Queer(y)ing The Family:

An Investigation into Theories of Family

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Abstract

Within society there are many varieties of family arrangements, however some New Zealand social policies overlook any groups which do not reflect the dominant family type. Certain aspects of social policy prevent their recognition, preventing the receipt of state welfare assistance. I argue provision exists for primarily one type of family group: the heterosexual nuclear family.

Beginning with the definition of the New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings (Statistics New Zealand, 1994), I examine the implications that such a narrow definition may hold for alternatives to the dominant heterosexual model.

This discussion develops into an examination of the construction of our social policy and the underlying ideologies which inform such policy. Specifically I examine some of the literature from a sociology of the family and provide an explanation for the disturbing fact that in New Zealand society it would appear that families which do not fit the definition outlined above are rendered invisible.

This research engages with theoretical material to examine both the construction and ideology of New Zealand social policy. Given the current trend towards greater choice for the individual, the important nature of such research is emphasised. I refer to the concern of the New Zealand Income Support Service that a woman who chooses to become pregnant outside of a couple relationship, and then requires income support assistance may be viewed as having become pregnant for financial gain. Alongside this, I examine the ideology of the deserving and undeserving poor which underpins much of New Zealand's welfare history and defines who is deemed worthy of assistance.

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There have been times during writing this thesis when I have felt that there was more than one personality inhabiting my body, especially towards the end when the pressure started to take its toll and often the words spouting from my mouth surprised me as much as the audience. So on behalf of all five of my personalities, thank you to everyone who has supported me through the last two years.

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Kia kaha, stand proud and I'll see you out there

Marti Hartley,

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Contents

Introduction

> *Feminists have called attention to the changing family. "The Family" is not an homogenous institution where the norm is a husband, wife and their biological children. The contemporary family may take a variety of forms, a fact which should be celebrated, not condemned* (Marjorie Cohen, 1989:13).

Where my family of origin come from in Lancashire, England, there is a saying *there's nowt as queer as folk* . Taking up this point, in this thesis I build upon that adage somewhat and suggest that there's nowt as queer as families.

In her book *Brave New Families* Judith Stacey (1991) suggests that the nature of families is changing. Stacey's book is American both in focus and content but I agree with her assertion that families are indeed changing. They cannot be considered as static institutions only comprising of two opposite sex, heterosexual parents any longer. Figures from 1991 (Statistics New Zealand, 1994) indicate that less than half of all families in children reflect this model; twenty five years ago these families accounted for two-thirds of all families in New Zealand.

Stacey (1991) argues that women are responsible for bringing the family into the contemporary postmodern age[1]. Without beginning a discussion of women's traditional responsibility for the family, or the ideology of domesticity at this juncture, women most certainly do have a role to play in changing the dynamics of the family. Stacey's postmodern families are, however, predominantly heterosexual. I wish to add the

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[1] See also Baber and Allen's (1992) discussion of how women are changing families.

variable of sexuality to the equation and contend in this thesis that queer[2] families are the definitive postmodern[3] family.

The specific focus of this research is a text based analysis of some of the theories regarding the construction of heterosexuality, and of how this construction is carried through into the social policy arena to reinforce heterosexuality as the dominant sexuality.

In the first chapter I examine the theories I employ in this research and the research methodology, specifically that it is largely a reflexive project. This discussion takes place in the context of debates about the place of feminism within academic research and I journey through some of the literature of these debates.

The focus of chapter two is an examination of some of the more traditional approaches to the study of the family. Beginning with the theories of Friedrich Engels (1884) about the origins of the family and the role that the family plays in a capitalist society, I draw upon some of the theories of a sociology of the family to argue that these traditional informants are implicated in the continuing marginalisation of families which can be said to be other than heterosexual. Particular attention is given to David Morgan's 1996 text *Family Connections,* which arguably inadequately acknowledges any family other than that of the

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2 The term queer appears throughout this thesis to refer to both queer as an umbrella term and also queer theory. Each will be explained in their own contexts.

3 I refer here to the challenging of and resistance to boundaries that postmodernism asserts, and also critiques of meta-narratives that may infer a superior position. Given postmodernism's resistance to an hierarchical approach to both theory and the world in general it is ironic to suggest that there is indeed anything definitive about postmodernism at all. I am not suggesting that queer families are either better or worse than other family forms, but rather that they present challenges to existing ideologies, and as such may be considered postmodern. See also Nancy Fraser (1995).

heterosexual nuclear unit. Primarily this discussion will highlight traditional understandings/definitions of family.

Theories of the family from a non-heterosexual foundation are explored in Chapter Three. Specifically Laura Benkov's (1994) work on how lesbian and gay parents have 'reinvented the family'. The challenges lesbian mothers present traditional assumptions about what family constitutes a family will be explored with reference to Peter Nardi's (1992) work on the creation of families within the gay and lesbian communities, and Kath Weston's (1991) book about how gays and lesbians may choose their families, both provide support for an examination of whom can be included as a family member. I consider the work of Maggie French (1992) " Loves, Sexualities, and Marriages: Strategies and Adjustments". French's material is an important consideration of parenting within a heterosexual marriage but with the twist of one or both parents having had homosexual relationships in the past. I expand upon French's (1992) sense that for her the homosexuality of one or both partners was not generally an overt feature of the couples that she researched. I contend that, by marrying, the lesbian or gay partner was assuming a heterosexual identity and thus living a heterosexual existence, in terms of the social perception of the relationship.

The queer families that my research will examine are not anticipated to be living within such an arrangement: their homosexuality is assumed to not have been *closeted.*[4] The changing nature of what family is and can be defined is integral to this

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4 The term closeted is used as a shorthand term for those who are not open about their sexuality, or their sexual relationships. This can be both internal in the sense that the have not come out to themselves and also external in that they still protect their sexual orientation, and often pass as heterosexual.

section. I conclude with a methodological discussion outlining the reflexive nature of this research and of my role within it.

Also I examine the issue of the choice to have or not have children. Support for this discussion will be drawn from Jean Renvoize (1985) author of *Going Solo: Single Mothers By Choice* and Belinda Trainor's 1988 article "Having or not having babies - what power do women have?" Renvoize (1985) writes of women who choose to become sole parents, and Trainor's (1988) work focused upon who has access to reproductive technology.

In Chapter Four I detail the creation of policy and also of how policy is co-opted to reinforce a dominant model, in this context, heterosexuality. I also present material gathered from visits to the New Zealand Income Support Service (N.Z.I.S.S.) and expand upon the anomalies I detected within aspects of their policies. The heteronormativity[5] of these polices will be analysed with reference to Carabine (1996) Richardson (1996) and Warner (1993).

In chapter five I provide some policy recommendations and discuss how these may be enacted. I provide the conclusions of this research and reassert my belief that the only families adequately catered for by welfare provisions in New Zealand are those seen to be representing the ideal of the nuclear heterosexual model.

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5 In using the term heteronormativity I draw upon Michael Warner's (1993) work, and refer to the practice of assuming a heterosexual orientation of those who may be otherwise. Warner (1993) contends that society has only one way to view a man and a woman together, that being as a heterosexual couple. Heterosexuality is taken as the normal form of sexuality, and thus a man and woman who reflect the majority image of couples, are read as a heterosexual couple. That they may both view themselves otherwise is seemingly cancelled out. Should a third party be present the possibility of a relationship between the two of the same-sex is seldom considered.

Chapter One

> *Models of research approaches do not mould or pre-determine the actualities of research, which is rather governed by the specificities of time, place, circumstances and persons and the situational responses of researchers within, and not just to, these; that is, the researcher is a part of these rather than merely a commentator on them* (Liz Stanley, 1991:3).

Introduction

The discussion in this chapter has three parts: the first deals with the actual research area I am concerned with, and my personal involvement with queer families. From a reflexive positioning I then move into methodological discussion and give details about the research approach, in primarily a theoretical engagement. I recount precisely why I have chosen not to research actual queer families but rather to consider the issues from a more text-based analysis. The final section of this chapter examines key theoretical informants and the perspectives I have used to conduct such research.

At this juncture my working definitions of 'family', 'queer family' and also of 'alternative' insemination are pertinent. All three concepts are frequently used within this research and are expanded upon within the context of their own discussions, in later chapters.

When I use the term 'queer families' I differentiate between commonly held assumptions about what constitutes the definition 'family'. In using 'queer families' I focus upon gay and lesbian families and also include arrangements in which one parent is openly homosexual. Several fictitious families appear in this thesis to demonstrate my argument that although some groups may

not reflect the dominant model of family they ought to be considered family nonetheless. In this sense then my concept of 'family' differs from that which is held by many policy makers[1]. In my definition and understanding the partner(s) of either one or both parents are included within the family, for example a family in which both parents have another partner and yet choose to parent the children together. I do not assume that to be a parent, and a good parent at that, that a coupling relationship needs to exist at any stage of the parenting arrangement. Throughout my childhood my mother was not involved in a coupled relationship which provided parenting support. My own early childhood experience of growing up in a family comprised of three adults and myself, and later having only my mother raising me; this first-hand experience provides the basis for my assumption.

In 1979 Marge Piercy wrote *Woman on the Edge of Time*, a utopian fiction which considers alternative parenting. Piercy (1979) writes of children being raised by up to three adults who are not their biological parents, but who have asked to parent a child, it is a requirement of the utopian community *Mattapoisett* that none of the parents be involved in a coupling relationship with each other as they believe this hampers the parent child relationship. Although I do not suggest that the two relationships impinge upon each other, in the form of queer parenting perhaps this scenario is no longer purely fictitious: children can have more

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[1] *In the 1991 census, a family was defined as either a couple (from a legal or de facto marriage) with or without a child (or children) who usually live in the same household. A household was defined as a group of people, whether related or not, who live together and who normally eat at least one meal together daily or at least share the same facilities. This definition of the family relies on two kinds of relationship; the presence of a couple (heterosexual only) and/or a parent-child relationship.* (Statistics New Zealand, 1994:2).

than one or two parents - indeed this has been the accepted case in blended heterosexual families for some time now.

I consider queer families and queer parenting to be comprised of more than sperm donation and surrogate mothering. Rather than only involvement with conception, as perhaps may be the case in some lesbian and gay families, this research is interested in arrangements in which both biological parents are involved in raising the child; - a co-parenting arrangement, as opposed to the comodification of wombs and sperm. Although not wishing to imply that families ought or need to have both a male and a female parent, I am specifically concerned with those arrangements which do. My own definition of family includes the person I share my home with although we are not involved in a couple relationship. Also included are close friends and his partner. There are also those people to whom I am legally related, but who are seldom drawn upon for support and consider only as a generalised extended family. It is apparent then that within my definition not all my family members are required to live under the same roof[2].

With reference to my use of the term 'alternative' Insemination I make use of the theories of both O'Neill (1983) and Martin (1993). 'Alternative' has been deliberately chosen over artificial as I believe this differentiates between a 'hi-tech' medical intervention requiring of the individuals concerned both a high income and also an awareness of the availability of such procedures[3]. Conversely, alternative insemination requires little

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[2] I will return to this particular perspective again in chapter three and expand upon it with regard to traditional definitions of the family and an analysis of 'family' by queer theorists.

[3] See Jana Sawicki's (1991)"Disciplining Mothers: Feminism and the New Reproductive Technologies"; and also Renate Duelli Klein's (1985) article "What's

technology and can be performed without medical intervention, if desired, in the home by the woman seeking impregnation.

Personal Involvement

At the very outset, this thesis originated from personal commitment to the idea of queer families. A dear gay friend, with whom I had shared a home with for about three years, and I began discussing the possibility of not only having(as in conceiving), but also of raising children together. For the post-graduate social policy and social work paper *Women and the Social Services* I began to explore the welfare provisions, that is the financial assistance available to women who chose to have children within such a context: not from within a couple relationship but primarily as an independent woman desiring children.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, my interest in queer families stems from a very personal place, and I now wish to return the discussion to a focus upon this.

My friend Tim[4] and I began sharing our desire with our friends, and to some extent took support from Maggie French's (1992) research. Many of our friends were neither surprised nor especially challenged by our plan, and were quite supportive of our concept of family. We lost one friend along the way, however, who held rather traditional views and beliefs regarding not only what a family was but of what a family could be. To him our arrangement certainly could not be described as a family, and to bring children into such an environment was considered as lunacy. I was shaken

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'New' About the 'New' Reproductive Technologies?" for additional information on 'hi-tech' medical interventions and of how these may have been co-opted to exclude some groups.

[4] Not his real name.

by his rigidity but, rather than being dissuaded, my commitment to researching 'alternative' families was strengthened. That wishing to create something situated outside a particular norm could generate such vehement opposition compelled me to explore why norms continue to be reinforced.

Recently Tim began a new relationship and now has a partner who is unaware of our plans for children. Tim has decided to leave our home and move to a new city to be with his partner. The plans for us to have children have also altered significantly. John[5], Tim's partner, does not hold any great desire to parent children and thus Tim is having second thoughts, feeling that children have enough to deal with growing up without having gay and lesbian parents. With this development has come further challenges: my own beliefs surrounding family have come into question. Is the geographical location of members a serious issue for queer families? Would the fact that we may not have children alter our belief in our family status? Many of these issues are addressed in this research and have also had to have been addressed personally.

Initially I focused upon women as independent women wishing to have children. I had not intended to be specific with regard to their sexuality but to concentrate upon the issue of choice to become a parent. In this sense I anticipated viewing lesbian and heterosexual women via the same tools and models. I (misguidedly) believed that social policies concerning parenting impacts upon both groups of women in a similar fashion.

I became aware that using the same tools of research to investigate two diverse groups was not going to be possible in this instance, and that perhaps this presumption was somewhat naive.

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[5] Not his real name.

The fact that same-sex relationships are not recognised by New Zealand law suggests to me that no aspects of policy could be assumed to impact upon different groups in an equal manner. Indeed Gloria Donadello (1986), when discussing social work practice, warns of this very issue. Richard Harker (1990a) also makes reference to the danger of treating those of unequal status equally. Harker (1990a) suggests that by doing so unequal outcomes will result. The beginning position of two dissimilar groups leads to the outcomes also being dissimilar, application of a universal practice does not overcome this. On the contrary, rather than equal treatment, what is required is a more equitable approach, undertaking to view each situation individually without preconceived expectations of the outcome. With this in mind, my research focus became sharper.

A Changing Approach

Late in 1996 my commitment to queer families and the preliminary research that I had already conducted developed into a research proposal. The work of both Ann Oakley (1981) and Joan Acker et al (1983) provided guidance for conducting research of a reciprocal nature, for indeed that was my intention for this piece. I wanted to share my interest in this area with the participants. The change in this position arose from two reasons: the first incident which began to challenge this ideal came from a casual conversation with a customer in a shop I was visiting. The woman indicated to me that I could cause unnecessary strife for the families I wished to interview by bringing actual cases to the attention of support agencies. She was referring here to the fact that gay and lesbian couples are not recognised in New Zealand policy law and are therefore should both partners have children

living with them are eligible to each claim entitlement to the domestic purposes and the unemployment benefit, or any other benefit which tests couples *living in a relationship in the nature of marriage.*

It was this woman's belief that these arrangements had little else going for them, and that I would jeopardise their income with my research! I did try to point out to her that I may be in such a position myself and thus was unlikely to do anything to make my own situation difficult. This did little to alter her belief. Although not entirely responsible for altering my intentions she did indeed make me question things a little more in depth.

I have long held the view that research should be both reciprocal (Oakley, 1981), and also beneficial to the party being researched, leading to their greater wellbeing. In this sense I mean that the intended participants may have concerns regarding the outcome of my research, this could range from their fear of being open about their situations and possible negative reactions (fear of being 'out' about their sexuality) to fearing the removal of State benefits. Neither of these situations would have resulted in the enhanced well-being of the intended participants. Reciprocity within research, empirical or theoretical, is important as a means of giving something back to those who may have participated (Oakley, 1981). Although I have had no actual families participating, reciprocity in this thesis comes both in sharing my experiences and position and also in the form of the recommendations which I make[6].

A further incident compounded my belief that perhaps my intended empirical approach needed altering. It was pointed out to

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[6] See Chapter Four.

me during a paper I presented at the 1996 Sociological Association of Aotearoa/New Zealand Conference that I was suggesting a fairly unfamiliar situation to many gays and lesbians within New Zealand. Out of interest my own reading had led me to authors such as April Martin (1993) and Laura Benkov (1994), both of whom document *joint* family relationships (similar to my concept of 'queer families')in an American context. Had I naively assumed such situations were even wanted here by the gay and lesbian communities? Certainly the absence of any New Zealand literature on the issue seems to indicate that it may not have been considered before. At the Pink Health conference in Wellington during Queen's Birthday weekend 1997, I was presented with the option of attending parallel sessions on either 'gay parenting' or for 'lesbian mother's', I chose the 'gay' option. Following the session I had an opportunity to ask some questions of the women who had attended the 'lesbian mother's' session. When I stated that I was writing a thesis on parenting *between* lesbians and gays several of the women responded with horror and said "why would anyone want to do that?" Initially I thought they were referring to the actual thesis topic but it soon became apparent that in fact it was the idea of raising children with a man that was so abhorrent to these women. Indeed of this matter, and in complete agreement with these women the Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group (1981:6) write

> *The heterosexual couple is the basic unit of the political structure of male supremacy. In it each individual woman comes under the control of an individual man. It is more efficient by far than keeping women in ghettoes, camps or even sheds at the bottom of the garden. In the couple, love and sex are used to*

> *obscure the realities of oppression, to prevent women identifying with each other in order to revolt, and from identifying 'their' man as part of the enemy. Any woman who takes part in a heterosexual couple helps to shore up male supremacy by making its foundations stronger.*

Although the women realised that I was not suggesting that they return to heterosexual relationships to parent their children, they saw my notion of queer families as not too far removed from this idea and as such remained sceptical. I will return to this idea of what Rich (1980) terms compulsory heterosexuality[7] in a later section to consider how ideologies can become reinforced by policy.

I became increasingly aware from conversations such as those outlined above that perhaps I was attempting to run before I could walk, so to speak: that the ground work of raising the issue and providing a theoretical framework needed to be conducted before I could even consider discussing these issues with actual families. With this in mind I altered my intended approach of interviewing to a deductive, theoretical engagement, examining the ideologies which may inform policy provision/construction within New Zealand.

