they're just men.
71 ...
72 Lori: You know it's not it's not
73 Sonja: mm
74 Lori: (Isn't it)
75 Sonja: I think gay men always try to be more erm masculine and dadily
76 like when the children are about I always think.
77 Lori: Tony does dun' he?
78 Sonja: (Well) I think Ben and Ben does and Mark used to. That they
79 actually they they won't be as effeminate in front of children
80 they sort of be that
81 ?: hhh ((through nose))
82 Lori: They won't get touchy will they?
83 ...
84 Lori: When the kids are 'round.
85 Sonja: I don't know I can't say I've no[ticed.]
86 Lori?: [mm]
87 Sonja: Don't they? Do Tony and Adam not?
88 Lori: No. And Tony'll go intah like dad- dad role and want to show
89 the kids how to do things (and that.) Have you not noticed it?
90 Sonja: erm not really I don't (even) look.
91 Lori: They try and involve them in (something).
92 Sonja: I don't really watch.
93 ...
94 Sonja: mm
95 Lori: And Adam just sort of sits back 'n
96 (9 lines omitted)
97 Sonja: They used to come around quite a lot as a couple and then all
98 of a sudden Ben sort of starting seeing this bloke behind his
99 back and they split up and he got a new bloke he was totally
100 effeminate
101 ?: ((sniff))
102 Sonja: outrageous, all Quentin Crisp and really camp 'n .hhh he came
103 round and they were- were they there? They were there weren't
104 they [and they were like he came out in a velvet]
105 Lori: [It really threw them]
106 Sonja: jacket and like a roland cartier shiny shoes and they were
107 like...

On line 58 of this fragment, Lori addresses Sonja's comment that 'it's really just gay men' (line 54). Her use of a contrast structure, launched by 'but', in defending gay men as male role models (similar to that deployed by Sonja on line 33 of the first fragment), treats having gay men as male role models as something for which a justification might normatively be

considered due. After claiming that their gay male friends ‘don’t portray a domineering image’ (lines 58-59) (presumably in contrast to the children’s father¹²), she identifies a problem with this claim: if gay men are not dominant it could be that they are ‘on the other extreme’ (line 63). In alluding to effeminacy, Lori highlights one of the qualities that make gay men potentially bad male role models in mainstream accounts: they are not appropriately masculine. Lori emphatically dismisses the possibility that their gay male friends are effeminate when voicing this potential concern (‘certainly not’, line 63), and seeks confirmation of this claim from Sonja, presumably to strengthen the claim. When, after a gap, Sonja does not align with her (in fact, she appears to disagree on line 64), Lori launches a second attempt to win Sonja’s affiliation by recycling the claim and making it more explicit (she actually says the word ‘effeminate’, line 66). Sonja eventually offers a minimal support for this proposition (‘No’, line 69). Lori is working hard to construct gay men as ‘just men’ (line 70) – what male role models should be - and not as *gay* men. In constructing her and Sonja’s gay male friends in this way, Lori provides further evidence of the implicit heterosexuality of the category male role model.

Lori trails off and Sonja rescues her by launching an account that appears to align with but actually subtly challenges Lori’s defence of gay men as ‘appropriate’ role models. She indicates that their gay male friends ‘always try to be more erm masculine and dadily like’ (lines 75-76) with the children. This means that whereas Lori claimed that their gay male friends are ‘certainly not’ (line 63) effeminate, Sonja implicitly suggests that they are effeminate. The words ‘try’ and ‘more’ perhaps indicate that their gay male friends are not constitutionally (very) masculine, rather they only play at being masculine for the benefit of the children. This suggestion is made more explicit when Sonja says that they ‘won’t be as effeminate’ (line 79), which clearly indicates, in contradiction with Lori’s account, that they *are* effeminate. Lori collaborates in producing this account (perhaps hearing Sonja’s comments as supportive) and extends it by saying that their gay male friends ‘won’t get touchy... When the kids are ‘round’ (lines 82, 84). In making this claim, Lori is perhaps attending to the other focus of concern surrounding gay men’s contact with children – the notion that gay men seduce and recruit children into homosexuality and one exposure to gay male sexuality is enough to create a homosexual orientation.

