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Queer kinships : a quandary of love without borders

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QUEER KINSHIPS:
A QUANDARY OF LOVE WITHOUT BORDERS

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ABSTRACT

What makes a family? Diverse family configuration can take on a variety of unconventional forms; however government definitions decide who are fit for the privilege of recognition within legislative acts. Policy protects individuals and families who are established within the margins of political governance while others are excluded. For example, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/sexual and queer individuals and families rarely profit from their sporadic mention in Canada's legislation and experience a lack of visibility within early childhood education and care settings. Furthermore, individuals who do not willfully pledge allegiance with the dominant culture's value system and create kinship outside the boundaries of heteronormative logic remain marginalized. The central question in this context begs for a theoretical argument as to why power is constructed and maintained as it is. Family identity discourse from a queer perspective could reform attitudes and policies where one form of family does not dominate over another.

Key words: family, diverse family configuration, queer, heteronormative

Acknowledgements

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Queer Kinships: A Quandary of Love without Borders

> The new narratives of intimate life that we have pinpointed do not represent a thinning of family commitments and responsibilities, but a reorganization of them in new circumstances (Wilson, 2007, p. 58).

> All the evidence suggests that we are living through major transformations of traditional forms of intimate life which cut across the homosexual/heterosexual dichotomy, and are producing a pluralization of domestic patterns and relationships (Heaphy, Weeks & Donovan, 1998, p. 453).

> The assumption that the traditional ways of allocating family responsibilities and of raising children are necessarily preferable is itself based on four principal axioms or beliefs, namely: (1) children need two parents, one of each sex; (2) family responsibilities should be divided between the parents, with fathers as economic providers and mothers as homemakers and caretakers, because this distribution of responsibilities mirrors the sex roles prevalent in the society at large; (3) mothers are better suited for child rearing and caretaking than fathers are; (4) primary caretaking of young children should be provided by family members. Each of these assumptions are subject to scrutiny. (Lamb, 1982, p.3-4).

Introduction

Alternative family structures[1] and queer kinships have recently taken a stronger stake hold in contemporary culture. The heteronormative[2] model of the nuclear family is clearly the dominant model by which policies and society functions to support. However, a visibly growing body of families which do not mirror the traditionally sanctioned structure have been emerging throughout North America and specifically Canada. Through the analysis of a queer theoretical framework, a new discourse on family characteristics is presented facilitating the queer family's right to equitable spaces. A thorough explanation and examination into the politics of identity, the expansion of diverse family configurations, and implications for future social and policy changes to meet the needs of queered families will each be explored.

What makes a family? Who decides what family composition looks like? Diverse family configuration can take on a variety of unconventional forms; however government definitions decide who are fit for the privilege of recognition within legislative acts. Policy protects individuals and families who are established within the margins of political governance. Many families are excluded from governmental benefits, making it necessary to advocate for broader concepts with a wider reaching draw. For example, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual and queer (LGBTTQ) individuals and families rarely profit from their sporadic mention in Canada's legislation. Furthermore, individuals who do not willfully pledge allegiance with the dominant culture's value system and create kinship outside the boundaries of heteronormative logic remain marginalized. The central question in this context goes beyond the goal for marginalized populations to be included into the heteronormative fold, and begs for a theoretical argument as to why power is constructed and maintained as it is. A new understanding of family identity from a queer perspective could reform attitudes and policies where one form of family does not dominate over another. In this equation, "the current episteme of intelligibility" (Butler, 2002, p. 25) would radically alter with the diffusion of governmental legitimations on what constitutes a family.

The genealogical[3] traces that have caused Canadians to arrive at an epistemology, and personal ontological narratives, are both critical to the process of balancing objectivity within subjective influences. Although I grew up as a Canadian, revealing my status as a queer woman I am also disclosing an individual identification that characterizes a crucial aspect into the nature behind my analysis. For example, for some, the experience of homosexuality obligates an

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[1] The conceived dominant and nuclear family model where two parents are of the opposite sex with shared race positions families outside of this structure as alternative.
[2] Heteronormativity, or the normalization of heterosexual identifications as fixed and stable, constructs difference as deficient.

[3] I am referring to Foucault's definition of genealogy as it "seeks to reestablish the various systems of subjection: not the anticipatory power of meaning, but the hazardous play of dominations" (Foucault, 1998, page 376). Genealogic analysis is an attempt to bring historical and social precedence into the deconstruction of contemporary norms.

individual to practice a kind of self-reflexivity concerning the structures of power. The result of living in the margins of hierarchical privilege casts a shadow on personal rights and freedoms, and occasionally the gay individual becomes a queer individual. Queer individuals disrupt the systems governed by heteronormative standards and make overt what dramatically resides in unnamed pockets, unacknowledged by the status quo. Queer theory, trans theory and post-structuralism not only grant an entry point into unraveling the politics of power, identity and status, but provide an opportunities for the individual's unconscious and self-identification to take a meaningful position within discourses of privilege and power. The goal of this undoing is to suggest equitable outcomes for the entire spectrum of humanity, and dissuade the historically enforced oppression from a limited liberation.

The everyday realities of life as a queer and gay individual in a world fraught with homophobia and transphobia led me to use the services of Canada's leading LGBTTQ community centre, The 519 Community Centre. Affectionately and simply termed The 519, this centre hosts a variety of programming with some exclusive for LBGTTQ clientele, an invaluable site where the general population meets a target population, mingling diversity and creating community despite difference. I was later hired to be part of the Queer Parenting Program that offers family planning courses as well as family resource programs specific to the LGBTTQ population. Many individuals and families come from great distances to participate and educate themselves concerning their rights as families who are otherwise disenfranchised from heterosexual familial entitlement. Bearing witness to the popularity of the programs, where attendance keeps increasing, and the phenomenon of the "gayby boom", makes securing informed and sensitive programming essential. The Queer Parenting Programs at the centre carry an unquestioned commitment to all types of diverse family configurations leading with the

philosophical charge that embody the values of "an anti-oppression social justice framework, a secular, politically non-partisan approach to all issues, a non-judgmental stance in dealing with all its stakeholders, recognition and celebration of diversity and respect for individual dignity and value" (http://www.the519.org/about/mission.shtml). The 519 is proof that an anti-oppression model can be used to perceptively service community and acknowledge difference without stigmatization.

I have worked closely with Chris Veldhoven, the coordinator and facilitator to the Queer Parenting Programs at the The 519. Although the programs operate from a place of social inclusion and anti-oppressive framework, the programs do not yet have written policy as a reference to guide their approach. As I became more involved in the service delivery of the Queer Parenting Programs, the internal philosophical structure became less consistent to each employee, resulting in an exposure of domestic political uncohesiveness. Within the operation of the Queer Parenting Programs, a natural tension exists between staff having differences and agreements. The balancing act of supporting diverse learning and teaching strategies while desiring a unified front to offer participants requires rigorous and frequent staff meetings where economic resources are scarce. Hence, one central thrust behind my posing identity and power questions aimed at queer families, and specifically at *what is a queer family,* is to theoretically qualify and create the potential for the construction of queer policy. What does it mean to dislocate intimacy, families, and their identities from the implicit heteronormative position? Where does a Canadian queer family stand in terms of our country's legislative authority? Prior to even having children, are my queer relationships validated by cultural assumptions? How can community and social services improve their outreach and programming to their targeted groups?

Canada's definitions of family and gender, my work in community and social services, and my self-identifications have propelled me to further contemplate the mechanics of subjugation, how power is wielded, as well as naming who profits and who is at a disadvantage in order to dispel the heteronormative rhetoric. Thinking critically in an effort to disperse the concepts of legitimacy, thinkability, and intelligibility are at the cornerstone of this study. My aim is to contribute to an emerging and growing discourse concerning queer kinships. Many queer narratives are yet to be documented for the express purpose of including the stories of the underrepresented. Queer and trans theories insist on bringing these stories forth as they have been remarkably lacking from our statistics, textbooks and consciousness. What does not appear in our legal or educational systems for example, speaks as much to those who maintain their positions of privilege and to those who do not benefit and are excluded. Equivalent to the intentions behind this exploration into the heteronormative parameters of loyalty, commitment and parenting which ultimately enables our rights as individuals who couple or not and as parents, is to claim the academic space whereby such disruptions to the norm can take place and stories of difference will be heard.

A primary intention inspiring this study is to thoroughly contemplate contemporary cultural standards. What came along with such deep inquiry are the undeniable inequities many face which consequently demand discursive and practical applications of social reform. This investigation will begin with an explanation of tools provided by post-structural, queer and trans theorists. Subsequently, I will strategically apply the tenets of these doctrines to unhinge conventional concepts concerning the creation and conduct of families. Following an in-depth critical analysis of Canadian family policies and documents, I will begin a discourse into what

informs teacher pedagogy in early childhood education and care settings. Finally, a new theoretical framework for the future will be divulged.

To Queer or Not to Queer: That Is Not the Question

The act of queering can establish difference as a site of learning. Opposing the assumptions built into the hierarchical and heteronormative matrix generates a prospect that removes binary structures which administrate the production of identity. This strategic implementation of queer theoretical reflection advances the philosophical and lived restrictions of commonly understood concepts that formulate current cultural conjectures. To put it simply, the purpose in borrowing from queer and trans theories a lens in which to view family dynamics, patterns and identities, is to acquire a purposeful insight into Canada's hierarchical determination of freedoms. Concepts such as kinship and family should not be exempt from queer assessment; in fact these notions can be linked to the most basic of human rights. Exercising a queer muscle to deconstruct some immemorial relationship urges such as love and connection creates a discourse with a resistance to margins. We can evaluate what is considered legitimate and illegitimate, however it may be even more pertinent to excavate below the foundations of a Canadian hegemonic family ideal. Queer and trans theories are useful tools in this quandary of love without borders.

Post-structuralism, Queer and Trans Theories Together yet Distinct

Queer theory needs to be understood before implementing its knowledge. The lesbian and gay movements of the 1960's and 70's inspired an evolutionary step into even more critical thinking concerning gender and sexuality. "The effect of this new 'queer theory' wave has been to show in even more telling detail how pervasive the issues of lesbian and gay struggles have been in modern culture, and how various they have been over time" (Warner, 1993, p. x). In

other words, the younger queer politics suggest a larger political maneuver than the proposal of gay liberation. Queer studies actually challenge the institutions that uphold the categorical dominions of status. While gay liberation may have and continue to demand equality despite sexual orientation or preference, queer theory unpacks stigmatization and interprets it as an unnecessary social construction put into effect to protect the elite few who have the entitlement to its privileges (Sullivan, 2003; Warner, 1993). According to this perspective, stigmatizations are bonded to each other with heteronormative ideology, known to Foucault as "the polymorphous techniques of power" (Foucault, 1978, p.11).

