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**Situated Heteronormativities:
Lesbian parenthood in contemporary Europe**

Abstract

Lesbians who choose motherhood in the context of an openly lesbian lifestyle are often invoked as a signifier of 'monstrous' postmodern kinship in homophobic rhetoric. Parenthood remains largely supported within clearly heteronormative parameters, as exclusionary policies regarding adoption and new reproductive technologies illustrate. However, a number of European countries have recently reconsidered the relational possibilities of lesbian and gay people and in some cases important legislative changes have been introduced. This paper outlines the social and political context of lesbian parenting within two distinctive European welfare states – Sweden and the Republic of Ireland. Interviews were carried out with 68 lesbian women in the two countries. An exploration of the experiences of lesbian parents in these contexts highlights the contested terrain of family politics. The different nature of exclusion within the two countries and lesbian parents' efforts to negotiate these contexts is illustrative of the ways in which heteronormative imaginaries inform the boundaries of formal kinship. Participants both subverted and reinscribed prevalent discourses of biological relatedness and familial relationships in the creation of their families. The paper examines the ways lesbian parents resist and reinvent familial discourses, highlighting particular codings of 'the family' within social policy and cultural frameworks.

Keywords: Lesbian, parenthood, Sweden, Ireland, sexual citizenship