Methodology

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[7] Rich's (1980) discussion of compulsory heterosexuality works well with Warner's (1993) use of heteronormativity. It must be noted that Rich's (1980) argument is focused solely on women's experiences, and more specifically the social construction of sexuality. As such it cannot be used as a blanket analysis of a homosexual experience. I contend, however, that compulsory heterosexuality and heteronormativity can be seen to be supportive of each other. The reinforcing of a heterosexual orientation is expanded upon in Chapter Four.

I turn now to examine the origins of feminist methodology and its compatibility with queer theory[8]. In doing so I identify the key concepts and themes within a feminist methodology and then examine these via the queer theorists I will draw upon in this research. However, initially I consider why feminists have developed alternatives to traditional research.

As Stanley and Wise (1990:39) write

> *Our position is that **all** knowledge, necessarily, results from the conditions of its production, is contextually located, and irrevocably bears the marks of its origins in the minds and intellectual practices of those lay and professional theorists and researchers who give voice to it. The existing discipline of sociology is neither neutral nor impartial; it reflects the practices and knowledges of groups of highly particular white, middle-class, heterosexual men while seemingly reflecting universalisms. Its sexism is no 'intrusion' or 'mistake'.*

Women have long been excluded from research for two major reasons, both largely premised on their differing biologies from those of men. Rosalind Sydie (1988) develops this argument and contends that a traditional scientific approach has created dualisms which categorise women and their experiences; for example, the association of the masculine with the rational, and of the feminine with irrationality. Because of women's menstrual cycle and reproductive capabilities women were deemed to be

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[8] I utilise queer theory in a similar manner to Seidman (1995), suggesting that the recognition of differences is fundamental to overcoming marginalisation, and that we cannot talk of a singular homosexual experience, but rather must talk of multiple experiences. I also draw upon Michael Warner (1993) to suggest that everything is open to being 'queered', to challenge positions of privilege and extend boundaries. I argue that there is more than one reading to all facets of society, more than one experience.

emotional and thus also without reason. As such it was thought that they would influence or complicate the results. Thus traditional scientific approaches have rendered them incapable of conducting research and also of being the subjects of research (Bunkle, 1992; Harding, 1986). Further evidence of women's exclusion within traditional research is provided by Smith and Noble-Spruell (1992) who expand upon the binaries of nature/culture introduced by Sydie (1988), and examine the Public/Private dichotomy. They write

> *Research had focused on the official, the public and the dramatic, ignoring the private, less visible systems* (Smith and Noble-Spruell, 1992:136).

With reference to feminist research, an ideal starting point is a definition of what is meant by the term. I note that feminist theorists utilise a range definitions. Indeed Shulamit Reinharz (1992) contends that feminism is a perspective rather than a method as there exist a multiplicity of feminisms and ideas about what constitutes feminist research. For Reinharz (1992) then, feminist research is guided by feminist theory, and that the two are interrelated and have the responsibility of bringing about, or being the agent of social change. She writes that

> *(t)he fact that there are multiple definitions of feminism means that there are multiple feminist perspectives on research methods* (Reinharz, 1992:241).

Reinharz (1992) is strongly critical of the authoritative use of quantitative research methods and contends that a multiplicity of methods is advantageous to feminism in general. Rather than

feminist research being labelled as primarily of a particular type (for example, statistical survey research), the feminist researcher may employ or amalgamate several methods, and thus provide a 'cumulative approach' (Reinharz, 1992:246).

Armstrong and Boyce (1988:1), informed by radical feminist theory contend the following definition of feminist research:

> *Feminist research may be defined as pro-women, change oriented research. It takes as its basic assumption the oppression and subordination of women by men and it assumes that it necessary and possible to change this situation .*

Armstrong and Boyce (1988) assert that feminist research is more than simply research by women. In agreement with Reinharz (1992) they argue that it must, or at least ought to, seek to change the status quo: that is, to change women's marginalised position within society. Maria Mies (1983) is also a champion for feminist research, asserting that feminist research is needed because there *is a contradiction between the prevalent theories of social science and methodology and the political aims of the women's movement* (1983:120). What then is so different about feminist research as compared to traditional research and feminism have an identifiable methodology?

Traditional *mainstream* research can be linked to quantitative methods, value neutrality and researcher objectivity, concepts which many feminist theorists strongly challenge (Acker et al, 1983; Oakley, 1981). Also rejected are universal statements, the requirement of generalisations and many *scientific* laws such as cause-and-effect statements (Reinharz, 1992; Smith and Noble-Spruell, 1986; Mies 1983; Acker et al,

1983; Oakley, 1981). However, before quantitative methods are altogether abandoned, Smith and Noble-Spruell (1986) defend their use, arguing that it is possible for quantitative research to maintain a position as a useful tool, such as in the form of exploratory research. This can be seen then as consistent with Reinharz's promotion of a cumulative approach (op cit). They warn that the danger with this (quantitative) method lies in the tendency for it to be considered as the only valid and legitimate method and that universalisms, whilst generally avoided by feminists, may also have their place. Explaining their argument they write that

> *(w)hile qualitative research can convey the complexities of human situations, quantitative research can provide the data from which to make generalised statements. These statements are important for both advising policy makers on public opinion, and devising new strategies for bringing about social change* (Smith and Noble-Spruell, 1986:140).

In this piece of research, however, I make recommendations and seek to effect social change following a textual analysis. Whilst neither qualitative nor quantitative this attention to text highlights the omissions within both policy and theory which have resulted in the continual marginalisation of those other than heterosexual.

Feminist research differs from traditional research with the voice of the researcher being present, or located within the research (Jones, 1990). Reinharz (1992) expands this position further and asserts that the researcher can not be viewed as separate from their research: that their previous knowledge and

experiences have an influence on, or within, their research[9]. Indeed, contrary to this assertion of objectivity from traditional research, Reinharz (1992), Smith and Noble-Spruell (1986), and Mies (1983) all argue that the feminist researcher must be as explicit as possible with regard to their values and beliefs.

From Feminist Empiricism To Queer

The next part of this discussion will examine briefly the journey feminist research has taken, from feminist empiricism through to my own queer, postmodern approach. Feminist empiricism is a positivist approach to research, closely following techniques of traditional scientific research. It asserts that the lack of women within scientific research, and thus of what has been considered to be 'knowledge' can be improved by adding in women into research, both as subjects and as objects, rather than changing how the research is conducted.. Jaggar and Rothenberg (1984) locate the origins of feminist empiricism within the boundaries of liberal feminism[10]. Rather than challenge who created knowledge, or even who assumed the right to create knowledge, women were added to existing research paradigms, traditional masculine paradigms: their marginalised position, and also the status quo remain unchallenged by this theoretical stance (Harding, 1986). Women's inclusion within scientific researchers as both the subjects of research and as the researchers depends to

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9 For a more expanded discussion of this see also Acker et al (1983); and Oakley (1981).

10 My use of term liberal feminism draws upon that of Alison Jaggar (1983) and also Rosemarie Tong (1989). Both assert that liberal feminist theory does not seek to alter the entire structure of a society, but rather seeks to have women included as full and equal members. This change is conducted largely through altering legislation, in effect criminalising the exclusion of women.

a great extent on the ability of these women to play by existing rules and within existing boundaries: that is, male-dominated rules and male-dominated boundaries[11].

Arguably, this does little to redress the imbalance of women involved in science and research, or improve their position on the fringes of society. Rather, as existing philosophies are not challenged by feminist empiricism, the relationship between women and scientific research, I contend, will not improve. Furthermore, arguably this position would not entitle feminist empiricism to be included under the auspices of feminist research. Earlier, with reference to Reinharz (1992), Armstrong and Boyce (1988) and also Smith and Noble-Spruell (1986) I illustrated how feminist research must work towards the liberation of women, that the status quo position of women as second to men must improve. I am unconvinced that feminist empiricism has the ability to undertake this. Adding women into research is an insufficient means to overcoming a significantly larger problem.

Sandra Harding (1986) contributes further to the debate, adding that feminist empiricists believe that by including women to scientific method better science may be conducted. She writes that

> *...feminist empiricism argues that women (or feminists, whether men or women) as a group are more likely to produce unbiased and objective results than are men (or non - feminists) as a group*
> (Harding 1986:25).

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11 See Allison Webber (1992) "Women in the Media: Wrestling With Old Values" for an example of women playing the game via male rules.

I argue this is a contradiction within feminist empiricism: first, feminist empiricists contend that science is neutral, uninfluenced by matters of race, class, gender, or sexuality. Yet Harding (1986) argues that having feminists use scientific methods will improve the validity of the results, and the objectivity of the results strengthened. This appears to me to be both a, seemingly contradictory, call to the essential nature of women (and thus also universalising the experiences of women), and a challenge to women's binary position as irrational. If women are included within scientific approaches to research as a means of improving the approach and the research, as feminist empiricists promote, suggestion is made regarding particular attributes that women may have, that they may be able to offer a different perspective. Yet at the same time that women are included within a scientific approach attempts to overcome any suggestion that they may be irrational and too emotional to participate in valid research. Jaggar and Rothenberg (1984) credit this theory of research with the inclusion of women with research and philosophies of knowledge and the acceptance of women as creators of knowledge. As already mentioned, I find this position to be problematic due to its connection to essentialist assumptions about the morally superior nature of women.

I find feminist standpoint theory, as discussed by Harding (1986), preferable to feminist empiricism. Feminist standpoint theory asserts that for the status quo to be challenged both the philosophies of science and the ensuing research must start with the women at the centre. Harding (1986:26) writes

> *Feminism and the women's movement provide the theory and motivation for inquiry and political struggle*

> *that can transform the perspective of women into a 'standpoint' - a morally and scientifically preferable grounding for our interpretations and explanations of nature and social life.*

Alison Jaggar (1983) discusses the roots of standpoint theory as originating within classical Marxism. She illustrates how Marxists believe that even research which claims to be objective is never entirely value neutral, and asserts that *(a)ll systems of knowledge bear the marks of their social origin within a particular mode of production* (1983:360). This, I would argue, is clearly a case of standpoint theory. Marxism asserts that the discourses and ideologies which the researcher works within, and under, are reflected undeniably in the research. However, Marxists only believe two standpoints to be in existence: that of the proletariat, the oppressed, and that of the bourgeoisie, the oppressors (Jaggar, 1983). I find this area of standpoint theory to be rather contentious. A problem within Marxist analysis, I argue is its insistence on reducing all inequalities within society to issues of class, stemming from an economic baseline upon which all aspects of oppression are premised . Harding (1986) challenges this collapse into economic reductionism by contending the possibility of the existence of multiple standpoints. Other feminist theories, such as socialist feminism and radical feminism[12], support standpoint theory and seemingly overcome its Marxist origins. Jaggar (1983:367-8) writes

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[12] Throughout this chapter I have drawn upon taxonomies of feminist theories to demonstrate the diversity of feminist thought and analyses of oppressions. My understanding of the various strands of feminism is based upon those of both Tong (1989) and Jaggar (1983).

> *...radical feminist epistemology is committed to the view that the observer is inseparable from the observed, the knower from the known. If this is so, then it is both proper and inevitable for theory to be guided by practical interests and to be informed by feelings .*

Furthermore, not only does Jaggar (1983) discuss others who support feminist standpoint theory as a philosophy of research, but she locates herself within this tradition. She posits that there is no Archimedean point outside of reality - that the researcher is always situated within one group or another, and this in turn becomes part of the research.

Research originating from the position of women is supported also by Phillida Bunkle (1992). She encourages the legitimation of non-traditional knowledge and points to the issue of women's own knowledge of their bodies, which has historically been discredited by medical science. To demonstrate this Bunkle (1992) refers to the disastrous outcome for many women involved in cervical cancer treatment at Auckland's National Women's Hospital. As she indicated, women cannot continue to accept the same medical treatment that men receive without thorough testing of these treatment on women, treatments pertinent to women need developing; indeed how different the outcome at National Women's may have been had this philosophy been adopted. Arguably, it is bad practice, indeed inferior research to apply existing knowledge to all groups in a universal manner, and anticipate the same outcomes for all (Donadello, 1986; Harker 1990a).

Harding (1987) warns that standpoint theory must take care not to fall into perspectivism, or more specifically relativism. She uses the example of sexism to demonstrate this point. Sexism,

according to this example, may be justified or accepted as plausible, on the grounds that is purely a male perspective, and not intended to be oppressive. Harding explains that

> *(t)he point here is that relativism is not a problem originating in, or justifiable in terms of, women's experience or feminist agendas. It is fundamentally a sexist response that attempt to preserve the legitimacy of androcentric claims in the face of contrary evidence* (Harding, 1987:10).

I contend that this context of justification is consistent with liberal beliefs with regard to the rights of the individual. A similar argument could be used to validate racism and indeed, heterosexism. Harding (1987) asserts that standpoint theory ought to aim to present an alternative framework for the creation and legitimation of knowledge. Further to this discussion, Harding (1987) contends that to achieve a feminist standpoint epistemology[13] the researcher ought to be a part of the group being researched. Viewing the world through the eyes of the oppressed is insufficient: rather the researcher must experience the oppressed's reality to fully understand the implications. She writes

> *To achieve a feminist standpoint one must engage in the intellectual and political struggle necessary to see natural and social life from the point of view of that disdained social activity which produces women's social experiences instead from the partial and perverse perspective available from the 'ruling gender'*

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[13] Epistemology is used in this sense to refer to a way of knowing, and of what is considered valid knowledge (Humm 1995).

experience of man (Harding 1987, cited in Stanley and Wise, 1990:27).

Standpoint theory is not wholly without usefulness and indeed can play a significant role in allowing the voices of marginalised groups to be heard, or as bell hooks (1984) would have it, a way of bringing the margins to the centre, and I return to this point with regard to queer shortly.

However a key area of this theory which I find to be problematic is that of its tendency to collapse women's experiences into a singular experience, and its notions of essentialism. Bunkle's (1992) examples of women's knowledge clearly illustrates this tendency. In terms of medical science rather than the experiences of an individual patient being heard, and thus treated assumptions can be made about how all patients in a given situation experience things. I am sceptical of the alleged existence of a singular standpoint of women. To assert the existence of a particular standpoint consensus needs to be reached on what that standpoint is,; by this I refer to the inevitable marginalisation of some experiences which, I argue, would occur.

Judith Grant (1987) is also critical of standpoint epistemology for this reason. She asserts that however positive the intentions of the feminist standpoint researcher are, the researcher can not avoid making universal statements regarding the nature of women and their experiences[14], and this is the major drawback of the theory. If one of the purposes of feminist

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[14] The universalising of experience is precisely what has occurred within a social policy framework. Although in doing so it may be possible to bring about social changes for women, variables such as class, ethnicity and sexuality all need to be considered. Women are not a homogenous group and as such do not experience all aspects of their lives in the same manner. See Angela Y. Davis (1981) for additional information.

research is to avoid collapsing women's experiences into a singular entity and oppression then this may not be possible using this approach. Grant (1987) contends that a standpoint assumes commonality and, furthermore, an essential nature of women. She argues that what ought to be challenged to a greater extent is the perpetual acceptance of masculine research as being objective.

Written from the position of other, queer theory resists falling into essentialism as is the situation of a singular standpoint theory also stemming from the position of other, rather highlighting the diversity among those within the group (Seidman, 1995). Arguably, it makes more sense to draw upon a theory which seeks to highlight the marginalised and often completely negated position of queer people in society, as opposed to co-opting an already existing theory, as may be the case in trying to establish a 'queer' empiricism.

At issue for my own research, and indeed myself as a feminist researcher, is the fact that standpoint theory seems to be saying that we must begin with women, from their (our) standpoint. I have fears that this position therefore leads to arguments about what can and cannot be researched by feminists/women. Aspects of queer experience, as researched by a feminist do not necessarily begin with from the standpoint of women, but rather with queer existence. The relationship between feminism and queer theory and the question of whether feminist theory and queer theory can work together to support each other must also be considered. I argue that utilising a standpoint theory within 'queer' research, that research which takes queer theory as its foundation, has the potential improve the position of gays, lesbians bisexuals, and transgendered and transsexual people. An analysis of queer experiences of being rendered lesser by societies

and indeed often invisible whose sole (positive) focus is upon heterosexually orientated people, is crucial. A 'queer' standpoint must take care to avoid presenting a singular example of queer experience. Harding (1986), as mentioned earlier, indicates the presence of multiple standpoints, I argue that this needs to be considered further and suggest that within a 'queer' standpoint there are also multiple positions. Acknowledgment of such multiplicity may overcome the tendency of standpoint theory in general to essentialise experiences, allowing a collapsed representation of marginalisation. The importance of differences to a 'queer' standpoint cannot be ignored. By drawing upon queer theory and suggesting the possibility of a 'queer' standpoint, I am creating an approach which reflects closely Reinharz's (1992) advocacy of a cumulative approach, taking aspects of each to build a stronger analytical tool.

Queer as an appropriate, or perhaps preferable, choice of theory stems largely from my personal relationship to the term, at a primary level, and also from the challenging of the normative order which I believe queer theory offers. To me, queer theory asserts plurality and fluidity. What I wish to do in this next section, then, is to discuss my personal use of queer and also detail queer as an academic theory.

The earlier statement by Liz Stanley and Sue Wise (1990:39) provides ideal support for my decision not to use existing theories of the sociology of the family to conduct my research. I agree with their contention that much of sociology is not impartial, as will be shown in a later section. Rather I draw support from queer theorists such as Jeffrey Weeks (1991), Warner (1993), Seidman (1995), Stein and Plummer (1992), and Halley (1996) all of whom consider the normalisation of the dominant which can be identified

in much of contemporary pakeha[15] society. Also I utilise critical theorists of heterosexuality, such as Richardson (1996), VanEvery (1996), and Carabine (1996), all of whom consider various aspects of social policy with regard to sexuality.

In using the term 'queer' I am making reference to sexualities other than heterosexual. I use this term inclusively to incorporate lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender and transsexual people. In this sense then I have chosen 'queer' not to render invisible the experiences of any one particular group as often seems to occur with generic terms. Indeed the term 'gay', although intended as a generic term to represent all groups, often presumed the gay male experience to be universally applicable to all who were not heterosexual. Anna Marie Smith (1992) cautions against 'queer' slipping into this same trap.

