Doucet, A. and Dunne, G. A. (2000) Heterosexual and Lesbian Mothers Challenging 'Feminine' and 'Male' Conceptions of Mothering, in Andrea O'Reilly and Saron Abbey (eds.), *Mothers and Daughters: Connection, Empowerment and Transformation*. Rowman and Littlefield; pp. 103-120.

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Introduction

The chapter explores how heterosexual and lesbian mothers create new forms of mothering which attempt to challenge and ultimately dismantle patriarchal motherhood. Drawing on our interviews with 97 mothers (and 23 fathers) carried out in Britain during the early to mid-1990's, we employ a wide conception of mothering, one that includes a revitalized conception of caring combined with economic independence. Our chapter aims

to re- conceptualize mothering practices and provide new insights on gender relations. We also hope to contribute towards developing alternative *feminist* conceptions of mothering, as distinct from both a "feminine" conception of mothering and a "male" model of mothering (Rothman, 1989). Our chapter builds from the narratives of the women we interviewed and we inter-weave these narratives with selected writings from feminist theoretical debates on care, gender equality and gender differences.

The chapter arises out of an active dialogue between us, the authors, over the past seven years on the relationship between gender, sexuality, and the organization of work

and family-life. More specifically, it is informed by our involvement in two different research projects, with some aspects of our research methodology in common (see Doucet, 1996; Dunne, 1997b, 1998a). Andrea's work considers the arrangements of heterosexual couples who define and describe themselves as "sharing" parenting, housework and employment (Doucet, 1995a, 1995b, 1996) while Gill explores similar issues in relation to cohabiting lesbian partnerships with dependent children (Dunne, 1997b, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c). One of the key themes, which brought these two studies together, was our shared interest in how gender permeates the lives of couples trying to be "equal". These investigations of divisions of labor in lesbian partnerships and in heterosexual couples who described themselves as sharing parenting took us deeper into an empirical and theoretical understanding of the significance of the social production

of gender differences for shaping outcomes. We share a common interest in illuminating the limitations and possibilities for change offered within a wide range of partnerships. Further, Gill was particularly interested in exploring the extent to which egalitarianism could be sustained in lesbian partnerships when children were present. Given that the women in Gill's study have the advantage of negotiating their relationships within a context of gender similarity, she sought to illuminate what can be achieved when gender difference as a structuring principle is minimalized.

The chapter is organized into three sections. First, we introduce the qualitative research studies that inform this chapter. Second, we draw out two shared findings from our research studies that demonstrate some of the ways in which these mothers challenged patriarchal motherhood and male conceptions of mothering. Finally, in

concluding, we point to some ways of theorizing mothers' efforts to create alternative and critical conceptions of motherhood within patriarchal cultures.

Two Qualitative Research Studies

The Research Samples:

Andrea's study:

Andrea's research was conducted with a "critical case study" of 23 heterosexual British couples with dependent children who identified themselves as "consciously attempting to share the work and responsibility for housework and childcare". These were *not* couples who claimed to be involved in "50/50 parenting" (Kimball, 1988) or "co-parenting" (Ehrensaft, 1988) as she was interested in household variation in the *meaning* and *structure* of sharing with regard to household work. Furthermore, the emphasis was on socially situated "choice" rather than necessity, such as in cases of male unemployment, since research suggests that the latter most often revert back to traditional divisions of labor once the man is employed full-time once again (Radin, 1982, 1988; Russell, 1983, 1987; Morris, 1990; Wheelock, 1990). Her initial interest in speaking to these couples was to investigate where gender differences were most resistant to change in households who were attempting to minimise strict gender divisions of labor[1]. The "sharing" couples that Andrea interviewed exhibited enormous variation in the meanings attached to, and the structured patterns of, "sharing" housework and childcare. It is important to point out that seven of the mothers accepted gender differentiation in parenting, housework and employment and thus, for them, "sharing" meant working within these "natural" gender differences. As Karen, a part-time lab

technician, puts it: "Men are men and women are women. *And they're different and they do different things*". The other mothers challenged gender differences and attempted to create patterns where gender differences were eliminated or minimized. This proved to be much more difficult than originally anticipated, partly because of the gendered social institutions and social structures within which they lived their lives. In spite of the constraints, 16 of the 23 women struggled to create new patterns of mothering.

