

Promising Sameness?

Lesbian Couples in Sweden at the Transition to Motherhood

Madeleine Eriksson Kirsch



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Academic dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology at Stockholm University to be publicly defended on Wednesday 28 May 2025 at 10.00 in hörsal 9, Universitetsvägen 10 D.

Abstract

This thesis is about lesbian couples in Sweden and their transition to first-time-motherhood. The overarching purpose is to explore how women in lesbian couples understand, explain and reason about their transition to motherhood. The analysis draws on two rounds of interviews: pre-birth with 40 women (both partners in 20 lesbian couples) and post-birth with 23 of these women (about 2–4 years after the first interview took place). The thesis explores how they reached the decision of which one of them would carry their (first) child (Study I), their parental leave plans in relation to dominant meanings of care and equal parenting (Study II), and what meanings of couple (in)equality and motherhood that underpin their reasonings before and after becoming mothers (Study III and Study IV). In all of the studies, the analysis focuses on how the Swedish gender equality discourse is articulated and negotiated in the women's narratives.

Due to its hegemonic position in Sweden, the gender equality discourse shapes dominant understandings of couple equality and equal parenting. However, the discourse is underpinned by a heteronormative focus on couples and (in)equalities. The thesis analyzes how this dominant discourse limit and enable certain meanings and interpretations for women in lesbian relationships of what 'goes on' in their families. For example, the findings indicate that women in lesbian couples can perceive themselves as equal from the onset, simply by being two women. Thus, creating families outside of the heterosexual nuclear family instills a certain optimism in the women's reasoning and imaginaries. In the thesis, the optimism is theorized in relation to public narratives of couple inequalities constructed around heterosexual couples, and the particular challenges a mother faces in relation to parenting with a father. In the interviews, the women would often draw on cultural scripts about 'absent fathers' and 'ever-present caring mothers' in which they situate themselves – as well as their partner – in the latter group. As the four studies show, this position is both productive and limiting. Productive in the sense that many women reworked dominant meanings of care, parental leave and couple equality. Limiting in the sense that they explicitly talked about lacking available scripts for their specific family constructions. Lacking scripts, and models, was however only perceived as an obstacle first after they had become parents. In the pre-birth interviews, the scriptless scenarios was often imagined as an advantage. In other words, while be(com)ing two present and caring parents appear to solve the immediate issue of equal parenting – as presented in the Swedish gender equality discourse – it comes with a particular set of challenges on its own. The thesis also illustrates how pre-birth imaginaries may change across the transition to parenthood for lesbian couples.

Keywords: *Lesbian couples, Motherhood, Gender Equality, Sweden.*

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To Malin and Lasse

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Before I became a PhD student, most stories of PhD life sounded lonely. To some extent, this has also been true for me—not least because I have worked a lot from my home in Uppsala. But there are a number of people that have made my journey less lonely, and two have certainly made me question the popular belief about “the absent supervisor”. I have been blessed with two highly present supervisors: Marie Evertsson and Fanny Ambjörnsson, none of whom I knew in person before they became my supervisors. Knowing them only by their academic work, I knew that they were excellent researchers—how lucky I am that they also turned out to be excellent people: kind, funny and a little bit *gränslösa*.

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Madeleine Eriksson Kirsch
Uppsala, April 2025

List of Studies

- I. Eriksson Kirsch, M. & Evertsson, M. (2023). Taking turns: Lesbian couples' decision of (first) birth mother in Sweden. *Journal of Family Studies*, 29(4), 1865–1883. [Reprinted with the permission of the publisher.]
- II. Eriksson Kirsch, M. (Revised and resubmitted). Who takes care of the caregiver? Parental leave plans among lesbian mothers-to-be.
- III. Eriksson Kirsch, M. (Conditional accept in *Gender & Society*). “We are seriously two equals”: Lesbian mothers-to-be reason about in/equalities and sharing motherhood in Sweden.
- IV. Eriksson Kirsch, M. (Submitted manuscript). Norms wanted? Lesbian couples in Sweden after the transition to motherhood.

Author contributions: Study II, III and IV are sole-authored. Study I was co-authored with Marie Evertsson, who's contribution to the article is approximately 20 percent. The topic was jointly decided upon, I made the main analysis and the first drafts. The final draft was co-written.

Contents

Acknowledgements	i
List of Studies	v
Preface	1
Introduction.....	3
Research aims and questions	6
Outline of the thesis.....	7
A note on terminology.....	8
Background	9
The Swedish gender equality project	9
LGBTQ+ families in Sweden: the times we are in	11
Previous research.....	15
The transition to parenthood and gender equality in family sociology.....	15
Lesbian and queer households in the literature.....	17
Theoretical framework	23
A relational approach.....	23
Heteronormativity and culturally intelligible scripts	24
Motherhood: ideologies and norms	26
Methodology	29
Background of the research design.....	29
Call(ing) for participants.....	29
The participating women	31
The interviews	34
Analytical approaches	38
Positionality and reflections on the insider position	41
Ethical considerations.....	44
Summaries of the studies	47
Study I	47
Study II	48
Study III	49
Study IV	50
Concluding remarks.....	51
References	57
Sammanfattning på svenska	71
Attachments.....	73

Preface

Are lesbian couples more equal than heterosexual couples? The question has hounded me throughout the years I have been working on this thesis. Upon speaking about my doctoral research, this question has been asked by friends, co-workers, strangers, and family members alike. It has been assumed to be part of my ‘hypothesis’, or that I at least will find an answer to this question. I have reasons to believe that some of those who open this book will do so in the hope of finding out. I am sorry to disappoint you. But thank you for showing me the importance of my research being done.

Upon analyzing the 63 interviews that form the empirical basis of this thesis, it is evident that this question troubles women in lesbian couples as well. For some, perceiving themselves to be more equal than heterosexual couples seems to be part of their self-image. For others, it is part of what they see as others’ expectations of them. Either way, ‘the heterosexual couple’—both real and imagined—is influential as a compass to lesbian couples’ everyday life, their decision-making processes in parenthood, and how they make sense of and discuss all of this.

Throughout the years I have spent with this research project, I have at various timepoints tried to decouple my research and my couples from heterosexual families and “heterosexual cultures” (Ahmed, 2014). Truly, I welcome research that manages to do so, but I also conclude that as long as these heterosexual imaginaries are present in queer and lesbian narratives, we must “stay with the trouble” (Haraway, 2016).

Introduction

Karin (follow-up interview): Some things are not different [from heterosexual families] at all. I mean, we also have to divide the responsibility and all that. But I think we have a different understanding of breastfeeding, for example, if you also have done it already or are capable of doing it. There's a different understanding. Yeah, I don't know how to put it. We are more alike, there is no... We do not easily fall into ideas about what is feminine and masculine, because there is no... We do it ourselves.

Madeleine: How do you mean?

Karin: The division of who does what or so. There is no social norm to follow.

Karin is one of the 40 women I interviewed for the purpose of this thesis: a longitudinal study about lesbian couples' transition to motherhood. The first time I met Karin, she was pregnant with her and her partner Katarina's first child. By the time I meet Karin for a follow-up interview, Katarina had recently given birth to their second child. Hence, they had both experienced pregnancy, birth-giving and—as she highlights—breastfeeding. In the quote above, Karin is comparing her lesbian family to (her general sense of) heterosexual parent families. While recognizing that she and her partner, like all parents with children, must make decisions and negotiate responsibilities, she underscores a difference compared to heterosexual families by emphasizing a similarity *within* the lesbian configuration. In this short example, Karin repeats the phrase “there is no” three times—indicating a felt absence of difference within the couple (“we are more alike”), an absence of scripts (“we do it ourselves”), and an absence of “social norms to follow”.

Like Karin, many of the women I interviewed sensed that their relationships and their everyday lives take place outside of certain scripts and norms. Having two children and carrying one each was, by far, the most common plan among the 20 lesbian couples I interviewed during their pregnancies with their first child. Among the 12 families that I revisited, eight had also proceeded with that plan: four families had already given birth to their second child, while the other four families were pregnant.¹

Having two (potential) birth-givers in a couple is undeniably a significant difference from the cis-gendered heterosexual nuclear family. Together with having two wombs within the couple, the women's narratives also centered around a perceived advantage of their shared status as two mothers(-to-be), as

¹ Both partners in 11 couples were interviewed separately. In the 12th couple, only one of the partners participated in a follow-up interview. The follow-up interviews were conducted when the first child was between 2 and 4 years of age.

opposed to a mother and a father. What do these embodied and social similarities promise for the couple? And why is it perceived as promising in the first place?

The focus of the present thesis is the transition to parenthood from the perspective of lesbian couples. The transition to parenthood is a life-changing passage that has been of major interest among feminist scholars and sociologists for decades (Faircloth, 2021; Fox, 2009; Grunow and Evertsson, 2016; 2019; Miller, 2007; Twamley, 2024). The enduring relevance of ‘the transition to parenthood’, as an avenue of scholarly inquiry, is owing to that the transition tends to exacerbate gendered inequalities at the labor market as well as in the home for heterosexual couples. This is also the case in Sweden, despite a long-standing welfare state in which ‘family-friendly’ policy and gender equality ideology is strong (Haar, 2009).

The work–family conflict is often regarded a central struggle of interest to feminists and family sociologists. Here, parental leave has turned into a “symbolic issue” (Björk, 2017) for gender equality (see also Almqvist and Duvander, 2014). This is certainly the case in Sweden, where parental insurance is the hallmark of the state’s gender equality project. Since its introduction in the 1970s, the policy has been revised multiple times with the explicit goal of increasing fathers’ uptake of leave (Johansson and Klinth, 2008). A recent report (Swedish Social Insurance Agency, 2021) shows that for children born between 2014 and 2018, 18 percent of heterosexual couples shared parental leave equally (which is defined as a 60–40 share). In the same report, it is stated that for lesbian parents with children born during the same period, the number of couples who shared leave equally was 41 percent. In other words, it is more than twice as common for lesbian couples to share the paid days equally.

Indeed, lesbian couples are often spotlighted as forerunners in ‘achieving’ equal relationships (Moberg, 2016). This is in part due to statistical reports like the one mentioned above, but it is also part of cultural narratives in which women-to-women relationships are seen as inherently egalitarian (e.g., Ovesen, 2021; see also Giorgio, 2001). To some extent, this narrative is rooted in lesbian feminism (Barnes, 2011), but it is also reinforced by hegemonic gender equality discourses.

Lesbian families’ ‘high status’ in the Swedish gender equality discourse is interesting from a historical perspective, given that lesbian couples have not had parental rights up until relatively recently in Sweden. Over a short period of time, then, lesbian parent families have gone from being seen as illegitimate to being viewed as the vanguards in the Swedish gender equality project (see also Dahl, 2018a).

Since 1995, when registered partnership was made available to same-sex couples, a number of legislative changes have been made to include and accommodate same-sex couples, such as: the right to adopt (2003), access to assisted reproduction in public clinics (2005), and gender-neutral marriage

(2009) (Malmquist, 2015). The increasingly large group of married, lesbian two-parent families are indicative of these sociocultural and legal changes (Kolk and Andersson, 2020; Dahl, 2022; Evertsson and Boye, 2018).

Before the legal and material realizations, many children were already living with lesbian (and gay) parents: either in step-families after heterosexual coupledom, or in lesbian and queer ‘de novo’ families, pursued through insemination abroad or in the home (Norrhem et al., 2015; Ryan-Flood, 2005; Zetterqvist Nelson, 2007). Prior to legislation, it was exceedingly common for lesbian couples to form families and share custody with a gay man or couple in so-called “four-leafed clover families” (*fyrklöverfamiljer*) (Rydström, 2008). Interestingly, this was seen as a distinctly Swedish kind of lesbian parenting, influenced by the gender equality discourse and norms around participatory fatherhood (see, for instance, Ryan-Flood, 2005).

When the parenting laws changed in the beginning of the millennium, the laws did not expand the number of legal guardians a child can have. The limit has always been, and is still, two legally recognized parents per child. Many parents in ‘clover families’ are therefore still not recognized by law in Sweden. Hence, the parenting laws that were introduced did not accommodate the kinds of queer families that already existed (e.g., children who lived in shared custody across lesbian and gay households), but rather reinforced the heteronormative two-parent model. Certainly, changes in legislation have mattered for how queer reproduction and kinship is approached and imagined, especially for lesbian couples (Dahl, 2020).

Today, it is believed that most queer and lesbian couples in Sweden embark on parenthood without involving cisgendered men as fathers (Dahl, 2022). This is also reflected among the couples in focus of my thesis: none of the interviewed women mentioned that they had considered, let alone desired, to involve a third or fourth parent. The fact that the vast majority of couples had conceived using reproductive clinics in Sweden, with donors who are unknown to them, reflect how the legislative changes trod a now well-established path (see also Malmquist, 2015a).

Most of the couples interviewed for this study were living in white, monogamous marriages, and all couples intended to co-parent only with each other.² From a critical perspective, the couples in focus can be read as largely assimilated and *homonormative*—i.e., their family-making resembles a heteronormative model (McCann and Monaghan, 2019; see also Halberstam, 2005). For the thesis, I am inspired by Ahmed’s (2014: 152–155) conclusion about the assimilation versus transgression debate, namely seeing lesbian parent families as living “in close proximity to heterosexual cultures” while “in-

² This was not an intentional sampling, and is rather reflective of those who felt spoken to by the call for participants. See *Methodology* for a discussion on recruitment and on the group of participants.

habiting norms differently”. This pragmatic approach recognizes that the couples in focus are homonormative in the sense that they are becoming parents in socially and legally recognizable—and thus, normative—ways, while, at the same time, they do not materialize the heteronormative ideal of a mother and a father.

