



**University of
Sunderland**

Quaid, Sheila (2008) Finding a Place: Negotiating Lesbian Parental Identities.
Doctoral thesis, University of Sunderland.

Downloaded from: <http://sure.sunderland.ac.uk/id/eprint/3422/>

Usage guidelines

Please refer to the usage guidelines at <http://sure.sunderland.ac.uk/policies.html> or alternatively contact sure@sunderland.ac.uk.

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

3.1 Introduction: Feminism and Motherhood	54
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

4.1 Narratives, reflexivity and standpoint theory	93
4.2 The ideology of the researcher	96
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	124
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	200
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
CHAPTER8: 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