Michel Foucault, arguably the most prominent post-structuralist to date, has influenced queer thinkers. Post-structuralism as a paradigm "seeks to examine the constitution of subjectivity in social life" (Namaste, 2000, p. 17). Subjectivity, where individual bodies or subjects are processed within the larger social context, measures heavily in post-structural preoccupation. In this equation, power is a unified force where identity is worked through a subject rather than identity being formed from an internal voluntaristic will. As such, identifications through the body are produced through a variety of institutionalizations. "If we understand the norms by which we are obliged to recognize ourselves and others as those that work upon us, to which we must submit, then submission is one part of a social process by which recognizability is achieved" (Butler, 2004, p. 193). Perhaps then, if we refuse to submit, as some trans theorists would suggest, there exists a window into new discourse (Stryker, 2006; Wilchins, 2002). If we choose to engage in a conversation that transforms reconizability then we are possibly exercising the unique inferences within our subjective selves prior to accepting the prescription of socially manufactured credentials. In this way, post-structuralist thought has inspired trans theories to expose socially force-fed interpretations of gender and sexuality and now asks subjects to continuously reestablish ourselves in the face of power domination.

Judith Butler, an eminent queer theorist, tackles the topics of sex, gender and desire and applies them to a subject. In a Foucauldian tradition she observes that "[t]he limits of the discursive analysis of gender presuppose and preempt the possibilities of imaginable and realizable gender configurations within culture" (Butler, 1990, p. 13). Various trans theories however scrutinize queer theory and post-structuralism to be insensitive to transgendered people who experience the un/imaginable gender configurations and incessantly broaden the un/imaginable domain of gender (Namaste, 2000; Noble, 2006; Stryker, 2006; Wilchins, 2002). "It is because queer theory considers only certain cultural and literary objects appropriate for examination, and because it is merely interested in an application of poststructuralist ideas to these objects, that the lives, bodies, and experiences of transgendered people are eclipsed. Queer theory's epistemological and methodological presuppositions authorize a political agenda that robs transgendered people of dignity and integrity" (Namaste, 2000, p.23). Queer theory and trans theory remain at times at odds on the topic of gender and sexual assignment. For example, trans theorist Bobby Noble suggests that the embodiment of a transitioned gender preserves the body in a "permanent place of modulation of what came before by what comes after, never fully accomplishing either as an essentialist stable 'reality' but also of permanent incoherence if the subject is to matter at all" (Noble, 2006, p. 11). This permanent incoherence can regularly and categorically disturb Foucault's definition of power as a "more or less organized, hierarchical co-ordinated cluster of relations" (Foucault, 1980, p. 198). This articulated premise has the potential to understand gender and sex as mobile or instable domains.

The seminal point that Judith Butler makes regarding gender is in her depiction of gender as an attribute rather than a noun. However, in her estimation the experience of gender is expressed through the body's reiteration of acts and gestures, or in her terminology, describes gender as "performativity". Her assertion that "the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality" (Butler, 1990, p. 173), is where many trans theorists would disagree and insist that subjects inhabit a meaningful place within their own gender production. "The relationship between bodily sex, gender role, and subjective gender identity are imagined to be strictly, mechanically, mimetic- a real thing and its reflections…the contrary subjective identities of transsexuals, the sartorial practices of transvestites, and the gender inversion of butches and queens all work to confound simplistic notions of material determinism and mirror-style representational practices" (Stryker, 2006, p. 9). In other words, each subject can assume a position in relation to the broader social culture and not strictly be victim to gender as a compulsory social and thus subjugated performance.

Enhancing queer and trans explanations of gender and sex is the axis of binary oppositions, another important concept introduced by post-strutcuralists. Binary oppositions are paired concepts where one cannot exist without the other. For example, man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual, legitimate/illegitimate, or adult/child each represents what appear to be fixed and polarized realities when in fact the juxtaposed terms are socially invented and their diametrical supposition can result in a total erasure of subtler formations of self.[4] Queer and trans theorists problamatize the binary explanation of sexuality as either homo or hetero as it universalizes and essentializes the experiences of sexuality where one serves as normal and one

as abnormal. "Binaries prevent other kinds of information from emerging…binaries are the black holes of knowledge" (Wilchins, 2002, p. 43).

Here's where it gets even more complex. If we can agree as queer theorists to reject the binary consequences of fixed meanings for its palpable dismissal of diversity, this rejection should also include tolerance towards difference and even the normalization of differences. Although it may appear as the desired end result when access is systematically granted to the marginalized thus rendering them mainstream, the radical nature of queer theory advocates for the continuous application of its disturbances. As some differences are normalized, others will emerge as abnormal. The politics of identity insist on the politicization of valuing difference, of acknowledging the unknown, of recognizing that there will always be current limits to our thinkability. In this way, the appearance of difference will always be shifting; dominant culture will always slowly be sharpening the blurry image of difference into the focus of the mainstream. This is the unchanging undercurrent of change. It is precisely the act of normalization in and of itself that queer and trans theories rebel against. Functioning from this tenet, queer and trans theories will tirelessly rock the proverbial boat of representation.

Subsequently, categorical identities are seen by medical and psychological institutions as fixed truths that become the leading characteristic to an individual's experience. Fixed categories "often became a master status as experiential and power relationships promoted the incorporation of that categorical identity into self-identity" (Kelly, 2005, page 263). Their categorical identity works itself into self-identity through lived relationships emphasized by everyday interactions in ordinary settings. Such is the product of a binary gaze; when heteronormativity demands an unwavering gender production it rejects the possibility of fluid or

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[4] For a more thorough investigation into binary oppositions, refer to the writings of French philosopher and sociologist Jacques Derrida.

trans gendered expressions thus limiting unique manifestations. Identity is seen as stable rather than one of many identifications an individual may possess.

Just as queer theory evolved out of the gay liberation movement, the emergence of transgender studies erupted in the 1990's out of queer theory. Trans theories attempt to address human complexities and identifications without universalizing differences. A trans focus might shift more precisely onto gender and sex relieving the sexuality realm from central importance in some interpretations. "Same-sex object choice is not the only way to differ from heterosexist cultural norms" (Stryker, 2006, p.7). Expressing a subjective gender does not solely rely on an individual's desire to attract love or sexual engagement. Living with the malleable "permanent incoherence" (Noble, 2006) of gender can be a subject's solitary anti-normative experience. Gender in this sense can fail; an individual's gender performance may be misread by a viewer in one moment, and then recognized distinctly in another. Conceivably akin to Butler's theory of gender performativity, the permanent incoherence of gender referred to is clearly attached to a subject's internal knowledge of self. Gender is more than an act; it is linked to an existential psychic substance (Wilchins, 2002). This approach leaves room for questions such as why are individuals restricted to only occupy one gender rather than accepting the possible vacillation between male and female. Do we have the vocabulary to discuss dual genders or the intersex[5] experience? The binary model assumes transgressions from their paired counterparts as flawed. Trans and queer theory suggests that "we're not the ones who are broken. It's the model that's broken. The model of Western thought about bodies itself, and much more besides" (Wilchins, 2002, p. 24).

So what does *queer* mean? Functionally at times the word *queer* acts as an umbrella term to describe the LGBTT community, however this meaning serves to homogenize differences

within the community. While "the popularity of the term 'gay' testifies to its potential as a non-clinical descriptor unburdened by the pathologizing history of sexology…similarly, in distinguishing itself from those terms which form its semantic history, 'queer' equally foregrounds 'a changing reality'" (Jagose, 1996, pp. 73-5). A more accurate definition of the reclaimed term *queer* implies an active defiance to heteronormative logic, also described as "destabilizing the spaces it flags" (Noble, 2006, p. 9). What does it mean *to queer*? "Queer (Theory) is constructed as a sort of vague and indefinable set of practices and (political) positions that has the potential to challenge normative knowledges and identities…it is not restricted to gays and lesbians, but can be taken up by anyone who feels marginalized as a result of their sexual practices" (Sullivan, 2003, p. 43-44). Queer as an adjective or identifier refers to embodying anti-normative traits; queer as a verb is to apply an anti-normative political perspective onto a particular issue. The effects of heteronormative logic can have an indefinite impact way beyond the domains of gender, sex and sexuality. If *queer* here can be understood as outcast status to the dominant heteronormative culture, links can be made to all forms of difference. Any topic can be queered. This is not to essentialize differences nor simplify a rhetoric of difference as a similarity to other marginalized populations. "The necessity of a focus on the intersectionality of racial, sexual, gender and class identities" (Sullivan, 2003, p. 38) has been critiqued to universalize identities, however "in queer models the rhetoric of difference replaces the more assimilationist liberal emphasis on similarity to other groups" (Jagose, 1996, p. 77). In an effort to refrain from extending difference to all forms of difference, I will be consciously choosing to exclusively centre on notions of intimacy, kinship/family and child as my central concepts to queer.

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[5] An intersexed person is an individual who is born with both anatomical parts of male and female.

Queer theory has endorsed a language that disrupts the status quo. The politics of identity can become the politics of difference and hence the plausibility of new discourses. "[T]he process of naming inevitably involves (re)constructing oneself in and through humanist identity categories- often imposed by others- and moreover, bracketing off or veiling over all the aspects of oneself that do not seem to fit neatly with such a designation" (Sullivan, 2003, p. 53). In this light, the politics of difference will bear relevance on new decentralized productions of family. Kinship or community is a matter of perspective.

Queering Partnership, Kinship and Community

Queer and trans theories endeavor to bring the politics of identity[6] back into the hands of each individual. The queered discourses of gender, sex and sexuality agree to decentralize validity by empowering persons to voice their own personal truths regarding issues of self-identification rather than relying on state or social approval or even acknowledgement. Using internal judgments to navigate unique gender, sex and sexual expressions takes us out of Foucault's "repressive hypothesis" (Foucault, 1978) and into diverse and authentic appearances of being. Foucault's repressive hypothesis, or the theory that the Victorian Regime's introduction to a relationship between sex and institutional power resulted in the regulation of sexual practice, naturalizes heterosexuality as a default location which inevitably places it in a position of legitimacy leaving homosexuality in the cold of illegitimacy. Such binary modes cast predetermined conclusions onto an individual's personal preferences and/or innate dispositions thus proving Foucault's and Butler's contention that subjects carry no power. For subjects to regulate their own authority, social and state constraints must release its moral grasp on personal identity and individuals must tirelessly restore their personal subjective identities. While this at

first may leave gay and/or queer individuals even more vulnerable to our homophobic and heterocentric Canadian society, the repeated disruption could eventually disintegrate the relationship between identity and institutional power. Thus, the politics of identity are critical to thinking about kinship and family as well.