To speak with Ahmed (2014), I view the Swedish gender equality discourse as a particular form of “heterosexual culture” that produces scripts and norms for contemporary notions of coupledness, parenthood and equality. As indicated above, lesbian parent families have recently—and rapidly—gained a particular status in the Swedish gender equality discourse. Drawing on critical feminist perspectives, I recognize the Swedish gender equality project and discourse as heteronormative, within which the intimate and professional relationships between women and men are in focus (Dahl, 2005; Magnusson et al., 2008; Martinsson et al., 2016). Across the four studies that encompasses my thesis, I have puzzled around the following question: how do the couples in focus navigate the norms and scripts that projects them as an ideal, while at the same time is not reflective of their family model of two mothers(-to-be)?

Research aims and questions

The overarching aim of the thesis is to explore how women in lesbian couples in Sweden understand, explain, and reason about their transition to motherhood. Drawing on interviews with women in lesbian couples, both pre-birth and post-birth, I have focused on how they make sense of their processes and becomings, with a particular focus on what these sense-makings may tell us about contemporary norms and discourses in Sweden. The purpose of this thesis is twofold: 1) to contribute knowledge about the decisions and experiences of lesbian couples making the transition to motherhood; and 2) to integrate these experiences and sense-makings from ‘the margins’ into the broader field of sociological family studies and gender equality. The overarching research questions that have guided my research are as follows:

- How do women in lesbian couples make sense of and plan for becoming two mothers?
- How do mothers in lesbian couples reason about equal parenting and being two mothers?
- How can their sense-makings be understood in relation to contemporary norms of motherhood and gender equality in Sweden?

Drawing on these research questions, I seek to contribute to the sociological interest in the transition to parenthood from the perspective of lesbian couples.

Most qualitative research on lesbian motherhood has been carried out with women and couples *as* parents. One of the main contributions of this thesis is therefore empirical in nature in that it contributes knowledge about how lesbian couples, who are about to become mothers, reason before and after the arrival of their first child. The thesis also contributes new perspectives on what Swedish gender equality policy and discourse ‘does’ in contexts beyond heterosexual couples who are making the transition to parenthood.

Outline of the thesis

The thesis consists of an introductory chapter, overview of the four studies, and concluding remarks, followed by the four studies. The purpose of the introductory chapter is to contextualize the thesis in relation to what it is about, how it contributes to the literature, as well as where and how it is carried out. Before I go into the thesis’ theoretical and methodological framework, I will first detail a background on the Swedish context that is relevant for the thesis, namely the rise of two parallel policy and discourse developments in Sweden: gender equality politics and LGBTQ+ family rights. Thereafter, I discuss two research fields that are brought together in the thesis: sociological perspectives on families and gender equality, and research about LGBTQ+ families. These two fields are not necessarily distinct, but are for the sake of clarity discussed separately. In ‘mainstream’ family sociology, lesbian couples are more on the margins, whereas in studies about LGBTQ+ families, lesbian couples are ‘the norm’.³

³ It is also appropriate, I believe, to say a word on the choice to present the Swedish gender equality discourse before the development of LGBTQ+ family rights, as well as to present ‘mainstream’ family sociology before the scholarship on LGBTQ+ families. This order risks reinforcing the idea of heteronormativity as the midpoint, towards which ‘other’ lives and sexualities deviate from. Therefore, I want to make the reader aware of that the order of things is the result of choices I have made. The presented chronicle reflects historical developments in society and, to some extent, in academia.

A note on terminology

Before continuing, this section will motivate and clarify some of the categorical concepts that are employed in the thesis and the four studies. The first motivation regards the choice to use the term *lesbian couple*. In the course of the first interview, most participants referred to their relationships using words like ‘lesbian’ or ‘same-sex’. At this time, I did not ask about how the women identified their sexuality, which I nevertheless decided to do in the follow-up interviews. Hence, for the second interview, I revised the background questionnaire to include a question on identification on sexuality (most answered lesbian, homosexual, or queer, and some stated bisexual). The decision to stay with the term ‘lesbian couple/mother/relationship’ throughout all studies, and also the introductory chapter, is motivated by my focus on the experiences of becoming a mother in a female same-sex relationship. It is thus the relationship category (lesbian) that I am referring to, and I see this as an umbrella term: I identify the relationship as lesbian, but partners within that relationship can identify as queer, lesbian, homosexual, dyke, bisexual, or otherwise. What ‘makes’ the relationship lesbian, in this study, is that both partners identify as women, which was the case for all participants. The use of ‘lesbian motherhood’, ‘lesbian families’ or ‘lesbian parenting’ is also widely used within the research field in which my study is situated. For that reason, I stay with the term, while recognizing that these relationships may contain women who do not identify as lesbians.

The second set of categorical concepts used include *birth mother* and *non-birth mother*. There is no consensus in the literature on how to differentiate between lesbian mothers based on birth status. A suitable strategy has been to use the concepts and names used by participants (Gabb, 2005; Malmquist, 2015a), which is also what I base my definition on. Among the group of interviewed women, all referred to themselves and their partners as mothers(-to-be). When distinguishing between themselves, they would talk in terms of carrying (Swedish: *bärande*) and non-carrying (Swedish: *icke-bärande*). In order to stay close to their own words, I have therefore chosen to use the terms ‘birth mother’ and ‘non-birth mother’ for analytical purposes. These concepts are also commonly used in the literature (e.g., Malmquist 2015a).

Worth mentioning is that by the time of the follow-up interviews, several of the women had the experience of each being a birth mother and a non-birth mother (since they had conceived two children that they took turns carrying). For the sake of clarity, I differentiate between the mothers based on their birth statuses for their first child.

Background

With this section, I will set the scene for the thesis and the couples in focus. As indicated, I will present two policy landscapes in Sweden that are relevant for the thesis: gender equality and LGBTQ+ family politics. The discussion combines a look at policy developments with previous research and critical perspectives.

The Swedish gender equality project

For decades, a politics of gender equality has influenced policy orientation, public debates, and the everyday lives of people residing in Sweden (Lundqvist, 2011; see also Alsarve et al., 2016; 2019; Johansson and Klinth, 2008; Magnusson, 2005; Norberg, 2009). When the political program for gender equality was initiated in the 1970s, a new word to capture gender relations was also introduced: *jämställdhet* (Schömer, 1999; Wottle and Blomberg, 2011; see also Dahl, 2005). The political program spawned from feminist debates, both inside and outside of academia, about “sex roles” (Roman, 2008; Lundqvist and Roman, 2008). The urge to introduce a new word was related to the connotations embedded in the Swedish word for equality (*jämlikhet*), and the type of politics it had involved so far. The politics of *jämlikhet* were rooted in the labor movement, which up until then had primarily focused on class. *Jämlikhet* literally means that equals should be treated equally, which was considered a potential threat towards ‘opposite attraction’—e.g., if men and women were considered *alike*, the heterosexual logic of two binary genders were at risk (Florin and Nilsson, 2000). So, because men and women were not considered to be alike in terms of gender, it followed that they could never become *jämlika* (equal). This was thus part of the reason behind introducing a politics of gender equality (*jämställdhetspolitiken*) in Sweden (Florin and Nilsson, 2000; Roman, 2008).

It has, however, become increasingly common to see *jämlikhet* and *jämställdhet* being used interchangeably, although they are, in fact, not synonyms (Schömer, 1999). Despite that the actual meaning of *jämställdhet* regards the relationships between women and men, many of the women I interviewed, for example, discussed their relationship by habitually referring to themselves as (more or less) *jämställda*. The word thus lends itself across contexts, but as the studies in this thesis indicate, the framework is neither easily translated nor unproblematic.

From early on, a ‘gender-neutral’ ideal and approach to family and gender equality policies was employed: taxes were individualized in 1971, and gendered maternity leave became ‘gender-neutral’ parental leave in 1974

(Lundqvist, 2011). These steps reflect the institutionalization of a dual-carer/dual-earner ideal (Lundqvist and Roman, 2010; Ferrarini and Duvander, 2010; see also Ahlberg et al., 2008). Men and women were thus gradually encouraged to take on more equal, and alternating, roles. To some degree, then, the view of men and women as inherently different has been somewhat broadened and challenged, as they have been increasingly encouraged to do the same things and fulfill the same functions. But ideas about women and men being different lingered. The idea of two complementary genders has, for example, permeated arguments for both a redistribution of childcare and for equality in the workforce (Dahl, 2005). As such, the gender equality discourse is underpinned by both a gender-difference framework and a gender-symmetry framework (Borchorst, 2008; Orloff, 2009).

In the pursuit of improving gender equality—and what was originally initiated to give women ‘equal access’ to paid work as men—inequalities in childcare and parenthood have also been targeted. While this was foremost rooted in the notion that parenthood influences the careers of men and women differently, it also came to mean giving men equal access to parenthood (Bergman and Hobson, 2002). Breastfeeding is a particularly charged practice in this context, and it has, to speak with Björk (2017), become a “symbolic issue” in gender-equal parenthood. For instance, in their analysis of popular handbooks for new parents in Sweden, Wahlström Henriksson and Rubertsson (2021: 336) identify that breastfeeding is portrayed as a “crook” for gender equality: it “hampers both women’s freedom and men’s bonding with their babies”. In these handbooks, breastfeeding is thus construed as a gendered constraint for women, while for men, breastfeeding is construed as something keeping them from equal access to parenthood.

Over time, men’s participation in care and unpaid work has increased in Sweden—often referred to as the rise of a “a new fatherhood ideal” (Alsarve et al., 2016; Johansson and Klinth, 2008). Although it is (still) more acceptable for fathers to focus on their careers and spend less time at home for economic reasons, it is socially unacceptable (in middle-class contexts at least) to openly disregard gender equality or disidentify with “the new man” in contemporary Sweden (Johansson and Klinth, 2008). Likewise, it is unthinkable to publicly condemn the working norm for mothers (Carbin et al., 2017).

The Swedish version of the ‘good mother’ ideal is constructed around balancing high parental involvement with high levels of independence (Björklund, 2021; Evertsson and Grunow, 2019; Forslund, 2009; Roman, 2019). In contrast to other contexts, such as the UK and the US, where gender equality and intensive parenting are understood as two competing ideals (Faircloth, 2021; Twamley, 2024; see also Hays, 1996), these ideals are not as contradictory in Sweden. Indeed, they are embroiled to a large extent in the Swedish gender equality project’s policy and discourse. Swedish family policy facilitate for most parents to be highly involved with their children, while also

maintaining a career in paid work. One of the central goals of the Swedish gender equality is to relieve the work-family conflict.

Although gender equality is often presented as a universally good ideal and policy, critical perspectives from postcolonial and queer feminist scholars have demonstrated that the underlying assumptions in gender equality politics revolve around white, middle-class heterosexual women and men (Dahl, 2005; Magnusson et al., 2008; Martinsson et al., 2016; see also Björk, 2017; Forsberg, 2009). Scholars who seek to problematize gender equality as universally good for ‘everyone’ therefore stress the importance of seeing gender equality as a construct underpinned by certain values and understandings of, for example, gender and sexuality. It is argued that the focus on women and men as couples and co-workers stabilizes the dichotomous idea of two different but complementary genders (Dahl, 2005). Subsequently, while this reinforces a differentiation between women and men, differences between women are largely disregarded. The creation of ‘women’ as a homogenous political category means addressing and including a particular group of women (Honkanen, 2008). Indeed, the very idea that changing ‘what goes on in the labor market’ is dependent on changing ‘what goes on in the home’ builds on the assumption that in the home, women are living with men. The acclaimed ‘gender-neutrality’ is therefore far from neutral, and it is argued that the discourse itself reinforces gendered norms, albeit by non-traditional lines—e.g., the ‘gender-equal man’ who is a caregiving father, and the ‘gender-equal woman’ who is a working mother (Björk, 2017; Dahl, 2005; see also Bacchi and Evelyn, 2016; Honkanen, 2008; Johansson, 2011).

In Sweden, gender equality is associated with progressiveness and modernity (Martinsson et al., 2016). Because these are desirable (middle-class) values to be associated with in general, subjects who are not explicitly addressed within the gender equality discourse will likely also adapt to these ideals (Forsberg, 2009) or at least be confronted with them (Norberg, 2009). This may be particularly evident when becoming a parent, since family policy is at the heart of the Swedish gender equality discourse. Family policy is not only highly associated with gender equality, but heterosexual couples specifically. To illustrate an example: when my wife and I had our first child in 2022, people would ask if we were entitled to the same parental leave as heterosexual parents. The parental leave policy is thus more than social transfers, it is embedded in particular understandings of gender, motherhood, fatherhood, equality and family. As we shall see, the development of LGBTQ+ rights has had a pronounced focus on parenthood and ‘family-life’ that is not far from the heteronormative family model.

LGBTQ+ families in Sweden: the times we are in

Only a few decades back; ‘coming out’ as a homosexual often meant living a (biologically) childless life (Malmquist, 2015a; Mezey, 2008). This has

changed dramatically in Sweden, to the extent that “having children is no longer simply an option; it is increasingly expected”—not least for lesbian couples (Dahl, 2022: 162). At the time of this writing, the first children conceived through state-funded assisted reproduction to lesbian couples in Sweden are entering their 20s. In other words, younger generations will not remember a time when same-sex couples were not permitted to marry and have parental rights in Sweden.