Rather I am using 'queer' as an umbrella term (Jagose, 1996) to differentiate from the heterosexual dominant culture; to focus upon the self concepts, naming and experiences of those who are not wholly heterosexual, and who see their own sexualities as open to questioning, both by themselves and also by those around them. For example, the daughter of a friend of mine vehemently rejects any sort of label which slots her firmly into heterosexuality and yet has never had a physical relationship with another woman. Although choosing to have such close relationships with males, she resists suggestions that this in any way limits her to physical intimacy *only* with males.

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[15] This research focuses solely upon Anglo-European society. I acknowledge the variety of models of family which can be seen within ethnicities other than my own Anglo origins, however I have chosen not to provide an anthropological discussion of the variety of families. My reasons for this are not intended to be exclusionary, but rather are based upon the size of this project and the need to adequately cover the issues.

At a personal level then, 'queer' represents to me the beginnings of a concept of self that allows for greater fluidity than do the terms gay, lesbian, bisexual transgender and transsexual, speaking of a position that is free from the politicking of an earlier time, especially with regard to the position of The Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group (1981) who advocate no relationships with men. When I first began to question my own sexuality, as a woman from the dominant pakeha culture in Aotearoa, I could find little to connect me to the term 'lesbian' and even less to 'dyke'. What sprang to mind were the stereotypical identities, often, I now believe, mythical, thrown up by a society whose only way of acknowledging difference was through fear. Nonetheless I could not see myself in the experiences of these women. Although I identified readily as a feminist I still had what can be considered as a straight woman's fear of anything unfamiliar. To find a place for myself within the term 'queer'[16] seemingly eased me into my process of coming out, I did not feel that this was a place where the 'rules' of both dress and behaviour were so rigidly imposed. This idea of the rigidity of the lesbian community stemmed largely from a naive perception of lesbians. In particular the article by The Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group (1981), when read as a heterosexually orientated woman, suggested ideas about the man-hating of lesbians, that to be lesbian this position must be taken. I understood little of the possibility of a feminine identity, seeing only the stereotypical

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[16] As an identifying term, Jagose (1996) believes queer remains unpopular, and is largely reminiscent of the pathologising of homosexuality. I dispute this strongly, and recognise that whilst there are many within contemporary New Zealand society who will never reclaim the use of the word 'queer', namely middle aged males for whom this word will never lose its derogatory inference, for many youth today it is their term of choice. Feeling, especially the young woman that I have encountered, that 'queer' is a term that they can make wholly theirs as a new generation.

'masculine' woman[17]. As my comfort with my changing sexuality increased I began to realise that the boundaries were not as tightly enforced as I had imagined and that I no longer resisted acknowledging that I had heard my own name and the term 'lesbian' in the same sentence. Perhaps I was overcoming some internalised homophobia along the way also. However, my comfort with the term 'queer' did not lessen, but rather I began to look at challenging identities and relationships and also the potential my own relationship with Tim held as a subversive tool.

'Queer' is incorporated into this research at a primary level in as much as the families I seek to theorise are, by definition, not heterosexually configured. At a more theoretical level 'queer' comes into play as an analytical tool by which I examine the heteronormativity of policy construction.

In using queer theory I refer to what I see as the possibility to overcome many of the gender conflicts which I see as present within the lesbian, gay, transgender, and bisexual communities. As I mentioned earlier, I historically I see divisions within a community who, as a whole, are often oppressed for the same reasons, I believe that unity can overcome bigger hurdles - that by working together greater resources are able to be drawn upon. Oppositional factions of separatism and misogyny, such as the preference for separatism of some radical lesbians (Adams, 1989; see also Frye, 1993) and the anti-women tendencies I have observed in some gay men, exist to be overcome. In a simplified sense, queer theory may allow for bridges to be built and alliances and coalitions to be established. It provides an ideal analytical

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[17] See Minnie Bruce Pratt's (1995) excellent discussion of 'butch' and 'femme' role in *S/HE*.

tool to deconstruct dominant assumptions within contemporary society and the, often implicit, ways in which aspects of society are constructed to privilege particular groups, generally those meeting/fulfilling the expected norms. Jagose (1996) maintains that 'queer' is an exceptionally fluid idea; to attempt to singularly define it is antithetical to its very nature. What I will attempt, as does Jagose (1996) is to provide an historical context rather than attempt to tightly define queer. Indeed Jagose (1996) believes 'queer' attempts to avoid defining.

Annamarie Jagose (1996) takes a "potted history" approach and traces the development of the 'queer' movement and contemporary queer theory from the homophile movements of the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century through the Stonewall years of gay liberation, the sexual revolution and also the women's movement to the present incarnation of queer activism and academic theorising. She highlights the seemingly contradictory positions of the gay liberationists and the members of homophile associations such as the Mattachine Society and also the Daughters of Bilitis, both primarily based in the United States of America. The liberationists Jagose (1996) characterises with the uprising at the Stonewall bar in June 1969 and a subsequent refusal to closet themselves and their behaviour, demanding their right to be who they were without fear of reprisal. The homophile association adopted an opposing stance and encouraged members in a quest for normalisation. Of gay and lesbian behaviour the opinion of experts was favoured over that of the experiences of the association's members (Jagose, 1996). She writes

> *(w)hereas homophile organisations had called for a liberal approach to social change, gay libration*

> *challenged the status quo. Homophiles favoured the improvement of public relations and presented images of homosexuality that would be acceptable to mainstream society. Gay liberationists, by contrast, refused to pander to heterosexual anxieties and scandalised society with their difference rather than wooing it with claims of sameness. Whereas the homophile movement had come to advocate assimilation, gay liberation was constructed around the notion of a distinctly gay identity* (Jagose, 1996:31).

Arguably, with explosion of HIV/AIDS within the queer (and also heterosexual) communities queer politics and activism appear to have seemingly transcended gay liberation, although not as smoothly as this account may suggest[18]. Specifically gendered and sexually orientated groups continue to exist, such as local lesbian support groups as new lobby groups comprising representatives from all alternative sexualities emerge, the New Zealand lobby group Rights Right Now, for example. These new groups address common issues in a bid to have a stronger voice. Recognising no place for themselves within the gay liberation movement and accusing the term gay for supposedly having become a generic rather than a gendered term (Smith 1992), becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the patriarchal organisation of society and believing they had little in common also with the women's movement as a whole, many lesbians broke away and developed a parallel lesbian feminist movement (Jagose, 1996). As Jagose (1996) illustrates clearly the histories of both gays and lesbians were quite distinct from each other, both socially in terms of the

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[18] Aronowitz (1995); Seidman (1995); Annetts and Thompson (1992); and Smith (1992) all provide excellent accounts of the activism within the queer communities.

bars and societies which existed for gays and also legally as on the whole it was male same-sex acts which were criminalised; as women were considered sexually passive, that is unable to have sex without the presence of a penis, little thought was given to the possibility of sexual relationships between them.

The lesbian feminist movement largely advocated giving no energy to men and at its most radical having no contact with men whatsoever and minimal involvement in any male organisations[19]. Specifically that *gay men, in so far as they are men, are part of an oppressive social structure which lesbian feminism is committed to overthrowing* (Jagose, 1996:50)[20].

However, perhaps the danger of such a rigid stance lies in the potential for overcoming shared discriminations. As I have already mentioned, personally I find alliances preferable to separatism. There is much potential for members of the queer communities to work with each other on issues such as why queer youth feature highly in youth suicide rates (Rose, 1993; Remafedi, Farrow and Diescher, 1991), also on changing aspects of policy that discriminate against queers, specifically encouraging the Crown to ratify the 1993 Human Rights Act[21]. Separatism seems to do little to actually break down barriers to minority groups, but rather appears to further reinforce them (Adams, 1989).

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[19] Jagose (1996) presents her discussion of the development of both lesbian feminism and queer theory in activism in a universal manner, assuming that the American experience holds true for the development of 'queer' in New Zealand.

[20] There is significantly more to this strand of feminism than the confines of this research can document. For further discussion see Rosemarie Tong (1989) *Feminist Thought;* and also Allison Jaggar (1983) *Feminist Politics and Human Nature.*

[21] Although not specifically talking of a 'queer' response to the position of the Crown, see the Cabinet Committee on Health and Social Policy (1997).

Contrary to many commentators and drawing support from Rosemary Hennessy (in Jagose, 1996), Jagose demonstrates how the origins of queer theory can be identified seen as closely resembling the lesbian feminist movement. However sceptical I may be of the separatism of the lesbian feminist movement, Jagose's (1996) point regarding the similarities between the origins of queer theory and the lesbian feminist movement is one with which I agree. To my understanding queer challenges structures and power bases in society in a way similar to that of lesbian feminism, and not seen I believe, to the same extent, within the gay liberation movement as a generic group, nor within gay male politics. Indeed Hennessy (cited in Jagose, 1996:57) writes

> *With its coalitional politics and its emphasis on sexual identifications, queer's affinity is clearly with that strand of lesbian feminism that does not understand sexuality as a by-product of gender. Queer is also productively informed by lesbian feminism in three crucial respects: its attention to the specificity of gender, its framing of sexuality as institutional rather than personal, and its critique of compulsory heterosexuality.*

Within a Northern hemisphere sense a combination of both queer activism and post-structuralist theory have been largely credited for nascent queer theory. Queer theory has been shaped by post-structuralist thought[22]: the meaning of queer is constantly being deferred, a dynamism which is not apparent within the

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[22] Jagose (1996) demonstrates how Saussurean linguistics, in which meaning is a system of signifiers and is not as simple as the language we speak on a daily basis but rather, has a meta layer of meaning attached, and as such is never fixed, can be linked to queer theory whereby the challenges to fixed meanings are similar.

frameworks of gay and lesbian activism and theorising. Within 'queer' theorising the challenges to both heterosexual institutions and the heteronormative underpinnings of the fabric of social organisation are never static. These challenges can be seen within subversive behaviours, for example lesbians who present in a pseudo-feminine manner, subverting the idea that lesbians are all exceptionally 'butch' and wear boiler suits. These women do not present, or construct themselves in this manner in the stereotypical sense of butch/femme role playing but rather to visually challenge notions of what lesbians can be; they que(e)ry defined roles and behaviours, in effect inverting these normative assumptions.

Two other factors both in the form of politics and activism, can be identified within the burgeoning queer theory. Activism and theorising HIV/AIDS in the United States of America and also Section 28 of the British Local Government Act 1988 in the United Kingdom has seen queer communities come together to challenge structural oppressions (Aronowitz, 1995; Seidman, 1995;. Smith, 1992; Weeks, 1991). Locally a similar alliance can be identified within the lobby group I detailed earlier, Rights Right Now These examples are dealt with in greater depth in chapter three, however for the present they are useful in terms of demonstrating the unity and coalitions which developed as a result between gays and lesbians, and more latterly also bisexuals transsexuals and transgendered people.

Although herself a queer activist, theorist of queer activism, Anna Marie Smith (1992) cautions of the dangers of lesbians remaining, if not becoming further, marginalised by queer politics and activism. Smith (1992) is not suggesting that 'queer' marginalises lesbians but rather that gender relations between

men and women do. She refers to her own involvement in British protests in which the position of lesbians was largely centred around their (our) right to become mothers: the validity of lesbian sexuality as a practice was not seen as an important issue as (again) women were seen to be virtuous and without sexual desire. As I have already illustrated such a stance has resulted in same-sex acts between women not being taken seriously. Smith (1992) continues to suggest that it is worth the risk by campaigning aggressively to challenge the position of lesbian sexuality in the eyes of some legislators. Here she is referring to the fact that lesbian sexual acts are not punished as severely, if at all, as are sexual acts between men. Although Smith (1992) is suggesting that lesbians risk their position of relative comfort in terms of prosecution for their sexual behaviour, she believes that the reward lies in having this behaviour acknowledged, thus far outweighing the individual cost.

The global impact of HIV/AIDS should never be understated for any community for, as a virus, it knows no bounds and does not discriminate. The terror which has swept through queer communities as family and loved ones die has effectively brought gays and lesbian together, if not actually closing the chasm of separatism and, often, misogyny at least erecting a bridge. Smith (1992) illustrates this point with reference to the activism of women within the queer communities, especially with regard to the research conducted, or rather lack of research conducted, on women-women HIV transmission. Given that woman-woman sex is largely viewed as passive and generally non-penetrative little in the way of research or funding is dedicated to the impact of this plague on women. It is only by standing up and demanding that the reasons for this position be exposed, argues Smith (1992) that the

position can ever be ameliorated. A particular que(e)rying of the process of research and funding allocation.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have set the scene for exploring the position of families configured alternatively to that of the heterosexual norm. As this research is being conducted using a feminist methodology I have accordingly demonstrated my own original involvement in this research, and also my personal commitment to the status of queer families. This self location aspect has journeyed the thesis through various philosophies and traditions of research to finally its settling down with a 'queer' standpoint approach premised upon contemporary queer theory: whereby all that is taken as a norm in society is open to being questioned, inverted and indeed que(e)ried.

From here Chapter Two takes a step back in time to examine some of the more mainstream approaches to the family, detailing why these can be considered problematic.

Chapter Two

> *Some people will want to maintain "traditional" families, with a strict sexual segregation of roles. Both matrifocal and patrifocal units in which the husband or wife plays a minimal role, or is absent by choice, rather than by desertion, will continue, side by side with households containing more than one male or female - pair or in more complex combinations* (Helena Z. Lopata, 1973:402).

Introduction

Utilising the theories of a sociology of the family[1] would seem to be the most appropriate way to consider the situation of families, queer or otherwise. However, arguably the analysis of the family offered by this aspect of sociological thought does not always recognise any other configurations other than the heterosexual nuclear norm. As such, family groups who do not reflect this norm are marginalised or discredited as valid families and subjects of study.

In this chapter I critically discuss some of the ideas from sociology of the family theorists. Primarily I review VanEvery's (1996) identification of two functionalist schools of thought: namely Parsonian and Marxist theory. Following on from this I consider Friedrich Engels' (1884, cited in Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1984) theories regarding the origin of the family. Marxist approaches to the study of the family have also been developed by various feminist

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[1] Abercrombie et al (1988:235) define sociology of the family as *the study of how human sexual reproduction is institutionalized and of how children, which are the product of sexual unions, are assigned places within a kinship system.* The definition does not appear to take into account any alternatives to sexual reproduction. Also lacking any acknowledgment in their discussion of this branch of sociology is the variety of shapes families can take.

theorists. I closely detail the spotlighting of the domestic labour debate which appears to be fundamental to a Marxist consideration of the family, and draw upon the work of Delphy and Leonard (1994), and Hardyment (1994) to support this discussion. Much of Marxist feminism has been critiqued for essentialising women and erasing differences between women[2]. To develop this critique I will use Heidi Hartmann's (1981) work in which she discusses the relationship between capitalism, patriarchy, and feminist analyses of this relationship.

I critique the recent publication *Family Connections* (Morgan, 1996), considered to be a major new work in the field of family sociology, and develop this into an exploration of the other informing theory illustrated by VanEvery (1996), a Parsonian functionalist approach to the study of the family.

Families from the queer communities do not have a monopoly on the alternatives: 'open' family models and other alternatives in the heterosexual communities are documented at the conclusion of this chapter, with reference to Constantine and Constantine (1972) writing on group marriage, and Gaeton Fonzi (1972) and Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1972) both of whom write about parenting and families within communes and cooperative communities.

Marxist Approaches

In this part of the chapter I wish to consider Marxist approaches to the study of the family. Central to this discussion will be a critique of these analyses in terms of their applicability for/to

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[2] See Rosalind Sydie (1987) for further examples.

this research: and a suggestion that Marxist approaches, similar to many other approaches almost completely overlook, if not indeed ignore, family groups other than that of the dominant model. Marxist approaches focus upon a consideration of the division of labour within the private sphere of the home and also on women's relationship to paid employment, especially following increased industrialisation. Of this aspect, and believing as does Stacey (1991) that as women's position in terms of the public arena changes so to does the family, Lane (1976:16) writes that *widespread employment of women under the factory system devastated the stability of the household.*

Also crucial to this approach is the ideology of the family wage and the belief that a family only needs one income - that men are somehow, by virtue of their gender, financially responsible for their female partner[3]. No discussion of Marxist analyses of the family would be complete without looking at the work of Friedrich Engels (1884, cited in Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1984). His analysis began to consider the position women held within contemporary societies, and theorise about why this may be. Ann Lane (1976:4) demonstrates feminist support for Engels class analysis writing that

> *many in the women's movement, both in the university and outside of it, have turned with enthusiasm to Engels' work on the family and the subjugation of women, and have found in his hypotheses and assertions easy ways to reach presumably radical conclusions about a variety of legitimate concerns.*

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[3] Rosalind Sydie (1987) expands upon this point further, suggesting that the position of women within a given society and their confined private role is connected to beliefs about their responsibility for procreation. Men had to go out to find food as women were expected to remain at home caring for children.

This enthusiastic support of Engels' work is not a position which I take and to begin my critique I use his paper "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State" (first published in 1884, and cited in Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1984). Contentious within Engels' (1884) work is his evolutionary model of family development, which is seemingly biased towards industrialised family units as each subsequent family unit seeks to improve on the previous models. His analysis therefore appears to be culturally blind to other types of family.

Alongside a journey through the development of humankind from savagery to civilisation (Lane 1976) in *The Origin of the family, Private Property and the State* Engels (1884) considers the stages in the development of the family in anthropological terms from the *Consanguine* family through to the, then contemporary, monogamous family. In this discussion Engels (1884) considers how the changing appearance and construction of the family as a unit has been responsible for women's oppressed status. That women were/are removed from owning the means of production as a result of the laws of inheritance and also the changing source of lineage from matrilineal societies to those where family name and status stems from the paternal line. Also of note in Engels' (1884) work is the perceived relationship between capitalism and the monogamous family. Throughout this discussion I will demonstrate Engels' (1884) belief that the family is both the product and reinforcer of the capitalist mode of production (Lane 1976; Engels 1884, in Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1984; Morgan 1996). Initially though, a journey through Engels' explanation of the origins of the family is crucial.