The next question comes in the form of destabilizing familial norms. Legislative and cultural determinism control the rights and freedoms of how bodies are stipulated to love and function as kin. State constraints are still loaded with the vestiges of the Church's ideology; "Procreation is a Christian reduction of the purpose of human sexuality to reproduction… Preocreationism has become the doctrine of traditional family values" (Goss, 1997, p. 11). In a queer equation, the institutions of marriage and fidelity are as fabricated as any other concept that organizes and regulates populations. The notions of sexual and relationship conduct, such as whom you love and how, would benefit from a queered exploration in order to produce the possibilities of imagining a queer family and would liberate all families from the hypocrisy so often linked to a heterosexual and institutionalized marriage. Probing deeper than the simple inversion of gender roles or orientation practice, the queering of family does more than formulate a homonormative[7] arrangement. In this instance, "[t]he term 'family' refers to groups of individuals who define each other as family and share a strong emotional and/or financial commitment to each other, whether or not they cohabit, are related by blood, law, or adoption, have children, or are recognized by the law" (Bernstein & Reimann, 2001, p. 3). In addition to this definition of family are any potential for agreed interdependent arrangements that may or may not be equal in their distribution as well as children with multiple households. Balancing on an entirely different alignment, queer families self-verify their designs without the affirmation

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[6] Identity politics differs from the politics of identity in that the politics of identity challenge the institutionalized governance of bodies rather than assimilating into the ownership of privilege.

[7] Homonormativity is a phenomenon known to queer and trans scholars as a replication of the heteronormative model with the distinction that the primary subjects are homosexual.

from external sources. What becomes a social justice issue is the dominant ideology's abjuration of patterns that do not adhere to specific cultural values. This exclusivity marginalizes those who do not willfully or unwillingly fit the narrow scope of what is deemed morally upright.

Queerly Intimate

To begin the dialogue of family identities, the central union between consensual partners will be deliberated. How adults conform or rebel from traditional structures launches a debate into familial un/intelligibility before the introduction of children. Monogamy is considered the pinnacle depiction of scrupulous behaviour according to dominant culture. "Our monogamy-centrist culture tends to assume that the purpose and ultimate goal of all relationships- and, for that matter, all sex- is lifetime pair-bonding, and that any relationship which falls short of that goal has failed" (Easton & Liszt, 1997, p. 23), an assumption which also excludes the possibility of long-term, committed relationships with multiple partners. Measuring the quality of intimacy based on these parameters automatically disqualifies other forms of ethical[8] and consensual sexual relationships. To project one form or code of conduct upon an entire range of cultural communities does not consider the politics of difference or allow for diversity. However, even in the queer community, monogamy is a disputed term. For example, "[t]he complexities of the different meanings of the term 'monogamy' was addressed implicitly by accounts given of encounters with third parties" (Heaphy, Weeks & Donovan, 1998, p. 463). Whatever the definition according to individual interpretation, the underlying insights regarding intimacy in a queer context are "the changing nature of forms of domestic organization, the shifting meanings of identity and belonging, and the developing culture of non-heterosexual ways of life" (Heaphy

et al., 1998, p. 454). Divergent relationship possibilities exist within the LGBTTQ[9] communities, although they are in no way inherent to a same-sex relationship.

Foucault derives the cementing of monogamous values from nineteenth-century ethos. "[M]odern society has attempted to reduce sexuality to the couple- the heterosexual and, insofar as possible, legitimate couple…The forms of nonconjugal, nonmonogomous sexuality were drawn there and established" (Foucault, 1978, p. 45-46). Along with the production of the lawful union came the sexually deviant and perverse. It was in the Victorian era where "the implementation of perversions had an instrument effect: it is through isolation, intensification and consolidation of peripheral sexualities that the relations of power to sex and pleasure branched out and multiplied, measured the body, and penetrated modes of conduct" (Foucault, 1978, p. 48). And so it began; divisions between what is considered the moral and unmoral sexual adult were created. And with that decisions were eventually made about whom has the right marry according to state law.

"That there are such regions, and that they are not precisely options, suggests that what troubles the distinction between legitimacy and illegitimacy are social practices, specifically sexual practices, that do not appear immediately as coherent within available lexicon of legitimation. These are sites of uncertain ontology, difficult nomination" (Butler, 2002, p. 20). In other words, if we are to meticulously obliterate the social constraints on partnership, we need to acknowledge other forms of relationship scenarios. Triads, or three partnered unions, non-monogamy, polyamory[10], romantic friendships[11], families of choice[12] and friends of family are a

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[8] In this case I am defining ethical as the absence of deceit from a sexual/emotional arrangement between consensual parties.

[9] I have deliberately chosen to include the Q of Queer within the LGBTTQ acronym to keep self-identified non-gay queer individuals included as a distinct cultural cluster.

[10] "Unlike 'nonmonogamy', polyamory does not assume monogamy as a norm…some feel that polyamory includes all forms of sexual relationships other than monogamy, others restrict it to committed love relationships" (Easton & Liszt, 1997, p.41)

[11] Before the popularity of the term lesbian came in the twentieth century, same-sex love between women was known as 'romantic friendships' in the nineteenth century. Considered secondary to the courtship between a man

few examples of untraditional associations. The gay marriage debate is an interesting intersecting location where a much larger conversation begins.

The Gay Marriage Debate

Queer and trans theories while discrete disciplines, overlap to create speculative space to imagine love between people as a self-ordained practice. In this respect, gay marriage is in line with the queer perception that individuals have the right to choose who they love and/or marry whether they mimic heteronormative structure or not. In fact, whether it's state law, religious law or cultural edict that restricts personal freedom and personal subjective identity creation is contrary to queer sensibility. However, gay marriage is only the cusp into queer and trans theory's challenge of institutionalized and internalized heteronormativity. Although it is critiqued as heterosexual impersonation, gay marriage may be a necessary stepping stone for traditional marriage to take. Firstly, gay marriage demonstrates the state's ability to adjust itself. Also, because gay marriage is concerned with the right for homosexuals to enter into the heterosexual's commitment ritual and legal benefits to be recognized as family by law, it highlights the legitimacy of orientation. The nature/nurture dispute over whether homosexuality is a choice looses its strength with the appearance of gay marriage. "We often pose the question in reverse to prove our point: Do Heterosexuals choose to be Heterosexual?" (Strongheart, 1997, p. 81). According to trans theory, the only choice subjects have is whether or not to reveal internal identity traits to the broader production of normal, as the genders individuals inhabit have a deeper association to ontological meaning than the behaviours that suggest them.

Gay marriage however also opens an unintelligible can of worms. Reaching beyond marriage as a symbol of mainstream experiences that homosexuals only very recently have been eligible to participate in Canada, it also represents "simple accommodation to the norms of the straight world, a calculated effort to win acceptance by somehow fitting in" (Lewin, 2001, p. 44). Many queer theorists (Butler, 2002; Sedgwick, 2004; Ohi, 2004; Wilson, 2007) have criticized gay marriage as being assimilationist to heteronormative culture instead of supporting a culture of many variations. Even though the legal contract that marriage affords is an attractive feature to secure rights for families, lesbian and gay relationships have the potential to construct intimacy without co-dependency[13], a trend in heterosexual unification. Heteronormativity presumes a nuclear model, complete with shared bedrooms, bank accounts and biological children. Should any one of these or other characteristics of a relationship alter in role, an individual operates out of difference from the norm. "[I]n this construction same-sex civil partnerships must be understood as a step backwards" (Wilson, 2007, p. 57). In a queer perspective, all types of intimacy or autonomy are welcomed. "[W]hile couple formation and membership were intensely important to many *(gay and lesbian partners)*[14], this did not exhaust the range of relationships that were identified as important" (Heaphy et al, 1998, p. 464). Queer families are found to enjoy extended networks beyond having couples at the core.

Is a legal contract more legitimate than a relationship commitment outside of marriage? "There needs to be an ongoing analysis as to why gay and lesbian couples would want to take on the structures of heterosexual marriages in our lives in the first place" (Blevins, 2005, p. 77). It can be argued that those who reside externally from legal obligations maintain an engaged role in

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and woman according to societal expectations, 'romantic friendships' were "a respected social institution in America" (Faderman, 1992, p. 2).

[12] "Families of choice" is a recent official term used to describe queer family configurations in academic circles (Lehr, 1999; Goss, 1997; Berstein & Reimann, 2001).

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[13] I am using the term co-dependency according to pop-culture's adaptation of a phenomenon where an individual's agency is no longer their own. Autonomous behaviours or desires outside of a committed relationship are construed to be selfish and therefore forbidden. This is an example of Governmentality where individuals regulate themselves based on social expectations. This concept will be discussed at greater length in the subsection that follows.

[14] Italic text in brackets did not appear in the original publication.

their partnerships suggesting an authentic and ongoing devoted commitment. While gay marriage challenges the institution of marriage to redefine its terms to include homosexuals, it can be argued that gay marriage ultimately adopts the values of marriage, still normative in its purpose. By rejecting heteronormative inventions whether through theory or practice, non-heteronormative models, lifestyle choices and practicing continuous relationship commitment, have a more certain opportunity for cultural recognition on a broad, social landscape. We are however, still living in times where "[v]ariations on kinship that depart from normative, dyadic heterosexually based family forms secured through the marriage vow are figured not only as dangerous for the child, but perilous to the putative natural and cultural laws said to sustain human intelligibility" (Butler, 2002, p. 16). Gay marriage may be defeating our progress in imagining the unintelligible by inadvertently intensifying the binary modes of legitimacy and illegitimacy. Gay marriages affect a hierarchy of difference rather than the dissolution of stigmatization.

Making Sense of Census Canada

Kinship...has lost the capacity to be formalized and tracked in the conventional ways that ethnologists in the past have attempted to do. (Butler, 2002, p. 15).

Census Canada, information produced by Statistics Canada, monitors a portrait of Canada and its citizens according to statistical surveys. A splinter group of the Government of Canada, Statistics Canada asserts that the surveys are "guided by the fundamental values of confidentiality, accuracy, objectivity and timeliness - and WE KNOW[15] that useful statistics must have no political bias" (http://www.statcan.ca/english/Talon/talonflashtext.htm). This statement is suggesting that the information garnered from intensive surveys are free from

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[15] Emphasis as it appears in print.

political bias, however an examination into their definitions and concepts reveal the underlying suppositions in Canada's equations of family:

> Census family is defined as a married couple and the children, if any, of either or both spouses; a couple living common law and the children, if any, of either or both partners; or, a lone parent of any marital status with at least one child living in the same dwelling and that child or those children. All members of a particular census family live in the same dwelling. A couple may be of opposite or same sex. Children may be children by birth, marriage or adoption regardless of their age or marital status as long as they live in the dwelling and do not have their own spouse or child living in the dwelling. Grandchildren living with their grandparent(s) but with no parents present also constitute a census family... The previous standard made no reference to same-sex couples. The addition of the words "a couple may be of opposite or same sex" reflects the established practice of including same-sex common-law couples and recognizes that same-sex couples can also be married. (http://www.statcan.ca/english/concepts/definitions/cen-family.htm).