However, thinking of time as a progressive and linear process moving towards ‘better days’ is partly misleading (Freeman, 2010). As indicated earlier in the introduction, the development of LGBTQ+ rights is neither all-inclusive nor neutral. It has given access and ‘acceptance’ of particular rights—and lives—in particular ways, often described as *homonormative* (Dahl, 2022; Gabb, 2018; Rydström 2008; Siverskog 2016). This is worth remembering when detailing the policy landscapes concerning lesbian parenthood in Sweden—which I will do next.

In **1995**, same-sex partners were given the right to register their partnership. This gave same-sex couples benefits and rights equal to the rights of married straight couples in most areas of life, except for parenthood (Malmquist, 2015a). The right to registered partnership did, however, permit the legal parent of a child the ability to share parental leave with a registered partner.

In **2003**, the Swedish government passed a law that a child can have two parents of the same juridical gender, giving same-sex couples the ability to adopt (Malmquist, 2015a). This was an important milestone leading up to the major change in **2005**, when state-funded assisted reproduction with donated sperm extended access to lesbian couples (e.g., Proposition 2004/5: 137). These changes in parenting laws equated registered partnership with marriage, and in **2009**, the marriage law was made gender-neutral (Kolk and Andersson, 2020).

Since **2019**, lesbian couples can also undertake reproductive treatment with donated sperm in private clinics in Sweden (this was previously only allowed at public clinics). In **2022**, the presumption of paternity law was further changed to also include married same-sex couples. In other words, the birth mother’s wife does not have to declare her parenthood after the birth of the child. She will, like married men, immediately be recognized as the child’s parent. The presumption may however be declared invalid (at any time) if the child was not conceived at an approved clinic.

Pathways to lesbian parenthood in contemporary Sweden

When the government granted lesbian couples access to assisted reproduction treatment in public health care in 2005, this increasingly became the dominant path to parenthood (Dahl, 2022). Indeed, the vast majority of the participating couples in my research conceived at public clinics located at university hospitals in Sweden. Many of the women also presented the state-funded route as the obvious pathway.

If the procedure is done at a public clinic, the treatment for a first child is highly subsidized, and the non-birth mother does not have to undergo second-parent adoption to become the child's legal parent. This is the case also for unmarried couples. The non-birth mother's parental status only needs to be confirmed after the birth of the child. Both women are therefore considered the (unborn) child's parent from start. This also includes 'leftover' embryos from an IVF procedure—e.g., the embryos that are frozen and stored belong to both partners and cannot be used by the birth mother alone were the couple to separate.

It is only the treatment for a first child that is subsidized by the state. Any treatments for siblings thereafter are self-financed, which is also the case when women take turns carrying their children. State-funded assistance is therefore not regulated based on whether one has given birth to a child, but whether one is already a parent.

If the procedure is performed at a clinic in Sweden—private or public—the donor's identity is always accessible (but not known to the couple). Having an open donor means that the child will have access to information about the donor upon having reached maturity (usually considered to be around 16–18 years old). It is further regulated in Swedish law that parents tell the donor-conceived child about the use of donor(s) (Lindgren, 2024). The donor does not have any right to information about the child and can never make a legal claim as a guardian.

When a couple seeks treatment at a reproductive clinic in Sweden, they need to be approved before getting help. Apart from the medical examinations that are conducted to investigate fertility, the couple also undergo a psychosocial examination and are asked to grant access to their medical records. It is evident from my interviews, conducted across Sweden, that the procedure can vary depending on region and practitioner. However, a general policy throughout the country is that the couple must have a stable relationship—which is specified as having lived together at the same address for at least two years. Couples also have to prove that they are financially secure and are asked about their past, present, and future situations. Their own childhood and their relationships to their family of origin are, for example, also assessed. This psychosocial evaluation, together with long queues at public clinics, make some couples seek self-financed treatment from private clinics in Sweden or abroad. Going abroad may also be related to a wish to have an anonymous donor, as was the case with one of the couples I interviewed. Going private (in Sweden) may also be related to not being able to find a donor who 'matches' the receiving couple, which was the case for another one of the couples who were interviewed.

Usually when couples conceive through clinics in Sweden, the donor is chosen by the clinical staff from their own sperm bank (for a discussion about the process of 'matching', see Andreassen et al., 2024). It is possible, however, to bring one's own donor to some clinics in Sweden (or abroad). One of the

couples I interviewed had succeeded in bringing a friend to a public clinic, but this does not seem to be a common procedure—neither among lesbian couples nor at public clinics.

Apart from the clinical routes, it is, of course, also possible to conceive through home insemination—either with the help from someone known to the couple or with sperm purchased at a clinic abroad. This procedure is, however, legally complicated and vulnerable, even more so since the presumption law changed in 2022.⁴ None of the couples interviewed for my thesis had conceived using home insemination, and only one couple had conceived in Denmark. On the contrary, taking the state-funded route was explicitly referenced as the most appealing pathway, also among those who, nevertheless, used private clinics in Sweden.

⁴ If a married lesbian couple conceives through home insemination, the non-birth mother is recognized as the child's second parent immediately at birth. However, the presumption law contains an add-on that specifically states that if the child was conceived through home insemination or at an unapproved clinic abroad, the non-birth parent's parenthood can be annulled at any time. To secure the non-birth parent's status, couples first have to annul the parenthood that is granted the non-birth parent at birth, who thereafter has to adopt the child (RFSL, n.d.).

Previous research

By focusing on the transition to parenthood for lesbian couples, the thesis taps into a number of well-established fields and theoretical avenues that have guided much of the scholarship in family sociology so far. For decades, sociologists and family scholars have pondered the transition to parenthood for heterosexual couples through the lens of various theoretical perspectives. Before I review the literature on lesbian and queer households, I will briefly discuss how the transition to parenthood and gender equality is commonly investigated and conceptualized in family sociology, and state how my thesis relates to the field.

The transition to parenthood and gender equality in family sociology

The vast scholarly interest in the transition to parenthood is rooted in the observation that on the aggregate level, parenthood brings about gendered inequalities that persist—in both the labor market and at home (Angelov et al., 2016; Cooke, 2014; Grunow and Evertsson, 2016; 2019). This is also observed among heterosexual couples who have similar incomes and career paths before they become parents: the pay gap between spouses widens in early parenthood (Evertsson, Moberg and van der Vleuten, 2025). In contrast, the pay gap in lesbian couples in Sweden first increases but then narrows. Partly spurred by such findings, quantitative studies have inquired about who carries the baby (and if both do at some point, in which order), and how paid parental leave is shared (Evertsson and Boye, 2018; Boye and Evertsson, 2021). However, when it comes to a more in-depth understanding of the observed patterns, quantitative studies have their limitations. It is against this backdrop that my thesis has taken shape.⁵

Research about the transition to parenthood intersects a number of fields that address the division of paid and unpaid work. The focus on paid and unpaid work can be traced to historical changes in many western societies, which saw a growth in dual-earner households during the second half of the 20th century. Parallel to that women's labor market participation increased, it was puzzling to scholars that the time men spent on housework and childcare by and large did not change (Hochschild and Machung, 2012; Evertsson and Neramo 2004).

The aforementioned fields are both interdisciplinary and heterogenous in terms of theoretical and methodological approaches, but there has been an enduring dominance of quantitative studies and framings, often underpinned by

⁵ See *Methodology*.

various forms of social exchange and gender theories (Doucet, 2023; see also Evertsson, Eriksson Kirsch and Geerts, 2021). These theories are different, but share two important things: first, they are often applied to explain unequal divisions of paid and unpaid work in heterosexual couples, and second, they assume a rational pursuit of benefit maximization—either for the household as a unit (Becker, 1991) or for each partner individually (Blood and Wolf, 1960; Lundberg and Pollak, 1996). According to specialization theory (Becker, 1991), spouses act to maximize the household utility and thus divide their tasks and roles in accordance with where the pay-offs for the family as a unit are the highest. This theory has been met with criticism; not least for ignoring gender and power dynamics in couples (England and Budig, 1998). Blood and Wolfe (1960) introduced the bargaining perspective to account for the distribution of power within a household, based on the partners' relative resources (such as income, education, occupational status, or the like). There are several bargaining approaches, but they share the underlying assumption that most people dislike housework and want to bargain their way out of it. When coupled with gender theories, most often the 'doing gender' approach, as outlined by West and Zimmerman (1987), relative resources as a theory tends to lose much of its explanatory power. For example, in heterosexual couples where the woman earns more or spends more time in paid work, she still spends more time than her partner on unpaid work, leading scholars to conclude that "gender trumps money" (Bittman et al., 2003; Evertsson and Neramo, 2004).

In both academic and popular discourses, the dominant framing of 'gender equality' is that of a 50–50 share. While this may be achievable—and measurable—in some areas and some contexts (such as parental leave in Sweden) (see for example Alsarve et al., 2019), it may not translate as easily into other areas of parenthood and couple relationships—not least in matters of care (Doucet, 2023). As Twamley and Faircloth (2024: 695) argue: "even putting aside the practical (and analytical) difficulty of accounting for every household or care task, more parity between these tasks does not necessarily mean more 'equality'—nor disparity, less equality". In line with this, scholars have increasingly questioned some of the underpinning assumptions and conceptualizations inbuilt in how the division of paid and unpaid work is often approached (Orloff, 2009). For example, dominant theories either position partners in a combative framework and/or as steered by financially rational pursuits (Doucet, 2023). In my thesis, I have been inspired and informed by the theoretical conversations about some of the dominant perspectives in family sociology. In particular, this has aided my vision on some of the taken-for-granted ideas around 'gender equality', existing not only in academic literature, but also in the Swedish discourse. In keeping these insights with me, I have turned to a relational framework (as explained further ahead). Although the interviewed women were asked to account for how they divide housework,

for example, my focus has not been on mapping—and comparing—their accounts in order to be able to say what their divisions look like and whether these divisions are ‘equal’. On the contrary, I have been interested in how they talk about housework and divisions, and how they negotiate dominant meanings of equality in such narratives.

Lesbian and queer households in the literature

The field on LGBTQ+ families is wide and covers a number of topics. As stated by Berkowitz (2009) more than a decade ago, the field cannot be considered a “new frontier” anymore. The literature is growing rapidly, and it is becoming a difficult task to review the heterogenous scholarship of LGBTQ+ families (but for excellent overviews, see Brewster, 2017; Goldberg, 2013; Moore and Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, 2013). Worth mentioning is that research on gay fathers is relatively scant compared to the vast research focusing on lesbian and queer mothers/parents (Doucet and Lee, 2014; but see e.g., Carroll, 2018; Evertsson and Malmquist, 2023; Tornello et al., 2015). In this overview, I will focus on some of the themes and findings in the literature that are close to and relevant for my thesis, including qualitative as well as quantitative studies. Throughout the section, I will discuss Swedish research interchangeably with research conducted in other contexts (due to the many overlapping themes). However, I will pay more attention to research conducted in Sweden, given my own focus on the context.

Lesbian/queer couples and (the transition to) parenthood

Broadly speaking, research on lesbian/queer motherhood and lesbian/queer couples is characterized by three competing narratives. First, that they are inventive and subversive (Dunne, 1998; Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan, 2001; Weston, 1991). Second, that they are more equal than heterosexual couples (Dunne, 2000; Goldberg et al., 2012). Third, that they are neither particularly inventive nor particularly equal (Carrington, 1999; Gabb, 2005; Lewin, 1993; Norberg, 2009). In other words, many studies about lesbian/queer couples have inquired as to whether they subvert or conform to heteronormative ways of living—e.g., the extent to which “these families are either ‘ordinary’ or ‘unique’” (Ryan-Flood, 2009: 2). One of the reasons for this is rooted in the ‘assimilation versus transgression’ debate (McCann and Monaghan, 2019).⁶

⁶ The rise of ‘equal’ rights and access to marriage and parenthood has yielded queer (political and academic) debates over whether these opened doors reflect a subversion of, or an assimilation into, traditional institutions (Ahmed, 2014; Butler, 2002). The LGBTQ+ advocacy for inclusion in heteronormative institutions such as marriage, and to some extent parenthood, is often referred to as a politics of *homonormativity* (McCann and Monaghan, 2019). This is a broad strand of theorization, and refers both to a downshift in political struggle (e.g., Duggan, 2002; see also Brown, year), as well as to the consequences of assimilationist discourses (Robinson, 2012), especially at the expense of those who do not conform.

The inventive and subversive narrative is based on, and attributed to, Weston's (1991) seminal work on lesbian and gay people constructing "families of choice". By that time, 'chosen families' signified having babies outside of the heterosexual nuclear family model as well as viewing friends and the queer community as family. At the heart of Weston's book is therefore the ways lesbians and gays disrupt conventional notions of kinship. Parallel to the growth of reproductive possibilities, research on queer kinship practices has increasingly, but not exclusively, focused on parenthood.

Three interrelated lines of inquiry have expanded around the focus on parenthood. The first relates to how queer and lesbian families negotiate kinship in relation to donor/s, genetics, and heteronormativity (e.g., Andreassen, 2018; Dempsey, et al., 2022; Geerts, 2025; Hu, 2024; Nordqvist, 2014; 2021; Ryan-Flood, 2005). The second inquires as to how queer and lesbian parent families negotiate with heteronormativity in their wider surrounding, such as interactions with healthcare providers (e.g., Andersen et al., 2017; Appelgren Engström et al., 2019; Malmquist and Zetterqvist Nelson, 2014). And the third addresses the division of paid and unpaid work, including childcare, in gay and lesbian households, as well as what meanings of equality, biology, housework and care underpin these divisions and relationships (Brewster, 2017; Goldberg, 2013, for overviews). My study is situated in, and contributes foremost, to this latter field, which is why I will give more attention to this research area.

