FINDING A PLACE: NEGOTIATING LESBIAN PARENTAL IDENTITIES

Sheila Quaid

September

PhD 2008
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank; the respondents who were interested in what I was trying to achieve. They gave a significant amount of time, collectively, but also thanks are due for their trust in me. I contracted to listen properly to stories of their private lives and to represent them in as close a way to their own perceptions as I could. I would also like to express my personal admiration for all of them and their lovely families.

Enormous thanks to Catherine Donovan for supervision, guidance and knowledge of this field. Even more thanks for putting yourself beside me with this project and for encouraging me to return to this after a long absence. Thanks to Anne Charnock who agreed to be second supervisor for a period, Liz Williams for earlier proof reading. Various colleagues and friends read drafts and these included; Julie Matthews, Cherrie Stubbs, Nicola Groves and Nicola Sugden. Finally thanks to Marion England who proof read the final draft. I would like to thank them for their time and to say I appreciated their valuable comments.
## CONTENTS

### CHAPTER 1

**General Introduction to Thesis** 1
- 1.2 The Changing Context 5
- 1.3 Terminology 8
- 1.4 Contested Terminology 10

### CHAPTER 2: SETTING THE CONTEXT  14

- 2.1 Introduction
  - 2.1.2 Historical Invisibility 23
- 2.2 Public debates surrounding Lesbian Motherhood 25
- 2.3 Legislative Context 35
  - 2.3.1 Legal Construction of Father in Licensed DI 39
- 2.4 Patient Selection for DI 44
- 2.5 Adoption Framework 46
- 2.6 Lesbians realising Possibilities 48
- 2.7 Opposition to the idea of Lesbians becoming Mothers 50

### CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES TO MOTHERHOOD: THE LITERATURE  54

- 3.1 Introduction: Feminism and Motherhood
  - 3.1.2 Motherhood as Biological Imperative 55
- 3.2 Motherhood as a biological imperative 59
- 3.3 Black Feminist Critiques 64
- 3.4 Motherhood as a Relational Identity 71
- 3.5 Material Framework for Motherhood 80
- 3.6 Emergence of Lesbian Motherhood 84

### CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY  93

- 4.1 Narratives, reflexivity and standpoint theory
- 4.2 The ideology of the researcher
  - 4.2.1 Standpoint theory 97
  - 4.2.2 Positioning the researcher and the researched 102
- 4.3 Feminism and methodological approaches 103
- 4.4 The research process 105
  - 4.4.1 Access 106
- 4.5 The sample 110
  - 4.5.1 Specificity of the sample 115
- 4.6 The Interview 118
- 4.7 Analysis of data 121
### CHAPTER 5: BIOLOGICAL FATHERS AND SPERM DONORS

5.1 Introduction ............................................. 124  
5.1.2 Secrecy ............................................... 127  
5.2 Negotiating the Absence of a Father Figure 128  
5.3 Knowing the Father ..................................... 133  
5.3.1 Ethnicity ............................................. 146  
5.4 Explaining the ‘Absent Presence’ to the Children 153  
5.4 Male Role Models ....................................... 157  
5.5 Discussion .............................................. 163  
5.6 Conclusion .............................................. 168

### CHAPTER 6: THE EXPERIENTIAL CONSTRUCTION OF ‘MOTHER’ IN LESBIAN LED FAMILIES

6.1 Introduction ............................................. 171  
6.2 Biology and Motherhood ................................ 172  
6.2.3 Breastfeeding ....................................... 173  
6.2.4 Negotiated Biological Mother and Co-parent 177  
6.3 Experiential Construction of Mother/Co-parent 184  
6.4 Negotiating paid and unpaid work ..................... 193  
6.5 Discussion .............................................. 198  
6.6 Conclusion .............................................. 202

### CHAPTER 7: PARENTAL IDENTITIES AND PRACTICES

7.1 Introduction ............................................. 207  
7.2 Emotional connections .................................... 208  
7.3 Outside world ............................................ 215  
7.3.1 The legal position .................................... 221  
7.4 Negotiating Finances ..................................... 226  
7.5 The naming of their Children .......................... 230  
7.6 Parental values ......................................... 234  
7.7 Discussion .............................................. 238  
7.8 Conclusion .............................................. 242

### CHAPTER 8: EXPERIENTIAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF IDENTITY

8.1 Introduction ............................................. 246  
8.2 Motherhood as an Identity .............................. 248  
8.3 Construction of Motherhood. Parenthood for the Co-parent 251  
8.4 Lesbian identity and Motherhood ......................... 257  
8.4.1 Coming out .......................................... 264  
8.4.2 Negotiating Lesbian Identity with the Children 276  
8.5 Disability ................................................ 279  
8.6 Discussion .............................................. 282  
8.7 Conclusion .............................................. 287
CHAPTER 9: CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

9.1 Introduction 289
9.2 Father or donor 293
9.3 Construction of ‘mother; as a role and an identity 298
9.4 Parenting practices 303
9.5 Identities 306
9.6 Final Thoughts 310

BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDICES

Letter and Consent form for respondents.
Interview Schedule