Sonja’s responses to Lori’s account of their gay male friends’ ‘non-gay’ behaviour around the children indicate that she has some kind of difficulty with this account. On four separate occasions, Sonja resists this account by saying: ‘I don’t know’, ‘I can’t say I’ve noticed’ (line 85), ‘I don’t even look’ (line 90), and ‘I don’t really watch’ (line 92). Saying these things allows her to avoid having either to align or to explicitly disagree with Lori’s account of the men’s behaviour. If Sonja has ‘not noticed’, ‘does not look’ and ‘does not watch’, she is not in a position to comment (also, by indicating that she has not noticed the men’s behaviour, Sonja suggests that it is not *noticeable*). Even when Lori explicitly questions Sonja’s ‘not noticing’ (‘have

¹² It is possible that Lori is attending to lesbian feminist concerns about the damaging presence of men.

you not noticed it', line 89), Sonja maintains (in a hedged fashion) that she has not ('erm not really', line 90). In relation to Lori's claim that their friends 'won't get touchy', Sonja offers more of a direct challenge to this account: 'Don't they?' (line 87) and 'Do Tony and Adam not?' (line 87). The wording of these questions conveys surprise, suggesting that Lori's account is in some way problematic. There is a short pause in between these two questions and Lori answers the second question with a quiet 'No' (line 88), picking up perhaps on Sonja's failure to align enthusiastically with her account.

Sonja possibly resists Lori's account of the men's behaviour because she is attentive to the problematic of portraying their gay male friends as good male role models only because they do not behave in ways that are overtly gay. Lori appears to assume that Sonja's discomfort is with the particular claim that their gay male friends do not 'get touchy... when the kids are 'round' (lines 82, 84), and not with the whole theme of gay men managing and 'toning down' their 'gayness' for the sake of the children. She continues to build her account of the men's behaviour (this is signalled by her use of 'and', line 88). She reverts, however, to what she assumes is a safer claim about the men going 'intah like dad dad role' (line 88), because it picks up on Sonja's earlier claim about the men's 'dadily like' (lines 75-76) behaviour.

However, Sonja now resists this account and launches a story about one of her gay male friends, Ben, visiting the family with a 'new bloke' (line 99). She works up a description of Ben's 'new bloke' as flamboyantly gay: he was 'totally effeminate' (lines 99-100), 'outrageous, all Quentin Crisp and really camp' (line 102) and 'came out in a velvet jacket and like a roland cartier shiny shoes' (lines 104, 106). The extreme case formulations, 'totally', 'all' and 'really', the exaggerated pronunciation of 'totally', and the use of listing (see Jefferson, 1990)¹³, all serve to emphasise this man's extreme effeminacy and gayness. Sonja is indicating that her children do have contact with *gay* gay men, and in so doing directly contradicts Lori's earlier assertion that their gay male friends are 'just men'. Sonja's question about whether the children were at home when Ben and his lover visited ('Were they there?', line 103) functions not simply to seek clarification from Lori, but to clearly display that the children were at home when Ben and his lover visited. Indeed, she does not wait for Lori's clarification, answering the question herself.

This exchange between Sonja and Lori highlights some of the difficulties of presenting gay men as positive male role models for children in lesbian families. In both fragments, Sonja and Lori orient to, and thus display, the implicit heterosexuality of the category male role model, and oscillate between apologising for, and celebrating, having gay men as role models for their children.

Conclusion

This paper has explored competing claims about the presence (or absence) of appropriate role models in lesbian families. In traditional discourse, lesbian

¹³ The use of a list structure serves to emphasise generality (Jefferson, 1990).