When lesbian households are compared to heterosexual households, it is often concluded that lesbians have more egalitarian arrangements (Evertsson and Boye, 2018; Goldberg, Smith and Perry-Jenkins, 2012; Kurdek, 1993; Moberg, 2016; Patterson, Sutfin and Fulcher, 2004; Solomon, Rothblum and Balsam, 2005; Sullivan, 2004; van der Vleuten, Evertsson and Moberg, 2024). The vast majority of this research is conducted within a quantitative framework. Based on register data, a number of studies have been able to compare the division of parental leave (Evertsson and Boye, 2018) and income development following the transition to parenthood between same-sex and different-sex households in Sweden (Moberg, 2016) as well as in Nordic countries (Evertsson, Moberg and van der Vleuten, 2025; van der Vleuten, Evertsson and Moberg, 2024). Collectively, these studies point to a large difference between lesbian and heterosexual parent families in Sweden: the earnings gap that is introduced following the birth of the first child is wide and permanent for heterosexual couples, while it is temporary and much narrower for lesbian couples (Andresen and Nix, 2022; Evertsson, Magnusson and Van der Vleuten, 2023; Evertsson, Moberg and Van der Vleuten, 2025; Moberg, 2016; see also Machado and Jaspers, 2023).

When it comes to the division of paid parental leave, however, birth mothers in both same-sex and different-sex couples take a larger share of the leave (Evertsson and Boye, 2018; Moberg, 2016; see also Rudlende and Lima, 2018). Malmquist's (2020; 2023) and Appelgren Engström et al.'s (2019)

studies are—to the best of my knowledge—the only qualitative studies on parental leave among lesbian couples in Sweden. Malmquist’s (2020) conclusions, drawn from the work of Bekkengen (2002) on how parental leave is conceptualized differently depending on which parent it regards, is informative about the larger patterns observed in quantitative studies. Parental leave for birth mothers was generally considered *necessary*, while non-birth mothers’ time at home was considered *important*. Following this conclusion, Malmquist (2020: 49) suggest that “parents whose time at home is seen as necessary are likely to stay home also under unfavorable circumstances, e.g., with no payment”. My research draws on and expands this knowledge by demonstrating (in Study II) that non-birth mothers’ leave can also be understood as necessary, particular in regard to her role as a caregiver for the birth mother. My study further illustrates the importance of paying attention to how unpaid leave is used. Many of the couples I interviewed, for example, planned to keep each partner on unpaid leave for a considerable amount of time.⁷ As in the study of Appelgren Engström and colleagues (2019: 3704), I also find that in most of the couples interviewed, “both mothers wanted to spend as much time as possible at home with the child”.

Divisions, parental roles, and the meanings they are given

A bulk of qualitative studies from a number of countries have focused on how lesbian parent families share housework and childcare (beyond parental leave), and what meanings they attach to domestic work and sharing. Together, the literature reflects diverse experiences, meaning-makings, and everyday lives. For example, there are studies where lesbian parent families report that they have actively taken on different parental roles based on birth- and biological status (e.g. Gabb, 2005; Malmquist, 2015b), just as there are studies where lesbian parent families report that they make no difference in their parental roles, or the tasks that they do, based on birth- and biological status (Downing and Goldberg, 2011; Malmquist, 2015b).⁸ Likewise, some of these families want to be seen as being ‘just like any other family’ and do not mind a division that replicates a heteronormative model, while others reject being likened to heterosexual families (Gabb, 2005; Downing and Goldberg, 2011; see also Norberg, 2009).

Collectively, these studies illustrate the wide range of arrangements that take place, and the importance of paying attention to what meanings are attached to gender, biology, care, housework, and parental identities. What meanings couples attach to biology, or what notion of equality they ascribe to,

⁷ It is more common for women than men (in heterosexual couples) to be on unpaid leave (Duvander and Viklund, 2019). Research about unpaid leave is scant, but a recent report demonstrates that, on average, 30 percent of the total time on parental leave during the child’s first two years is unpaid in Sweden (Swedish Social Insurance Inspectorate, 2024).

⁸ In some of the studies referenced, like Malmquist (2015b), both types of findings are found across the study’s group of participants.

will likely influence and shape what types of struggles they experience (cf. Downing and Goldberg, 2011; Malmquist, 2015b; Moore, 2008; see also Dahl, 2018a). For example, in Malmquist's (2015b) study of lesbian parent families in Sweden, she identified three different 'repertoires' related to how the group of couples experienced and expressed equal parenting. In one of them, equal parental roles were described as spontaneously occurring between the mothers, in which they made no difference based on birth status. In the second repertoire, achieving equal parental roles was described as part of a struggle that required continuously hard work for the mothers. In both the first and the second repertoires, the couples idealized equality, according to Malmquist. In contrast to these two repertoires, the third—i.e., the 'biologistic'—pictures the two mothers as 'naturally' unequal, due to birth status. Among the women who draw on this type of repertoire, taking on a primary and a secondary role (where the biological mother is the primary) was not portrayed as a problem: "they are simply construed as factual", Malmquist (2015b: 263) concludes.

In Dahl's (2018b) study of queer parents in Stockholm, she finds that her participants reasoned along similar lines as those of Malmquist's, but she approaches the topic of embodied and 'biological' differences from a different perspective. Dahl (2018b: 1029) writes:

I would argue that a distinctly Swedish ideology of gender equality that departs from an unmarked white, middle-class nuclear family logic inevitably leads to an idea of (parental) equality that requires sameness, or the absence of difference. Among lesbians I have interviewed [...] the difference that fertility–pregnancy–gestational motherhood makes is understood as problematic primarily when it risks undermining the status of the other parent, or when it results in a division of labour that can mimic that of heteronormativity and women's subordination in a heterosexist world.

Moreover, Dahl observed that her interviewees expressed a 'fear' towards what they themselves referred to as 'biology'; it was both a fear of giving biology any significant meaning and a fear of being *seen* as biologistic. Hence, some of the participants conflated talk about (positive) meanings of pregnancy as adhering to an essentialist view of gender and/or the body. Like Dahl, other scholars have also shown the importance of exploring how the Swedish gender equality discourse influences same-sex couples (Norberg, 2009) and queer and lesbian parents (Ryan-Flood, 2005; 2009). My study draws on and contributes to this analysis by exploring how key facets of the discourse are negotiated during the transition to parenthood.

The 'egalitarian ethic' or the 'lesbian utopia'

Parallel to the aforementioned empirical findings, the literature has also been permeated by a critical conversation about the tendencies to project, evaluate,

and reproduce egalitarian values/arrangements in lesbian and queer couples. Two concepts that are often seen in this critical research are *the egalitarian ethic* and *the lesbian utopia*. Conceptually, the two terms capture the same idea or myth; e.g., that lesbian couples are (inherently) different from, and better than, heterosexual couples. On my reading, the ‘egalitarian ethic’ is often employed to shed light on a tendency in research (e.g., Gabb, 2004; Goldberg, 2013), while the ‘lesbian utopia’ reflects a “lesbian love tale” (Giorgio, 2001; Ovesen, 2021) rooted in the community (for an overview, see Harden et al., 2022). The lesbian utopia is fueled by gendered scripts of women as inherently egalitarian, loving, and non-violent. In her research about intimate partner violence and help-seeking among queer and lesbians in Sweden, Ovesen (2021) analyzes the struggles in identifying violence in queer and lesbian relationships, in part, through the myth of the lesbian utopia (see also Barnes, 2011). One of Oveson’s findings regard the difficulty in naming and recognizing violence in queer and lesbian intimacies.

By drawing on insights from this critical scholarship, my thesis contributes to how the myth of the lesbian utopia enters negotiations and sense-makings around lesbian motherhood. In particular, I have paid attention to the ways in which this myth may be reinforced by the Swedish gender equality discourse. Regarding this, I also want to mention Norberg’s (2009) study conducted on lesbian and gay households (most without children) in Sweden. Norberg’s study is also situated in a critical perspective on the Swedish gender equality discourse, with a focus on how the couples construct themselves in relation to it. One of the conclusions Norberg makes is that gay and lesbian couples portray heterosexual couples as “anti-role models” (2009: 193). Similar conclusions can also be drawn from my interviews, and there are many overlaps between our findings; such as perceiving the non-heterosexual relationship as more ideal. However, while Norberg sees it as a rhetorical strategy that is used to display one’s own relationship as more equal, I see it as consequence of the gender equality discourse. In Study IV, I unpack these consequences by comparing the interviewee’s ideals before and after the transition to motherhood.

The thesis in relation to the literature

Taken together, the literature illustrates the importance of exploring how different contexts (including place and time) may influence how lesbian and queer couples make reproductive decisions (Herbrand, 2018; Malmquist, 2015a; Mamo, 2007; Nordqvist, 2014; Ryan-Flood, 2005; 2009), and make sense of (un)biological ties (Dahl, 2018b; Gabb, 2005; Malmquist, 2015), as well as equality in the household and in parenthood (Carrington, 1999; Downing and Goldberg, 2011; Malmquist, 2015b; Moore, 2008). The literature is also quite consistent in showing that lesbian couples who experience difficulties or struggles in their relationships—especially in relation to their respective parental roles—portray the difficulties as largely unexpected. In both Malmquist’s (2015a) and Dahl’s (2018a; 2018b) studies, for example, couples

who expressed difficulties would often describe them as unanticipated, leading not only to struggles but also to disappointment (see also Pelka, 2009). Such findings thus speak to the importance of exploring how women in lesbian couples imagine their upcoming motherhoods, in order to increase current knowledge on lesbian parenthood—which is heavily dominated by stories from lesbian couples who already are parents. My thesis therefore contributes with a longitudinal perspective on how couples imagine and realize lesbian motherhood.

When my thesis is read in relation to some of the key works on lesbian/queer parenthood in Sweden (e.g., Dahl, 2018a; 2018b; Malmquist, 2015a; 2015b; Ryan-Flood, 2005; 2009; Zetterqvist Nelson, 2007), it is evident that norms in the LGBTQ+ community are context-specific and that they change over time.⁹ This is especially evident in relation to the research carried out before legislative changes (e.g., Ryan-Flood, 2005; 2009; Zetterqvist Nelson, 2007). In Ryan-Flood’s comparative study of lesbian mothers in Ireland and Sweden, she found that Irish and Swedish couples engaged with heteronormativities in very different ways. In her research, this was clearly manifested in how lesbian couples in the respective countries decided on donors (Ryan-Flood, 2005). Her interviews were conducted before there were any legal and official pathways to parenthood for lesbian couples in the respective countries. Couples in both countries therefore had to find donors and make decisions without clear/official guidelines. In Ireland, it was more common to choose a donor who would not be involved. In contrast, a large part of the Swedish couples involved men as participating fathers. Regarding the Swedish women who chose to involve donors as fathers, she concluded that it “must be viewed within the context of a history of gender equality constructed as a shared project among women and men and the promotion of participatory fatherhood” (Ryan-Flood, 2005: 201). Indeed, the Swedish women emphasized the importance of having a father present. In contrast, then, the couples I interviewed—who not only dismissed the idea of involving a donor as a father, but also rejected notions and roles associated with fathers in general—therefore illustrates a radical shift (see also Malmquist, 2015a; Malmquist et al., 2016). The legal and temporal dimensions that set our research apart illustrate that the way heteronormativities influence how lesbian couples decide on, and make sense of, their parenthood is far from stable.

⁹ This is not my conclusion alone, but draws from a personal conversation with professor Ulrika Dahl.

Theoretical framework

Expectations and experiences of lesbian motherhood are at the heart of the empirical material in this thesis. With the increased rights, lesbian couples in Sweden have been granted the possibility to form families in socially, and legally, recognizable ways. Against this background, my research has focused on how couples who are forming families in these normative ways relate to dominant notions of equality in partnership and parenthood. In particular, I have been interested in exploring the women's maternal imaginaries and how they negotiate contemporary norms and ideals of motherhood in relation to contemporary notions of equal parenting in Sweden. A critical point of departure for my thesis is that these negotiations and experiences do not take place in a void. Rather, I see them as relational and embedded in context-specific cultural frameworks. This is in line with a social constructionist perspective, which assumes that meanings around motherhood and equality are not inherent or fixed, but are continuously produced and reproduced through everyday practices, discourses and social relations. Below, I will define and explain the theoretical perspectives and concepts I have used in my research.

A relational approach

As indicated, I have been informed and guided by a relational framework (e.g., Mason, 1996; 2004; Morgan, 2011; Smart, 2007; Twamley et al., 2021). This approach acknowledges flexibility in terms of what a family can be and do, and that these becomings and doings are embedded within a complex web of cultural, institutional, and personal relationships.