Gill's study:

Gill's research is based on the experiences of 37 lesbian couples living in six major English cities[2]. A wide range of strategies was employed to recruit participants, with snowballing through different sources being the most successful. The only selection criteria used were that respondents be currently cohabiting and that dependent children were present. Interestingly, most respondents had become parents via donor insemination and were raising their children as a joint project. As both parents usually thought of themselves as mothers and/or were biological mothers (in 40% of households) the term `birth-mother' is used to describe the biological mother of the child/ren or youngest child and `co-partner' to describe the partner. Further, the majority had at least one child under five years old, thus providing the opportunity to explore arrangements at a point in the life cycle when polarization is often at its most extreme for heterosexual parents[3].

While there was some variation in the two samples in terms of ethnicity and class, participants in both studies were predominantly white, well educated and middle class - although many came from working class origins and had experienced social mobility. In relation to Gill's study, educational and occupational advantage among her sample was theoretically predictable given the material dimension to the construction of sexual

identity. A similar observation can be made about issues of gender equity and the challenging of traditional gender ideologies for Andrea's study. Moreover, the social class composition of her sample should not, however, be surprising given that patterns for sharing housework and childcare were relatively rare in Britain in the late 1980's and early 1990's (e.g. Brannen and Moss, 1991; Morris, 1990; Gregson and Lowe, 1993, 1994).

Methodology:

Both studies employed a diversity of methods, mainly qualitative, in order to gain a sense of how employment, parenting and housework were allocated between partners. A semi-structured joint interview (approximately 2-3 hours) -which revolved around the use of a visual participatory method of data collection called the Household Portrait technique (see Doucet, 1996, Dunne, 1997b) - was conducted for each partnership in the two studies. These were followed by individual interviews. In addition, each of Gill's participants completed time-task allocation diaries for a period of seven days. Andrea analyzed her interviews by using an adapted version of the "voice centered relational method" of data analysis (see Mauthner and Doucet, 1998; Doucet, 1998) while Gill's method of analysis was informed by a grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) (see Dunne, 1999).

Findings:

As our conversations about our two research projects progressed, it soon became clear that sexuality did mediate gender with respect to the organization of work in the home and in the labour market, so that both kinds of labor were more symmetrically

balanced or "equal" in lesbian households. Moreover, we observed that the majority of women in both studies shared a common commitment to taking responsibility for young children. This was particularly revealing in Andrea's study where couples presented themselves as "consciously attempting to share housework and childcare". Nevertheless in spite of good intentions, the gendered discourses, the social institutions, and social structures within which these couples lived out their lives proved more pressing than had been anticipated. Meanwhile Gill, whose previous work had examined issues of gender, sexuality and employment (1997a) in relation to childless/childfree lesbians, was initially taken aback by her respondents' commitment towards caring for their children. She had anticipated that most would resolve the contradiction between the demands of income generation and childcare by making use of public/private childcare provision. As the different kinds of work that we are examining - earning a living, managing and maintaining a household and caring for children - are all essential foundations for living, we then begin to think about why it is that women, rather than men, retain this commitment, while also reflecting upon how to make sense of, the persistent link between women and care giving. Our thinking led us through the maze of literature on the theoretical relationship between gender equality and gender differences (see also Doucet, 1995b) and to two theoretical points that we elaborate on, in conjunction with our findings, in the next section of this chapter. We came to these theoretical points through our interpretations of women's narratives and thus we will weave the empirical findings and the theoretical points together.