families are presented as inherently insufficient and incapable of providing children with appropriate role modelling. This discourse valorises biological fatherhood and the (heterosexual) nuclear family. Homosexuality is viewed as the outcome of deficient or unsuitable role modelling and gay men are viewed as inadequately or inappropriately masculine and lesbians as inappropriately feminine. Claims about the necessity of male role models have informed lesbian mother custody cases and debates about lesbian's access to donor insemination, fostering and adoption. Such claims are currently being recycled in discussion surrounding the revision of the HFE Act. Claims about the importance of a maternal influence have similarly informed discussion around gay fatherhood (Clarke, 2001). Pro-lesbian/gay challenges to traditional discourse have taken two main forms. First, liberal, normalising reassurances that lesbian families do not lack suitable male role models and children's sexual identity development is no different from that of children in other families. This strategy ultimately reinforces traditional views of family by positioning heterosexuality as the norm against which lesbian families are compared. Second, critical responses that take issue with the notion that male role models are a necessity and celebrate the value of gay men and lesbians as non-traditional role models for children. Although liberal responses have clear strategic value (and have been successfully used to defend the rights of lesbian mothers in a variety of contexts, see Clarke, 2002c), they are grounded in the assumption that social justice for lesbian families is dependent on demonstrating their sameness to heterosexuals.

Critical claims are virtually absent from mainstream discussion about lesbian (and gay) families, drowned out by gender normalising claims that (strategically or otherwise) accept the premise that male role models are a necessity (Ben Summerskill dismisses lesbian separatist views as fantasy). Radical claims are perhaps risky because there is the potential for such claims to play into the hands of the opposition and be used against lesbian and gay families. The anti-gay CR movement, for instance, regularly uses radical gay and lesbian feminist texts in support of its agenda (see Herman, 1997).

Lesbian (and gay) parenting is not inherently gender radical/progressive; there are multiple stories that can be told about gender in lesbian and gay families. Lesbian parents (such as Sonja and Lori) may offer their children greater access to alternative accounts of gender; however, it seems unlikely that lesbian parenting alone can counter the coercive effects of dominant socio-cultural constructions of gender and sexuality. A progressive politics of parenting should celebrate LGBTQ people as positive 'role models' for children, accept multiple versions of masculinity and femininity (and gender performances) and allow for a variety of family forms - those with fathers or male role models and those without.

Victoria Clarke is a senior lecturer in the School of Psychology at the University of the West of England. She has published a number of papers on lesbian and gay parenting and co-edited two Special Issues of *Feminism & Psychology* on marriage (with Sara-Jane Finlay and Sue Wilkinson). She is currently co-editing a book on LGBT psychology (with Elizabeth Peel) and conducting ESRC funded research on same-sex relationships (with Carole Burgoyne and Maree Burns).

Address: School of Psychology, Faculty of Applied Sciences, University of

the West of England, Frenchay Campus, Bristol BS16 1QY. Email: Victoria.Clarke@uwe.ac.uk

Acknowledgements

This paper is based on my PhD research, which was supervised by Celia Kitzinger, Sue Wilkinson and Jonathan Potter and funded by an ESRC research studentship (award no.: ROO429734421). When the research was conducted Celia Kitzinger and I were based in the Social Sciences Department at Loughborough University. Thanks to Virginia Braun, Rosie Harding, Fiona Kelly and Elizabeth Peel for helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper. Thanks also to Damien Riggs for editorial support and for encouraging me to write a paper for this Special Issue!

References

- Abell, J. & Stokoe, E.H. (2001). Broadcasting the royal role: Constructing culturally situated identities in the Princess Diana *Panorama* interview. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 40, 417-435.
- Arnup, K. & Boyd, S. (1995). Familial disputes? Sperm donors, lesbian mothers, and legal parenthood. In D. Herman & C. Stychin (Eds.), *Legal inversions: Lesbians, gay men, and the politics of law* (pp.77-101). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Atkins, D. (Ed.) (1998). *Looking queer: Body image and identity in lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender communities*. New York, NY: Harrington Park Press.
- B v B (1991). *Family Law Reporter*, 402-12.
- Benkov, L. (1994). *Reinventing the family: The emerging story of lesbian and gay parents*. New York, NY: Crown Publishers, Inc.
- Burman, E. & Parker, I. (1993). Introduction – discourse analysis: The turn to text. In E. Burman & I. Parker (Eds.), *Discourse analytic research: Repertoires and readings of texts in action* (pp.1-13). London: Routledge.
- Chrisp, J. (2001). The four letter word–Sons: Lesbian mothers and adolescent sons. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 5(1/2), 195-209.
- Clarke, V. (1999). ‘Stereotype, attack and stigmatize those who disagree’: Employing scientific rhetoric in debates about lesbian and gay parenting. *Feminism & Psychology*, 10(1), 152-159.
- Clarke, V. (2001). What about the children? Arguments against lesbian and gay parenting. *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 24(5), 555-570.
- Clarke, V. (2002a). Resistance and normalisation in the construction of lesbian and gay families: A discursive analysis. In A. Coyle & C. Kitzinger (Eds.), *Lesbian and Gay Psychology: New Perspectives* (pp.98-118). Oxford: BPS Blackwell.
- Clarke, V. (2002b). *Lesbian and gay parenting*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Loughborough University.
- Clarke, V. (2002c). Sameness and difference in research on lesbian parenting. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 12, 210-222.
- Clarke, V. & Kitzinger, C. (2004). Lesbian and gay parents on talk shows:

- Resistance or collusion in heterosexism. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 1(3), 195-217.
- Clarke, V. & Kitzinger, C. (2005). 'We're not living on planet lesbian': Constructions of male role models in debates about lesbian families. *Sexualities*, 8(2), 137-52.
- Clarke, V., Kitzinger, C. & Potter, J. (2004). 'Kids are just cruel anyway': Lesbian and gay parents talk about homophobic bullying. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 43(4), 531-550.
- Connolly, C. (1998). The description of gay and lesbian families in second-parent adoption cases. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 16, 225-236.
- Cooper, D. & Herman, D. (1995). Getting 'the family right': Legislating heterosexuality in Britain, 1986-91. In D. Herman & C. Stychin (Eds.), *Legal Inversions: Lesbians, gay men, and the politics of law* (pp.162-179). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Copper, B. (1987). The radical potential in lesbian mothering of daughters. In S. Pollack & J. Vaughn (Eds.), *Politics of the heart: A lesbian parenting anthology* (pp.233-240). Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books.
- Cruikshank, M. (1980). Mothers. In M. Cruikshank (Ed.), *The lesbian path* (p.155). Monterey, CA: Angel Press.
- Deaner, C. (1997). The myth of the male role model. In J. Wells (Ed.), *Lesbians raising sons: An Anthology* (pp. 65-68). Los Angeles, CA: Alyson Books.
- Dobson, J. & Bauer, G. (1990). *Children at risk*. Dallas: Word.
- Donovan, C. (2000). Who needs a father? Negotiating biological fatherhood in British lesbian families using self-insemination. *Sexualities*, 3(2), 149-64.
- Dunne, G.A. (2000). Opting into motherhood: Lesbians blurring the boundaries and transforming the meaning of parenthood and kinship. *Gender & Society*, 14(1), 11-35
- Edwards, D. and Potter, J. (1992). *Discursive psychology*. London: Sage.
- Fitzgerald, B. (1999). Children of lesbian and gay parents: A review of the literature. *Marriage & Family Review*, 29(1), 57-75.
- Goodman, B. (1977). *The lesbian: A celebration of difference*. Brooklyn, NY: Out and Out Books.
- Goodman, B. (1980). Some mothers are lesbians. In E. Norman & A. Mancuso (Eds.) *Women issues and social work practice* (pp.153-181). Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock Publishers.
- Golombok, S. (2002). *Parenting: What really counts?* London: Routledge.
- Golombok, S., Spencer, A., & Rutter, M. (1983). Children in lesbian and single-parent households: Psychosexual and psychiatric appraisal. *Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 24, 551-572.
- Green, R., Barclay Mandel, J., Hotvedt, M.E., Gray, J. & Smith, L. (1986). Lesbian mothers and their children: A comparison with solo parent heterosexual mothers and their children. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 15(2), 167-84.
- Hare, J. & Richards, L. (1993). Children raised by lesbian couples: Does context of birth affect father and partner involvement. *Family Relations*, 42, 249-255.
- Harne, L. (1984, Summer). Lesbian custody and the new myth of the father. *Trouble & Strife*, 3, 12-15.
- Harne, L. & Rights of Women (1997). *Valued families: The lesbian mothers'*