The 'relational turn' in sociology developed as a critical response to a theoretical overemphasis on individualism and choice (Mason, 2004; Smart, 2007; Twamley et al., 2021), not least stemming from the individualization thesis. Among others, Giddens (1992) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995; 2002) theorized that the political changes that took place in many western societies during what is often referred to as 'late modernity' meant a shift away from traditional values and patterns—e.g., they saw an expansion of an emphasis on individualization. Although their interpretations of the consequences of individualization differ, Giddens and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim are often grouped together as proponents of this theorization. In a broad sense, the individualization thesis beholds that contemporary relationships have abolished traditional values, social structures, and pre-assigned roles and scripts. While Beck and Beck-Gernsheim were more hesitant towards what negotiated family configurations would entail for intimate relationships, Gid-

dens was optimistic about individualization leading to more democratic arrangements and pure relationships, in which the independence of each partner would be highly valued.

Most sociologists would agree that intimate relationships—in terms of both practices and ideals—have changed during the past century, but these changes have neither materialized in the ways nor to the extent anticipated by the ‘grand’ social theorists (Mason, 2004; Mulinari and Sandell, 2009; Smart, 2007). However, scholars have pointed out that there are links between the individualization thesis and contemporary discourses around relationships, not least visible in gender equality ideals (e.g., Ahlberg et al., 2008; Jamieson, 1999). Within gender equality discourses, autonomy, choice and symmetrical relationships—much like negotiated families—are indeed idealized. As Faircloth concludes: while “discourses around ideal relationships may have changed, practices have not kept pace” (2021: 22; see also Jamieson, 1999). In other words, a weakening of traditions—or societal changes for that matter—does not mean that traditions are not present or negotiated with in everyday life. That such negotiations are relational, as opposed to individual, was further emphasized in the ‘relational turn’ (Finch and Mason, 1993; Mason, 2004; Smart, 2007).

Indeed, a major critique of individualization theorists concerns the view of the individual as autonomous and free-floating (Smart, 2007). Throughout my research, my point of departure has been that the women’s imaginaries and practices of be(com)ing mothers are relational, and negotiated within particular cultural and policy frameworks. The relational approach is often used go beyond the immediate personal links within the couple relationship, extending to grandparents, friends, co-workers, and bonus relationships (e.g., Alenius Wallin, 2024; Alsarve, 2021; Eldén et al., 2024; Roseneil, 2004; see also Twamley et al., 2021). This has not been an explicit focus in my research. Rather, I have focused on the women’s “*processes of relating*” (Mason, 2004: 177, emphasis in original), and the “externalized negotiations of practices and meanings” reflected in their personal stories (Twamley et al., 2021: 4). Although the interviews were held separately with each partner, their personal stories were deeply relational—which I have embraced, rather than overlooked. As such, relationality is both an ontological and analytical stance in my approach, which has informed how the women’s stories are interpreted—e.g., not as reflections of isolated selves, but as “relational selves” (Mason, 2004: 177).

Heteronormativity and culturally intelligible scripts

A central concept of my theoretical framework is heteronormativity. As a concept, heteronormativity captures the notion that heterosexuality is constructed *and* privileged, rather than neutral and natural (Jackson, 2006; Roseneil et al.,

2013; Warner, 1993). Heteronormativity primarily intersects gender and sexuality, but also emphasizes that particular ways of living are privileged before others, which extends to race, class, age, and functionality (Ahmed, 2014).

Heteronormativity was introduced during the 1990s (e.g., Warner, 1993), and has since been extensively influential in various fields, not least in queer theory (Ambjörnsson, 2006; Roseneil et al. 2013). In Roseneil et al.'s (2013: 166) study of how same-sex lives have been regulated in European countries, heteronormativity is explained as follows:

[Heteronormativity] draws attention to the multitudinous (social, legal, political, cultural) ways in which heterosexuality is normalized, naturalized, and privileged as an institution, and to the ways in which homosexual practices and relationships are excluded, stigmatized, marginalized, and minoritized.

Heteronormativity is therefore not attached to specific bodies or couples by default, but can manifest through bodies and couples when heteronormative structures are enacted and reproduced. Heteronormativity should therefore not be conflated with heterosexual couples and individuals, or interpreted as if all heterosexual couples are, or live, heteronormative lives; heterosexuality exists in many diverse variations (Ambjörnsson 2006; Jackson 2006: 105). For example, the norm that a family consists of a mother and a father who have naturally (through intimacy) conceived a child is considered a heteronormative family ideal that preserves reproductive sexuality, specifically (Hopkins et al. 2013). Since all heterosexual couples may not be able to conceive through intercourse, neither can all straight couples live up to the norms of reproductive sexuality. However, the failure of reproductive sexuality means something else for a heterosexual couple than it does for a lesbian couple; since the latter couples do not mainly seek help at the reproductive clinics for physical fertility problems (Mamo, 2007). In other words, the reason to 'go to the clinic' is very different for a lesbian couple than for a heterosexual couple. For a lesbian couple, it is the exciting first step towards 'making a baby', while for a heterosexual couple, it may represent a last hope.

In queer theory, heteronormativity is often combined with the concept of scripts (Ahmed, 2014; Ambjörnsson and Jönsson, 2010; Halberstam, 2005; see also Lamont, 2017; Nordqvist, 2021), which I also employ in the thesis (particularly in Studies III and IV). The most referred to script is that of *the heteronormative life course* (Halberstam, 2005). According to Ambjörnsson and Jönsson (2010: 9, my translation), the heteronormative life course makes visible that "in order to orient ourselves in life and create meaning, context, and comprehensibility, we must adhere to certain life schemas, or manuals. These manuals are socially constructed and reflect cultural and contemporary ideas about how a proper life should be lived". The heteronormative life script therefore stipulates a particular set of ideas about what a 'normal'—and re-

spectable—life look like (see also Freeman, 2010). In its essence, the heteronormative life script dictates the events—and conditions—of dating, coupledom, marriage, and childbearing. As discussed earlier on in the introduction, the transgression versus assimilation debate arose in the wake of queers and non-heterosexuals starting to lead lives that resemble and/or follow the heteronormative life script. However, as Ahmed (2014) has argued, this debate is in need of more nuance:

Even when queer families may wish to be recognised as ‘families like other families’, their difference from the ideal script produces disturbances—moments of ‘non-sinking’—that will require active forms of negotiation in different times and places. (Ahmed, 2014: 153)

Ahmed (2014) refers to negotiations that take place in interactions with others, and she takes the examples of lesbian mothers negotiating with schools, local communities, and other parents. In my research, I have instead focused on how the women seem to negotiate, and relate to, certain scripts *within* the relationship. This approach is similar to Lamont’s (2017) study about queer dating and courtship practices, in which she takes as a starting point the idea that dominant cultural notions of dating and courtship are heteronormative. As such, Lamont has focused on how queer people navigate dating absent particular “culturally intelligible scripts” (2017: 628). In line with Lamont, I have worked from the idea that there are scripts that make certain events, experiences, and identities more or less culturally intelligible in couple relationships. I found this to be a productive way of exploring how the interviewed women relate to, and make sense of, various ideals about equality in their partnership, and parenthood, during the transition to motherhood.

Motherhood: ideologies and norms

In this thesis, motherhood is conceptualized not as a predetermined biological destiny, but as a social—and embodied—practice that is heavily scripted and shaped by prevailing norms. Lesbian women, and especially lesbian mothers, do not escape the cultural mandates of motherhood (Hequembourg, 2012). However, lesbian motherhood gathers two different types of identities: the mainstream position of a mother and the marginal position of a lesbian (Hequembourg and Farrell, 1999). Previous research shows that queer and lesbian mothers balance this juxtaposed identity in many different ways; for example, by presenting themselves as “good mothers” in “normal families” (Moreira 2018, see also Allen and Goldberg 2020). Having carried and given birth to a child may alleviate these situations for lesbian birth mothers. But for a lesbian non-birth mother, who resists both the hegemonic status of being a biological birth mother as well as the stereotypical childless lesbian, it might come with more challenges (Freitag 2020). This is theorized by Park (2013)

through the concept of *monomaternality*, which refers to the cultural belief that a child can only have one ‘real’ mother. According to Park, monomaternality “stems from a combination of beliefs about the socially normative and biologically imperative” (Park, 2013: 3). Indeed, the ideology of monomaternality tends to privilege the child’s biological, and/or gestational, mother. As indicated in the literature review, much of the research on lesbian parent families has focused on how lesbian partners negotiate the (lack of) genetic ties within the family. This was also present in the interviews I did, not least in relation to deciding (first) birth mother. Throughout the thesis, I have combined the notion of monomaternality with feminist perspectives on motherhood. My focus has been on how the interviewed women engage with various ideas about motherhood before they become mothers (e.g., what goes into their imaginaries), as well as how they negotiate motherhood ideals—as mothers.

Motherhood and reproduction have always been central to feminist debates, inside as well as outside academia (de Beauvoir, 2011/1949; Rich, 1986; Riddick, 1989; DiQuinzio, 1999). For as long as motherhood has been pondered and debated by feminists, the debate has also been contested (Neyer and Bernardi, 2011). One such tension regards what the feminist cause should revolve around: claiming women’s rights as mothers or rejecting motherhood altogether? As Neyer and Bernardi (2011) summarize it, the tension is rooted in that, on the one hand, many women are mothers, but on the other hand, motherhood does not unite all women—neither as women nor as mothers. Another area of tension regards viewing motherhood as limiting women’s lives on the one hand (de Beauvoir, 1949; Hays, 1996), and viewing women’s experiences of motherhood as affirmative and important, on the other (Kittay, 1999; Riddick, 1989). Regardless, these debates are based in women’s lived experiences as mothers and non-mothers, and they are often tied to the gendered obligations and expectations that come into parenthood, which set women’s and men’s experiences apart (Doucet, 2018a).

Over the years, scholars in the US, and beyond, have identified and followed the rise of a particularly intensive motherhood ideology (Hays, 1996; Faircloth, 2021; see also Elvin-Nowak and Thomsson, 2001; Forsberg, 2009). Intensive motherhood is the ideology that idealizes a selfless, child-devoted mother who performs a time-consuming, expert-guided and emotionally absorbing parenting (Hays, 1996). According to this ideal, a child’s development and well-being is dependent on the mother’s love and care. Because it is believed that women perform this naturally, mothers are also seen as primary caregivers. In other words, these ideals are informed and mediated by gender essentialist beliefs—e.g., cultural ideas about women as innately capable of being, and better equipped to be, caregivers than men (DiQuinzio, 1999; Hays, 1996). As discussed previously, the spread of an intensive motherhood ideology in Sweden is ambiguous, which has to do with the hegemonic gender equality discourse (Mollborn and Billingsley, 2025). It is argued that “good

motherhood in the Swedish context is a matter of finding the right balance between involvement and independence” (Björklund, 2021: 99; see also Evertsson and Grunow, 2019). In my research, I have been interested in unpacking how the interviewed women approach certain motherhood ideals—especially those that are understood to be in contradiction to gender equality ideals.

Methodology

In this chapter, I will first present the larger research project of which my thesis is part. Thereafter, I will present the details that concern my thesis; the process of recruiting participants and the women I interviewed; the process of interviewing; and the analytical procedure. Throughout the chapter, I will raise methodological considerations and challenges. I will also discuss my own insider position and ethical concerns.

Background of the research design

My thesis is part of a larger project called GENPARENT (PI: Marie Evertsson); a multi-method approach to the transition to parenthood in different-sex and same-sex couples.¹⁰ I was enrolled in the research project to conduct a qualitative sub-project about lesbian couples' transition to parenthood in Sweden. The rationale and the overarching research design for my thesis were therefore partly decided upon before I entered the project, and some aspects—like the interview guides—were crafted in collaboration with project team members. To reflect this process, I will at times refer to decisions that were made by stating 'we'. It is worth mentioning that the influence of the larger research project extends to the overarching research design—e.g., longitudinal, semi-structured interviews with each partner in lesbian couples at their transition to motherhood. I was responsible for recruiting and interviewing participants, as well as for analyzing the interviews. Apart from Study I, which was co-authored with Marie Evertsson, the remaining three studies was solo-authored, and coined, by me.

Call(ing) for participants

I started looking for participants at the end of January 2019 by involving maternity clinics and reproductive centers in spreading flyers and folders with information about the research project (see Appendices I and II). I was intent on reaching expectant lesbian couples all over the country, preferably couples who reside in more rural areas. For that reason, I made contact with multiple maternity clinics who helped me put up my poster in their waiting room. Concurrently, I published an online ad (see Appendix III), which I spread in LGBTQ+-related forums on social media (such as Facebook and Instagram). Project team members, including myself, also spread the digital call from our

¹⁰ The GENPARENT project is funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program. Grant agreement ERC CoC 2017, #771770.

personal Facebook accounts. The latter resembles snowball sampling and builds on the idea that people who see the ad will share it and forward it to people outside of our own acquaintanceships (Goedecke, 2018). This approach is often a rewarding method in terms of reaching a vast group of people without much effort, which was also the case here: during the time of active fieldwork—i.e., recruiting and interviewing participants—there was a total of 1100 unique visitors to the online ad.¹¹

The online ad was created with WordPress, which is a free tool for creating websites often associated with blogs. I decided to use this tool because it is fairly easy to set up a website using Wordpress, and because it has an application that allowed me to track the traffic in the digital ad. The flyer and folder also contained information about the online ad, which meant that people who received information about the study from a midwife or saw the poster in a waiting room also could have visited the online call.

Unlike spreading ads via social media, involving maternity clinics and organizations might include being held back or slowed down because this method is dependent on people providing access. Gatekeepers are usually defined as those who will provide information or put the researcher in contact with possible participants. In my case, the ‘gatekeepers’ at the maternity clinics or reproductive centers were not in a position to control whether I would reach the group of interest or not, but their help was important in order to reach potential participants that do not reside in the bigger cities or near my own location, as well as participants who are not regular visitors to Facebook groups or social media in general. The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex rights (RFSL) also helped spread information about the study to their local groups (online and offline).