A feminist conception of caring and mothering:

Marianne Hirsch points out in the Introduction to *The Mother/Daughter Plot* (1989) that many of the "daughterly" white feminists being raised in the 1960's and 1970's had grown into mothers who struggled to reconcile their continued ambivalence towards their mothers' situations with their own mothering practices and experiences. While some of the women in our studies expressed these sentiments of ambivalence towards their own mothers' caring, what was even greater was their critical questioning of culturally and socially defined "mothering scripts"(Willard, 1988) and the gender scripts which define particular conceptions of caring practices and identities for mothers. These scripts, as Hilary Graham has pointed out, hold that "caring defines both the identity and activity of women in Western society" (Graham, 1983:30). The majority of the women in both studies struggled with the dilemma of wanting to question dominant feminine conceptions of caring, which precluded women's autonomy and independence, while also recognizing the value of care work and mother-work. In the end they were attempting to resolve a classic dilemma that has been grappled with by feminist theorists, that of focusing on the positive side of care rather than its frequently portrayed "down side" (Rhode, 1990:6). In this sense, we would argue that the majority of women in our studies were rejecting a *feminine* conception of care and embracing and developing a *feminist* conception of care. This distinction between a feminine and a feminist approach to caring is well articulated by Joan Tronto. She writes:

".... the *feminine approach* to caring carries the burden of accepting traditional gender divisions in a society that devalues what women do.... *A feminist approach* to caring, in contrast, needs to begin by broadening our understanding of what caring for

others means, both in terms of the moral questions it raises and in terms of *the need to restructure broader social and political institutions if caring for others is to be made a more central part of the everyday lives of everyone in society*" (Tronto, 1989:184-189; emphasis added).

Tronto also highlights that "feminist theory will also need to describe what constitutes good caring" (Tronto, 1989:184; see also Jagger, 1990). The majority of women in both studies (16/23 in Andrea's and all of Gill's) were providing everyday examples of feminist examples of "good caring". They reconceptualised caring so that its positive qualities were maintained, and also transcended, so as to balance caring with autonomy, dependence and independence.

Andrea's study:

Although the women in Andrea's study were grappling with the tensions between feminine and feminist conceptions of caring, they were also confronted with the dilemma of living with male partners who were largely not involved in these reflections. Or if they were, these were reflections that stopped short of questioning the primacy of employment versus home life. Of course, nobody said this in direct ways, but her interpretations of the individual interviews with men brought her to these views.

In the same way, even where women were emphasizing that a career was very important to them, they also had not relinquished traditionally female domains such as caring and domestic responsibility. Mandy, a University administrator, points to how she combines her need for economic independence with caring. She begins by saying:

"But one important imperative for me, and I wouldn't like to quantify it or put it in a blanket, is to feel okay about money. To me, money is security. And my money is security. I think I would feel immensely uncomfortable living off somebody else's salary".

At the same time, she also says that: "My ideal world would be that I worked probably ¾ time with the hours arranged so that I could meet Jessica from school".

After speaking about her wish to combine some degree of autonomy with caring, Mandy notes that she is also bothered by the fact that it is mainly her, and not her husband, who is thinking along these lines:

"I think the other thing is that I would like to achieve a better mutual understanding with Christian about the relative importance of our two jobs so that we don't have the misunderstandings that we do. We still have tussles about whether or not one's persons' work is prioritized over the other's. He feels that I prioritize mine. And I *know* that he prioritizes his."

While it was the case that the men in Andrea's research contributed a great deal to the children and to the domestic sphere, women retained the overall responsibility for domestic life and this posed tensions and difficulties as they attempted to balance full time paid employment with home life. In the end, five of the 16 women accepted this state of affairs and arranged their hours into part-time work while the children were young. For the other eleven women, it was a continual source of discussion and negotiation as women coaxed and battled with men to get more involved. In the case of Laura and Stephen, the couple with the longest marriage in the study (27 years), Laura describes in meticulous detail how every five years "she went on strike" with certain

aspects of household life and how she just pressed on with her demands as the years went on and as she moved up

the career ladder from nurse to health visitor, to college lecturer in health studies. With some weariness, she says that she and Stephen finally arrived at a position where she felt more comfortable with their respective roles in caring for the children. She says:

"In fact for the first time I feel that if anything ever happened tome, I know that they would be okay. I'm sure they would have been okay before - I'm sure Stephen would have been reasonably coping at an earlier stage. But now I *know* that I could disappear from the face of the earth and they'd be all right".