Engels (1884) considers the *Monogamous* family to have evolved as industrialisation and the development of private property and wealth gave rise to the need to guarantee the paternity of offspring; a considerable shift from the earlier situation within the *Punaluan* family, outlined above, whereby lineage was traced via the female members. Indeed of this, Rosalind Sydie (1987:98) writes

> *In Engels' account, then, the biological fact that women have children was used first as the explanation for matrilineality and for the pre-eminence of women in early societies. This biological fact became a liability, however, when ownership of property increased. Increased property and the wealth it brought resulted in some sort of psychological change in the men that made them want to pass their possessions on to "their" children.*

Clearly, the transition in family groupings was not as swift as the previous discussion would suggest. This change was made possible through support of the "natural" division of labour, referred to now as the gendered division of labour. Sydie (1987:99) explains this natural division of roles as being grounded upon beliefs of 'man the hunter' and 'woman the domestic nest builder'.

So it is the monogamous family which has become the basic model utilised by both public and private enterprises which have policies regarding the family(ies) of their members, for example companies who extend employee medical insurance to include both spouses and children. As Engels (1884, cited in Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1984:215) establishes, the monogamous family had very specific aims, primarily to ensure the male was the head of the

family and to the protect the paternity of any heirs to the family wealth.

According to Engels (1884) the male-headed monogamous family brought with it a reinforcement of a woman's position as being primarily responsible for the home and domestic labour. 'He' would provide and 'she' would care for 'his' children: *(w)ithin the family he is the bourgeois, and the wife represents the proletariat* (Engels 1884, cited in Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1984:131). Engels (1884) also believes that within the proletariat household male dominance of women would not occur: as no private property exists the male can not assert his position over the female.

Although he discussed the monogamous family as the dominant form, Engels (1884) also seemed somewhat aware of its role in maintaining the subordination of women. He advocates women's greater participation in outside paid employment to end their subservient position, and writes

> *...the first condition for the liberation of the wife is to bring the whole female sex back into public industry...and this in fact demands the abolition of the monogamous family as the economic unit of society* (Friedrich Engels, cited in Bronfenbrenner, 1972:120-21).

This relationship between the family, as reproducers of labour, and capital, the means of production, is a central tenet of Engels' (1884; 1984) analysis. Indeed Engels (cited in Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1984:121) suggests that a capitalist mode of production would not be possible without such a strong connection between the two.

Fundamental to a critique of Engels is the assumption that all family groups will be nuclear and heterosexual. This point is particularly evident with regard to class and his belief that a woman obtains her class status from her husband, primarily of significance to bourgeois women who, as Engels (1884) believed, did not generally work in the paid, or public arena (Sydie, 1987).

Within a lesbian relationship no such assigning of class status is possible. In such relationships, then, such an analysis of class would not hold true. It is safe to assume that at the time of Engels' (1884) writing, family groups were undeniably heterosexual. However, as I will illustrate in Chapter Three, such families are no longer the only model, yet such theories remain as informants well past their expiry date.

Also contestable within Engels' work is the idea that incest taboo suddenly emerged (Lane, 1976). Lane (1976) believes that Engels inflates the importance of this taboo and also 'fudges' its development. She (1976:15) contends that Engels' (1884) analysis collapses the experiences of incest taboo within pre-class societies into a universal, homogenous, experience. Lane (ibid) challenges all beliefs that suggest the existence of such common characteristics, branding Engels need to do this as *an obscure impulse* (ibid).

Sydie (1987) highlights the problems in such an explanation, and states that in many societies the work of the women was not viewed as secondary and that therefore Engels' (cited in Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1984) explanation oversimplifies the dynamics within the group so that his theory is consistent. Critical of Engels' sweeping statements Lane (1976) directs her argument towards Engels' anthropological data which, she suggests, is contestable,

charging his analysis with a *tendency to make easy and tidy generalizations* (Lane, 1976:14).

It can be concluded then that the Marxist approach to the sociology of the family, as Lane (1976) identifies is largely premised upon the work of Friedrich Engels, centres almost wholly upon the family as an economic unit within the socialist struggle for greater productivity. Women are included in this approach only in as much as they have the primary responsibility for domestic labour, which holds them back, according to Engels (cited in Lane, 1976), from true equality with men. Although recognising the role women play in production biologically, Engels believed that the key to the end of their subservient status lay in their gaining access to the public world of paid employment. In doing so women would then become part of the proletarian revolution against the bourgeoisie. Tong (1989:52) demonstrates Engels' belief in the ease of such a transition and writes that

> *(a) proletarian revolution would then be easy to format because virtually all of the working class would be feeling the direct results of exploitation.*

Nowhere in this explanation is the reallocation of the responsibility for domestic labour or childcare. A central flaw in this theory lies in the fact that women cannot leave the home and their (assumed) responsibilities unless provision is made to fill the breach.

As with Marxist theory in general, I consider the reliance upon economics as sufficient explanation for the oppression of some groups in society, namely those who are not the norm, to be

contentious. Families, I would argue, are about more than production for a capitalist economy, and, as I will show in Chapter Three, consist of more than the simplistic models such theories would suggest.

Seeming satisfied with the dynamics of family groups, Engels' (1884) work does not appear to be suggesting a return to any previous forms of more communal family models. This point is supported by Lane (1976) who asserts that Engels became tied up in the language of critiquing capitalism and as a result much of his theory appears to be inadequate at a micro-social level.

What then, have feminist theorists made of Marxism? The relationship between women and domestic labour, as outlined above, may be a further site over which Marxist theory tumbles. Rosalind Sydie (1987), followed by both Christina Hardyment (1994) and Delphy and Leonard (1994), illustrates the importance of the work of women in the reproduction of the labour force and also in its maintenance. The work carried out in the home by women is, on the whole both unpaid and also under-valued. That it plays a vast role in maintaining both capitalism, in a macro sense, and also the family in micro terms is undeniable. Yet because of its site (the private world of the home) domestic work is frequently overlooked, and certainly not considered in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) figures (Waring, 1988). The outcome of such neglect must certainly be the continued lack of value accredited to domestic labour. Rosemary Novitz (1987) and Carl Davidson and Marianne Bray (1994) develop the implications of this lack of recognition and value. In one sense, women are often only able to work a limited number of hours (part-time) due to their assigned responsibility for domestic chores, included in this are both housework and also child care. Compounding this is the belief of

many employers that a woman's place is in the home, (reinforcing both the ideology of the family wage and also of heterosexual relationships). Moen (1992:243), referring to a study of employer attitudes to working mothers, demonstrates how women with pre-schoolers were more likely to be dismissed, or made redundant, from paid employment if the employer felt that the women were distracted from their workplace responsibilities because of their families. Moen suggests that this stance strengthens the ideology of domesticity, and removes both the choice of these women to work and a (probably) valuable income.

Observations such as this are explicit in stating just exactly whose responsibility home life is. Although they may work outside the home women must not sacrifice their families for their careers (Novitz, 1987). Being involved in part-time labour is not without its own sets of problems, of which I will not delve into here[4].

When women do go out to work whether full-time or a more casualised employee, they are paid less than their male counterparts (Horsfield, 1988). Two inter-related points arise from such pay inequality: as compared to the work of men, the work of women is ascribed less status, as evidenced by their smaller wage packets, and also the ideology of the family wage is supported. In the interests of maintaining the status quo, that is keeping women in the home and financially responsible on a (male) partner the practice of paying men a family wage became common (Hartmann, 1981). Male employees were/are consistently paid more than their female colleagues as it

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[4] Carl Davidson and Marianne Bray (1994) provide a detailed analysis of the impact of part-time labour on women.

was/is considered to be the duty of the male to financially support his family.

A further aspect of women's responsibility for domestic labour is considered by Marxist feminists, that of the wages-for-housework campaign. In being paid for their, currently unpaid, domestic labour, it is believed that the value of women's work will increase and also that women will become financially independent of males (Molyneux, 1979; Hartmann, 1981; Novitz, 1987; Ramazanoglu, 1989). However if, as Ramazanoglu (1989:75) believes housework has *a place in the systematic oppression of women then paying women* for their domestic labour supports the ideology of domesticity: that it is indeed women's work[5].

In summary then, women, confined to the private realm of the home, are less able to participate in the public arena of paid employment. In this sense they provide a valuable source of labour and, as demonstrated by Delphy and Leonard (1994), effectively reproduce the labour force - both in terms of biological reproduction and also in the form of the maintenance work they become responsible for. They explain how businesses and employers may benefit from the caring labour carried out by the male employees' wives, enabling the male to carry out his job free from the responsibility of doing his own washing and cooking, and thus able to be more focused on paid employment (Delphy and Leonard, 1994:160).

Ultimately Marxist feminist theory appears to universalise the experience of women, if indeed not essentialising women. Sweeping

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[5] see also Valerie Bryson (1992) *Feminist Political Theory* for more on the wages-for-housework campaign.

generalisations about what it means to be a woman become entrenched, leading to binary divisions of 'us and them'. Ideological beliefs that women are maternal, emotional and more sensitive, develop from such a foundation. Any women who do not reflect this belief are branded 'unfeminine'. The explanation of/account for women existing as a class in themselves can, I believe, be taken as Marxism's justification for this essentialising and universalising. Recall, as Engels' work discussed earlier illustrated, that women are viewed as the oppressed class and as such can be considered to be in an interchangeable position with the working class: Thus within the dual class binary (of oppressor and oppressed) established by Marxist theory collapsing women and their/our experiences into a singular unit becomes necessary. With regard to financial support, the position of lesbian or unmarried women is given no attention at all.

My argument is that such theories do not consider anything or anyone to be other than heterosexual. In this particular situation women are considered in their reproductive role and in relation to their (male) partners. The position of lesbians, gays, and other queer folk is apparently irrelevant, for indeed their existence within such theory is invisible.

A central tenet of Marxist feminist theory is the belief that the oppression of women will end when capitalism is overthrown. Although not a Marxist feminist herself, of this Heidi Hartmann writes that when men and women establish that capitalism is the source of their oppression and not gender relations, and thus working together, both capitalism and gender oppression will be overthrown (Hartmann, 1981:6).

The position of bourgeois women is unclear in this perspective. It is difficult to believe that women from different class groups will join with each other, let alone with men to fight the battle against the inequalities within capitalism[6]. A similar assertion can be made with regard to women of colour and also lesbian women. Both these groups of women can be considered as marginalised groups and as such the battles and issues they face may have little in common with those of white, heterosexual women who represent the dominant culture in many (colonised) societies[7].

As illustrated, then, women have paramount responsibility for domestic labour and child raising. Sydie (1987) contends that this ideology is premised upon women's reproductive capacity: because women bear children and, in general, are at home following the birth of these children they also become responsible for the private domestic work. This is consistent with Engels' assertion and dependence on 'nature' (Lane 1976). Because reproducing children is considered women's 'natural' role in society other domestic duties pertaining to raising a family also become enmeshed in this 'natural" role. Supporting this argument, Ramazanoglu (1989:70) states that

> *(t)he identification of women with the physical ability to nurture children within their bodies and to bring them into the social world through a mysterious but messily*

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[6] Fiona Williams (1989) considers this point with regard to social policy and believes that the universalising of women may occur for convenience. Williams illustrates the situation of a working class woman who is unlikely to see many similarities between herself and Margaret Thatcher. In a New Zealand context, I believe similar points can be raised with regard to Jenny Shipley. Arguably, few women receiving State support could find common experiences with a woman in such a position, and whom is also able to alter their income.

[7] See bell hooks (1984) and also Angela Y. Davis (1981).

physical process of birth does seem to put women really closer to nature than men.

Such a strong dependence on biology has been critiqued by Sydie (1987), who demonstrates how women have been excluded from much of society because of their biological makeup. She details examples of women prevented from entering research positions because of their perceived lack of objectivity and heightened emotions. Women have also been excluded as the subjects of research as their menstrual cycle was thought to impact upon the results of some tests[8].

It can be concluded from this analysis, then, that *women helped to reproduce and sustain the social structures of capitalism* (Ramazanoglu, 1989:76). Clearly the central focus of Marxist feminism is upon ameliorating the social and economic position of women. Not considered, as with Marxism on the whole, is the situation of those outside heterosexually organised relationships; members of the queer communities are overlooked as gender relations and definitions take precedence. To expect the position of **all** minorities or marginalised groups to improve following the resolution of the class wars is arguably too idealistic. Aside from ignoring completely issues of racism, it does not effectively challenge the heterosexism in contemporary society and, as such, may inadvertently reinforce it. The family, then, is considered to be an *ideological state apparatus* (Morgan, 1996), used by the dominant group or class to maintain the status quo position of that group. In this sense it most

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[8] See my discussion of this within Chapter One.

certainly is not to be used, I would argue, to provide legitimation for groups challenging this position.

Critique of David Morgan's *Family Connections (1996)*

Much of classical Marxist theory remains popular within a sociology of the family, and as such I now turn to focus upon David Morgan's new text *Family Connections* (1996), primarily a class-based analysis of family relations .

David Morgan is a prominent theorist in the sociology of the family. Writing in a book first published over twenty years ago, Morgan (1975) identifies the imminent changes family units were facing, and indeed would continue to face. And suggesting that the form families would take was most certainly undergoing transformation. Morgan's (1975) earlier work does not consider gay, lesbian or bisexual, and most certainly **not** transsexual families, although this is not surprising for a book of this age. Any references made at all to homosexual relationships or experience can be found entrenched in theories of deviance. Perhaps it is the repeating of such an omission that makes *Family Connections* (1996) so disappointing. Since the mid-seventies a number of significant legal changes have taken place: in New Zealand for example, the Homosexual Law Reform Act of 1986, legalising homosexual relationships. Or a less positive piece of legislation, and in Morgan's own backyard, Section 28 of the British Local Government Act 1988, which is most definitely implicated in relegating those other than heterosexual families to the realms of the pretend[9]. That theorists

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[9] Both Chapter Three and Chapter Four examine Section 28 of the British Local Government Act 1988 in more detail.

from the dominant group in 'society' continue to ignore situations other than those which are dominant is not at all surprising and reinforces the ideology of the deviance of queer relationships. David Morgan's (1996) latest offering certainly seems to be doing just that.

His introduction discusses the history/evolution of the sociology of the family. In Britain especially this evolution has been characterised by research on the family and work, and more recently by the work of feminist theorists on the family and gender roles (Morgan, 1996). Morgan's own work focuses on more traditional sociological analyses and discussion.

The sociology of the family appears to be somewhat lacking in patronage, losing numbers to both the study of religion and also the study of deviance, Morgan writes that *(f)amily sociology was certainly not sexy and might have been more than a little politically suspect,* (1996:3) and also that the purpose of the study of the family was to encourage the reader *to think about family relationships in a wider context of overlapping ties of family, kindred, friends and neighbours* (ibid: 5). Comments such as these hark back to previous links between the sociology of the family and community studies (Morgan 1996). Morgan (1996) appears to ignore his own advice, however, in his lack of recognition of viewing family relationships in a queer context.

Morgan (1996) considers the impact of Marxism on family studies and separates this influence into four key areas:-"The domestic labour debate" (1996:7); "A stress on the family as an 'ideological state apparatus'" (ibid: 7-8); a discussion of the role the

family plays in the public/private split and the ability to operate relatively smoothly that the family accords capitalism: in the sense that much of the maintenance work that workers require is performed by female partners (within heterosexual families) and not the employers themselves[10]. And finally a consideration of the relationship between the family and the State, and the way in which the State works to encourage certain types of family (1996:7), I will expand on this final point further in Chapter Three.

Rather than more contemporary notions which may challenge how the family is constructed and reinforced as an institution - for example Adrienne Rich's (1980) work "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" in which Rich demonstrates how women are conditioned into believing their only option is to become a heterosexual woman; and of how the institution of heterosexuality becomes privileged. Or, more recently, Chrys Ingraham's (1996) "The Heterosexual Imaginary: Feminist Sociology and Theories of Gender", which also challenge the reinforcing of heterosexuality as a dominant ideology. Morgan's (1996) attention to the contribution of feminism to the study of the family is somewhat unsupportive. His discussion of feminist analyses of the family and their subsequent impact upon the sociology of the family is a scant two pages.

Supporting my earlier analysis of Marxist feminism, it appears in this context that Morgan refers to feminism *a la* critiques of women's role within both the family and the home[11]. He writes ...*the*

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[10] See Delphy and Leonard (1994) for further detail, and also my previous discussion.

[11] See for example Ann Oakley (1976) *Housewife* for a comprehensive discussion of women's responsibility for domestic labour and also my previous discussion in this chapter.

feminist critique inevitably focused upon divisions, specifically sexual divisions, within family life (1996:9).

Morgan (1996) is seemingly critical of, and perhaps more than a little threatened by, the (mythical) belief that many feminist theorists thought the answer to overcoming women's oppression lay in constructing families without men at all. Indeed of who is/ought to be included within family relations Morgan writes

> *Family relations on the other hand, necessarily include men as well as women, even if the conventional models tend to give less significance to their experiences* (1996:9).

Comments such as this strongly appear, to me at least, to be suggesting that Morgan (1996) believes families must necessarily include both men and women. It is not my intention at this juncture to begin a discussion of New Reproductive Technologies (NRTs), or radical feminist utopian dreams of conception[12] (for example see Marge Piercy, 1979). However, one possible reading of such statements seems to suggest that Morgan's (1996) work can be seen to reinforce the family as a heterosexual institution. Contending that if men are not present within the group then it possibly may not be seen as a family. This is as contentious to me as the definitions utilised by Statistics New Zealand (1994) as I have documented elsewhere in this research.

A saving point of Morgan's (1996) introduction is his acknowledgment of the fluid meaning of the family. He writes that

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[12] See Chapter Four.

> *Feminists shared in this unhappiness with preordained categories and with the consequences of fixed understandings of 'the family' for the lives and experiences of women. Uncritical usages of the term 'the family' could reinforce popular understandings with possible implications for public policy* (1996:10).

Closer examination of both his chapter list and index reassert my previous critical position regarding his omissions however, and the following is a discussion of Morgan's neglect.

A surface check of the contents page does not suggest any examination of any type of alternatives to the nuclear family. To test this assumption I then examined Morgan's index pages, wondering whether the references to alternative family types may exist in the implicit form of an index. Of the several hundred references only six lent themselves to closer investigation: Caring Relationships; the Family and Changing Gender Relations; the Declining Significance of Family Practices; Kinship; Parenting; and Sexuality.

Morgan's chapter entitled "Care" contains a discussion on the importance of examining gender when considering caring relationships, both in the sense of who is doing the caring and the role caring may play in the construction of gender identities. He writes

> *The links, mutually reinforcing, between caring for and caring about, are parallel to the links between gender as a set of activities and responsibilities structured by the sexual division of labour and gender as a core sense of identity* (1996:101).