One of the challenges during recruitment was creating a call that will attract the intended participants (see also Ovesen, 2021). In the call, I altered between using ‘same-sex couples’, ‘lesbian couples’ and ‘living in a same-sex/lesbian relationship’ in order to be as inclusive as possible but still clear about who the intended couples should be. In the text, it was also clarified that the participants could identify as lesbian, dyke, homosexual, bisexual, queer, or as a woman in a romantic relationship with another woman (cis or trans). The participants had to meet the following criteria: be pregnant or be living with a pregnant partner, have no previous children, be at least 18 years old, and live in Sweden.

Before I started the process of recruitment, we had decided in the larger research team that I should aim to interview around 20 couples. The rationale behind this decision was that a larger initial group would ensure a sufficiently

¹¹ This does, however, not mean that everyone who visited the online ad was a potential participant. Visitors could also be curious colleagues and friends who wanted to see what I was working on. The number of visitors should therefore not be interpreted as if there were 1100 potential participants. However, it is reflective of the spread of the ad.

large group in the second round, would some participants drop out. In total, 29 couples showed interest in participating in the study, out of which 9 did not meet the criteria.¹² All of the others who contacted me during the recruitment process (which lasted about one year) were therefore interviewed.

The participating women

The following description of the participating women is based on the first round of interviews as well as the background questionnaire they answered at that time. The vast majority of the women can be read as white and most belong to the middle class, the latter category being based on their educational attainment, occupation, and income as stated in the questionnaire. A little more than half (13) of the couples resided in one of the four biggest cities in Sweden (i.e., Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö, or Uppsala) and the rest lived in smaller cities or rural areas in northern, middle as well as southern parts of Sweden. All but five women had been born in Sweden (four were born in other European countries, and one was born in a non-European country). Two had migrated to Sweden as a couple for work, one of the women had migrated as a child, and the two women had migrated to live with their current partner. Three interviews were conducted in English, otherwise all interviews were held in Swedish.

At the time of the first interview, the women were between 26 and 41 years old (mean age: 32). The length of the couples' relationships varied between 2 and 10 years. One of the couples were in a polyamorous relationship, but did not intend to co-parent with any of their other partners. Out of the 20 couples, 11 were married and the rest were cohabitating, and 13 of the couples were homeowners, while 7 rented their home.

Three of the women had upper-secondary education as their highest educational level (i.e., basic schooling in Sweden). The rest of the group had either undergraduate or advanced experience in higher education; however, the type of educational training they had varied somewhat. For example, some women were trained nurses, others were in the middle of doing a PhD, and others had vocational training for a cultural profession. At the time of the first interview, three of the women were students, one was unemployed, nine had fixed-term contracts, and two women were freelancers. The others had permanent contracts. Their type of professions varied between occupations like nurse, teacher, retail worker, doctor, social worker, manager, factory worker, cultural worker, firefighter, copywriter. Those who were active in paid work usually worked 40 hours per week (before the birth of the child), which corresponds

¹² Of the nine couples who did not participate: two couples were trying to conceive but were not yet pregnant, three couples did not respond when trying to schedule the interview, one couple was pregnant with their second child, one couple experienced pregnancy-related issues and had to drop out before the interview, one couple had already given birth when contacting me, and one couple was excluded due to sharing mutual friends with me.

to the norm of full-time work in Sweden. Most women had a monthly salary that was close to, or lower, than the median income of women in Sweden at the time (which was around 35,000 SEK).

Given that participation in the research project was based on self-selection, the group of participants is reflective of those who felt spoken to by the call. Apart from the geographical spread, the group of participants turned out to be quite homogenous. The experiences and narratives that are told in the studies, and in this thesis, should therefore be read against the backdrop that most—but not all—are told from white middle-class positions.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the participating women

Category	Number of participants
Age	
26–30	16
31–35	20
36–41	4
Education	
Advanced	19
Undergraduate	18
Upper-secondary	3
Monthly Gross Income (SEK)	
Less than 20,000	6
20,000–24,999	5
25,000–29,999	8
30,000–34,999	8
35,000–39,999	9
More than 40,000	4

Data source: interview wave 1, 2019–2020.

Enrolled as a couple, interviewed apart

The couples are participating in the study together, but every interview was held with partners individually. This was also requested in the call for participants. The decision to interview partners individually was made together in the larger research team, and was based on a number of aspects, which I describe further below. Before I circulated the call for participants, I wanted to experience doing both separate and joint interviews with couples. Therefore, I carried out a pilot study with two lesbian families with the purpose of experiencing both of the approaches to interviewing couples. I interviewed the partners together as well as apart in both of the pilot families. I alternated the

order of the interview type, so Couple A would have the joint interview before the individual interviews, whereas Couple B would have the individual interviews before the joint interview. Afterwards, the pilot participants were asked about how they experienced the two different interview situations. Interestingly, they largely felt that the two settings were not so different from each other. I noticed, on the other hand, that the co-presence or non-presence of their partner shaped the interviews and the stories they told. For example, in the couple interviews, one of the partners would talk more and take the lead. In the joint sitting, their stories would also be exceedingly harmonious. Certainly, this is interesting in and of itself, and how couples “display” (Finch, 2007) their relationship may, indeed, serve as the unit of analysis (e.g., Bjørnholt and Farstad, 2012). However, such a focus did not align with the purpose of the present research project.

An important aspect that influenced our decision for individual interviews was that the women were transitioning to motherhood in different ways (e.g., one was pregnant and would be biologically related to the child, while the other would not). Based on previous research (see, for instance, Dahl, 2018a; 2018b; Pelka, 2009), the difference in birth-status can be emotional and sometimes difficult to articulate and address (for both type of mothers); not only in an interview situation, but also with one’s partner.

It is common in family sociology to use a mix of both joint and individual interviews when including couples and families in studies (e.g., Doucet, 2016; Faircloth, 2021; Fox, 2009; Twamley, 2024). Due to limited time and space, I had to decide on one of the two interview methods—as opposed to doing both. On this note, I want to emphasize that I do not conceive of the interview situation as an opportunity to ‘unveil’ hidden truths or realities (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014)—as I will elaborate more on below. To that end, any of the approaches would be as good, but they lead to different stories being told, and as such, they also offer different opportunities for analysis.

All couples took care to ensure that they would not be present during each other’s interviews. In two or three cases in the first interview round, the partner did, however, come home in the middle of the interview or towards the end, and sat in a nearby room for the rest of the interview. During the second interview round, there were a few interviews that were interrupted by the arrival of both partner and child. In these situations, I would ask the woman being interviewed if she wanted to pause or end the interview, but the answer was always no with reference to “she knows everything anyways” or “we have no secrets”. Whether this influenced the rest of the interview is difficult to discern, but my overall sense is that it did not change what was shared or how it was said.

The interviews

As mentioned, the general approach for conducting interviews in this project was based on participants' self-selection process. For the first interview, women contacted me based on an interest in the research. The informed consent form for the first interview asked whether the participant would give their consent to be contacted again for a second interview. All participants in the first round agreed to this.

In contrast to the first interview's self-selecting logic, the second round of interviews began with me contacting them and asking for their time. Orchestrating the second interview wave was more difficult than the first—despite having all the participants in place. It was evident that the couples had much less time on their hands compared to the first interview round.

In the first round of interviews, I interviewed 40 women (each partner from a total of 20 expecting couples). This round took place between February 2019 and January 2020. The follow-up interviews were conducted with 23 out of the original 40 women (11 couples and one non-birth mother), and took place between November 2021 and March 2024 (this round was extended due to my own parental leave).

The women who did not participate in the follow-up round did either not respond to the multiple attempts I made in contacting them (both through e-mail and SMS) or declared that they could not participate in the follow-up interview due to personal matters. The latter was less common, however.

My overall sense of the follow-up interviews is that most women were keen to participate again. Not responding to e-mails and texts that lie outside of the ordinary demands is a relatable habit I share with my participants, especially since I have become a mother myself. After conferring with my supervisors and other colleagues, I decided that three contact attempts would be enough.

The first interview

During the year I spent conducting the initial interviews (2019–2020), I traveled a lot. This was due to two important aspects: I wanted to meet couples all over Sweden, and I wanted the interviews to be face-to-face. The interviews were scheduled either through e-mail or SMS, and I would, in most cases, have parallel contact with both partners in a couple. The women were asked to pick a location that they felt comfortable with. Most often, they would decide on a place convenient to them—which usually meant their home, or a café near their home or workplace. The interviews lasted between 39 and 110 minutes (mean time was around an hour). At the time of the interview, most couples had reached the third trimester (which starts at week 28), but a few were earlier in their pregnancy.

When meeting up, I would initiate small talk with the women and share something from my own life. If I had traveled to meet them, the train ride or being new to their city would in many cases be the topic I chose. In some

cases, I would also disclose my identity as a lesbian by saying something about my girlfriend. This was done to facilitate a level of trust when I felt this was needed (which I will discuss more in detail below).

Before the interview would start, the women were handed information sheets about the study (see Appendix VIII). They were also asked to sign a consent form and fill in a background questionnaire with questions such as age, gender identity, place of birth, income, education, week of pregnancy. Afterwards, I would ask whether they had any questions about the research project or the interview. I initiated the interview by asking whether they felt ready and okay to begin recording.

The interview guide included both open and detailed questions covering a range of themes (see Appendix IV). The questions were oriented towards past, current, as well as future decision-makings, issues, and expectations. Each interview ended with a set of broader questions relating to ideals and whether it was important for them to have equal divisions of parental leave and housework. At this part of the interview, they were asked to fill in pie charts about how they planned to share the parental leave, the current division of time spent in housework, and how they ideally would divide housework when their child is 1.5 years old.¹³

The second interview

The second interview wave started in November 2021 while I was pregnant with my first child. In total, I did 11 of the follow-up interviews before going on my own parental leave. The interview round was picked up again in September 2023 and lasted until March 2024, during which 13 follow-up interviews were carried out. Because the follow-up interviews were spread out over a period of almost 2.5 years, the ages of the children varied between 2 and 4 (almost 5) years. This did not, however, pose an issue to the research project, given that the purpose of the study was not tied to parents with children of any particular age. The follow-up interviews lasted between forty minutes and two and a half hours. Most of the interviews were around an hour or longer (the shortest interview had to be finished earlier due to the participant's work schedule).

Due to my pregnancy and various restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, I did six of the follow-up interviews via Zoom. Since I had only conducted, and indeed prioritized, face-to-face interviews in the first wave, I was first a bit hesitant as to what the Zoom interview experience would be like. I had assumed that digital interviews would be less interactive and, perhaps, a bit impersonal. These assumptions, however, turned out to be wrong.

¹³ In the end, I did not include the completed pie charts as part of the empirical material. After only a couple of interviews, I realized that the pie charts were arbitrary in terms of what they represent. However, completing the pie charts sparked interesting reflections and reasonings in many interviews, which is why I nevertheless also kept them for the follow-up interview.

The Zoom interviews were quite relaxed, both of us had our video active and it did not feel so different from face-to-face interviews.¹⁴ I believe that it helped that I had interviewed all of the six women face-to-face previously, and I also believe that interacting via Zoom (or something like Zoom) felt quite habitual to most of us by that time (e.g., the winter of 2021–2022). Indeed, it was evident that the six interviewees who had their follow-up interviews held via Zoom were also used to the format (see also Oliffe et al., 2021).

Out of the 12 couples I revisited, 4 had welcomed a second child, and 4 were pregnant with their second child at the time. Among the other couples, also four in total, most were in the process of having a second child—e.g., they had either already attempted insemination at a clinic or were in queue to begin their reproductive journey—apart from one couple who had dissolved.¹⁵

The procedure for the follow-up interview followed the same routine as in the first. The women were reminded about the research project's stated purpose, and they were asked to sign a consent form and a background questionnaire. By and large, the interview guide also covered the same themes, but instead of being oriented towards the future, most questions were based on a 'according to plan?' inquiry (see Appendix VI). Some of the questions had also been crafted around some of the themes and findings from the first interview round. For example, in the first interviews, many of the women spontaneously spoke about heterosexual others (real and imagined). This finding (discussed in Study III) inspired me to ask more direct questions about how they believe they are different, or similar, to heterosexual couples and parents. I also included a question about higher divorce rates among lesbian couples with children (compared to heterosexual couples with children), which encouraged the women to reflect more broadly about what they believe are some of the unique challenges (or advantages) for lesbian couples. I was first a bit hesitant to include the question about divorce rates—would the women experience it as intrusive or even a bit rude? This did not, however, seem to be the case; many of the women had a lot to say on this topic, and it proved to be a good question to stimulate reflections about challenges that are unique to them.

Since many of the couples also had a second child, or were expecting their second child, at the time of the follow-up interview, a set of questions pertained to the processes and experiences of their second reproductive journey

¹⁴ Based on ethical considerations, I only recorded the audio of the interview.