- legal handbook, 2nd ed.* London: The Women's Press.
- Herman, D. (1997). *The antigay agenda: Orthodox vision and the Christian right*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Hornstein, F. (1984). Children by donor insemination: A new choice for lesbians. In R. Arditti, R.D. Klein & S. Minden (Eds.), *Test-tube women: What future for motherhood?* (pp.373-381). London: Pandora Press.
- Johnson, S.M. & O'Connor, E. (2002). *The gay baby boom: The psychology of gay parenthood*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Jefferson, G. (1990). List construction as task and resource. In G. Psathas (Ed.) *Interaction competence* (pp.63-92). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Kelly, F. (2005). In search of a father: Sperm donors, lesbian-headed families, and the Re Patrick case. In H.G. Jones & M. Kirkman (Eds.), *Sperm wars: The rights and wrongs of reproduction* (pp.252-63). Sydney: ABC Books.
- Kirkpatrick, M. (1989). Lesbians: A different middle age? In J.M. Moldhame & R.S. Liebert (Eds.), *The middle years: New psychoanalytic perspectives* (pp.135-148). New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Kirkpatrick, M. (1987). Clinical implications of lesbian mother studies. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 14, 201-11.
- Kirkpatrick, M., Smith, C., & Roy, R. (1981). Lesbian mothers and their children: A comparative survey. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 51, 545-551.
- Klein, R.D. (1984). Doing it ourselves: Self insemination. In R. Arditti, R.D. Klein & S. Minden (Eds.), *Test-tube women: What future for motherhood?* (pp.382-390) London: Pandora Press.
- Lewis, S.G. (1979). *Sunday's women: Lesbian life today*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Patterson, C.J. (1992). Children of lesbian and gay parents. *Child Development*, 63, 1025-42.
- Patterson, C.J., Hurt, S., & Mason, C.D. (1998). Families of the lesbian baby boom: Children's contact with grandparents and other adults. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 68(3), 390-99.
- Patterson, C.J. & Redding, R.E. (1996). Lesbian and gay families with children: Implications of social science research for policy. *Journal of Social Issues*, 52, 29-50.
- Peel, E. (2001). Mundane heterosexism: Understanding incidents of the everyday. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 24(5), 541-554.
- Polikoff, N.D. (1987). Lesbian mothers, lesbian families: Legal obstacles, legal challenges. In S. Pollack & J. Vaughn (Eds.), *Politics of the heart: A lesbian parenting anthology* (pp.325-332). Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books.
- Pollack, S. (1987). Lesbian mothers: A lesbian-feminist perspective on research. In S. Pollack & J. Vaughn (Eds.) *Politics of the heart: A lesbian parenting anthology* (pp.316-324). Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books.
- Pomerantz, A.M. (1986). Extreme case formulations: A way of legitimizing claims. *Human Studies*, 9, 219-229.
- Potter, J. (1997). Discourse analysis as a way of analysing naturally occurring talk. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice* (pp.144-160). London: Sage.
- Potter, J. & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and social psychology: Beyond*

- attitudes and behaviour*. London: Sage.
- Radford, J. (1991). Immaculate conceptions. *Trouble & Strife*, 21(Summer), 8-12.
- Riddle, D.I. (1978). Relating to children: Gays as role models. *Journal of Social Issues*, 34(3), 38-58.
- Rights of Women Lesbian Custody Group (1986). *Lesbian mother's legal handbook*. London: The Women's Press.
- Rowen, A.J. (1981, Winter). Notes from the battlefield: Lesbian custody. *Common Lives/Lesbian Lives: A Lesbian Feminist Quarterly*, 2, 97-106.
- Ryan-Flood, R. (2005). Contested heteronormativities: Discourses of fatherhood among lesbian parents in Sweden and Ireland. *Sexualities*, 8(2), 189-204.
- Saffron, L. (1996). *'What about the children?' Sons and daughters of lesbian and gay parents talk about their lives*. London: Cassell.
- Smart, C. (2004). Equal shares: Rights for fathers or recognition for children? *Critical Social Policy*, 24(4), 484-503.
- Speer, S. (2001). Reconsidering the concept of hegemonic masculinity: Discursive psychology, conversation analysis and participants' orientations. *Feminism & Psychology*, 11(1), 107-35.
- Stephens, E. (1982). Out of the closets into the courts. In M. Row (Ed.), *Spare rib reader: 100 issues of women's liberation* (pp.91-98). Middlesex: Penguin Books.