A consideration into who is included and excluded from this definition must be explored. For an agency with a claim to have no established political bias, this definition of family contradicts Statistic Canada's alleged objectivity. Although on the grounds of gay liberation the recent revision to include same-sex couples into the fold of Canada's definition of family compositions is worthy of mention, it continues to neglect the growing presence of transgendered or transsexual parents, and a total neglect of alternative family configurations that currently exist. For example, how does Canada account for a lesbian-led family with a sperm-donor father that has agreed to co-parenting status? Although still heteronormative in its understanding of familial identities, it is relevant to note the amendment where notions of the nuclear model are stretched to include same-sex couples as rightful parents because it reveals that the government can institute change from within. With enough pressure from advocacy groups and through exposing individual family narratives of difference, marginalized groups have a better chance of legislative and policy inclusion. This is critical to the process of shaping policy, as it informs how federal and provincial ministries designate services to the public. Without federal backing,

provincial legislatures are less likely to address the needs of the under-represented. Without provincial backing, health and social services are less likely to address the needs of marginalized communities. This trickle-down effect can be devastating for families who are not recognized by Canadian standards.

The prescribed and supposed objectivity and expertise of government agencies are regarded as implicit to citizenship as a Canadian. Foucault understands this phenomenon as governmentality, where "'[g]overnment' did not refer only to political structures or to the management of states; rather, it designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed" (Foucault, 2000, page 341). In turn, subjects are inculcated to govern themselves according to Canadian standards which do not reflect a queer behavioural trajectory. Census Canada's definition of family thus produces ideas of legitimacy as it does not protect or understand the complexity of family as a unit despite configuration allocation. Furthermore, Census Canada's intrusive yet incomplete portrait of Canadian identity is a powerful example of panopticism (Foucault, 1977), understood by Foucault as the unobstructed gaze. The concept of an unobstructed gaze is believed to set up inherent surveillance and a total lack of privacy. However, the denial of including alternative kinship structures is not only Canada's failed panoptic attempt into families; it exposes Canada's heteronormativity in its search for examples of family and how people organize themselves. "[T]he existence of a whole set of techniques and institutions for measuring, supervising and correcting the abnormal brings into play the disciplinary mechanism" (Foucault, 1977, p. 199), is put into effect in the creation of statistical measurement.

With such tools borrowed from poststructuralist, queer and trans theories, an interpretation into queer families, further than the nomination of diverse and consensual adult relationships where the inclusion of children and an individual's right to parent, can now be mulched.

Family Un/intelligibility

> Being a parent is an inalienable human right regardless of a person's ability or desire to be married, and that the fulfillment of that right can be made possible in the setting of an alternative family (Segal-Engelchin, Erera & Cwikel, 2005, p. 86).

The Census family maintains the heteronormative convention that parents must be two adults romantically tied whether by marriage or not. "Gay kinship ideologies challenge the belief that procreation alone constitutes kinship and that 'non-biological' ties must be patterned after a biological model" (Sullivan & Baques, 1999, p. 80). Queer parents are not necessarily related by blood to their children. However, the visibility of single and partnered queer biological, adoptive and social parents[16] remains absent from the Census "findings". "We need to displace this strange heteronormative narrative of motherhood and gender and sexuality" (Luce, 2004, p. 53). Family configurations can take on diverse and complex formulas, in contrast to the traditional heteronormative nuclear model. For example, if a lesbian-led couple had the intention to conceive a child, they may decide to solicit a donation of sperm from a close and personal friend. The man may be in a relationship also implicating his partner in the equation. "Co-parenting arrangements can include any combination of individuals and/or couples who choose to parent together… Co-parenting can be the basis of many creative parenting opportunities and innovative family structures" (http://www.fsatoronto.com/programs/lgbt/co-parentingMarch2007.pdf). This is only one of many examples representing diverse family configuration. Imagining possible variations of family structure can be stretched into the unintelligible, a location some queer families have been

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[16] Social parents are non-biological parents. This term is used in academic journals in an effort to avoid semantic confusion when discussing different parental identities.

recently pioneering. In this light, the unintelligible represents the previous and subsequent

arrangements that can be envisioned in queer kinship or community scenarios. Such scenarios

may be drastically unlike any heteronormative familial predecessors. It becomes a complex

labyrinth of options for family construction, so how can Canada recognize and protect the rights

of the unaccounted non-traditional families?

To Canada's credit, the definition of family expanded in 2007 when an Ontario appeals

court ruled that a boy can have three parents; his biological mother, his social mother and his

sperm donor and co-parent. This is a huge advancement for recognition of alternative family

structure; however custody rights and social acceptance are lagging behind. It's time for

Canada's community and social services to play catch up to its changing vision of family. It's

also time for Canadians to openly share the freedoms of family construction and parenting, and

strive for all families to share in equitable outcomes. "This means LBGT-led families will be

free from the impacts of ignorance, hostility, harassment, discrimination and oppression,

intentional and/or unintentional, and can participate fully in all levels of community life"

(http://www.the519.org/programs/Queer_Parenting/New_Partnership_Overview.pdf). In

Toronto, programs such as the LGBTQ Parenting Connection are providing services and safe

spaces for LGBTTQ families to get know their rights and exercise their freedoms with support.

However, these programs are exceedingly rare in Canada.

The Right to Parent; Inferences within the Assisted Human Reproduction Act

Although queer identities are not intrinsically linked to homosexualities, they are

frequently associated with one another. There are multiple and plural combinations of identifiers

an individual may subsume. For example, one can present as queer and gay, however these

concepts are not mutually exclusive. LGBTTQ communities are already underrepresented and

there currently is very little research extended to self-identified queer individuals who are

heterosexual. For this reason, when demystifying legislative documents, this study must

commingle these identities in order to examine the barriers queer, gay and trans individuals

currently face in their pursuit of parenthood. According to a queer perspective, every individual

should enjoy the right to parent regardless of their identities. I am therefore intentionally

including queer into the acronym of LGBTTQ; some gay and trans individuals may also identify

as queer. This placement of queer within the homosexual and trans context acknowledges a

cultural group who identify as both queer and straight. Queer is not synonymous with lesbian,

gay, bisexual, transgendered, transsexual or intersexed; these characteristics do however spill

over the margins of the heteronormative ideal and are thus branded as queer through the

delegitimization of difference by the dominant culture of power.

While tolerance and exposure to lesbian, gay and trans unions may be progressing, the

next evolutionary step to accepting new identities are in the LGBTTQ's families' rights as

parents. Reproductive technologies and the arrangement of parenting choices for LGBTTQ

families necessitate their acceptance into Canada's policies and social consciousness. "Non-

biological lesbian mothers lack not only biological ties to their children, but have no legal ties

even if those children are intentionally conceived through donor insemination in the context of a

committed relationship" (Bergen, Suter & Daas, 2006, p. 201). Recognizing LGBTTQ

individuals as viable parents is the next big leap for Canadian society and legislature to adopt

such as the Assisted Human Reproduction Act (AHRA). "Lesbian parenting represents a radical

and radicalizing challenge to heterosexual norms that govern parenting roles and identities. It

undermines traditional notions of the family and the heterosexual monopoly of reproduction"

(Dunne, 2000, p. 11). New familial sensibilities are demanding that the needs of marginalized communities are met.

More out lesbian and bisexual women are choosing to have children either through adoption or donor insemination. The family context can differ from a heterosexual one resulting in differences in service delivery: lesbian women may want to know their sperm donors, a couple may have to decide who is to carry the child, the social mother may not have access to father services, and homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism prohibit visibly gay and trans clientele from using health care services. Furthermore, most healthcare providers lack LGBTTQ cultural competency[17]; fertility clinics and/or counselors and obstetric services are not trained in LGBTTQ considerations, and many pediatric and child care service providers are unwilling to recognize the non-biological mother as legitimate parent (Ross, Steele & Epstein, 2006, p. 506). These service gaps result from the lack of Canada's legislative recognition and support. However the increasing numbers of LGBTTQ families choosing to have children are making these issues urgent to address. Questioning the AHRA, and its enforcement within fertility clinics, is vital in accomplishing accessibility on the right to conceive.

Traditionally, fertility clinics were established to assist the reproductive success of young married heterosexual women. "Procreative privilege underpins the Christian cultural notion of marriage and family" (Goss, 1997, p. 7). Bill C-13 (formerly Bill C-56), or AHRA, was designed to mandate the ethical and healthful treatment[18] of fertility technology. Before the arrival of the AHRA in 2004, fertility clinics had no political obligation to service single women,

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[17] "The term 'cultural competency' refers to a long-term developmental process that moves beyond 'cultural awareness' (the knowledge about a particular group primarily gained through media sources and workshops) and 'cultural sensitivity' (knowledge as well as some level of direct experience with a cultural group other than one's own)" (Epstein, 2008, p. 5). Cultural competency refers to in-depth cultural awareness and exposure to a specific group.
[18] It is important to note that the ethical and healthful treatment referred to here is interpreted according to governmental and medical establishments.

older women, lesbians or trans masculines[19]. In many cases, "fertility services still refuse to inseminate lesbian couples because they believe the child's welfare would be at stake" (Vanfruassen, Ponjaert-Kristofferson & Brewaeys, 2002, p. 237). Historically, clinics have had the freedom to decide who their clients are, and have barred lesbians from their practice (Arnup, 1994; Ross, Steele, & Epstein, 2006; Vanfruassen, Ponjaert-Kristofferson & Brewaeys, 2002). "Labeled 'socially infertile' by the medical establishment" (Luce, 2004, p. 52), lesbians have had difficulty finding clinics. Since the introduction of the AHRA in 2004, it could mandate reproductive choice as a right. Although the AHRA has made legislative transparency on certain points, others remain in a grey area. In general the AHRA's position on parenting as a right remains unclear and clinics have yet to understand the cultural and practical needs of LGBTTQ individuals. "Barriers include the fear of disclosing sexual orientation to providers, a lack of cultural competency among health care providers, and a lack of appropriate services" (Ross, Steele & Epstein 2006, p. 506). Specialized training in LGBTTQ cultural competency could radically improve services for this population. Health Canada has even commented that the number of single parents and same-sex couples that are turning to AHR has increased (http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/reprod/hc-sc/index_e.html). "Some [Toronto-based] fertility clinics estimate that as much as 30% or more of their clients are members of LGBTQ communities" (Epstein, 2008, p. 2).

According to the Act, "assisted reproduction procedures are prohibited unless carried out in accordance with a licence and the regulations, which will address health and safety concerns" (House of Commons of Canada, 2002, p. i). This statement addresses the recently enforced medicalization of insemination procedures. Bearing in mind that the health and safety concerns

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[19] Trans masculines is a new term that evades any genital connotations and refers to female to male trans individuals (FtM)s.

referred to here are based on medical and governmental standards, the licensing and regulating of self-insemination puts queer bodies at risk of receiving treatment that has not taken queer cultural competency into account.[20] Responding largely to the medical definition of infertility, Health Canada has not yet made any official statements regarding the potential criminalization of home insemination under the Act (Epstein, 2008), a major concern among LGBTTQ communities. For many queer and/or gay women, seeking the services of fertility clinics is a matter of insemination and not fertility. "Self-insemination is still seen as a threat to medicine since it is a de-professionalised, de-medicalised practice that privileges the lay knowledge and concerns of the women themselves" (Haimes & Weiner, 2000, p. 477). The potential of criminalizing self-insemination demonstrates the Act's lack of consideration of LGBTTQ identity as parents and consumers of AHR. "Where queer adults together choose their route to becoming parents, to taking on parenting roles, and to forming queer families…the Act simultaneously restricts the ways that queer Canadians can exercise their reproductive freedoms" (Cameron, 2008, p. 119).