¹⁵ I know that at least two of the original couples had terminated their relationship by the time I started doing follow-up interviews. Only one of these couples wanted to continue their participation, and I interviewed both of the women in this couple. Before I conducted these interviews, I conferred with colleagues in the team about potential ethical dilemmas given that the purpose of the project, as it was stated in the ethical application, did not include questions about dissolution, etc. Of course, longitudinal research projects can never foresee how life will unfold for participants; hence, we decided that doing the follow-up interviews would not cause an ethical issue in and of itself. Before the start of these interviews, I politely told the women that I would not ask them questions about the dissolution, but that they were free to talk about it.

and/or what it was like to be a mother of two. For those who had changed birth-givers (which turned out to be all participants), it was of particular interest to inquire about how they experienced being ‘on the other side’ this time.

It is also worth mentioning that many women talked about how the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had influenced their everyday life, especially during their parental leave with various lockdowns and restrictions—leading to crushed plans and dreams about spending time in toddlers’ groups and such. It was quite expected before I started the round of follow-up interviews that the women would talk about the pandemic. In dialogue with the larger research team, we decided to not include specific questions about how they had experienced the pandemic, given that it was not part of the research project’s main focus, but rather to allow the topic come up spontaneously.

Individual couple stories

Because I have interviewed each partner separately, their respective interviews can be seen as *individual couple stories*. This is also how I have approached the interview material. The couple relationship was, indeed, highly present in every interview. This is no wonder, however, given that the women were participating in the study on the basis that they, as a couple, are transitioning to motherhood. I do want to emphasize this aspect since the presence of ‘the couple’ might otherwise be overlooked or disregarded. In one sense, then, the partner was ‘present’ as a reference point, being invoked in their stories about their everyday lives and journeys to becoming parents. Moreover, what also influenced the interviews was the fact that I would interview their partner (or already had). Many women were, for example, curious about what their partner had answered. They would also occasionally refer to the upcoming interview with the partner if they felt they did not remember something (e.g., “she will know what date that was” or “she will remember this better than me”). When women made such remarks, it suggests that they sensed that they were (trying) to give the most correct description possible of their everyday life, their division of housework, or their journey to conception. The purpose of the interviews was, however, not to map out what their lives ‘really look like’ and compare what each partner had said in order to, for example, highlight discrepancies between partner’s accounts. As I will discuss below, I understand the interview situation as a site in which situational stories are co-constructed by the interviewee and me, rather than direct representations of the interviewee’s ‘reality’ (Doucet, 2018b; Woodiwiss et al., 2017). However, this does not mean that the stories that are told are detached from lived experiences, indeed “story tellings may come very close to the life as experienced” (Plummer, 2002: 168).

Analytical approaches

Throughout the thesis, I refer to the interviews by using a mix of words: *data*, *empirical material*, *narratives*, *stories*, and *sense-makings*. The following quote from Plummer resonates with the approach I have adopted for the interview situation, and has influenced how I have worked with the interviews as ‘stories’:

Whatever else a story is, it is not simply the lived life. It speaks all around the life: it provides routes into a life, lays down maps for lives to follow, suggests links between a life and a culture. It may indeed be one of the most important tools we have for understanding lives and the wider cultures they are part of. But it is not *the* life, which is in principle unknown and unknowable. (Plummer, 2002: 168, emphasis in original)

In the analytical process, I have guided my attention to the “links between a life and a culture” (Plummer, 2002: 168). One of the questions I have asked myself during the analysis is: “What makes *that* story possible?” (Doucet, 2018b: 93, emphasis in original). There is, however, never only one story in an interview. Which stories are heard, or seen, are dependent on the researcher and the analytical questions being asked to the data.

Moreover, what is told in an interview is neither static nor pre-given. As indicated, I view interviews as situational constructions that are co-produced by the interviewee and the interviewer, and because of that, it is impossible for any of the partners in an interview situation to foresee what will be told and heard during an interview. For instance, the women would sometimes say “oh, I have not thought about this” or “this is interesting, I wonder what my partner thinks about this”, which indicates that some of the things that were spoken about during the interviews were articulated for the first time and/or had not previously been discussed within the couple. I mention this because I want to emphasize that I do not approach the interview as a site where the researcher simply goes and *gathers* information that already exist ‘out there’ (Braun and Clarke, 2019; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014). Rather, I approach the interviews as situations where the women are asked questions about their lives, which encourage them to make sense of their experiences and to describe them to me. As much as their stories say something about their personal lives, they say something about their sociocultural surroundings, as well.

The culture to which I have linked the women’s stories is the Swedish gender equality discourse. As indicated, I have been informed by a critical feminist perspective (Dahl, 2005; Martinsson et al., 2016; see also Bacchi and Evelyn, 2016), in which gender equality politics is neither seen as neutral nor as universally good. Rather, this critical perspective recognizes any gender equality discourse as context-specific and constructed, as well as constructive of certain norms, ideals, beliefs, and scripts.

After I had conducted all of the interviews in the first wave, I reflected upon the group of women that had been interviewed, and what they had shared with me; the type of decisions they had made; and what type of struggles, expectations, and imaginaries they had expressed. For the purpose of this thesis, I have focused on what the interviews collectively say about the experiences of becoming a mother in a lesbian relationship in Sweden. In order to do so, I combined a narrative approach with reflexive thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021).

Briefly put, reflexive thematic analysis is a method for identifying and interpreting shared meanings across data (Braun and Clarke, 2021). These broader patterns of meanings identified are then captured in *themes*, which the researcher creates and decide upon. Indeed, the active role of the researcher—throughout the process—is emphasized in Braun and Clarke’s approach; hence, they labelled the method *reflexive* thematic analysis. I decided to work with this method for my thesis for three reasons. First, while it is theoretically flexible, it is also embedded in a qualitative paradigm that aligns with my epistemological grounding:

[Q]ualitative research is about meaning and meaning-making, and viewing these as always context-bound, positioned and situated, and qualitative data analysis is about telling ‘stories’, about interpreting, and creating, not discovering and finding the ‘truth’ that is either ‘out there’ and findable from, or buried deep within, the data. (Braun and Clarke, 2019: 591)

Second, the method can be combined with other approaches, such as a narrative approach (e.g., Plummer, 2002). The type of narrative approach that I have worked with also asks similar kinds of constructionist questions to the data as reflexive thematic analysis allow for. Third, it was suitable for the thesis’ overarching purpose of exploring the shared meanings and experiences across participants’ stories. That is, by closely exploring what stories that are told in each interview, I have focused on identifying patterns across interviews. For me, patterns across interviews can mean that several women are describing something (e.g., a decision or a plan) in exceedingly similar ways, but it can also be about identifying meanings that are presented as taken-for-granted across interviews.

In practice, the reflexive thematic analysis approach involves a recursive engagement with the data that encompasses a number of phases: familiarization with the data; coding the data; creating initial themes that builds from the codes; and reviewing and developing the themes—which are often refined while writing (Braun and Clarke, 2021).

The process of making sense of the data

In this section, I will discuss data management and the analytical procedure more indepth. These are sometimes completely separate processes, and at

other times, they overlap. All interviews were transcribed verbatim by research assistants hired in the broader research project. The research assistants worked closely with me to make sure that details were not lost in translation. For example, if they did not hear what was said, I would assist them, since I would, in most cases, be able to recall the interaction and the content of the interview. The decision to not transcribe the interviews myself was necessary due to the vast number of interviews in combination with the limited time available to me. But it was a difficult decision to make, since transcribing is valuable for the analytical process. To compensate for that, I would listen to many of the interviews in order to not lose touch with the audio data. I would also discuss the interviews with the research assistants, who were well-informed about the research project's aim and purpose. Their task was not to analyze, but it was valuable to hear what they had thought about as they listened to and transcribed the interviews. One of the three transcribers is also an experienced researcher on topics related to motherhood and reproduction.

I uploaded the transcripts in NVivo 14, a qualitative data analysis software. I used the software mainly for data storage and data organization. In the end, the 63 interviews that make up the data consist of approximately 1,500 pages.¹⁶ During analysis, the transcripts were kept in their original language (interview quotes was translated to English first when taken into manuscripts).

I applied a mixture of coding techniques for different purposes, but the first thing I did given the huge amount of data was to structure the data into topic codes (largely derived from the interview guide). This was helpful in order to easily and relatively quickly be able to look at different parts of the interviews, and also gather what every participant had said about a given topic. Although the topic codes were not analytical in nature, it was productive to be able to read every participant's answer to a particular question (for example, the decision regarding birth mother) together. At different stages, I would print these separate documents (e.g., all extracts on a particular topic) and read them on a hard copy. I would therefore temporarily make separate 'data-parts' of all material about a certain topic. This approach allowed me to explore the data from different perspectives. When working with these separate and fragmented datasets, I was aware that every excerpt had been removed from its context (the full interview), and I would often go back and forth between reading and re-reading both separate 'data-parts' and individual interviews in full. Hence, the topic codes initially had an organizational purpose, but they also aided the analytical process in the sense that I could familiarize myself with the data in several ways (Braun and Clarke, 2021). Codes were therefore created both in NVivo as well as on hard copies. During the process of familiarization and coding, I made notes in the form of longer reflections. These reflections would lay the ground for the initial themes.

¹⁶ This is an estimation based on the fact that most interview transcripts were between 25–35 pages.

The ideas and topics in the four studies that make up my thesis emerged at different stages of the research process; therefore, each reading of the material was shaped differently. For example, the first and the second study began from questions that were included in the interview guide—i.e., the decision of first birth mother and plans for the parental leave. In contrast, the idea for Study III came from me noticing that the women attached certain meanings to *being two women* and *be(com)ing two mothers*. Hence, I was interested in exploring and unpacking this. Lastly, the idea for Study IV came from noticing a change between the first and second interviews in how the women talked about (not having) roles/scripts for their relationships.

Regardless of how each study was initiated, I largely worked with data analysis in similar ways. In order to not repeat myself too much, I will briefly go through the steps that were taken in the first study. The focus of the study was to explore how the women *made sense* of the decision about who was to be the first birth-giver. During the first round of coding, I coded what factors the women mentioned (such as age, desire to be pregnant or not). Thereafter, I started to look for how these factors were given meaning and motivation (e.g., in what way did age come to matter, how were pregnancy desires narrated). In most couples, both women wanted to carry a child at some point. When the women accounted for the decision of who goes first, the differences and similarities between them was emphasized (either given importance or downplayed)—e.g., differences and similarities took on particular meanings. I made preliminary themes constructed around these initial codes, and discussed them with my supervisors (one of them whom also was a co-author of the study). When we discussed my preliminary themes, we decided to situate the meanings in relation to context-specific sameness discourses (e.g., Gullestad, 2002). In other words, to make the stories about similarities and differences meaningful and theoretical, we looked at them from the point of view that the decision of birth-giver is a decision that introduces (a particular) difference between them. The themes were revised and refined multiple times, not least during writing—which is also granted an important role in analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2021). My approach to data analysis may best be described as abductive (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012), in that I have simultaneously been led by what is ‘going on’ in the empirical material, and by theoretical perspectives and conversations in the literature.

Positionality and reflections on the insider position

Our positions and locations influence “what research we do, when, and how we do it” (Skeggs, 1997: 18; see also Haraway, 1988; Oakley, 1981). I have spent a lot of time thinking about my position and where I am located in (relation to) my research. What stories do I hear? And what stories do I tell? I represent the researcher, but as a lesbian woman in a lesbian parent family, I also belong to the group I research. As mentioned, I became pregnant with my

first child between the first and second interview round. This means that I experienced the transition to parenthood while also doing research on the topic. My insider position, as well as my academic background in gender studies, have undeniably influenced the position I am “looking from” (Haraway, 1988) and the knowledge production made in this thesis. It has influenced some of the questions I have asked in interviews, what follow-up questions have come to my mind, as well as what questions I have asked to the data (Bengtsson, 2022). In what follows, I will focus on the insider position in relation to interacting with the ‘field’ and with participants.

In terms of gaining access to the ‘field’, understanding particularities of the site as well as the topic in focus, the insider position is often attributed importance (Bengtsson, 2022; Ovesen, 2021). Before I circulated the call for participants, I was, for example, already a member of many LGBTQ+ related Facebook groups, general groups as well as groups specifically about parenthood. Being a ‘participating observer’ in these online communities had—before I embarked on this research project—given me a lot of information, ideas, and understandings about what prospective lesbian couples were thinking about and discussing with each other in these forums. My prior understanding of the subject matter informed some of the questions included in the interview guide, as well as follow-up questions asked during interviews.

During interaction with interviewees, I would sometimes refer to my identity as a lesbian in cases where I sensed it was needed. For example, upon arriving at the apartment of one of the couples, both partners waited for me in the hallway. Before I took off my shoes, one of the women asked: “You are not from *Sverigedemokraterna*, right?”¹⁷ I thought it was said as a joke, but when I understood that she was serious, I interpreted the question as a way of checking my trustworthiness. After I had ensured that I was neither affiliated with nor sympathized with a far-right political party, I still sensed a certain level of doubt towards me and/or the situation. This was quite unusual; up until then, all of the participants had greeted me with an interest in the research project and an enthusiasm in taking part. In sensing that there was a distance, I tried to create a closeness by referring to my girlfriend while we were still making small talk in their hallway. This interaction illustrates a number of dilemmas involved with the insider position, and I will use it to walk through some of the dis-/advantages regarding the insider position.