Gill's study:

In the case of Gill's households where parenting was described as a joint project, both `birth-mothers' and their partners shared this responsibility for the overall care of the children, or at least they expressed that they were trying to share it. Cay, birth mother of two young boys describes how she sees their approach to parenting differing from their understanding of heterosexual arrangements:

"It’s just so much more equal, the responsibilities are shared. Like with het friends with children the same age... like Simon, and he's a new man and he's very involved and very supportive, but he doesn't say to his partner, `I'd like to go out on Wednesday night, is that OK with you?' He just says, `I'm going out Wednesday night.' It appears that it's up to the woman to sort out childcare. Whereas if one of us is going to go out we discuss it first because it is not a given right”.

Like the rest of the sample, they describe a flexible approach to the organization of work in the home with both partners entering the rhythm of domestic life - which was

supported in the diary analysis (see detailed analysis in Dunne 1998a,b). This is understandable given their similarities as women and the absence of gender scripts to inform practice. Cay's partner Vivien, who had been married and had a grown-up son, describes some advantages of their arrangements:

" I think what we do is try and expand the idea of roles... What we tend to do is swap them around all the time and we share a lot of things. So one minute I'll be doing this sort of thing and then Cay will do the same thing at other times. And now [that I am in full-time employment] I don't come back - like I was married for quite a long time and when my husband came home from work, as far as he was concerned the day was finished in terms of work, whereas when I come home from work... I take off my coat and assess what's going on and act - get on with it. If they're in the bath I go and get their pajamas or whatever. And you don't have that kind of demarcation line... I can enjoy the mothering in a new and exciting way, because even though I was in a relationship I didn't have the sort of freedom and sharing that I have in this relationship, so I had the weight of responsibility for the child squarely on my shoulders.... So I felt I couldn't allow myself so much time to actually enjoy just being a mother".

Vivien's words illuminate a feminist concept of caring which highlights the pleasures associated with caring in a social context where assumptions about who-does- what are less fixed and where each partner also has a certain degree of autonomy. The approach of these mothers to sharing domestic work and their valuing of the pleasure and work of care helps explain why both partners in this study were able and willing to devote a far greater amount of time to childcare than is usual in heterosexual partnerships (see Dunne 1998a).

Challenging a "Male Model" of Parenting, Housework and Employment

While sixteen of the mothers in Andrea's study and all of the mothers in Gill's sample were not only challenging patriarchal motherhood, they were, almost without fail, also questioning a male work norm" and a "male model of employment" (Sassoon, 1987:31). In this sense, they were giving life to some of the theoretical insights developed by feminist authors who have been critical of some of the tenants of liberal feminism and "equality feminism". That is, although the equal rights tradition has been important as a theoretical tool and a political strategy for women's struggles to gain equal entry into and access to the rewards of the public world of work and politics, it also has its limitations. As argued by Elizabeth Meehan and Selma Sevenhuijsen:

"The employment of equality as a concept and as a goal supposes a standard or a norm which, in practice, tends to be defined as what is characteristic of the most powerful groups in society" (Meehan and Sevenhuijsen, 1991; see also Bacchi, 1990; Young, 1990; Rhode, 1989, 1990).

In a similar vein, Deborah Rhode has eloquently argued for the creation of a "society truly committed to caretaking values"; this would be achieved "not only through fundamental changes in employment structures and welfare policies", but also through a recognition that the important questions at stake are "*not only of gender equality but also of cultural priorities*" (Rhode, 1990:210-211; emphasis added).