And also

> *Caring tasks and emotional labour are not just any set of tasks, they constitute a central set of tasks in constructing gender identity and sexual difference* (ibid).

Morgan's discussion, whilst asserting the importance of gender, and indeed asserting the family's role in the reinforcing of gender identity, fails to consider sexuality, perhaps as heterosexuality is taken as given. Later in "Care" he writes that *(t)he analysis of caring needs to be extended to include considerations of age, race and class as well as gender* (1996:102), I believe the explicit consideration of sexuality in this analysis is crucial. In omitting sexuality Morgan (1996) further marginalises the non - heterosexual family (the queer families in my research).

In his references provided for the family and changing gender relations Morgan (1996) again fails to consider the importance of sexuality, rather looking specifically at the role of women within the family and of how women may constitute a change in the gender roles within the family. He writes

> *The family or the household becomes the site for potential changes in the gender order partly through the exchanges between family practices and other sets of practices. Thus changes in the occupational structure have their impact upon the gender order in part directly, through restructuring of the labour market, but in part indirectly as mediated through domestic relationships* (1996:79).

Further, in the "Gender" chapter, and seeming to be speaking directly to my research topic, Morgan acknowledges that the changing gender order may not be so significant by itself and writes

> *A more sceptical approach might see these changes in the gender order as being of limited significance with an effect that is overall supportive of marriage and the family with all their oppressive and patriarchal features better concealed but definitely present* (ibid: 84).

Morgan (1996) at least acknowledges at this point other positions if not specifically looking at them himself. From a brief examination of his "Gender" chapter I then considered his references to family practices and their declining significance, largely out of curiosity to see precisely what he means by the term *family practices.*

Morgan uses the term *family practices* almost interchangeably with the theory of *cultural capital* and accredited to Pierre Bourdieu[13] (Harker, 1990b). There is little in the way of consideration for alternative families in his discussion, rather Morgan (1996) appears content to revisit his discussion on the changing gender order in heterosexual, nuclear families. With regards to the declining significance of such practices he acknowledges that

> *(m)ore people are choosing to remain outside marriage, whether in a cohabitation relationship or in some other arrangement. People are having fewer children and are increasingly likely to have children outside wedlock. The*

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[13] See Morgan (1996:188) for a complete discussion of this similarity.

single-person household is one of the most rapidly growing household types (1996:197).

There are two major points to be made about such statements. First Morgan (1996) yet again avoids an ideal opportunity to acknowledge those who (presumably) sit outside of his own experience, rather preferring to mention Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and other Queer family configurations as *some other arrangement*(s). To an outsider it could seem that no alternatives to those presented by Morgan exist such is the explicitness of his omission, and indeed the publicised importance of his book (Back cover *Family Connections* 1996).

A second concern with this examination of declining family is specifically surrounding his suggestion that anything other than existing patterns are not family patterns. Perhaps I should clarify my argument here: whilst I can appreciate Morgan's recognition of changing patterns what I react to is the appearance that this is somehow viewed as negative. A different wording would be more preferable, and although still acknowledging a change conclusions about the appropriateness of such changes would be less easy to draw.

The challenge to *Family Connections* here is to examine definitions of kin, both in the light of the working definition of kin utilised within this research and also in light of Nardi (1992); Benkov (1994); and Weston (1991), all writing on family configurations within queer communities. Morgan's (1996) consideration of kinship is primarily concerned with connections between families and households and their relationship to the family economy rather than with a variety of types of kinship. Yet again no mention of family

types other than that of the dominant group (read white, heterosexual and nuclear), or of little other than how these kin groups may be experiencing change. Such a tight focus on the family economic situation appears to do little in terms of recognising the wider picture. I contend that families are more than economic units of production. Whilst I concede that they are generally viewed as sites of **re**production, I do not consider that this reproduction is a purely economic event. In Chapter Three I examine in more detail the reproduction of heterosexuality that is expected of families.

Somewhat unsurprisingly, the normativity of the heterosexual family and indeed of heterosexuality itself is reinforced by the references to parenting in the book. Again Morgan (1996) draws upon his standby of 'changing family practices' and considers the role that parents play in this. For example he considers this role with regard to eating disorders and gender construction in adolescents.

His references to sexuality are almost comparably absent. Other than how children via the family may come to see their own and other's sexuality and he chooses to not examine alternative sexualities or their positions/roles in the family.

Morgan's (1996) analysis of the changes heterosexual family units may be experiencing is most certainly detailed. What his book cannot hide, however, is the explicit disregard for families other than the dominant socially acceptable form. I find it disturbing that young students can pick up such a text and not have to face the fact that heterosexually configured units are not the singular model of the family. Indeed, in a recent discussion with a colleague I was told of how she made an effort to present an inclusive lecture on families to her first year sociology students. That she did this was beyond the

material presented in the particular study guide, and thus also the examinable material of the course. Queer families must not be included only as an after thought. And then only because some are aware of their/our existence. That consideration is now given in texts to the position of people of colour, recognising their unique experiences, has become accepted. How long ought queer families wait for our experiences to be included in general texts, and no longer be almost solely dealt with in queer media?

Parsonian Family Theory

Given that VanEvery (1996) has identified two informing schools of thought feeding into a sociology of the family it is vital to detail the principles of Parsonian theory. In a brief definition, VanEvery (1996) writes that

> *Parson's theory of the family refers to the nuclear family household: a relatively isolated, small unit consisting of a married heterosexual couple and their own children, and specialising in the functions of socialisation of children and personality stabilisation of adults* (VanEvery 1996:41).

Parsons is particularly interested in the functioning of the nuclear family (Parsons, 1980). His approach differs from Marxist accounts of the function of families in that he does not see their function solely in terms of economic production and reproduction, and indeed in the interests of the mode of production. Rather seeing a more complex picture incorporating the development of the individual personality.

Similar to Friedrich Engels (1884), Talcott Parsons had a theory of the evolution of societies and thus within them of families. The evolution of the group is likened to biological evolution (Giddens, 1989) and the group develops through several stages to arrive at its present form. Parsons (1980) indicates that there are fundamental universal features to all groups, his prime example being that of language, because there is no known human society which does not possess a language (Giddens, 1989:635). Alongside communication, and as such language, three other evolutionary universals are included in Parsons' (1980) paradigm, religion, kinship and technology. All four are required for evolutionary progress. Presumably then it is the level of these universals which marks the level of the group. Parsons' (1980) schema is unhesitantly biased towards industrial societies, and is explicit in its attitude of the less complex societies, implying that these were culturally naive.

Drawing upon anthropological data (as did Engels (1884) for his analysis) Parsons (19800 presents a developmental account not too dissimilar to that of Darwin's theory of evolution. Giddens (1989) demonstrates the ease with which such theories can be refuted, stating that the human world can not be considered to neatly parallel the animal world, pointing to difficulties with classification as a starting place. Many pre-industrial societies have, according to Giddens (1989), kinship systems more highly developed than many of their more industrialised counterparts, and yet would in Parsons' (1980) view, be considered as less advanced. To this critique I would also add notions of universality. To homogenise all experiences and needs is to most certainly omit the experiences and needs of some (marginalised) groups. Similar to Giddens' (1989) example of the kin

structure within less industrialised societies, queer families, I contend, would be almost undeniably considered less advanced by Parsons' (1980) model. At best I would argue that we do not share his valuing of universal experience.

Oddly Parsons (1980) seems to contradict his own theory and the subsequent valuing of industrialised societies. In a chapter within the anthology *Sociology of the Family* (Anderson, 1980) Parsons discusses the soaring divorce rate in the United States of America. The increasing occurrence of divorce, he believes, is leading to the greater disorganisation of the family. Yet most certainly it could be argued that this (divorce) is indeed a feature of industrialised societies. His own figures, although for a thirty year period only and extremely dated, show a significant increase in the rate of divorce at a time when the U.S.A. was experiencing a boom. Is the increasing occurrence of divorce superseded by the benefits of greater industrialisation? The relationship between divorce and industrialisation sits outside the scope of this research, however it is certainly an interesting irony within Parsons' (1980) theory.

The collapsing of the experiences of all members of a family is defined by Eichler (1988) as 'familism', that what holds true for one member is taken as true for all members. Such a position is used by theorists and policy makers alike, primarily, I would argue, for convenience. Convenience in two senses: first in collapsing the members of a family or group into a singular unit policy makers and theorists are saved the (often financial) expense of accounting for others in the group. And in the second sense the experiences of one family can then be transposed to **all** families in a society. Although the situation can be said to be improving those in the majority

position, (the heterosexual families) are primarily focused upon in research upon the family. However, the theories generated by such research can be applied in an ad hoc manner to all family types. Within a Parsonian family sociology, I would argue that, this is most certainly the case. Parsonian reliance upon the existence of universals is evidence of this: these universals are required to be present to determine the status or level of the family, a singular method of analysis in which some families are seemingly destined to appear as less desirable.

Queer is Not the Only Alternative Family

The final area I wish to explore in this chapter is that of alternative straight (heterosexual families). At the height of the sexual revolution of the 1960's and early 1970's (I believe a predominantly heterosexual revolution until the Stonewall riots in 1969) a great deal of material was written around the concept of the open marriage and the group family, and American experiences of these groups. I most definitely cannot claim that the family configurations I am suggesting and referring to in my own work are the only alternative to have ever been examined. I will suggest, however, that these alternatives have almost without exception been heterosexual units. Much seems to have been made of what these arrangements mean for the institution of 'the Family' and of the (dreaded) promiscuity which appears as the 'bad guy'. It would appear that by very definition these families must be comprised of promiscuous individuals determined to bring down the family and rattle the morals of middle society. Theorists such as Michael and Heather Humphrey (1988) were considering whether or not the nuclear

family was an endangered group. To my mind placing something on an endangered list implies it has value and that society would like to hold onto it. Is this what is wanted? Indeed if so many are moving away from this type of family by choice is there indeed any cause for concern?[14]

In 1972 an entire text was devoted to the nuclear family crisis (Gordon, 1972) and, almost certainly, this text is not alone in its commentary. Communal forms of living were apparently cause for concern. Concern arises I believe because of the role expected of families to reproduce heterosexual individuals with a strong commitment to conservative values. This point is taken up by VanEvery (1996) and expanded upon in Chapter Three.

Constantine and Constantine (1972) consider the group marriage as an alternative to the heterosexual nuclear family. They identify the small size of nuclear family units to be one of this forms most negative aspects and explain that within larger groups children are presented with a greater number of role models to enhance their development and growth, thus group marriages are preferable (Constantine and Constantine, 1972:205).

In a similar manner to my suggestion that a singular definition of the family is an insufficient device to acknowledge all types of families, Constantine and Constantine (1972) believe a unitary design for marriage (1972:205) is insufficient. Recall here Eichler's (1988)

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[14] According to Statistics New Zealand (1994)only 13.5% of all families surveyed in the 1991 Census of Population And Dwellings were counted as being a nuclear family unit. A nuclear family is defined as *a legally married couple with at least one child, where the husband is the sole breadwinner and the wife the homemaker* (Statistics New Zealand 1994:4).

concept of 'familism' and of how family theory or a prescriptive theory could not be applied to all groups in a blanket fashion.

A final model of 'alternative family' to be explored in this discussion is that of the 'communal' or 'cooperative' family. Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1972), in a survey-based piece of research on communal and cooperative communities in the United states of America, identified a move away from privately owned property as being one of the most crucial factors to the success of the new community. A feature which is overwhelmingly antithetical to the growth of the 'family' and the capitalist mode of production. It is little wonder that dominant society accused people from within such groups of bringing down the institution of the family and of destroying family values. If indeed one follows Engels' (1884) argument that the development of private property is fundamental to the growth of both capitalism and the nuclear family with a male as the sole income earner, members of communal groups were almost certainly responsible for a great deal of change. What is not so clear is whether this can be viewed as positive or negative and arguably depends almost solely on an individuals political allegiances.

Also what is somewhat unclear in the many discussions of communes and cooperatives is the name or identity the group used to define themselves. As such it may not be appropriate to even term these arrangements families. I should point out here that I do not intend this to appear as though I now 'own' the definition of family, but rather that the particular group may not identify as such and thus so labelling them may appear paternalistic. Moss Kanter (1972) illustrates how some communes used terms such as 'father' to identify the leader of the group, and also how, similar to Engels'

(1884) 'punaluan' family, members of the same generation are considered to be brothers and sisters. The preceding generation are all looked upon as parents. Gaeton Fonzi (1972) also considers the use of traditional familial terms in a chapter entitled "The New Arrangement", illustrating the point with the example of two children born of separate parents but whom are brought up to consider themselves as brother and sister, and for whom the parenting is shared.

What does not appear to be mentioned in this literature is the need for external financial support. The groups referred to by both Moss Kanter (1972) and Fonzi (1972) all appear to be self-sufficient, providing for themselves through some form of group enterprise. How the group or family would be viewed in terms of welfare support is unclear. Given the involvement in enterprise, the drive away from private property and the reciprocal care which I have identified in the previous discussion presumably any welfare assistance was unneeded, and thus the group remained outside the tight policy definitions of the family.

Conclusion

What can be concluded from this chapter, then, is that the family as a singular unit of organisation has undergone many changes in the course of its existence. Changes both in an anthropological such as Engels' (1884) theory of the development of the family and also Parsons' (1980) theory of the evolution of the family as paralleling increased industrialisation, viewed as a positive feature.

I have demonstrated the insufficiencies of a sociology of the family as a theoretical tool due to the narrowness of its informing

theories: Marxist theory for its lack of consideration for little beyond the household economy and the division of labour within the home, and Parsonian theory for similar reasons and also for its undeniably heterosexist bias. I have also demonstrated how alternatives to the (heterosexual) nuclear family have been documented and researched. Unfortunately, they too ignore any queer alternatives, seeming to explore only heterosexual units. Two features do arise from these alternatives, however. Firstly the fact that people appear unhappy with the traditional family unit; and secondly, the desire of many to create new family groups to meet their needs. This is an issue which I will expand upon in the following chapter.

Chapter Three

> *As the International Year of the Family reminds us, the family is society's most basic structure, the first building block of all human relationships and the fundamental unit of organisation. It has unique advantages. It is a human institution, with human values and human goals, operating in environmental reality...the family is for most of us the locus of our deepest human experience. Intimacy and passion, identity and self-hood, connection to the past and hope for the future....*
> (Jolly, in Statistics New Zealand 1994:1).

Introduction

The alternatives to studying the family from within a Marxist framework are considered in this chapter. I begin with some definitions of this concept 'family', and then move into a discussion of the forms such a group can take within the queer communities. Following on from this I will closely examine the impact of Section 28 of the 1988 British Local Government Act, and how it privileges heterosexual families. The final section of this chapter leads into a more general discussion about how policy is constructed to reinforce particular models of the family.

The Oxford Reference Dictionary (1987) defines a family as *a set of parents and children or of relatives; a person's children; the members of a household* (1987:292). Maggie Humm (1995) has considerably more to say and writes of the family as having become identified by Marxist feminists as being the primary site of women's oppression and also that feminists seek to give new meaning to the concept family, for example the work of Baber and Allen (1992). Neither of these concepts of the family appear to be pronouncing the

family as singular or tightly defined, but rather describe (the Oxford definition in particular) a range of possibilities, none of which appear to exclude members of the queer community explicitly or otherwise. However, queer families have been ignored. Ken Plummer (1992:20) writes

> *...gay and lesbian experience must be increasingly recognized in all their rich and diverse forms. Gayness is not a simple threat to the family, but a sign of the increasingly rich and diverse ways in which late modern societies are coming to organize ways of living together, often in mutual support.*

Family Queered

The entrenched assumption[1] of a predominantly heterosexual society that gays and lesbians cannot have children causes many within the queer communities to challenge traditional definitions of family and procreation (Benkov, 1994). Creating a family through reproduction is only one way to establish an intimate group. The idea of friends as family within queer communities (Nardi, 1992) also needs to be considered because how members of the queer communities construct family groups to meet specific needs is also an important issue. To this end Nardi's (1992) belief that we create new family groups to overcome the rifts that may have appeared in the relationships with our families of origin needs to be discussed.

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[1] See Chapter Two for discussion of the lack of attention to queers reproducing paid by traditional family theorists (Morgan, 1996; Morgan, 1975; Parsons, 1980).

For many, parents, siblings and children included, the process of 'coming out'[2] is fraught with tension and anxiety. The arguably irrational fear of those other than 'straight', or heterosexual can mean that rather than being affirmed by family members, ties of kin are often strained, and indeed may be completely severed[3]. Nardi (1992:109) explains that for many within the queer communities gaining both acknowledgment and approval from heterosexual communities for their relationships can be difficult. The struggle for legitimation can apply to both wider society and also to the family of origin.

In general, those outside the dominant social group, that is not heterosexuals, seem to be feared. The loss of support this may entail can be painful and, if New Zealand's youth suicide statistics are to be also considered, perhaps even fatal[4].

In my own experience of coming out I have been fortunate to not have lost any family members, but I do remind myself that I have not 'come out' to all of them either for fear that I may. It is this fear which means that I adopt behaviours illustrated by the case studies in Weston (1991), fudging statements regarding relationship status at family events and gatherings. It means that with some, especially

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[2] Coming-out is used to refer to the process of accepting one's sexuality(ies), and of beginning to tell others of this. For some, they never move beyond only acknowledging their sexuality to themselves. See Pollack and Schwartz (1995).

[3] New Zealand author, Terry Stewart has written an excellent, easy-to-read book *Invisible Families* (1994) which is a useful resource for parents of queer children. See also *The Journey Out* (Pollack and Schwartz, 1995) for information on the coming-out process.

[4] See for Statistical data on Gay and Lesbian Youth Suicides and also the impact of 'coming-out' on youth Rachell Rose (1993); Remafedi et al (1991); Gibson (1989); and also Hetrick and Martin (1988).

older, members of my family of origin I am selective about what I share. In academic terms it also means that when asked about my research by these people I present a 'sanitised' version of my field of interest to avoid any of the personal questioning which inevitably arises from such research areas.