Other fertility factors that further implicate LGBTTQ parents are the costs, availability of ethnically diverse sperm, and social acceptance of LBGTTQ family identity. The cost of donor semen services can range from $700 to $950 per cycle in Toronto. The "testing of semen from known donors for cryopreservation…can be higher" (Ross, Steele & Epstein, 2006, p. 508). The evolution of the queer family structure has witnessed a trend in the desire for lesbian-led couples to have a relationship with their donors. The higher costs of using known donors can be cost prohibitive for many families. Furthermore, there is a limited selection of donors available through sperm banks, both in terms of ethno-cultural backgrounds and identity-release donors.

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[20] For some queer families, self-insemination has acquired its own ritualistic significance. It has the capacity to embody a conception replete with symbolic meanings.

And finally, participants living outside of Toronto were required to undergo a home study and police check resulting in a considerable delay specifically because of their sexual orientation (Ross, Steele & Epstein, 2006). "A number of legal concerns about the rights and responsibilities of all parities emerge…In addition to the support of a child, auxiliary costs of medical and legal assistance can be considerable" (Patterson & Chan, 1999, p.201). Each of these factors contributes to discriminatory climate for the LGBTTQ population and their rights as parents.

What the Act does not address is the ethical argument that discusses the viability of assisting reproduction in relation to LGBTTQ families. Why not support same-sex couples in becoming parents when heterosexual infertility has marketed reproductive technology as worthy of development? Who counts as a parent? "The advent of contraceptive technologies is the impetus for academic, religious and medical statements regarding the separation of reproduction from sexuality" (Luce, 2004, p. 49). Such discourse questions the connection between sexuality and reproduction, making it possible for lesbians, trans men and women, and gay men to become parents. However, queer advocates ask that assisted human reproduction not be synonymous with asexual conception. "Lesbian conceptions aren't necessarily asexual… Some women leave instructions for donors to leave when *they're* done 'doing their thing' so that women can continue doing theirs" (Luce, 2004, p. 49-50). There can if fact be sex in insemination; the practice of insemination can be sexualized. Assisted reproductive technologies may have originated because of "the needs of a man to conceal his sub-fertility" however lesbians use it "not as a necessity to circumvent subfertility but as a positive opportunity" (Haimes & Weiner, 2000, p. 478). Normalizing reproductive technologies, rather than keeping fertility issues shrouded in secrecy, could welcome LGBTTQ families into the assisted human reproduction

procedure. Lastly, the fear of the criminalization of home insemination that would inhibit the right to take sperm home impacts lesbian and trans masculine potential child-bearers because as families it is not the issue of fertility that sends them to sperm banks and fertility clinics "but simply a way to access sperm in order to conceive" (Epstein, 2008, p. 6).

Gay men face a different set of challenges in accessing reproductive technologies in the pursuit of raising a biological child. Surrogacy is a costly and finding women to "donate" her womb and/or eggs can be extremely difficult. "The combined restrictions on sperm donation, self insemination, and the criminalization of commercial surrogacy may make it extremely difficult for gay men to become biological parents in Canada" (Cameron, 2008, p. 119). Lacking in the current literature is social class discourse regulating which gay male families can afford surrogacy as a choice. Furthermore, the application of surrogacy can have profound social ramifications. "Surrogacy is likely to be another means by which to exploit poor women, especially women of color…the availability of technologies such as egg harvesting allow women to carry children to whom they have no genetic relationship, thus opening up the possibility that black women can carry white children, and allowing white potential parents to bypass the decreased availability of adoptable white children" (Lehr, 1999, p. 130). With existing legislative acts such as the AHRA, it becomes a pertinent question as to which organizational body should govern the rights of human bodies. Issues of class and race measure deeply here. The intersections of class, race and queer family construction must be explored; the medical and theoretical complexity of achieving biological connection for gay men and trans feminines with their potential children need to be discussed on the basis of an individual's right to parent without shying away from class and race discourse. These are difficult and multifaceted conversations that are continuously emerging and transforming an understanding of parenthood.

Currently, the objectives of the AHRA as an Agency are "(a) to protect and promote the health and safety, and the human dignity and human rights of Canadians, and (b) to foster the application of ethical principles in relation to assisted human reproduction and other matters to which this Act applies" (Department of Justice Canada, 2004, p. 13). When queering Canada's AHRA renditions of "human dignity", "human rights" and "ethical principles", we can investigate the foundations of these principles. These principles, while commendable to include and be considerate of, are based on the heteronormative attitudes towards family and kinship also supported by Canada's legal system which moreover operates within heteronormative culture. The AHRA reads as heteronormative, where "blood ties imply that family members will be closer and their relationships more significant than the relationships they have with non-family" (Daniels, 2005, p. 265), as the central purpose behind developing reproductive technologies. The AHRA also standardizes reproductive technologies, fixing the law to its own ethical personification. The social dimensions of alternative families, the variety of parenting roles, and a reconceiving of biologic and genetic ethics, must be adapted to include queer family politics. Otherwise, Canada can be calculated as negligent within its own objectives. The AHRA has not yet made the symbolic meaning of family relationships significant inside their acclimations of "human dignity", "human rights" or "ethical principles" in the environment of assisted human reproduction. What remains absent from the Act is discourse around separating biological and social parenthood. The AHRA could be contextualized to promote the maintenance of the preference whereby "genetic connectedness is something that is of considerable importance in terms of individual and family health and well-being" (Daniels, 2005, p. 266). The queer family displaces the importance of genetic information as paramount to a family's identity construction. Some queer families share with their children their genetic information, which counters the

historical and traditional approach to donor donation. Furthermore, concepts of ownership and/or belonging are also shifting. Queer cultural competency needs to be acknowledged when servicing individuals with assisted human reproduction who identify as queer.

The Right to Parent Continued; Some Legal Implications

The dominant social construction of what a status-quo family is silences and delegitimizes alternative forms of family configuration. For example, the non-biological parent or social mother of a lesbian-led family "is frequently not only questioned but also misunderstood and ignored" (McManus, Hunter & Renn, 2006, p. 16). The unique challenges lesbian social mothers face also appear in the giant legal barriers of establishing custody. Only after childbirth can the social parent use the legal system to complete the process of second-parent adoption in order to be recognized legally as a parent. "Women's choices regarding donors are tied to histories, perspectives on genetics, and the politics of recognition by society" (Luce, 2004, p. 51). Judicial and societal preference to award the genetic relationship of sperm donor over the social mother is observed as a denial of rights. The court system operates as heterosexist and may not interpret the desires of lesbian parents as being in the best interest of the child. This social reality makes many women feel it necessary to establish a contract with their donor before insemination resulting in costly legal fees. Furthermore, fertility and custody issues for female-to-male transsexuals with a wish to conceive "experience even more discrimination than do lesbian couples" (Baetens, Camus & Devroey, 2003, p. 285).

The custody rights for gay men who are not biologically connected can be just as precarious. "In Ontario, for example, the *Children's Law Reform Act* (CLRA) specifies that the 'best interests of the child shall be the determining factor" (Arnup, 1999, p. 6) during a custody ruling. The "best interests" criteria is not only steeped in historical homophobia and transphobia,

but is left up to judicial discretion (Arnup, 1999), making queer, gay and trans parents vulnerable to social assumptions rather than relying on legislative protection. "Studies of the development of children with lesbian parents date back to the 1970's when lesbian women began to fight for custody of their children when they divorced. At that time, lesbian mothers were losing custody solely on the basis of their sexual orientation" (Golombok, Perry, Burston, Murray, Mooney-Somers, Stevens & Golding, 2003, p. 20). Furthermore, Canada's focus on the rights of the child eclipses the developing discourse concerning the right to parent. "[T]he emergence of values emphasizing personal freedom and fulfillment, and the decreased social stigma attached to non-marital child-rearing" (Segal-Engelchin, Erera & Cwikel, 2005, p. 86) highlights a relevancy to establish this perspective within a legal context.

Until recently, few fathers were non-biological. "Many were divorced or separated... They wanted to affirm their sexuality *and* their paternity" (Miller, 2001, p. 227). Consequently, the identity of a gay male parent largely formed from previous heterosexual coupling. With a slowly evolving social landscape, gay couples are now pursuing their rights to parent. For these men, adoption and fostering are the more popular and affordable options to parenting. Adoption has its own history and trends.[21] "Traditional adoption attempted to equal the genetic birth experience...However, the emerging view holds that adoption is a unique, life-long experience not to be confused with genetic parenting" (Sullivan & Baques, 1999, pp. 85-6). It can take years for a gay couple to become parents (FIRA, e-bulletin). "Same-sex adoption remains contentious for many agencies and family practitioners (Mialle & March, 2005, p. 84). Many citizens and adoption agencies remain intolerant to homosexuality. "The greatest support for who should be allowed to adopt was shown to be married heterosexual couples, the ideal from a

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[21] This study does not go into great detail regarding the politics of adoption. For more information on this topic, specifically on gay male led families who adopt children in Canada, please visit www.fira.uoguelph.ca/, volume 1, number 3.

social work context" (Mialle & March, 2005, p. 90). Heterosexism, in its stand to privilege straight, white, middle-class, married couples, overshadows the gay parent as a feasible option. Aside from Toronto's *Daddy, Papa and Me* offered at The 519, a monthly queer-positive drop-in for fathers and their children, there is a distinct lack of services for gay, bisexual and queer fathers where father involvement in general is an underrepresented topic. However, committed gay relationships, and particularly gay married couples, stand a more likely chance to be approved as parents. This favoritism of family structure once again reinforces the heteronormative model of family and creates the likelihood of homonormativity.

The history of donor insemination, egg donation and embryo donation may be short, but gay, bisexual and queer fathers face a long history of commonly held negative stereotypes. Gay dads are less visible than other queer family configurations that feature a mother. There is less research, services or attention given to gay men who decide to parent. The particular barriers each man or family can face will be distinctive to their own political and/or economic status, yet systemic and social trans- and homophobia disadvantages all gay, bisexual and queer individuals. Today however, more gay men are taking part in having children after establishing their identities as gay men (Patterson & Chan, 1999). The typical socialization of men does not encourage their role as nurturers, and the common association of gay men as sexually preoccupied, or the erroneous assumption that gay men are pedophilic, does not fare in their favour in the context of child rearing. The active and rampant heterosexism and homophobia has produced rather large barriers for gay men to parent. In Toronto, unlike other parts of Canada, there are several groups instituted exclusively for gay fathers. Established in 1978, there is Gay Fathers of Toronto (GFT)[22], the father visibility group[23] created in 2006 in collaboration with

FIRA "to increase the visibility of bay/bi/queer fathers and prospective fathers, and our entitlement to parent" (Pride & Joy, 2008, p. 16), and the programs designed for gay dads in the LGBTQ Parenting Connection[24] operating out of The 519 Community Centre as well as the Sherbourne Health Centre. These services are new to the area of gay male parenthood.