Andrea's study:

For even the most successful of the career women in Andrea's sample, whose salaries outweighed those of their male partners, there was still a sense - particularly

while the children were in their pre-school years- that employment should be balanced with home life and moreover that the workplace should recognize the value of parenting. Marie is one of the highest earners of the sample, earning 28,000 pounds (approximately $46,00 U.S dollars/year) as a tax consultant. Her views have changed gradually, particularly after she had her second child:

"When I first had Oliver, you know, it was very important to me that I didn't, that having the children didn't interfere with my work because it mattered to me that people at work could see that I was able to carry out my job now. Well, I'm actually coming to the view, well, you know, *work shouldn't be like that*. Women shouldn't have to, you know, work environments should actually respect the fact that you're a parent... I know that would be viewed detrimentally. I feel I should say that the children are important and that Jake (partner) should be able to say it as his work too. People's awareness of the fact that families should be accommodated with work should increase by doing that. I feel that's a more important battle really. I know I can carry on my job *perfectly well* having children. But I mean I shouldn't feel awkward about wanting to go home early one day because I want to do things with Oliver or having a day off. I shouldn't feel that I've got to sort of not tell people that I'm doing something with my children. They feel it's sort of sapping my enthusiasm for my job. *That's ridiculous*.... More fundamentally, men think that if you've got children, you change as a person. And I have changed as a person. But I don't think it makes me less capable of doing my job well. I think, in fact, the demands of having family and holding down a job are strengthening things. They mean you've got to compartmentalize your time even more. I think it means I work better when I'm at work

because I have to switch off and I have to get it done and get home. And I want to work efficiently so I get my job done in the day".

In a similar way, Mandy points to the dangers for women in assuming that men have an ideal situation with regard to work: "What happens in the workplace doesn't let men do what would achieve equality for them in the family sphere. And it's now also preventing women from doing that."

While women across the sample voice similar reservations, these sentiments about balancing home life and paid employment were clearly gender differentiated. That is, although the overwhelming majority of full-time employed women sought to achieve a better balance between paid work and child rearing, these expressions were conspicuously absent from all of the men interviewed. Many of the men did comment that they wished they could take sick leave days to be with their children as well as on how they would like to have the opportunity to take paternity leave within a supportive working environment. However, not one of the 23 men interviewed mentioned the lack of fit between the working day and the children's school hours. Joe and Lilly, for example, discuss how they combine two full-time careers with caring for their daughter. Lilly says that " I do feel guilty sometimes and if Hannah (daughter) is having a problem, then I think, well, would she be having it if I was looking after her?" On the other hand, her partner Joe says that he doesn't feel guilty about working full-time because "I suppose it's expected that the man goes out to work".

Only two men slowed down their careers around the children but this was due to their partner's insistence that one parent should do so and since both of these men were self employed (with variable earnings), it made sense that they did rather than their

partners who were in full time high paid jobs. Both of these men came to appreciate the gains they had achieved by being the primary caregiver of young children as well as the importance of politically and socially recognizing caring as "work". In the words of Adam: " I enjoy the fact that being at home with the baby is just so unquestionably necessary as work". Nevertheless, Adam and all the other men in the sample still felt the hold of "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell, 1995). That is, they constantly assessed how they were holding up under the gaze of other men and "what other men think". This left men in a position whereby as much as they may have desired to do so, they never fully crossed the dividing lines between traditional fathering and new conceptions of fathering where they might have found something in common with feminist conceptions of mothering. In the case of Andrea's couples, there was, thus, a strong over-aching sense across the entire sample that mothers suffered from guilt if they were not spending enough time with their children while fathers experienced guilt if they were not putting enough energy into their jobs. Ultimately this proved to be difficult for women. Because men were not taking on a comparable share of the care and responsibility for the children, women were left to compensate and this only deepened their feelings that both their mothering *and* their commitments to employment were being compromised. In questioning malestream notions of the distinct separation of home and work while parenting with partners who did not share this critical stance, women were left to deal with the frustrations of deciding to "opt out" of the male model or remain within it. Five of the 16 women opted out while the remaining continued to work full-time hours within a predominantly "male model" of work which made it difficult for women, and men, to parent.