In recent times, my inability to be myself with all members of my family of origin has resulted in either my not attending, or recreating events such as Christmas, preferring to be with, those I refer to as, my family of choice. Within the queer communities, I am told, this is not uncommon (Nardi, 1992; Weston, 1991). To recreate a family for oneself is to fill the gap that may have opened up by the absence of support of the family of origin. In his discussion of friends as family, Nardi (1992) demonstrates this point clearly and writes that

> *(f)or many gay people, the 'friends as family' model is a political statement, going beyond the practicality of developing a surrogate family in times of needed social support. It is also a way of refocussing the economic and political agenda to include non-traditional family structures composed of both romantic and non-romantic non-kin relationships* (1992:117).

Definitions of the family utilised by a variety of policy makers and welfare providers are too narrow, I believe, to encompass all the models which can be identified within contemporary New Zealand society, and indeed often completely ignore particular situations. I now turn to focus upon kin groups within queer communities and the multitudinous configurations which are overlooked by tight

definitions of the family such as that utilised by Statistics New Zealand (op cit).

Models of the family found within the queer communities are often, according to Peter Nardi (1992), the result of previous sexual relationships with those now considered to be within the family group; Nardi (1992) identifies that when this occurs an 'incest taboo' among this group can be identified. Following the ending of a coupling relationship the family unit does not necessarily end also. Former partners may still consider themselves to be part of the family. However there is an apparent unwritten rule regarding future sexual relationships with such people, and similarly also for other members of the family. None of this would seem to be vastly different from heterosexually defined families, with the exception of any blood links between the members, and the obvious illegality of sexual relationships between close blood relatives.

A family for me, and other queer folk, represents a group of people with whom I share my life and feel some connection to other than just friendship. These are the people with whom I celebrate special occasions and whom I turn to for support and comfort in times of need. As with traditional blood families, I don't have to live in the same place as these people to continue the connection/relationship. They are family by choice and fulfil all the expectations one would have of a blood relative, and sometimes often more.

Writing of the queer communities (such as San Francisco's Castro district) Weeks (1991:153) considers the reciprocity which occurs in such communities which would typically be found within traditional (that is family of origin) relationships. Weeks (1991)

identifies that a similar pattern exists within communities organised around a religious faith.

Within the queer communities a variety of family types exist: from the models of the family which closely parallel those found in heterosexual communities (queer nuclear families) to groups of people sharing their lives and drawing upon each other for support similar to my personal definition above. Andee Hochman (1994) talks of such variety and presents, among several, the example of Renee La Chance and Jay Brown, who created their own family unit from a close friendship, to demonstrate this point in detail[5].

Particular attention must be drawn to the work of Andee Hochman (1994); April Martin (1993); Kath Weston (1991); Peter Nardi (1992); and Jeffrey Weeks (1991) who support multiple models of families, and indeed consider the removal of the use of the definite article 'the' when considering families: to consider '**a** family' rather than '**the** family'. I agree with Weston's (1991) assertion that family is a plural concept and as such ought not to be discussed in the singular or by the unitary definite article 'the'. Warning of the danger of a singular definition of family being relied upon, Weston (1991:22) illustrates how the term 'family' is applied universally. She asserts that to talk of the family as singular is to *imply that everyone participates in identical sorts of kinship relations and subscribes to one universally agreed upon definition of the family* (Weston 1991:165).

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[5] See Phyllis Burke's (1993) *Family Values: Two Moms and Their Son*, also Kath Weston's (1991) *Families We Choose,* for further examples.

But perhaps the last word in this section should go to Laura Benkov who, strongly supporting a pluralistic definition of families, writes that *in the end, our families will be what we make them* (1994:165).

Aspects of Anti-Queer Family Policy

Section 28 of the British Local Governments Act 1988 has an overwhelmingly heterosexist bias. As Jeffrey Weeks (1991) illustrates, local bodies are prohibited from any actions which promote a homosexual lifestyle. Of this Act Anna Marie Smith (1992:201) writes

> *Section 28 is a fundamental part of the official discourse on homosexuality. Although there have been no actual prosecutions of any local authorities under this legislation, it had a tremendous informal effect on their policies: several existing and proposed programmes have been cancelled, grants to local groups have been cut, and visual arts exhibitions and theatrical productions have been censored and refused funding.*

In this sense then, applications for funding for queer activities are turned down and in schools queer teachers and students alike are not permitted to be themselves. Smith (1992) discusses the assertion of Section 28 that anything which accepts, or acknowledges, the existence of those other than straight can be construed as promoting homosexuality. Illustrating this point clearly she writes that

> *...the responsible homosexual, limits his or her expression of his or her homosexuality to a hidden and self-contained space which is defined in terms of fixed frontiers; he or she is, in other words, closeted in every sense. That he or she does not actually exist since no one can ever obtain a perfectly closeted status is beside the point; this is the ideal homosexual which the supporters of these laws accept as legitimate* (Smith 1992:204).

Exactly how one is supposed to behave and still identify as homosexual is simultaneously both unclear and also bitingly obvious - although not the sole feature of an individual surely how one acts contributes to who one is: not in an all defining sense as in implying that to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or whatever one must adopt particular practices, an essential homosexual if you like. Lisa M. Walker (1993) talks of this politics of identity in her article "How to Recognize a Lesbian: The Cultural Politics of Looking Like What You Are". Building on the work of both Cherríe Moraga and Donna Haraway (both in Walker 1993), Lisa M. Walker (1993) links the politics of a femme identity to those of a white-skinned women of colour, both are accepted by dominant society - they 'pass' as being from the dominant group - both heterosexual and white, neither standing out as other. Perhaps this is the ideal type that Smith (1992:204) believes the supporters of Section 28 allude to.

Queer theorists assert that there is no such essence in queerness, that everything is arbitrarily open to being both queer and indeed 'queered'. That within sameness there also exists difference Indeed talking of both gay and lesbian identities, Kristin G. Esterberg (1996:259) demonstrates how lesbian and gay identities are not fixed,

but rather are *constructed, and reconstructed within particular social and historical circumstances and communities.*

Thus, transhistorically, there is no essential gay or lesbian identity, but rather simultaneous representations of what it is to be queer. Esterberg continues on this theme (1996:260) and suggests that speaking of sexual identity as singular negates the differences apparent within variables such as race and class, and also indeed of sexual practice, for example beliefs about exactly what constitutes lesbian sex. To imply a singular lesbian identity, or indeed queer identity arguably forces the experiences of some to the periphery of an already marginalised society

However, to return to the ideology feeding into the belief that queers should be neither seen nor heard, both Weeks (1991) and Romans (1992) identify the results of the 1987 British Social Attitudes Survey as providing key support for the passing of Section 28 of this Bill (the British Local Government Bill) into Law: the results of this survey provided the 'evidence' which suggested that tolerance of those other than heterosexual was decreasing in Britain, again notions of an ideal homosexual - tolerated only if we do not create a fuss.

Also cited by Weeks (1991) are further results of this survey which show a distinct lack of support for gays and lesbians being able to adopt children, not surprising though are results which indicate that people are not as opposed to lesbians adopting as they are gay men[6]. Reinforcing again the ideology of childcare being a woman's

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[6] *[Lesbians are] not a problem. They do not molest little girls. They do not indulge in disgusting and unnatural acts like buggery. They are not wildly promiscuous and do not spread venereal disease.* (Lord Halsbury in Smith, 1992:200). Comments such as this a rife with ignorance. Unfortunately, Halsbury's comment was made as recently as

responsibility, gay men are further removed from any part in childcare than are heterosexual men because of the kinds of sex they are characterised as participating in, that is to say that they are not engaging (generally) in acts in which conception would be possible. The results of the British Social Attitudes Survey (see Weeks, 1991), as with any results of a controversial nature, beg the question "what was the mix of the population being surveyed?". Who exactly has become less tolerant?

In a specifically local context a similar situation can be identified in New Zealand, although not in actual statute, most certainly in attitude. During 1997 the steering committee for the annual HERO parade had an application for funding turned down by the Auckland City Council because, in the opinion of several of the councillors, the parade is *derogatory of family values* (Gummer, 1997). Again, a blatant example of how queers are not thought of as being included in the definition of family. Indeed, when discussing queer activism, both Smith (1992) and Annetts and Thompson (1992) map the increasing dominance of conservative family values and the parallel spread of New Right doctrine, supporting Weeks' (1991) links to the Social Attitudes survey. Indeed Smith (1992:202) writes

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1986. It hangs on Victorian notions of women as asexual, regardless of sexuality; that women are essentially less interested in sex than the male of the species; see also Diane Richardson (1992) "Constructing Lesbian Sexualities".
That lesbian sex renders the transmission of disease impossible is also a misnomer, women-to-women sex can spread a variety of diseases and viruses. Also at issue is Halsbury's conviction that women do not engage in anal intercourse. Although presumably not as frequent as in heterosexual and gay male sex, anal intercourse between women is not an impossibility. See Richardson (1996:6-9) for additional information.

Section 28 was not, then, the result of an irrational prejudice, or 'homophobia', but was actually central to one of the important strategies of Thatcherism.

Are queers in danger of seeing such prohibitions executed in New Zealand, a country which is thought to be among the most 'accepting' in the world in terms of queer issues?[7] I will return to this point in chapter four when I examine the relationship between monetary policy and social policy.

Gummer's (1997) article also continues to report how these same councillors view such parades as being masked opportunities for recruitment, a belief that appears to be connected to antiquated notions of homosexuality being a contagious disease, and subsequent misinformation/ignorance about transmission of HIV/AIDS (Weeks 1991). The debate surrounding the social construction of homosexuality as opposed to the genetic nature (that is that we are born with our sexualities already determined and do not have a choice) although nonetheless interesting perpetuate beliefs such as that which I have outlined above, that homosexuality is genetic and thus may also be inherited. The main argument is that if homosexuality can be passed on, that is genetic, then homosexuals most certainly ought to be prevented from reproducing.

If we agree that sexuality is a social construct then laws preventing gays, lesbians and other queers from having children, or indeed having anything to do with children, can be strengthened as a response due to the (irrational) fear that we will convert them, or at

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[7] see Heart's (1994) *The Straight Woman's Guide To Lesbianism* for a discussion of the acceptance of gays and lesbians within various countries.

least unduly influence them. Prior to the 1993 Human Rights Amendment Act gays and lesbians in New Zealand could be dismissed from a job or not hired because of their sexuality, as such being out about one's sexuality if it differed from heterosexual was somewhat unwise in many circumstances, especially those involving the care of children. Although this position has improved the Government has yet to ratify its own position with regard to this legislation, considering itself exempt until at least the year 2000.

However, to support the opposing view (that sexuality is genetically decided) is to extend legislation denying queers access to reproductive technology, if not actually ban parenting altogether. Neither offer ideal solutions, both can result in a backlash against the legitimate position of queers. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1993) presents an interesting play on both of these positions with reference to male gender identity and psychoanalysis. Sedgwick (1993) demonstrates how some contemporary psychoanalysts assert that male gender identity is ascribed by other males - that the influence and involvement of women in this process can both impinge upon and substantially alter the outcome, indeed the likelihood of homosexuality in male children is seen as the direct result of female involvement. Sedgwick (ibid) also highlights how psychoanalysis appears to be gender-blind in its theorising the process of core gender identity development in lesbians, focusing almost singularly on homosexual behaviour in boys. That children have a sexuality is often ignored, as indeed is anything linked to children and sex. Sedgwick (1993) notes this point and demonstrates how children who act, either consciously or subconsciously, as other than heterosexual are referred on to specialists for 'treatment', sexuality other than

heterosexual it seems can not be confirmed until an individual reaches the age of majority, that is legal adulthood.

My stance is strongly influenced by queer theory and maintains that explanations are not the motivator, nor is the apportioning of blame relevant. Rather asserting that challenging the institutionalisation of heterosexuality and inverting power dynamics is more useful to ameliorating the marginalised position of queers. Noting this point Esterberg (1996:260) succinctly explains that

> *(m)oving beyond the constructionist/essentialist debates, queer theorists have begun to retheorize lesbian/gay identity. Drawing heavily on postmodern and poststructuralist strains of thought, queer theorists seek to problematize the very notion of lesbian and gay identity and challenge the essentializing nature of identity itself...While queer theory is not a uniform body of theory and contains many diverse impulses, a common theme is to challenge the notion that sexual identity is a unitary essence residing in the person.*

Section 28 of the 1988 British Local Government Act is quite possibly one of the most anti-queer pieces of legislation passed in recent times. Its impact upon non-heterosexual families cannot be understated as such families are rendered 'pretend'. Weeks (1991) considers the rationale behind such legislation, as previously mentioned, as being entrenched in concerns of an increasing queer population. At this point Maggie French's (1992) research, detailed in the chapter "Loves, Sexualities, and Marriages: Strategies and Adjustments", becomes important. Her research explores family situations in which at least one of the partners has previously

identified as gay or lesbian, although the family now considers itself to be a heterosexual unit. Families such as these, I would argue, would thus seem to be treated as real vis-a-vis the 'pretend' families mentioned in Section 28. Thus the leap back into an identity: what the family presents as to society as a whole is seemingly more important than who the members are, to policy makers, and therefore also broader society if we are to believe that they are representative of the whole, appearances are vital.

Queer Procreation and Family Status

Both Nardi (1992) and Weston (1991) contend that the concept 'family' has, since around the nineteenth century, become attached to procreation. Recall the discussion in the previous chapter where I demonstrated the origins, according to Friedrich Engels (1884), of the family in anthropological terms and the relationship between paternity and inherited wealth and their subsequent importance to the development of the family. At this point, it is important to illustrate that the belief that only heterosexuals procreate is indeed a misnomer. Research such as my own and also the work of April Martin (1993), Laura Benkov (1994), and Gillian Hanscombe (1981) to name but three, refutes the belief that queers cannot have children. Facets of society may render having children a difficult option for queers, but it is certainly not impossible. Indeed Belinda Trainor (1988) considered this very issue with regard to both her own health status, and also her position as a lesbian wanting children. Demonstrating the increasing use of reproductive services, that is generally fertility clinics, Trainor (1988:63-64) wrote

> *(t)he Services are not only used by lesbians but by a growing number of single heterosexual women. Some prefer being single, but want children, others haven't yet met the men they want to live with but because of their age or for other reasons, don't want to wait.*[8]

Family status appears to have become premised upon the ability to procreate (Weston, 1991; Nardi, 1992), The 'fact' that those within the queer communities, by virtue of the kinds of sex they have, or indeed the synergy of the particular genitalia of those they have sexual relationships with, cannot reproduce seems to deny them this status. Richardson (1996), VanEvery (1996) and Carabine (1996) indicate how the family is viewed as a site of reproduction for gender roles, and as such it is expected that heterosexuality be reproduced in family members; queers, it would seem, are not to be trusted with this. Yet strangely enough it could be argued that most queers come from heterosexual parents, perhaps queers are not the ones to watch out for!

Is Family What All Queers Want?

Also what is important to note is that for many within the queer communities the very construct of family represents a heterosexual institution; an institution of which they want absolutely no part. In a British documentary of the PRIDE festival in London Allan Matthews of the (British) Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association says that *the family as an institution has been used to threaten gay people down through the years* (Oram, 1997). In the

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[8] Jean Renvoize (1985) also considers the position of women who choose to sole parent and may be consulted for further information.

same piece, musician Boy George also warns of the dangers of becoming *like our persecutors,* implying that in attempting to create our own models of family queers are buying into an institution and ideology which has been instrumental in our oppression, a failing to see the hegemonic nature of such a move. Romans (1992) and Loulan (1984) consider the position of children with regard to lesbian identity, illustrating how some lesbians believe that having children has no business being part of a lesbians' life. Of lesbians who either chose to become mothers or have children from previous relationships, Romans (1992:104) writes

> *(t)he lesbian community can so often label her a 'pretend' lesbian; in fulfilling her wish to have children she finds it necessary to defend her position as tenable in the face of adamant criticism from other lesbians.*

Whilst recognising this position, further expansion of queers who wish to remain outside families is out of the scope of this current project. However, I am in no way suggesting that only those queers within so-defined family units are in valid and legitimate groups. Indeed by doing so I would be pushing gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people into the same trap I have accused those in state positions of creating. If pressed to give a world-view, or idealised situation, I would opt for a society in which people were free to create their own groupings and define them as they wished. However, we do not live in such an ideal world; policy is not created within such a rose-tinted vision.

As I mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Judith Stacey (1991) contends that the face of families is changing: that defining

characteristics such as being a nuclear (usually heterosexually configured, two parent plus children) unit and having the wife work only within in the home and only in domestic labour (that is, not home-based outside employment) are insufficient tools to utilise to identify what constitutes a family. Stacey (1991) regards women as being responsible for this change in picture. As women enter the paid workforce, she argues, families also undergo change, thus suggesting that families are not static institutions. Although I am not specifically concerned with the effects of women entering the labour market, I am interested in the explanations that are given for the apparent dynamism of families[9].

I do not consider the structure and organisation of families to be static: how a family presents itself in its initial years is not necessarily the final, or only way it may appear. Connections can be made here to patterns of divorce in heterosexual families. When two people marry and have children the family can be, by many, viewed as complete; however this may not be the only form that this particular family takes. Such a heterosexual model may look like the following (fictitious) family.

> *Stuart Brown, a car salesperson, married Rose Pringle, a company secretary, in 1983. Joshua Pringle-Brown was born in 1985, followed by Tiffany Pringle-Brown in early 1987, and Rose became a full-time, devoted mother Stuart's reputation as a terrific salesperson soon led to him being able to open his own car yard, " Free Wheeling". He required the assistance of a secretary/receptionist in*

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[9] When I refer to the dynamic nature of families, or of the dynamism within families I refer to the changing face of family structures, both within the family and also the changes that families as a whole have undergone historically.

this enterprise, and rather than ask Rose to leave the home, and thus the care of their two children, he employed an office junior - 19 year old Roxy Hampstead. As it happened, the salary that Stuart had to pay Roxy was much lower than what it would have cost the Pringle-Brown's in childcare, should Rosemary have taken this job. Roxy was an exuberant young woman, with a great deal of initiative. Before too long she and Stuart were involved in long, after-work meetings. This extra time spent together resulted in the pair beginning an affair. After three years, Rose began to suspect the relationship and questioned Stuart, who admitted his unfaithfulness. The Pringle-Browns divorced in 1991, and Rose was given custody of Joshua and Tiffany. Roxy and Stuart remain together and she has just bought into the company.

The face of this family, then, has very much altered from its original configuration, but a family unit can still be seen to exist.