The burgeoning possibility for transgendered and transsexual individuals to conceive and carry children now exists. For some, this could mean their transgenderism is a self-identification and there are no biological obstacles to overcome. For others, it could mean they have completed their transition, could be post-operative with a double mastectomy, and would have to cease their hormone treatment in order to conceive. Or, trans individuals with female partners could wish for a child. In any scenario, the social climate for accepting a trans perinatal experience will be loaded with transphobia. "Because transsexualism is socially not accepted and is still considered to be a psychiatric condition" (Baetens, 2003, p. 284-285) the obstructions trans individuals bear in their right to parent are triple-fold. Often, the trans individual is countering homophobia, transphobia and ableism. Functioning out of The 519, a pilot course called Trans Fathers 2B established in 2007. This is a "12-session course for trans men and trans masculine individuals considering parenting. This course explores the practical, emotional, social, and legal issues relevant to trans men and their loved ones considering parenthood" (The 519, webpage).[25] This is a revolutionary new endeavor on a global scale.

There has been recent controversy as to whether gender identity disorder of children (GIDC) should even appear in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM). Only appearing in 1980, GIDC was criticized as a replacement of homosexuality from the DSM after it was removed in 1973. (Zucker & Spitzer, 2005). "While the decision to remove "homosexuality"

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[22] Gay Fathers of Toronto website: http://www.gayfathers-toronto.com.
[23] For more information on this project visit: www.lgbtqparentingconnection.ca and/or www.fira.ca.

[24] Website to be launched soon.
[25] http: //www.the519.org/programs/Queer_Parenting/Trans%20Fathers%202B%20poster%20winter%2008.pdf

from *DSM-III* was a highly polemicized and public one, accomplished only under intense pressure from gay activists outside the profession, the addition to the *DSM-III* of "gender identity disorder of childhood" appears to have attracted no outside attention at all-or even to have been perceived as part of the same conceptual shift" (Sedgwick, 2004, p. 141). Considering homosexuality has been classified as a disorder and then removed, there is an argument that these conditions in the DSM are heteronormative in scope and problematizes identity attributes as qualifiable within science. It begs to be queered and questioned; what is the DSM's grading rubric that determines when an uncommon behaviour becomes pathological? Who, within the American Psychological Association, determines the rubric? The categorical axis inherent to psychological logic remains at odds with the queer and trans theory's belief that identity is self-governable and identifiable. The pathology that classifies gender "dysphoria" does not take into account gender as a fluctuating and diverse attribute. In this light, refusing parenting rights to trans individuals on the basis of psychological instability is a human rights infraction.

Queer Families Reprise

Reconsidering family is occurring on a continuum whether it is spoken about or not. "The danger of arguing for greater freedom in private life is that unless the social inequalities that restrict choice for many are broken down, the available options will remain highly restricted. For those concerned with meaningfully increasing freedom, this poses a critical question: If we wish to enhance freedom in personal life, how can we develop a narrative of family and private life that recognizes and confronts the ways by which social inequalities constrain freedom for many?" (Lehr, 1999, pp. 132-3). Despite individual self-identifications, LGBTTQ families are residing within profound social inequalities. Heterosexism and dominant cultural values largely dictate current epistemological conditions. Ameliorating the social and legislative conditions so

LGBTTQ families can more easily self regulate their conduct and configuration choices are the first issue. The second issue is to problematize power structures and repeatedly queer discourses around personal rights and freedoms. A starting point is to acquire more information gathered from a queer narrative, where queer discourse can be a voice inserted into mainstream social reality. This will prompt academic, medical and sociological applications and oblige them to take the queer family seriously. The urgency has arrived; the "gayby boom" will see a generation of children raised in queer families, a new population frontier to be contended with. Working towards a new family narrative with greater freedom within personal family life, and the ways in which conception is managed, are fundamental motives to queer family identity. Engaging in the politics of identity and difference is equally as significant.

Post-conception: The Development of Queer Children

> These dramas of identification and disidentification point to how queer the child is in our culture- and not just the child who dares to utter its queer desires and thus to make itself the unwanted child everyone is afraid to love, but any child insofar as it is purported to be innocent (Ohi, 2004, p. 83).

What happens after the successful completion of carrying a fetus to term? Most services and programs devoted to early childhood life operate from a heteronormative theoretical framework. The insidious daily and systematic normalizations of gender, sex and sexuality mutually strengthens the oppressive force of power domination by producing expectations classified by heteronormative discourse. Notions of childhood, childhood development and early childhood services and education can be queered in order to disrupt this production. Queer and trans theories suggests that identity be understood as unstable; in this respect, as children develop it becomes of premium importance to not interfere with their fluctuating sense of selves during maturation. Exploration in children occurs self-consciously, however when we insinuate heteronormative practice into their fabric, their selves are left particularly vulnerable to

domination. The earlier children are subjected to heterocentric conditioning, the more internalized its teachings become. The consequences are numerous; the dominant ideology may inhibit and suppress the realization of authentic divergent forms of expression, gender, sex and sexuality differences may be diagnosed as pathological, the presence of alternative identity traits become sparse and forbidden, feelings of isolation and alienation can be frequent and intense, the barriers to personal fulfillment may become too extreme to overcome, the methods of unlearning dominant discourse may be painful in young person's personal evolution, as well as other unimagined or unnamed outcomes. Developmental norms such as ages and stages criterion and behavioural checklists are some of the many ways teacher and psychological pedagogy reinforce the normalization of children.

Childhood Sex and Sexuality

Normalizing certain favored characteristics of children reoccur constantly. The preoccupation of children as innocent is a common example where the making of innocence/good pits experienced/perverse as its binary opposite. Every time children are perceived as innocent, the heterosexist use of binaries simultaneously fashions the erotic in relation. "It is not merely that imagining innocence violated is a salaciously enjoyable undertaking in itself; more important, the obliterative operation of naming innocence performs a violation analogous to the imagined illegality" (Ohi, 2004, p. 83). The presence of innocence casts an imaginable illicit as its partner. Both the identification of children as innocent and the dis-identification of children as innocent within a heteronormative presumption reinforce the emergence of corruption. The pretense that the vulnerability of children can be violated gives leverage to the eroticization of inexperience.

The explicit and implicit immersion of heterosexuality in early childhood settings makes it redundant for service providers to label or recognize it as a form of sexuality. What is not often recognized is that this immersion normalizes heterosexuality and thus produces a heteronormative environment. "The presumption that children are asexual, 'too young' and 'innocent' to understand sexuality is contradicted by the fact that the construction of heterosexuality and heterosexual desire is an integral part of children's everyday experiences, including their early education; for example children's literature widely used in early childhood education constantly reinforces a heterosexual narrative" (Robinson, 2005, p. 24). Examples such as Disney's princesses are as abundant as they are culturally embedded. The point has become a resounding theme in many queer theorists' analyses. The construction of the child as naïve, in need of protection from dangers that do not constitute the generic homogenous norm is perpetuated here. This includes examples of homosexuality, while heterosexuality is repeatedly represented.

The simplistic aversion of the Victorian notion that sex is perverse is puritan residue that casts heterosexuality as the regime of natural orientation. "It is largely through the powerful intersection of these discourses and their reinforcement through psychological discourses of child development that sexuality is constructed as both irrelevant to children's lives and a 'taboo' subject in their education" (Robinson, 2005, p. 21). Normative development milestones, determined by psychology, consider an interest in sex purely anatomical and gender as fixed. This influential analysis does not take identity as self-governable or varied orientations into account, nor does it allow early childhood contexts to embrace children's intuitive development free from judgment. If a child later identifies as gay or trans the only two options left for this individual is to continue in their repression of themselves or assertively "come out" to the world

in which they inhabit. Affirming curiosity or exploration as unfixed and compelling sites of self-discovery is generally not endorsed.

Traditionally, many early childhood educators have believed that children should be sheltered from the discourse of sex and sexuality; however children's exposure to sex and sexuality cannot be and is not obscured. What remains thoroughly under examined by early childhood pedagogy is how there is a reiteration of the heteronormalization process and its effects on children. This incongruity and silence of diversity is rarely perceived or voiced by dominant ideology, and has become a site of concern for queer thinkers. On a heteronormative binary axis where adults are considered educated, straight and independent, and children are perceived innocent, queer and dependent, common fears are that it "casts children as potential victims, and opens the possibility for children to be recruited to homosexuality, the so-called 'gay agenda'" (DePalma & Atkinson, 2006, p. 340). Not to mention there "are huge blank spaces to be left in what purports to be a developmental account of proto-gay children" (Sedgwick, 2004, p. 144). The protection of divergent identities most early childhood educators are determined to conceal are unsuccessful and instead act as perpetrators of shame, stigma and judgment, and further discredits and undermines the diversity of family forms from which children come. "Strangely enough, the disavowal of homosexuality as unthinkable does certainly not mean that it is never thought about…the cultural pervasiveness of the prohibition on homosexual love" (Rasmussen, 2006, p. 474-476) is revealed in the silence of its mention. What will and what will not be administered as relevant issues are part of the hegemonic policies of education and psychology. Distorted by the incompleteness of diverse representation, homosexuality or transgendered experiences are thus hidden and recognized as perverted and unnatural. "As a result, the school curriculum, by serving as a repressive force, is instrumental in

the incomplete construction of self, identity, and difference" (Erevelles, 2005, p. 423). The lack of citizenship children face when there are a lack of visible differences may outcome as internalized homo/transphobia. If identity is recognized as varying, it undermines the glorified and static yardsticks of heteronormative measurements, and leaves a child open to unique expression that can sway from one identity into another. Otherwise, a hatred of self begins and the production of 'other' is perpetuated.

The Unacknowledged and it's Effects

What is not openly recognized by heteronormativity is the bias within the perspective that selectively defines normal as straight male/masculine and straight female/feminine groupings. Exposing children to sex, gender and sexuality that is not classified as biologically determined, and/or unmatched sex and gender, and/or homosexual orientation is considered an immersion into overtly sexualized situations. What dominant culture has not acknowledged is that biological sex, a gender-sex match and heterosexuality *are* homogenous and repetitive exposures to normalized sexualized scenarios. The absence of diverse representation deepens the enhancement of the pervasive dominant ideal. "In other words, conceptualizing the self using binary identities (i.e., male/female; masculine/feminine; able/disabled; straight/gay, etc.) supports hierarchical, patriarchal, and heteronormative ideologies that place subjects in fixed collective categories that exclude minoritized others in order to maintain its privileged status as a majoritized binary" (Ruffolo, 2007, p. 257). What we do not specifically teach may be as powerful as what we do teach.