Gill's study:

For Gills' couples a high level of flexibility and even-handedness characterized the allocation of employment responsibilities between partners, regardless of the age of the children. Being a birth-mother, or the birth-mother of the youngest child was a poor predictor for employment differences (hours, status, pay etc.) between partners. Their thinking about employment was shaped by a view that both partners had a right to, and would benefit from, an identity beyond the home, and that level of pay was a poor indicator of the value of work performed. It was unusual to find one partner's `career' taking priority over the other's. A strong sense that caring for a child was important, demanding and pleasurable work balanced this, however. For example, Gill asked both birth mothers and co-parents whether the arrival of children had influenced their view on the centrality of paid employment. Helen and Maggie are both part-time social workers, who divide the care of their three-year-old son between them. Maggie explains her changing attitudes to paid work:

"It has changed, yes. Yes, and work is not as important to me now. I think the original reason for working part-time was to share Paul (son). But actually I'm not sure now even if I'd want to go back to full time - probably not back to being a totally work person, which would be stressful and horrible... The motivation behind it was to do with Paul, and to make sure that he was equally cared for - because neither Helen nor I wanted to be either the one that was at work or the one that was at home all the time".

What is interesting to note is that Maggie is not Paul's biological mother. Importantly, this shift in attitude towards paid work was common for both birth-mothers and co-parents alike. With persistent regularity respondents spoke of seeking balance in

their lives. Thus it was not unusual to find both partners in half time employment, particularly when they had pre-school age children, and this was the `ideal' for many other couples in the study. For example, one working-class couple with children from a previous marriage, where neither had formal qualifications, bought a catering van and each worked half time selling hot dogs so that one was always at home for the children.

Another common approach was to take turns in developing paid work opportunities and taking `career' breaks. Within reason, they were prepared to experience a reduced standard of living, and indeed many did, to enable what they perceived to be a fairer outcome. For the mothers in Gill's study, respondents' decisions about how to balance childcare with paid employment seem to confound `rational' economic models, which see traditional divisions of labor as the logical outcome of men's superior earning potential. This kind of model illuminates the taken-for-granted nature of privileging employment considerations over caring. Further, in Gill's households it was not unusual for the partner with the higher paid job to reduce her hours of employment. This was often seen to make sense because that person held more power in relation to their paid-working life. This again exposes the masculine thinking underpinning rational economic models (see Edwards and Duncan, 1996).

Furthermore, the experiential insights gained through lack of specialization facilitated the development of empathy. Thus, the performance of paid work, the domestic routine and childcare afforded no mystery. This view is well summarized by Louise. She and her partner Thelma each have half time employment and share the care of their two pre-school aged children between them:

"I think that because you have been through the situation yourself you have a real understanding. If you are at home all day with a baby you cannot think of anything that is more demanding than that or more tiring. But if you have been out at work all day you cannot think of anything more tiring than that. But because we have done both, we can really understand. There wouldn't be an argument about who has had the hardest day because we both had a very clear understanding of the experience of being at home all day and the experience of being at work all day. They are both very demanding in different days".

Finally Thelma sums up the advantages of both partners working with a more even balance:

"I think we go about things in our own way, we don't have the role definition. We get the best of both worlds really. We get to continue along the road with our careers and also to spend time as a family and to enjoy the time with the children. Disadvantages? We could earn more money I suppose if we worked full-time, but then it takes away the point of having children I would say".

Conclusions:

Karin Davis (1989) in her Swedish study of women, work and time argues that when women have the option to work part-time, particularly where part-time work is not equated with poorly paid, insecure, or temporary work, they may reap many personal and political benefits. She writes:

"In one sense, women choosing and taking part-time work, and thereby being instrumental in bringing about one of the major changes that has occurred in the last twenty years, can be seen as a rejection, on their part, of wage labour as the over-riding

structure and an unconditional adherence to male time. It is a strategy... for women to retain the totality of their daily lives... (B)y limiting the time spent in wage labour, a soil is provided *whereby visions of what is important to fight and strive for can find a space*" (Davies,1989:208; emphasis added).