Stacey's (1991) argument regarding women entering the paid work force as being responsible for the changing appearance of the family is appealing. Yes, women are entering the paid workforce in greater numbers[10]. However, to hold them entirely responsible for any new patterns in family configuration can all too easily backfire: the voice of the Moral Right can be very quick to jump on the band wagon, I believe, and retitle this responsibility as blame, and as such argue that women ought to remain in the home.

Weeks (1991) also considers this attitude of blaming feminism for the breakdown of the traditional family. This discussion builds on the Marxist approaches to the study of families outlined and

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[10] see Anne Horsfield *Women in the Economy* (1988) for a breakdown of statistical data regarding women and employment.

developed in the preceding chapter. The strength of the Right can be identified in greater detail with reference to the previous discussion of Section 28 of the British Local Government Act 1988, and in greater depth in Chapter Four where I focus upon policy-making and also specific aspects of policies.

Conclusion

In this chapter, then, I have illustrated meanings given to 'family' within the queer communities, from actual blood relations through to the recreated, or reconstituted families who share the highs and lows in our lives. I have also presented a pluralist view of family types, asserting that family ought not to be preceded by the definite article 'the', thus explicitly stating the presence of a unitary model of family, but rather that more than a singular model needs to be acknowledged as valid. The 'pretend' family status which queer families are accorded in the United Kingdom via the 1988 Local Government Act seems to be creeping into New Zealand policy also, albeit not as explicitly. The impact this move may have on families can not be understated, nor can the way policy is controlled to ensure some groups are consistently placed on the fringes.

In the following chapter I want to explore the creation of policy and how the dominant group in society, in this instance read heterosexual, construct policy to maintain their own position and seemingly further marginalise others. Of how heterosexuality is both constructed and maintained not only as the dominant position, but often as the only option available.

Chapter Four

> *Existing in defiance of the parenting roles defined by gender, heterosexual procreation, and legal sanction that constitute the traditional family, lesbian and gay parents grapple with definitions of the family. In doing so they draw upon cultural norms, even as they challenge and transform them* (Laura Benkov, 1994:145).

Introduction

In this chapter I consider the construction of social policy. Although frequently taken for granted, social policy is seldom specifically defined (Cheyne, O'Brien and Belgrave, 1997) and as such I use this as my starting point. From considering a working definition of social policy I briefly highlight some of the characteristics of New Zealand's recent social policy history, including the increasing influence of fiscal policy upon social policy. Understanding how policy continues to be manufactured according to an ideology determined to maintain existing models of oppression and indeed the status quo is the next task of this chapter. To conduct this analysis special attention will be drawn to the work of both Janet Halley (1993) and also to Jean Carabine (1996), who question the construction of heterosexuality, Halley with regard to legal theory, and Carabine from a social policy perspective. The concluding section of the chapter introduces the fictitious family of Matthew, Hannah and Robert, and explores aspects of actual policy in greater detail.

Social Policy Defined

It has been suggested by Cheyne et al (1997) that often a definition of what social policy is is sadly lacking. To rectify this

problem, and to draw upon their definition, then, social policy can be defined *as actions which affect the well-being of members of society through shaping the distribution of and access to goods and resources in that society* (Cheyne et al, 1997:2). Carabine (1996:56) adds that *most definitions of social policy are about achieving welfare objectives in relation to services such as housing, health, education, social care and income maintenance.* Further on she adds that *the impact of heterosexuality is omitted* (ibid). Although Cheyne at al's (1997) definition of social policy can be extended to include the private sector also, the private sector has not been the concern of this research, but rather I have chosen to focus upon State policy.

I would argue that the boundaries between the two are becoming less sharply defined. As I demonstrated in chapter three, New Zealand's welfare provision has been fed from a belief in the deserving and undeserving needy (Cheyne et al, 1997; Rudd, 1993). Indeed Cheyne et al (1997:18) write that *(c)ontrolling the poor was much more important than improving their condition;* and from Rudd (1993:239) *anyone living outside a nuclear family had suspect morals.* What I now wish to do is to consider some of the ideology behind welfare history, or to demonstrate the links between original intention and current practice (Cheyne et al, 1997:20).

Only The Deserving

Arguably the focusing of social policy initiatives towards employment schemes and unemployment assistance has been a key feature of New Zealand's early policy history. Cheyne et al (1997) contend that until the latter part of the nineteenth century Government policy was not directed towards the social on any great scale, but rather was keen on establishing new enterprise

and obtaining vast tracts of land: development was paramount. Cheyne et al (1997) identify British welfare policy and experience as providing the origins of much of New Zealand social policy. Although state intervention in the well-being of the population increased with the first Labour Government in 1935 New Zealand continued to be a country whose primary allegiance was to capitalist enterprise and maintaining strong trading relations with other markets. Demonstrating this point Cheyne et al (1997:26) comment that

> *(f)rom the 1840s to the 1980s, New Zealand social policy has shown a marked preference for employment-based welfare rather than direct state support. The promotion of economic growth and full-employment - through which individuals and households have access to market income - were goals more in keeping with New Zealand popular values of self-reliance than high levels of direct public provision.*

Further reinforced was the ideology of the nuclear family unit. Welfare support for women with children was originally limited to those who had been deserted by their husbands, those who were unmarried were most definitely excluded. Women's position of economic dependence on a male breadwinner remained almost completely unchallenged until the second wave of feminism hit New Zealand in the early 1970s. The advent of the Domestic Purposes Benefit (D.P.B) enabled women to both raise their children alone and to be able to leave unsatisfactory partnerships, although as both Rudd (1993) and Saville-Smith (1987) document, this was not without its own set of problems with women now becoming economically dependent on the State, rather than a male. Rudd (1993:229) comments that

> *(t)he DPB was revolutionary at the time, and provoked strong moral opposition in that it was given irrespective of whether a parent "chose" to leave a spouse. It was argued that the DPB would encourage unwanted pregnancies and split up families.*

The importance of the Domestic Purposes Benefit for queer families is illustrated later in this chapter with reference to the situation of *Hannah and Matthew*, a fictitious family presented as an example to the New Zealand Income Support Service.

Policy then, in New Zealand has not been underpinned by ideas of collectivism, but rather by increasing belief in declining state intervention in welfare, for example private medical insurance schemes, and the recent threat of privatising tertiary institutions. Jonathan Boston (1992) identifies this as a return to the Victorian notions of a hierarchy of need, characterised specifically by targeting. Of targeting he explains that limited funds are directed to those with the greatest need, rather than universally applying to all members of a society (1992:79).

However, this targeting, as I have already shown with the example of the British families in Maggie French's (1992)research, is not without its conditions. Individuals must be prepared to alter their behaviour to be deemed worthy. On a grand scale this can be identified with the International Monetary Fund assistance to a stricken South Korean economy, the financial bailout comes with the requirement that the South Koreans adopt New Right economic policies to stabilise their economy; policies favoured by the International Monetary Fund.

The Study of Social Policy

Williams (1989) covers the various approaches to the study of welfare and also some of the history of British welfare creation. Williams' (1989) book is important to this discussion as it is used as an introductory text for social Policy students What I find surprising is that whilst Williams claims much of welfare and policy to be concerned with families she does not write about Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act[1]. Lesbian parents barely rate a mention, and then only briefly in relation to radical feminism. Yet a statute which was hotly debated during the course of Williams' books' creation is not even mentioned (see Nardi, 1992; and Weeks, 1991). If an aspect of policy as contentious as Section 28 (see Weeks, 1989; Smith, 1992; and also Nardi, 1992) is not recognised by Williams (1989) as important policy on the family then perhaps it could be suggested that much of social policy analysis and provision is overtly homophobic. Williams has the task of guiding the education of social policy students, yet her ignoring anything queer results in the importance of such issues for a significant portion of the population being entirely neglected..

For a heterosexual theorist to include queer experiences seems to be threatening and some may feel it would result in them being branded as queer. The exploration by queer theorists of these issues often seems to result in it taking significantly longer to be tabled or come to public attention. Although undoubtedly important texts referring solely to queer may not appeal to a mainstream market, for the reason mentioned above with regard to policy analysis: contemporary society is less accepting of anything

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[1] Recall the discussion of Section 28's importance in Chapter Three.

other than dominant values, and certainly few individuals seem to want to advance the needs of the marginalised. That things improve over time is certainly to be hoped for, but not without a great deal of hard work.

Collaborative work is perhaps one way around the lack of emphasis placed on queer issues and experiences, something Cheyne et al (1997) may have been wise to consider, rather than the similar historical journey to that of Williams (1989) Cheyne et al (1997) have chosen.

A fundamental flaw with Cheyne et al's (1997) recent text, as with David Morgan's (1996), is its blanket omission of anything other than heterosexually based concerns. I have major concerns that what has so obviously been written for use as a text book for social policy students in this country can ignore that the institution of heterosexual practices is presented as 'norm'. Whilst I recognise the importance of a locally produced text with familiar (in a geographical sense, rather than experiential) examples and policies Cheyne et al (1997) appear to be stating that the population of Aotearoa/New Zealand is entirely heterosexual. Either that or perhaps that social policy provision and analysis does not extend to those with sexualities differing from the norm.

If we were to take as canon the popular figure that one-in-ten people in any population is not heterosexual the misnomer that queers fall outside both policy provision and need would indeed be acknowledged. Beliefs surrounding the deserving and undeserving (read: normal and deviant) can yet again be detected. Society's fascination with branding women who raise their children without a partner as 'immoral' has subsided somewhat as feminist analyses and explanations have gained in popularity: no longer is the woman solely to blame for her status. The position of queers is yet to

catch up and I would contend that it is principally the role of queer theorists to extend this work and to challenge other policy theorists to acknowledge the prevalence of non-heterosexual nuclear families.

However, before the heterosexual construction of policy can be spotlighted, I need to first illustrate how heterosexuality in its self is created, and indeed maintained; a perhaps seemingly chicken-and-egg scenario.

The Creation of an Institution

Richardson (1996:2) explains how the social construction of heterosexuality as a fixed state becomes institutionalised and universally applied to all individuals and families.

Largely through the creation of laws, or at least of the creation of laws criminalising homosexual behaviour, presumably this is defined as sexual behaviour, heterosexuality becomes constructed. Janet Halley (1993) contends this very point and illustrates her case clearly with regard to legal theory in the United States. Queers are penalised, and often completely banished, as a result of their (our) behaviour, dress and intent which is judged to indicate social deviance.

Recognising that heterosexuals are not exempt from either homo-erotic desire or actually participating in such sexual relationships which would be characterised as homosexual, Halley (1993) indicates that this is explained away generally as the heterosexual person slipping up, rather than this being an indicator of a closeted existence! Apparently then, straight people are to be excused when engaging in acts which would result in punishment if they belonged to another group in society, for example, homosexuals.

In her landmark 1980 article "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" Adrienne Rich presented similar evidence to Halley (1993), also at an institutional level. She contended that the very structuring of, usually, state institutions reproduced successive generations of heterosexuals, in a manner which the experiences of lesbians would be denied, and most certainly accused of operating agencies of recruitment[2].

The hypocrisy present in both the legislation discussed by Halley (1993) and also earlier by Rich (1980) is overwhelming to say the least. Inverting systems or structures, that is inverting hierarchies, presents situations which appear as farcical. Halley (1993) illustrates this clearly with reference to a case involving a gay man expelled from naval service for engaging in homosexual acts. Halley (1993) asks how rational it would be considered to ask a heterosexual person, either male or female, to renounce who they were and focus their attentions to members of the same sex. The very suggestion would most certainly be considered lunatic. Yet as Halley (1993) consistently demonstrates, this is exactly what is asked, if not expected, of gays, lesbians, and other queers; an effort or attempt to rehabilitate oneself that reinforces antiquated notions of homosexuality as deviant[3].

To be queer in itself may not necessarily attract penalty, but to behave in a queer manner may (Halley, 1993; see also Smith, 1992). So it can be seen from this evidence that heterosexuality

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[2] Recall here also Claire Gummer's (1997) article regarding the HERO parade in Auckland mentioned in Chapter Three.

[3] Abercrombie et al (1988) demonstrate the relationship within sociology between deviance and criminality. They write that *deviancy research has taken a much broader definition of deviance as any socially proscribed departure from 'normality'. Thus, many different forms of behaviour may be socially condemne*d or challenged even though the behaviour is not specifically illegal (1988:68).

can be constructed through judicial institutions. I will contend however, that its maintenance work is conducted via policy creation: penalising certain acts in particular instances only goes part of the way to promoting heterosexuality as the only option. In this next section, then, I will closely look at how Carabine (1996) considers the relationship between heterosexuality and social policy. Carabine (1996:55) states that *(c)ommonly sexuality tends to be disregarded as a relevant issue for social policy, or there is a universal acceptance of it as heterosexual, 'normal', 'natural' and fixed.*

Policy, in this instance, however, is about to be 'queered'[4]. That the status quo position of hetero policy be allowed to continue without a single point of redemption in these politically correct times is unsatisfactory. Surely those who pay lip service to liberal attitudes are embarrassed by the obvious hypocrisies contained within their laws. For example in New Zealand we have a system of government which has legislated against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation (that is, the Human Rights Act 1993), unless this discrimination is undertaken **by** the State! Funding to bring the State into line with the public sector (a project undertaken by the Human Rights Commission known as Consistency 2000) has been withdrawn as the Government seeks to maintain its current exemption, thus continuing what they perceive as their right to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation in certain aspects of policy.

As Carabine (1996) has stated (see above) social policy is not analysed using heterosexuality as a conceptual tool, and as queer

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[4] I use the term 'queered' to suggest the inclusion of experiences of sexualities other than heterosexual within all aspects of social policy: to challenge rigid assumptions about what ought to be included and omitted within policy consideration.

families do not come under the definition of family the impact of policy upon these groups is not analysed. This point will be returned to in the concluding chapter where I make some recommendations to policy makers.

New Zealand's model of welfare, and thus also social policy construction is, as mentioned previously, based upon the British system. Carabine (1996:62) argues that

> *social policy (in its widest sense) either implicitly or explicitly conveys messages about appropriate sexuality and acceptable female sexuality.*

Heterosexuality it can be seen, then, is consistently placed in a privileged position as it is established as the benchmark against which all other sexualities are measured (Carabine, 1996). Both VanEvery (1996) and Richardson (1996) illustrate why this situation is not viewed as problematic. They contend that heterosexuality whilst *always in the process of being produced* (Richardson, 1996:5), is taken as natural, and that which is natural, and hence taken-for-granted, is not problematised or understood as a complex set of social practices. Arguably, then, the privileging of heterosexual family units is not examined or deconstructed, but rather is reinforced as other family units are rendered invisible.

This final part of the chapter explores how actual policy impacts upon families other than heterosexual.

The Stance of the New Zealand Income Support Service

During the course of this piece I visited the New Zealand Income Support Service (hereafter referred to as N.Z.I.S.S). Following an explanation of my needs I was shown to a

caseworker[5]. Without giving her any indication that I had any personal interest in queer families I relayed to her two hypothetical scenarios concerning *alternative* families. The first scenario is as follows:

> *Matthew and Hannah share a house together. Matthew is gay and also has a child with Hannah, Robert. Hannah and Matthew have never been involved in a sexual relationship with each other. Robert was conceived using alternative insemination. This pair are viewed by many outsiders to be a couple with a small child.*

I have already touched on the British research of Maggie French (1992) in my introduction, identifying how her research with families in which at least one of the partners had considered themselves gay or lesbian. Expanding upon this I contend that her research on what she terms *mixed marriages* while nonetheless important is only valid in circumstances in which the family presents as heterosexual[6].

In Hannah and Matthew's situation, however, they do not present as heterosexual - each having a partner who does not live with them. Although, as I have already mentioned, to outsiders their relationship is viewed as heterosexual this is indeed a misnomer - an assumption by a society which apparently has no other model with which to understand relationships between men and women than nuclear heterosexual configurations.

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[5] I do not name the worker from N.Z.I.S.S. for two reasons: firstly that she no longer works for the service and thus I was unable to contact her for a follow-up, and secondly, I do not wish her to be held responsible for her department's policy. The visits took place in September, 1996.

[6] French's (1992) article "Loves, Sexualities and Marriages: Strategies and Adjustments" is returned to in Chapter Three for a discussion of how some families are viewed as pretend.

With regard to this type of situation N.Z.I.S.S. have no other means with which to assess this family other than presuming that a heterosexual relationship exists, that is that Hannah and Matthew are a heterosexual couple *living together in a relationship in the nature of marriage.* The heteronormativity[7] present within such institutions renders alternatives to heterosexuality invisible.

This assumption of heterosexuality, and indeed of a heterosexual based relationship, was exactly the position held by the caseworker from N.Z.I.S.S. Should either Hannah or Matthew require income support assistance (such as the Domestic Purposes Benefit or the Unemployment Benefit), because they share a house, household bills and parenting they are thus assessed as a couple: the only model of the family that N.Z.I.S.S. recognise is that of the heterosexual family. Queer families are not included in their definition of family. The individual sexuality of either Hannah or Matthew is therefore negated: because they appear on the surface as a heterosexual couple and their shared arrangement with regard to parenting they are thus also assessed as financially dependent/responsible for each other[8].

The second scenario I presented to the caseworker at N.Z.I.S.S. was that of Elizabeth, Anna and Ian, and is as follows:

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[7] In Matthew and Hannah's situation because they have a child together outsiders do not consider the possibility that neither of them is heterosexual, the equation invariably seems to read MALE + FEMALE + CHILD = HETEROSEXUAL COUPLE, arguably, which is indeed a myth which heterosexually dominated societies need to overcome.

[8] This discussion also draws upon the criteria which N.Z.I.S.S. utilise whether or not a relationship in the nature of marriage exists. Alarmingly, many flatting arrangements and relationships could be challenged by such broad criteria. This position may be changing however as the Social Security (Conjugal Status) Amendment Bill passes through Parliamentary Select Committee readings, and the precise definition of *a relationship in the nature of marriage* is decided (Norgate, 1998). Recognition of same-sex relationships may now be possible under the terms of such a Bill, although no possibility for same-sex marriage exists.

Elizabeth, a lesbian, impregnated herself using sperm donated by her friend Ian. It was jointly agreed before conception that Ian would play no part in the raising of the child - emotionally or financially. The insemination was privately and casually arranged. Following the birth of the child, a daughter Elizabeth named Anna, Elizabeth decided she did not wish to return to her job as a pharmacist as had been her initial intention, rather choosing to stay home and focus on raising Anna. Elizabeth applied for the Domestic Purposes Benefit. Because of her agreement with Ian that he would play no role in the raising or supporting of Anna, she did not name him as Anna's father.