The historical layering of silence is part of a heteronormative operation. Disruption only occurs when an alternate reality is named which counters the dominant or singular definition of normal. "[W]e find that our research is affected by the layers of silence we encounter

everywhere regarding sexualities and sexualities equality…our own involvement with these silences and subterfuges contribute to the discourses of heteronormativity and homophobia that maintain the 'wounded identities' of the non-heterosexual as the marginalized Other" (Atkinson & DePalma, 2008, p. 26). Homosexuality is too often sexualized and considered an inappropriate or dangerous topic for early childhood, academic and professional contexts. Homosexuality appears excessive when it is out of hiding as it provides a startling contrast to heteronormative construction. Silence will continue to "perpetuate a therapeutic discourse that reinforces the vulnerability of the victim and presents a diminished self" (Atkinson & Depalma, 2008, p. 28). In this equation, the inevitable attrition of innocence each child endures could have negative effects. Consequently, the techniques of power are at work through a child's body. The more open research can become in this area, the more likely early childhood spaces will be inclusive and accepting of gender or sexual differences in children or their families.

Many early childhood educators take their psychological and developmental cues from psychologists. The psychological stages of gender development teach us that by the second stage, children "are more likely to experiment with cross-gendered play to help them understand that gender is constant" (Hamlett & Fannin, 2006, p. 3). If the heteronormative bias is as ingrained into psychology as this reference suggests, there is a detrimental partiality in urgent need of counterbalance. The reinforcing layers of oppression are playing out. "The disciplinary practices that in/form subjects- for example, hierarchical observations, normalizing judgments… administer power over the subject as well as create and maintain a continuous state of dependency on these disciplinary practices" (Ruffolo, 2007, p. 259). Early childhood educators who are purposefully seeking inclusive practice may not even be aware of the multiple inhibitors of homosexuality and transgenderism. Queer and trans theories, where "the self lacks any stable

centre" (Erevelles, 2005, p. 426), are useful frameworks in the unfolding of heteronormative hegemony. According to this interpretation, fixing sex, gender and sexuality contradicts an individual's freedom to vacillate among their many identities. A location in the construction of incoherent centres allows all forms of expression to flourish.

Inclusion

The term inclusion refers to a specific educational model that strives for the coexistence of differences without stigmatization. True inclusion in the educational system could foster an authentic recognition of difference. Inclusion values difference as natural to the sociology of childhood. "Inclusion…is about a child's right to belong to her/his local mainstream school, to be valued for who s/he is and to be provided with all support s/he needs to thrive…It is a continuing process involving a major change in school ethos and is about building a school community that accepts and values difference" (Rieser, 2006, p. 168). Philosophically, these tenets of inclusion support the queer theorist's disruption of normal and endorse the engagement between all children. The quest for authentic and progressive inclusion requires a shift in attitude towards children with differences in order for it to transform school's current structure. What requires further queering however, are the normalized spaces in which inclusion takes place. If inclusion can agree with a queered perspective where it is not the assimilation of difference subsumed into the mainstream that is sought after, but rather a respectful intermingling between individuals, the politics of identity mingle with the politics of difference and stimulates new discourse.

An understanding of the emergent field of disability studies where there is an appeal to reform the pathologization of difference as deficiency, beside queer theory's basis of identity as constructed and multiple, expands the politics of identity and difference. Early childhood

settings are typically the sites where the identification of difference occurs. It is primarily from these locations that children are flagged for their uniqueness and sent to psychological settings for assessments prior to the likelihood of receiving a diagnosis. "Thousands of American families are dealing with recommendations from teachers to have their children assessed…cultural norms privilege medical and school discourse, so families must learn to negotiate responses to labels" (Navarro & Danforth, 2004, p. 111). A label, based on clinical and categorical praxis, refuses to acknowledge itself as an incomplete representation of an individual. Hence, heteronormativity is implicit in the psychological model.

Personal narratives and the presence of new citations can reconstitute new legitimate subjects. Finding ways to uncover the voices of the marginalized is long overdue. "This disrupts the usual binary by which the silent partner is automatically characterized by hetero-masculinity" (Atkinson & DePalma, 2008, p. 30). The presence of varied experiences reveals alternatives to the norm. Children with physical and/or mental disabilities are another example of visible difference. The power of the narrative approach can create a social repositioning of people with an intellectual disability or other displays of difference. One way for educators and practitioners to adjust their attitudes is to access a disabled child's narrative voice and depathologize labels by seeing a person with multiple identifiers. "The stories of people's capabilities that we draw on run counter to a dominant cultural story of lack associated with disability" (Fullagar & Owler, 1998, p. 441). How identity is produced through pathology and the exclusion from normality can be counterbalanced with personal, anecdotal and subjective stories which endow an internal voice. Disability rights activists are working to ameliorate the social structure of how differently abled bodies can coexist outside of the matrix of oppression. Rather than being victims, or characterized as passive to the binary of productive citizenship, disability rights calls for an

inclusive approach where difference is not interpreted as deficiency. This process runs parallel to the destruction of heteronormative of gender and sex dominance. However, the principles of inclusion in early childhood education, much like the disability rights advocacy for social inclusion, should not be mistaken for a haphazard amalgamation of distinctive differences. "It isn't only oppression that lives in my body, our bodies. The many experiences of who we are, of our identities also live there" (Clare, 2001, p. 362). It is the responsibility of each individual to not discriminate against "irrevocably different" (Clare, 2001, p. 363) bodies. This will strategically reduce oppression towards difference.

Curriculum and Teaching Practices in Early Childhood Settings

What are some possible reformations an early childhood setting can do to practice true inclusivity? Having books, games and crafts available that demonstrates mixed configurations of identities are purely the beginning of setting up strategies of inclusion. Having visual symbols present in the environment that acknowledge differences need to be backed up with theoretical competency. Encourage children and staff to get in touch "with the multiple repressed sites located in its unconscious so as to regenerate into multi-cultural, multi-classed, and multi-gendered self" (Erevelles, 2005, page 426). Centre policies can embody a philosophical shift towards the encouragement and acceptance of diversity in all forms. Adopting such thoughtful pursuits precedes any and/or all practical examples of classroom conduct. In this light, the distinct environmental disturbances are decentralized to each unique site while the true progress exists internally within each practitioner and student. These efforts will undermine the psychological and educational concepts of normality. These efforts let everyone win by eradicating the oppression of categorical praxis. In a queer equation there may be discomfort

when there is no standard to measure an average against; however, it is within a disruption that learning occurs.

"A recognition that another world can exist in which an incredible variety of bodies and minds are valued and identities are shaped, where crips and queers have effectively (because repeatedly) displaced the able-bodied/disabled binary" (McRuer & Wilkerson, 2003, p. 14). The world described is a world that distinguishes human nature as multi-faceted, and the narrow margin of normal is obliterated. If inclusion in early childhood contexts represents inclusion as it was intended, the earliest imprints on a child will be of acceptance. The implications of an individual evolving with a positive self-esteem will more likely be successful in different life expectations, and less likely to experience social isolation. Queering heteronormativity and its repercussions of how identity is produced is vital to the healthy development of children who may experience difference and their "typically" developed peers. Welcoming the narrative voice of the marginalized children is an effective strategy in bringing these children into an inclusive circle of care.

ECEC (early childhood education and care) settings are systems that reflect dominant ideologies and politics. The historical resistance to addressing disability, diversity, multiculturalism and sexual diversity has a long way to catch up regarding these issues being represented and addressed in ECEC policies, curriculum, literature, music, art, and teacher pedagogy. Early learning environments have been known to maintain stereotypical views of difference. "It is critical to remember that there are also thousands of young people in the school system who are living in LGBTQ families who walk into schools everyday where their families are not recognized or acknowledged, where they do not see themselves reflected in books, in posters, in stories, in films, in the curriculum generally, in the language that is used or in the

assumptions that are made about what families look like" (Epstein, 2008, p 1). While the insidious and obvious lack of diverse representation is crippling to everyone, queer thinking asks us to remember that the crux intrinsic to a meaningful shift of power delegation is to stop observing difference as a threat. "The presiding asymmetry of value assignment between hetero and homo goes unchallenged everywhere" (Sedgwick, 2004, p. 145). Heteronormativity in ECEC is so embedded in pedagogy and policy that most practitioners are unaware of its present unless specifically trained. Thus, the importance of self governance within each individual family resource site or daycare is imperative in the deconstruction of dominant thinking. Active sex and sexuality discourse belongs in ECE pedagogy. This mental and practical shift can accelerate seeing difference as different, not wrong.

Difference is a location of learning and evolution through the process of questioning. What about the child who does later in life identify as trans, gay or queer? Why is the queer child feared as a site of intelligibility? Is the child queer because the child grew up in a queer context and/or didn't receive the developmental role-modeling that the psychology has determined as healthy and correct? When will Freudian assumptions of normative gender and sexuality be re-evaluated by the psychological body?[26] Is the child a queer child because societal values constrain multiple citizenships and make it necessary to "come out" as different when the norm doesn't embody a broad range of possibilities? Or is the queer child reprehensible because "the child figures in the debate as a dense site for the transfer and reproduction of culture, where "culture" carries with it implicit norms of racial purity and domination"? (Butler, 2002, p. 22). Perhaps the queer child is regarded as an unfortunate symbol of radicalizing future potentials?

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[26] There is a large discourse surrounding the psychological development determined by Freud and the field of psychiatry that deciphers the child as a "coherent social subject who has a *sexuality* and a *gender*" (Blevins, 2005, p. 70). Please refer to *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* and his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality.*

Maybe the child who is queer demonstrates a fluctuating future that to contend with requires a total upheaval of dominant family values? What is the direction this generation of the "gayby boom" will take? Kinship or community will certainly take on new appearances.

The Anti-Conclusion

Post-queer Theory

Queer theory has been explained as a framework that disturbs dominant cultural thinking. While queer theory has been influenced by the post-structuralist construction of subjectivity as malleable to the structures of power, trans theorists have been busy reconnecting an ontological meaning with the self. Disability studies also provide a valuable critique of the dominant culture of power and their strategies implemented to disenfranchise differently abled minds and bodies. The culmination of these theoretical tools facilitates a new brandishing of collective vision that encapsulates the necessary components to begin a new movement of a post-queer premise. In this light, post-queer theory is a discipline that utilizes the insights from the combined agenda to arrive at a new epistemology. Furthermore, the idea of post-queer corrupts more than the focused disruption of heteronormative practice, and its application is farther reaching. Post-queer theory has the potential to integrate the politics of difference into the politics of identity. ""Queer" is beginning to become an unusable term; it has the potential to be centripetal or stabilizing the space it marks, or centrifugal, that is destabilizing the spaces it flags (as in to pervert, torsion, make strange)" (Noble, 2006, p. 9). With the imaginability of a homonormative potential, post-queer theory is a recommitment of destabilizing spaces and stretching difference to encompass an even broader domain of expressions. Disrupting the standardized practice of heteronormative dynamics, construing the politics of identity and difference where identifications are self-governable and decentralizing categorical labeling by empowering

individuals to personally narrate their own evolving sense of selves, each contribute to a post-queer political and personal location.