Ultimately, however, it was Gill's couples who were best able to find ways whereby they could follow these "*visions*" and "*find a space*" for "*what is important fight and strive for*". The women in Andrea's study did this largely in conjunction with other mothers, but they constantly found themselves in a double bind whereby they wanted to reconceptualize caring and yet to do so would mean giving up their simultaneous goals for achieving "equality" with their male partners. While's Gill's couples certainly suffered inequalities with their male colleagues and friends, they nevertheless had a "feminine space" in which to mother. This was a space that existed somewhere between traditional conception of the feminine and masculine, somewhere between equality and difference, and indeed *beyond equality* (see Cornell, 1991; Irigaray, 1985).

The class implications of our arguments cannot be under-estimated. The 16 women in Andrea's study who were most successfully challenging gender differentiation and the majority of women in Gill's sample were educationally advantaged. Thus these creative options and sets of negotiations may not be open to working class, or economically disadvantaged households, in the same way. Nevertheless, the argument remains that the absence of gender differences and gender scripts was an asset for Gill's couples, both working class and middle class. That is, female partners did not have to make their decisions around mothering and employment

in relation to the major gender differences in pay and status as well as within the hegemonic masculinities that face most heterosexual couples.

In this chapter we have argued that rather than move from a patriarchal notion of motherhood to a "male" way of mothering, the women we interviewed sought to balance work and home life in ways that recognized the value of economic independence as well as emotional inter-dependence. Our findings suggest that mothers who are attempting to translate a "feminine" conception of mothering and caring into "feminist" ones are creating critical and strategic practices of mothering. In doing so these mothers, particularly the lesbian mothers in Gill's sample, are also re-creating gender. Judith Butler has written that: "In an important sense, gender is not traceable to a definable origin because it is itself an originating activity incessantly taking place" (Butler, 1986). The mothers in both studies, but particularly those in Gill's research, are "incessantly" re-creating mothering and re-creating gender. One of the reasons for the imbalance in parenting and caring in heterosexual relationships lay with fathers' resistance or inability to mirror the mothers' versatility with regard to balancing paid employment with the work and pleasures of home life. Our work underlines the necessity to problematize the centrality of paid employment in the lives of men, and associated discourses of hegemonic masculinities, rather than simply the desire for women to care.

We both owe a debt of gratitude to the individuals who agreed to be part of our studies and who so patiently shared their wisdom and precious time with us. The research reported in this chapter was funded by the Commonwealth Association of Canada and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council in Andrea’s case and by the British

Economic and Social Research Council (reference number R00023 4649) in Gill's project. For encouragement and guidance in their projects both authors thank Bob Blackburn as well as, in Andrea's research, Carol Gilligan, and in Gill's, Henrietta Moore. Particular thanks to Gill's overworked and underpaid, yet always enthusiastic colleagues, Kim Perren, Esther Dermott and Jackie Beer who assisted her project over the three years.

1. The couples in Andrea' study were found through snowball sampling through varied community, employment, and parenting organizations in the villages, towns and small cities of southeastern England. All households had children (between one and four children, and all children over the age of one-year (Entwistle and Doering, 1980). Although the majority of respondents came from working class backgrounds, the sample was largely "middle-class", with 87 percent (n=20) of the sample having educational qualifications, technical or academic, beyond secondary school. Average individual earnings were 16,800 pounds ($27,400 US dollars per annum). The majority of individuals were employed by the public sector – in teaching, nursing, health services, social work, postal work, and clerical and administrative work within educational institutions.

2. Overall, parenting was depicted as jointly shared between partners in 30 households (80%) - generally their children were described as having two mothers. Where parenting was not a `joint project' the reasons given usually related to the relationship being formed when children were older. Respondents tended to be well educated - 70% hold degrees or professional qualifications and occupationally advantaged - 78% were professionals, administrators or managers (again see Dunne 1997a for discussion of links between

lesbian lifestyle and educational and occupational empowerment). They were usually employed in the public sector - as teachers, health and social workers. Some were self-employed in craft occupations, or in several cases as cleaners.

3. It is also important to add that some of these partnerships had men involved, such as in cases where donor fathers were also involved in caring, albeit as junior partners].

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