According to N.Z.I.S.S. current regulations a woman seeking the Domestic Purposes Benefit (hereafter referred to as the D.P.B) is penalised by an *arbitrary* amount for refusing, or being unable, to name the father, or fathers, of her child(ren).

I reversed the scenario to the caseworker so that Elizabeth carried the baby for Ian, a gay man. Following the birth of the child Elizabeth gives Anna to Ian. As agreed prior to the conception, Elizabeth would have no further contact with Anna or Ian as the child's mother. Should Ian subsequently require the D.P.B. an arbitrary amount would not be deducted (as was the case with Elizabeth needing a benefit) from his benefit as Elizabeth would automatically named as the child's mother, and due to the casual nature of their arrangement would be required to contribute to Anna's upbringing financially. Both myself and the worker from N.Z.I.S.S. were shocked at the anomaly this presented: in casual arrangements it is possible for the mother to not name the father but the reverse does not hold true.

Two issues arise from these anomalies. First, that women are discriminated against by being penalised by an *arbitrary*

amount for not naming the father, and secondly that the ideology of the women as being dependent on a male for financial support and as having primary responsibility for child care is not at all challenged, but in fact appears to be reinforced, and indeed illustrates succinctly the heteronormativity of such policy provisions.

The caseworker and I further discussed women who choose to become parents outside of a relationship. In light of work by Jean Renvoize (1985) concerning women who desire to have children, and either have done, or are considering *going it alone* I asked her how N.Z.I.S.S. would view such women's eligibility for payment of the D.P.B. The caseworker indicated that if a woman chooses to become pregnant and then requires a state benefit she can be considered to have become pregnant for financial gain!

Within policies such as this, the right of women to choose to have children is seriously dependent on their relationship status and their ability to support themselves. I believe Trainor's (1988) analysis of who has the right to reproduce can be transposed to the social policy arena: women in need of welfare assistance or in receipt of such assistance must be seen to act like model citizens (read heterosexual *family* orientated)[9].

Lesbian or other queer women who choose to have children, whether in a relationship or not, need to ensure that they are financially supported by a partner or can support themselves. In Hannah and Matthew's situation should Hannah require the D.P.B the heteronormative policies of N.Z.I.S.S. would suggest that Matthew ought to support her and that their individual partners are inconsequential to the family arrangement.

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[9] See my expansion of Trainor (1988) in Chapter Three.

Although this law has recently been challenged, New Zealand does not legally recognise same sex partnerships and welfare policies both reflect and reinforce this stance - the only relationship which is acknowledged therefore is that which is assumed to exist between the parents, or a heterosexually configured *de facto* relationship.

Conclusion

How families which do not reflect the heterosexual norm are excluded from some aspects of social policy provision has been demonstrated this chapter. I have detailed how social policy is constructed in such a way that minority groups become increasingly marginalised.

Special attention has been given to two key social policy texts (Williams, 1989; and Cheyne et al, 1997), both of which provide minimal analysis of the position of queers with regard to social policy. This constant lack of attention is unsatisfactory if the position of queers is to improve. In Chapter Five I detail some recommendations to social policy creators and discuss how these may be implemented.

Chapter Five

> *It may well be a truism to say that there is no "traditional family". Indeed, the very concept of "family' means different things to different people, since it is always inflected by factors such as class, race, ethnicity, religion, gender and sexuality...Thus, while the family is not an institution but a constantly changing social and cultural construct, it nevertheless continues to function as an institution with very real power relations* (Jillian Sandell 1994).

Introduction

In this chapter I will make some recommendations, aspects of both policy creation and society which I believe would benefit from being queered, or at least que(e)ried. From these recommendations I then move on to a more general conclusion, reflecting upon the aims of the thesis and reiterating my main points and arguments.

Recommendations

It would seem that there are many ideas about who should be included and who should be ignored in definitions of social units. In this section I make some recommendations to policy creators, suggesting how to 'queer' family policy provisions. I have not focused upon any particular welfare provider, or social policy agency and these recommendations are general scope.

I have demonstrated throughout this thesis that the nature of families is changing, at both a local, and a global level. In New Zealand families such as the 'Cunningham' family in television's *Happy Days* are becoming smaller in number. Indeed as Statistics New Zealand (1994) illustrate, with reference to the 1991 Census

figures, only 13.5% of New Zealand families were considered to be the traditional nuclear family unit, whilst the number of blended families and one parent families is on the increase. Statistics for those living in queer families are unavailable for the 1991 period. However, in 1996 questions about same-sex partnerships were included for the first time, thus creating a foundation from which queer families may begin to be recognised. However, under-reporting of same-sex relationship status may have been significant; at the time a bid to legalise same-sex marriage was passing through the Court system. Had this attempt been successful those living in de facto same-sex relationships and receiving State welfare assistance would have therefore been brought under the regulations for heterosexual partnerships, and may have been financially worse off.

Those in same-sex relationships would be assessed under the criteria social service providers draw upon to establish whether a relationship is in the nature of marriage or not. Given the uncertainty the marriage bid may have created, in the queer communities the 1996 Census figures ought to be viewed as the tip of the iceberg. Only future inclusion of such questions can provide any real figures of the number families which are queer. Perhaps the continued inclusion of such recommendations is the easiest recommendation to make: keep the questions regarding same-sex relationships in the Census of Population and Dwellings, let us be counted for what and who we are, rather than having an assumption of heterosexuality placed upon us.

By doing so I would hope that the belief that queers are a minority who ought to be kept from view, as appeared to be the belief of some of the Auckland City Councillors when they denied

Council funding for the 1998 HERO parade (Gummer, 1997) may be challenged.

To make recommendations to individual providers is to ignore the model of welfare that successive New Zealand Governments have adopted. What is important to improving and including the position of queer people in this country may be viewed by those in policy creation positions as radical at best, and perhaps also naive. Extending the boundaries of benefits to include more of society may be challenged because of the financial cost this could be said to bring to the country. Hawke (1993) indicates that within any public policy creation, economic policy can never be discounted. However, I am not an economist, nor is this thesis concerned solely with the economics factors in social policy provision. What I am concerned about is highlighting the institutional heterosexism present in New Zealand society, and the implications institutional heterosexism has for family policy.

Work has been carried out upon the need for a feminist approach to both social work practice and social policy provision[1] and the document *Puao-te-ata-tu* (Ministerial Advisory Committee, 1986) explored issues of racism by New Zealand social policy agencies and social service providers, highlighting the need for change if negative indices for Maori are to be overcome. Both the New Zealand University Student's Association (N.Z.U.S.A.) and the New Zealand Family Planning Association (N.Z.F.P.A.) have had, or presently have, queer project workers to establish that needs of the queer communities are being met. Both organisations have recognised that their target populations include queers, and as such there are specific issues which need to be met. Indeed

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[1] See for example Katrina Ings (1988) M. Phil. research.

N.Z.F.P.A. are recognising the fact that heterosexually oriented people are not the only ones requiring information and advice about planning families.

The creation of a queer document such as *Puao-te-ata-tu* (Ministerial Advisory Committee, 1986) could go along way to bringing the needs of the queer communities to the fore.

This leads into my next recommendation and as Gloria Donadello (1986) also suggests, that gay and lesbian experience be integrated into practice. In this sense then I believe that removing the normalising presumption of heterosexuality (heteronormativity), queers would not be forced to the margins, or deleted from policy provisions.

Donadello (1986) recognises the criticisms made by fundamentalist Christians towards the queer communities as being 'anti-family'. To continue this myth breaking, beginning with the experiences of queers is imperative, the queer standpoint I asserted at the outset of this research. Rather than beginning as a matter of course with the experiences of heterosexuals and then measuring all other experiences in relation to this, norms must be broken down within social policy creation and administration. New frameworks need to be established. Indeed with specific reference to social work practice Donadello (1986:284) comments that

> *we must commit ourselves to integrating the experience of lesbians and gay men in order to achieve a holistic vision. Social work cannot advocate for social justice and deny protection of rights for lesbians and gay men.*

Gloria Donadello (1986) alludes to the existence of a singular experience and this is a position that I find contentious because, as I have shown throughout this research, it can lead to

essentialist notions which reinforce already marginalised positions.

These recommendations all appear to stem from a belief in legislation as the answer. Changing legislation is not the only option, there is a need to see it as a process which will enable the position of queer families to be recognised. Promoting legislation as **the** solution is, at best, naive. I would argue that few individuals change attitudes and behaviours on the sole basis of laws.

Michelangelo Signorile (1993) asserts that queers need to 'come-out' and be visible as a means to ending homophobic discrimination. A favourable argument, supporting Donadello's (1986) belief that queers in policy positions and social services roles need to be seen, both as role models for those still closeted and also that society at large may see how many of us there really are and the diversity among the population. Indeed as Donadello (1986:288) believes the more of us there are out there, the greater the need to create human rights legislation to protect us.

Linked to the process of increasing visibility of queers is the challenging of the assumed the heterosexual orientation of an individual: breaking down heteronormativity. That an existence as 'heterosexual' is used as the norm needs to be overcome, perhaps it sounds idealistic, but people ought not be judged by their sexuality, indeed if queer theory suggests anything it is that we are more than our sexualities, and not trapped by fixed identities (Namaste, 1996; Aronowitz, 1995; Seidman, 1995; Seidman, 1993).

Finally, the term 'family' needs redefining, and careful, ongoing interrogation. That the definition is so tight and also cautiously guarded appears to me to be linked to economic policy, in a similar manner to definitions of unemployment. If the

definition is broadened extra benefits may have to paid out, not an ideal situation in a flagging economy. Coming from an ideological stance which contests the usefulness New Right Monetarism, I contend that people need to come before figures. Donadello (1986) argues also for the redefining of the term 'family' to be more inclusive, and perhaps as I have suggested earlier we resist defining families as reflecting a singular model (Weston, 1991). As Gloria Donadello (1986:293) concludes

> *(t)he traditional definition of "the" family in terms of a nuclear unit must begin to give way to accommodate new alternative family forms. We can no longer tolerate the false dichotomies that have been set up between alternative families and the traditional view of the family.*

My recommendations can be summarised thus:

- A continuation of legislative changes, especially the Human Rights Commission's Consistency 2000 project;

- Increased visibility of queers in positions that may effect change, that is policy makers and others in positions of power 'coming out' about their sexuality;

- That the term 'family' be redefined to be a more inclusive term, giving access to minority families all the privileges of family status;

- A challenging of the heteronormative basis of New Zealand society, that heterosexuality be no longer given the superior position it currently holds;

- That a document be created assessing social service provisions and providers and their role in meeting the needs of the queer communities, similar to the document *Puao-te-ata-tu* which challenged racism within the Department of Social Welfare (Ministerial Advisory Committee, 1986).

Implementation of Recommendations

To suggest possible implementation of such recommendations appears to be asserting a 'world view', something which this research has been cautious to avoid. However, no recommendations would be complete without details of how change may be effected. The following is a discussion of how this may occur.

The ratification by the State (irrespective of political party) of the 1993 Human Rights Act is crucial to improving the fringe position of queer folk within Aotearoa/New Zealand. Until this occurs discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation will continue. Funding the Consistency 2000 Project of the Human Rights Commission must continue as Consistency 2000 is fundamental to the ending of the State's exemption from the Human Rights Act[2].

The removal of the potential for discrimination enables many other recommendations to be undertaken. For example, the increased visibility of queer folk at all levels of the policy making process can provide for aspects of queer experiences to be

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[2] For further information on the Consistency 2000 project contact Member of Parliament Tim Barnett.

represented. The fear of dismissal from employment forces many to keep the closet door tightly shut. That queer folk occupy all levels of society must be recognised. Being able to safely have the space to be 'out' without fear of reprisal would provide a significant voice, one which could no longer be ignored (perhaps as many as 370,000 people within New Zealand may be queer).

As I mentioned in Chapter One, the building of bridges between communities is an excellent way to overcome shared oppressions. The creation of such alliances does not ignore the differences between groups within a community but rather enables greater resources to be drawn upon.

Legislative changes are only one way to increase queer visibility. Sexuality education within schools must positively represent all possibilities available to our youth, arming them with self esteem, affirming who they are. The New Zealand Family Association (1994) provide a guidebook for endorsing and affirming the sexuality of youth. Endorsement of such a programme by all schools is one way to provide this.

Redefining the term 'family' becomes possible as more queer folk "stand up and be counted". Continuing the collection of statistical data via the Census provides policy makers figures which suggest that the face of 'the family' is changing, and as such policy too needs to change.

The heteronormativity of assumptions embedded in social policy creation can be challenged with the continuation of research such as this thesis, and also the including of queer experiences within the teaching of social policy courses. Texts such as Cheyne, O'Brien and Belgrave (1997) and Fiona Williams (1989) used to teach Social Policy students need complementing with texts acknowledging queer existence and experience. These students are

our future policy creators and yet may receive little tuition in anything other than an heterosexual perspective. Hawke (1993:63) supports this point and asserts that the quality of the literature utilised heavily reflects the outcome of policy advice.

By employing queer project workers to conduct research, social policy agencies can assess whether or not their services meet the requirements of the queer communities. The creation of policy documents stems from this, detailing ways of overcoming institutional heterosexism.

Implementing change, therefore, needs to be approached from multiple angles, recognising the needs and experiences of **all** stakeholders.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have detailed recommendations to policy creators, and to discuss the possibilities for implementing these recommendations. Of major importance to social change being effected is the recognition of the position of queers as marginalised, and a working towards a commitment to improve this. For some this may involve a major shift in thinking. However, queers are significant in number and must strive to bring this about.

This thesis began as a reflexive piece of research, and as I discussed in Chapter One, my self-inclusion has been supported by a feminist approach. My commitment to both queer communities and queer families most certainly needed to be stated. As Alison Jones (1990) would agree, I am most certainly in the text.

I have critiqued standpoint theory for relying too heavily upon essentialisms, and argued that this reliance over-rides the potential to acknowledge differences within a group. To suggest a

queer standpoint would seem be in itself contradictory because, as I have demonstrated throughout this research, one of the most fundamental aspects of queer as a theory is the importance it places upon acknowledging differences. What 'queer' does is to suggest coalitions and alliances to resolve issues and oppressions, recognising that different groups may not experience these issues in the same manner (Aronowitz, 1995; Seidman, 1996; Seidman, 1995). In a sense then, what I suggest is a 'queering' of standpoint theory. As essentialist as standpoint theory may be its importance, and indeed usefulness in terms of policy construction, cannot be ignored. To exchange the reliance upon essentialism for recognition of differences would ensure a powerful theoretical foundation for ending the marginalisation of minority groups. That no mandate to speak for all queer folk be stated is crucial to the success of a 'queered' standpoint theory.

Chapter Two highlighted some of the more mainstream approaches to the study of families, and paid particular attention to the informing theories of the sociology of the family. The origins of the family according to Marxist theory have been considered alongside both the role of the family in a capitalist economy and also how the labour of women is imperative to the success of capitalism. That major new texts on families continue to be both written and published omitting any group other than the heterosexual dominant model (see Morgan, 1996) has been critiqued also in Chapter Two, and again in Chapter Four with regard to social policy texts.

As I mentioned in Chapter Four, with reference to the British Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association (Oram, 1997), not everybody wishes to be a part of the institution of family, an institution that many see as responsible for the continuing oppression of those who

come under the queer umbrella: namely gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender, transsexual, intersex and, in Aotearoa takataapui, universally (ibid). Nowhere in this research have I asserted that to part of a family or to consider ones group a family is to be considered as located higher than those who do not use this terminology, nor wish to be included in such groups. Rather, my intention has been to foreground the hijacking of both the term family and also the ideology of the family by those holding the dominant position in society (in this instance heterosexuals in nuclear families), to exclude those who do not measure up. Indeed the purpose of Chapter Three is to illustrate how the concept of 'family' is constantly reclaimed and recreated by queer communities who find themselves outside traditional definitions of family and thus excluded from both policy and view. Carabine (1996), Richardson (1996), and VanEvery (1996) have all identified how that which is taken as normal is seldom explored, theorised or even questioned. In this thesis I have attempted to move away from that position, and indeed challenge the norms. In doing so I have drawn upon a variety of theorists from a 'queer' school of thought.

Queer families most certainly are not the first model of alternative family (Constantine and Constantine, 1972; Moss Kanter, 1972; and Fonzi, 1972) yet to my mind they may provide the most challenges. Refusing to acknowledge, see or accept that a male and a female with a child may not be a heterosexual unit, or recognise that a same-sex couple may consider themselves to be a family, only serves to perpetuate the myth that this is both the only model and also the 'normal' or 'right' model. If this thesis is to achieve anything at all let it be that dialogue is created; that

boundaries are removed and that heteronormativity is finally challenged.

That most contemporary societies are founded on homophobia and heterosexism seems to be a given fact, and one that has remain unchallenged for far too long. What I have aimed to do in this research, then, is to bring this issue to the fore, suggesting that racism, classism and sexism, although undeniably important, are not the only institutions deserving of feminist social critique. The institution of heterosexuality also ensures the preservation of the status quo: that those other than heterosexual are continuously denied the right to claim equal status. Ratification of the Human Rights Act 1993 by the State can overcome this.

The term 'family', as I have shown throughout this thesis, ironically seems to be both contentious and aspired to, indeed it appears that policy has been directed at privileging family units, albeit heterosexual family units. As I have shown, other groups fall outside this definition and may, as in the British experience, be rendered 'pretend'. And unless they alter the sexuality of their members, as in the case of the families in Maggie French's study (1992) this will continue to be the case. Those in positions of policy creation must recognise both queer individuals and queer families as valid and legitimate, rather than seeking to maintain their position at the bottom of the heap. As activist group Queer Nation are so fond of saying, *"We're here! We're queer! Get over it".*

Postscript

On February 9, 1998, the Ministry of Education released a draft Health and Physical Education Curriculum (Samson, 1998). In this draft document, the Ministry recommend that sexuality education be included as one of six key areas highlighted as important to the health education of school children, beginning with new entrants, encouraging *students to develop confidence about themselves* (Samson, 1998:3). In Chapter Five I outlined how such a move was an imperative factor in ending the marginalisation of queers, and improving the self esteem of queer youth.

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