On a purely queer theoretical ground, it almost feels like an oxymoron to formulate queer policy. The image of queer as "the endlessly mutating token of non-assimilation" (Sullivan, 2003, p. 48) could and should never become sedentary in any position, yet an agreement of how to unpack power and identity can flourish in and of itself. Post-queer rhetoric could allow for this notion of agreed disagreement, whereby queer policy development is like a recognizable map illustrated for unrecognizable and constantly shifting terrain. While queer theory will continue in its bottom-up strategic pursuits to prod Canadian policy to do better at providing for all its citizens, thus minimalizing and eventually eradicating marginalization, subjugation and stigmatization, post-queer theorists can begin to evolve their own policy production from the top-down in a decentralized fashion. Philosophically post-queer concepts can be a widely adopted set of principles; however the particulars within policy production can be based on the recommendations of individual community and social agencies. Each provider would have the discretion to address the needs of their specific users. Additionally, in this equation what appears as cemented within the process of printing and publishing, would be understood by its creators and consumers that any document is only ever in a working form. The product is in a sense as fluid as the environment it inhabits. Of course some circumstances require a bottom-line response, usually to an act of violence or disrespect. Such inevitable consequences can be outlined by the users of the document that best suits the milieu.

Recommendations

Countering heteronormative hegemony may result in the creation of post-queer policy. The practical application of such endeavors might witness the emergence of an anti-oppressive

and socially inclusive mandate[27] that realigns power structures to authentically be accountable for marginalized populations with the specific political intention to continuously reinvent its position based on the changing needs of broader social approval. In the current Canadian social climate, this requires Census Canada to adapt its definition of family, gender identity disorder be removed from the DSM, the AHRA to make specific amendments that contextualizes queer kinships, and the ECEC industry to reconstitute their pedagogic approach both in theory and practice.

It has been argued that Canada's policies simply do not take into account the needs of LGBTTQ families and parents. The Statistics Canada's Census family is incomplete in its classification. AHRA requires substantial amendments in its constitution in order to adequately address the specific needs of the LGBTTQ community. Although both legislations have modified their declarations to include the mention of same-sex partnership in our Canadian profile, traditional family values continue to dominate over the marginalized. Social policies and social norms are inextricably intertwined making it Canada's duty to provide leadership in breaking down the barriers for all family types. The diversity of family and parent identity in Canada is slowly being destabilized by the exposure and existence of queer configurations. At present, the AHRA does not yet match the needs of LGBTTQ families, despite the rise in the number of LGBTTQ families who employ fertility services.

As one of the features of the AHRA, the Act created the Assisted Human Reproduction Agency of Canada, "established as a corporate body that may exercise powers and perform duties" (House of Commons, 2004, p. 13). The board of directors in the agency are appointed, and collectively the members report to the Minister of Health on matters regarding assisted human reproduction technologies (House of Commons, 2004). Although the board may, by by-

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[27] Please refer to The 519's website for an example of an anti-oppressive philosophy: http://www.the519.org.

law, "establish advisory panels to examine, report on and make recommendations with respect to any issue" (House of Commons, 2004, p.15), the transparency of the agency's underlying assumptions, are not made known to the public. I would strongly recommend that a professional with an expertise in the area of LGBTTQ issues regarding assisted human reproduction be appointed to the Agency's board of directors, or the creation of an official advisory panel specifically devoted to such issues, take effect.

Toronto is a hub for LGBTTQ advocacy within Canada. Through the collaborative efforts of doctors and social workers, ten recommendations were created for improving the provision of assisted reproductive technology services for lesbian and bisexual women, based on their extensive research using qualitative focus groups (Ross, Steele & Epstein, 2006). The following is a summary of their recommendations:

1. Involve all parties desired by patients, including partners, known sperm donors, and co-parents.
2. Provide accessible fertility services for known sperm donors, including gay men.
3. Expand the selection of donor semen, particularly with respect to donors of diverse ethno-cultural origins and open-identity donors.
4. Minimize costs and services and communicate a consistent fee structure.
5. Provide opportunities for women to make informed choices about interventions consistent with their known or presumed fertility.
6. Offer infertility support that is specific to lesbian and bisexual women (eg., specialized groups) or is provided by individuals who are knowledgeable about issues relevant to lesbian and bisexual women.
7. Provide cues that the service is lesbian and bisexual positive.
8. Strive for a unified standard of care across geographic regions, and facilitate access for women living outside of major urban centres.
9. Where feasible, offer specialized services or services in partnership with the lesbian and gay community.
10. Help lesbian and bisexual women to connect with other relevant services and support systems. (Ross, Steele & Epstein, 2006, p. 736).

These recommendations are practical and employable for our near future. The Sherbourne Health Centre and The 519 Community Centre in Toronto are working together to address the

needs of LGBTTQ-led families in the greater Toronto area and beyond by promoting these ideas as well as LGBTTQ cultural competency training sessions for fertility clinics.

While these ten recommendations are vital to improving the quality of reproductive services for LGBTTQ individuals, queering the nuances associated with fertility is another kind of endeavor. Making a commitment to reform any theoretical justifications that maintain overt or hidden marginalized populations is a task for policy makers as well as practitioners. The country of Canada is responsible for its citizens, and the AHRA should be a reflection of this commitment to the entire spectrum of its users. The AHRA, as well as the clinics that employ AHRA's standards, should be thinking about these issues. The concepts of family, kinship and community are notions not only applicable to queering techniques, but identified as needing disruption from an inclusive perspective.

The AHRA isn't the only legislation that demands examination. The profound stigmatization LGBTTQ people have faced by mainstream society as a whole has rendered this group especially vulnerable to discrimination. "Both the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and provincial human rights legislation containing specific reference to sexual orientation might be helpful in ensuring the right of access" (Arnup, 1994, p. 107). Since bill C-392 was introduced in 2005, the Canadian Human Rights Act now includes "gender identity" and "gender expression" as protected grounds of discrimination (http://www.egale.ca/index.asp?lang=E&menu=34&item=1256). As legislature slowly plods forward in its protection over minoritized groups, it is now the obligation of health and social services to provide specialized services for LGBTTQ partners and for LGBTTQ families to have children free from discrimination or harassment.

What happens to children and their families when they engage with the system of early childhood care and settings? Processes of institutionalization take effect. The provision of equity would uphold a theoretical awareness into the politics of identity and difference. The first wave of instituting strategic change is for ECECs to locate their strength in addressing any marginalized group and apply this fortitude to broaden the circle of acceptance to other minority populations. As teachers set the tone for learning environments, it is possible to foster an atmosphere where children and adults alike learn to respect others despite differences. Regardless of personal beliefs on sexual orientation or queer family configurations, it is the right of each child and family accessing resources and services from ECECs to be treated respectfully. For example, teachers can:

1. Remove assumptions that define parents as a mother and a father, for example, replace mother/father titles on administrative forms with: parent, caregiver or guardian. Modify all administrative classification (intake forms, registration forms, all parent permission forms including field trip form, video/photography release forms) systems with inclusive language.
2. Always intervene. Address homophobia, heterosexism and transphobia when it happens.
3. Include depictions of LGBTTQ families within program policies and practices. This can be done by consulting with LGBTTQ parents (even ones that may not be attending to gain further insight) for ideas around inclusive language, supportive pedagogical approaches for student learning, and safe space. For centers not immediately serving LGBTTQ families, having policy that addresses LGBTTQ families, indicates openness for future families that may access services.
4. Have comprehensive literature and books in libraries and classrooms that reflect all types of families and members of the LGBTTQ community that have contributed to society, politics and art.
5. Use visual representation to reveal inclusive practice, such as safe space stickers, pride colours and posters. This is a clear way ECECs can designate their stance to sexual diversity. Representing the families that visit the centre, by posting their family photographs on a family board, is yet another way to show respect and support for all families and dynamics.
6. Use gender neutral terms whenever possible. Even mother's and father's day could be renamed parent, family or caregiver day.
7. Help LGBTTQ individuals to connect with other relevant services and support systems. This can be done by collaborating with centres such as The 519 Community Centre, who have comprehensive policies and resources already in place. Through collaboration and

partnership with the LGBTTQ community, centres can be more equipped to provide specialized services.

8. Have staff trained in anti-bias education in order to integrate its principles. Services such as Planned Parenthood of Toronto[28], offer specialized training for service providers on the needs of the LGBTTQ population.
9. Integrate diverse family and cultural background in the program curriculum. Avoid heterosexism in your activities.
10. Never out a student with LGBTTQ parents.
11. Be involved. Attend gay-straight alliance meetings if available to show your support. If not, create a group. (Joanmohamed, 2006; Metro Association of Family Resource Programs, 2007).

These recommendations are a few liberationist ideas to disturb normative ECEC environments and indicate an openness to difference where there is an active dialogue within the discourse of gender, sex and sexuality. However, a post-queer application of the politics of identity and difference could grant an even more expansive disruption to status quo qualifiers. Discrimination exists despite the irrevocable or temporarily transgressive material or internal manifestations of difference. Conceptualizing the big-picture of post-queer politics should not be forgotten. The recommendations act as an opportunity for discussion, however teacher pedagogy necessitates an upheaval of broader assumptions. For example, consciously minimizing relationships of binary productions such as the abled/disabled paradigm cultivates coexistence over assimilation or intolerance. Therefore, the primary change required consists of a change in thinking before action. The politics of identity suggest a personal and purposeful engagement with self whereby the product that emerges from these philosophical principles results in the inclusion of all expressions of difference. If a post-queer theoretical framework was implemented prior and concurrent with the operation of a classroom, many of the above recommendations would be irrelevant. Those recommendations are useful only to the demonstrations of heteronormative curriculum and environments.

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[28] Please refer to their website for more information: www.ppt.on.ca.

Post-structural, queer, trans and post-queer theory can work in tandem to not only improve the quality of life for subjugated individuals, but also of the majoritized whole. Homogenous environments inhibit an evolving and tangible awareness that undoubtedly benefits from diverse perspectives. "Within each of the numerous forms of oppression, members of the target group (sometimes called "minority") are oppressed while on some level members of the dominant or agent group are hurt. Although the effects of oppression differ qualitatively for specific target and agent groups, in the end everyone looses" (Blumenfeld, 2000, page 268). As Canada prides itself on being a multi-cultural mosaic, it seems plausible that this model can accommodate a changing vision of kinship, family and community.

In one of my many inspiring conversation with Chris Veldhoven, whom I introduced earlier as my supervisor and the coordinator of the Queer Parenting Programmes at The 519, he described to me his goal to "work ourselves out of business". What would the world look like if this goal were reached? Intimacy would be authorized by the individuals it affected, prescribed gender, sex and sexuality would loosen into self-discernable identifications, queer families would become families, kinship would embrace endless configuration arrangements, communities would evolve into community, and difference would be an asset not a deficit. In this described social climate, working ourselves out of business and into a post-queer landscape would be thinkable.

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