First, I ‘used’ my identity as a lesbian in this particular situation as a way of positioning myself as ‘one of them’ and not as ‘one of the enemies’. Second, prior to this interaction, I had not thought about the interviewees’ potential vulnerabilities from this particular perspective, which I see as a lack on my

¹⁷ *Sverigedemokraterna* (The Swedish Democrats) is a far-right political party in Sweden, and it is currently one of the largest parties. During the past decades, their nationalist and conservative agenda has threatened the conditions for LGBTQ+ individuals and families in Sweden.

behalf that is rooted in my insider position—e.g., I considered myself as coming from ‘the inside’, but this was of course not obvious to the participants. Third, having good intentions and an insider position does not outright mean that all things will align or be experienced ‘the same’ (Ovesen, 2021). In other words, emphasizing sameness in the interview situation does not come without challenges: there is, for example, a risk that one shared identity or experience is overemphasized, while differences are underplayed, ignored, or diminished (Ryan-Flood and Gill, 2010). To that end, the insider–outsider position should rather be seen as a continuum, instead of a binary in which the researcher clearly belongs to one of the two positions (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009).

Moreover, the level of sameness or similarities are dependent on many other aspects as well, which may be more or less visible for the interviewer and the interviewee. To give an example: my position as a white woman may have influenced what type of experiences were shared or not, and how. In one of the couples, the importance and difficulties of finding a black donor was, for instance, stressed in the interview with the white birth mother, but not in the interview with the black non-birth mother. While there may be many reasons for why some women stressed certain things, and others did not, I believe that my whiteness may have shaped what was shared or not shared in some of the interviews.

Furthermore, when interviewees know that the interviewer share some of their experiences—especially regarding the topic in focus—interviewees may exclude or leave out information they think the researcher already knows (Bengtsson, 2022). To (try to) account for that, I would say before the interviews that I would ask questions that I might already know the answer to, but that I want to hear what they had to say with their own words. This was also a way of preparing them, and myself, for questions that may be taken as ‘self-evident’ knowledge (see also Gustavson, 2006). Also, in cases when I had not disclosed my identification as a lesbian prior to the interview, it was clear that some interviewees took it for granted (for example, by using ‘we-speak’ in which they included me). This is no wonder, however, given how common it is that research about lesbian women/couples is, in fact, led by lesbian researchers (Gabb, 2004).

Being friendly, yet not a friend

Several of the women I interviewed did not belong to a queer community or were friends with other queer and lesbian families—especially those who resided in rural and smaller areas. For some women, then, the interview could have been the first time they spent a longer time sharing their personal thoughts and experiences not only with a researcher, but with another lesbian woman/mother (who was not their partner). During the actual interview, I did not share anything about myself, but as previously mentioned, I would sometimes refer to something personal either before or after the interview. It was

rather common that the women would say toward the end of the interview, when I inquired whether they wanted to add something, that they felt they had talked a lot and bored me with their talk (which they of course had not). To compensate for their feeling of being the one who did all the talking, I would ‘off-record’ take the lead and share something personal or make a connection to something they had said in the interview.

My approach as an interviewer was that of being an empathic and curious listener. However, it was important for me to balance being friendly, yet not give the impression of being a friend (Ryan-Flood and Gill, 2010). After all, I would spend tremendous time working with, and analyzing, what the women had told me in the interviews, which ultimately inserts a power imbalance. When I arrived home after one interview during the first wave, the woman I had just interviewed had sent me a friend request on Facebook. The notification on my telephone gave me ambivalent feelings. I was flattered, because the request was a sign that she had appreciated our interaction, but it also meant that I might have been too friendly and inviting. I sent her a message to say that I was happy to receive the friend request, but that I had to decline the request due to ethical considerations.

Ethical considerations

This research project has taken a number of measures to meet ethical standards and guidelines throughout the research process. First of all, the research project received ethical approval by The Regional Ethical Review Board in Stockholm (DNR 2018/406-31/5). As mentioned, all participants received a document containing a short description of the study and a consent form (Appendices VIII and IX), which they were encouraged to read and sign before the start of the interview. In the consent form, it was stated that the interviewee had the right to withdraw from the research project at any time. Before I started the recorder, I would verbally emphasize that they had the right to stop the interview at any time and that they had the right to skip a question they did not want to answer. For the six interviews conducted via Zoom, the consent form was read to them while recording and an oral statement of their consent was collected before the interview began.

The ethical aspects of doing interviews does not end with the interviewee’s consent. On the contrary, their consent places a responsibility on me to handle their information and the interviews with sensitivity and careful considerations. To protect the women’s anonymity, the original names of people and places are either altered or removed from all quotations used in published material. To further protect their anonymity, I do not provide a table where their demographic information is linked to pseudonyms.

The three transcribers who were hired in the project had to read through our ethical application and sign a confidentiality agreement. The transcribers were also informed about the importance of decoding the interviews as they

were written down—this includes participants’ names as well as names of other people they mention, or other things that could identify them, such as the name of the city they live in or the company they work with. All participants were given pseudonyms before their interview was transcribed so that the transcriber could use the altered names straightaway. The consent forms and hard drives with the recorded interviews are kept in lockboxes only available to members of the research project.

Interviewing family members who are aware of each other’s participation comes with a particular set of ethical challenges (Alenius Wallin, 2024). In most research projects, the researcher is responsible for safeguarding participants’ anonymity towards potential readers. When family members are enrolled, however, another dimension is added—e.g., protecting their anonymity vis-à-vis each other. Although this was not explicitly promised to the interviewees, I have taken extra precaution to not inflict harm on their relationships by, for example, not including quotes that could potentially be seen as resentful (Twamley, 2024: 22).

Moreover, I decided to give each participant a different pseudonym for each study.¹⁸ The reason behind changing their pseudonyms in each study is related to the ethical dilemma of including family members who are linked in the presented research. In each study, the couples are linked by their pseudonyms (which share the same initial letter; e.g., Petra and Paulina belong together, as do Amelia and Agnes). If one interviewee can identify herself, she will easily be able to identify which pseudonym belongs to her partner. If I would have used same pseudonyms in all of the studies, she would then have been able to trace everything that her partner had said in all of the studies.

¹⁸ In the Introductory chapter, however, I have used the same pseudonyms as in Study I, given that the quotes used were so few.

Summaries of the studies

Study I

Eriksson Kirsch, M. & Evertsson, M. (2023). Taking turns: Lesbian couples' decision of (first) birth mother in Sweden. *Journal of Family Studies*, 29(4), 1865–1883.

In this study, we explored how the interviewed women made sense of the decision of who would be the (first) birth mother during the pre-birth interviews. This study is the first to focus on how lesbian couples in Sweden make sense of the decision of birth mother before they become parents. In the study, the decision is framed as a choice that will introduce a particular difference within the couple. From the literature, we know that this (biological and genetical) difference can be a root of maternal hierarchy, jealousy, and tension (Dahl, 2018a; Gabb, 2005; Malmquist, 2015; Pelka, 2009). Against this background, we focused on how the mothers-to-be decided to 'create a difference' between them in a context in which cultural and political discourses around equality foreground, and promote, sameness (Dahl, 2018a; Gullestad, 2002). As the findings show, most of the couples planned to have two children and take turns carrying them. Interestingly, narratives of the turn-taking plan centered largely on what similarities the women would have in relation to each other, rather than it leading to one genetically related child each. Sharing the embodied experience of pregnancy therefore appeared to be at the front of their plans.

The process of deciding which one would carry the first child varied among couples. For some, it was never a question as to which one of them would carry for the reason that one of them did not desire pregnancy for herself. But in most couples, both women wanted to carry at one point. Being older or having a stronger desire to be pregnant were the two most common reasons presented when explaining how the women arrived at the decision as to which one of them would carry the (first) child. Across interviews, the decision was presented as either easy or having been made in a conflict-free manner. Some of the non-pregnant women who described having a strong desire to be pregnant explicitly addressed the ease with which they stood back from pregnancy now because they knew they would get to carry the second child. In other words, the long-term plans to have two children and carry one each seemed to instill a peace of mind in couples where both partners had a strong pregnancy desire. In this context, both age and a stronger desire to carry are rendered unproblematic differences on which to base the decision. These differences were both assessed in, and dependent on, the relational dimension of the couple.

Study II

Eriksson Kirsch, M. (Revised and resubmitted). Who takes care of the caregiver? Parental leave plans among lesbian mothers-to-be in Sweden

In the second study, I turned to the couples' parental leave plans as detailed in the first interview round. Two distinct approaches to parental leave were identified among the couples: split leave and combined leave. Because the approaches differ in how the couples imagined and planned for the postpartum period (i.e., the first weeks and months following the birth of the child), the study focuses particularly on how the women envisioned this time. The two approaches are explored in relation to the wider policy context and its embedded norms and ideals. Split leave refers to a parental leave type in which the women planned to divide the total time spent on leave in two separate periods, with the birth mother's leave preceding the non-birth mother's leave. This parental leave plan was presented as natural and largely self-evident, which is in line with reasonings from both lesbian and egalitarian heterosexual couples as presented in other studies (Alsarve et al., 2016; Malmquist, 2020; 2023). I discuss this approach—and how it is presented and motivated—as indicative of the Swedish gender equality discourse. Parents are heavily encouraged to take equal amounts of paid leave as well as to be on leave at separate periods. This is not only discursively promoted but also embedded in the policy design. In contrast, the approach to combined leave stands out as unusual and as a reworked way of planning and imagining parental leave. Combined leave, as detailed by the couples, consists of having both mothers at home for a substantial amount of time following birth (1–3 months). These couples focused less on ensuring that the paid leave or total time on leave was distributed fifty-fifty, and focused more on securing both mothers' presence at home during the first month/s. Indeed, these women centered their motivations for combined leave around factors other than the division of parental leave; such as care for each other during the postpartum period. In particular, the non-birth mother's leave-taking was seen as a way of providing care for the birth mother.

The study sheds new light on the Swedish gender equality project's flagship—e.g., the parental leave system. By comparing the two approaches to parental leave, I analyze norms and expectations—as well as some of the limitations and possibilities—that define the Swedish parental leave system. Despite the fact that the parental leave system has seen a number of revisions since its introduction in the 1970s, the 10 days of temporary leave appointed to the non-birth parent following birth has remained the same since it was introduced in 1980. Rather, policy reformations have vigorously focused on encouraging fathers' involvement through enabling and promoting separate

care periods. In this study, I argue that a consequence of this is that the gendered obligations—and care needs—in early parenthood have been overlooked by policy-makers.

Study III

Eriksson Kirsch, M. (Conditional accept in *Gender & Society*). “We are seriously two equals”: Lesbian mothers-to-be reason about in/equalities and sharing motherhood in Sweden.

In the third study, I explored how mothers-to-be discussed couple in/equalities and their upcoming motherhoods more broadly. Their reasonings are explored through the context in which they are articulated: Sweden, as one of the most ‘gender-equal’ and ‘woman-friendly’ places. Although lesbian couples are not explicitly addressed by the gender equality discourse (Dahl, 2005), these couples are not becoming mothers in a vacuum. As such, the study addresses how the women reason about becoming two mothers in a country where political reforms and public debates have focused on the challenges of motherhood in relation to fatherhood and couple-inequalities as being due to gender differences (Lundqvist and Roman, 2008). By examining how lesbian couples discuss in/equalities and their upcoming motherhoods before becoming mothers, this study contributes to the field of lesbian parent families, in which it is stated that lesbian mothers often do not foresee the type of challenges they may face (e.g., Dahl, 2018a; Malmquist, 2015b, Pelka, 2009).

The findings illustrate that the women largely perceived themselves as differently situated (in their relationships and in their transition to motherhood) than women in heterosexual relationships. That they are two women was presented as a matter-of-factness that ‘protected’ them from developing unequal roles, but also as a scenario in which they did not need to be mindful of inequitable arrangements. As such, their narratives constructed their relationships as either ‘already-equal’ or as exempt from the gender equality project. While this is not so surprising—given the focus on heterosexual couples in the Swedish gender equality discourse—it produces certain meanings and expectations in these non-heterosexual configurations. Their optimistic anticipation largely revolved around the advantage in that none of them would (risk) becoming an absent or uninvolved father. Indeed, most women aspired to what can be classified as ‘intensive motherhood’ ideals (Hay, 1996); they both planned to stay home for a long period of time with the child, reduce their work-hours, and deprioritize their paid work. As such, these couples alter how the work–family conflict is typically construed for women who are becoming mothers. It is often assumed that the central conflict in family negotiations entails women trying to argue their way into (or back to) paid work. As these couples illustrate, their main and mutual quest rather revolved around navigating their way into the home. Intensive motherhood ideals are often framed

as a contradiction to equality ideals. This did not, however, seem to be the case with the interviewed women—perhaps because the ideals are claimed in relation to another mother, and not a (potentially distant) father.

Study IV

Eriksson Kirsch, M. (Submitted manuscript). Norms wanted? Lesbian couples in Sweden after the transition to motherhood

In the fourth study, I combine the findings from the third study with the follow-up interviews. This paper is a standalone piece, but it can also be read as a sequel to the third study, since it draws on an identified change of perspective between the first and the second interviews. I unpack the observed change in perspective in relation to how the women describe their experiences of being two mothers.

In the pre-birth interviews, the women embraced their ‘free-from-script’ (Lamont, 2017) configurations in not having to renegotiate prescribed roles and heteronormative models. During the follow-up interviews, it was still the case that they perceived their families as unscripted ‘scenarios’, but in contrast to before having a child, it was not celebrated to the same extent. Interestingly, the women imagined that heterosexual couples had it easier in many ways—which was a quite dramatic change in how they related to and discussed (real and imagined) heterosexual others. This puzzling shift is explored from the perspective of the ‘negotiated family’ as a theoretical and political ideal for equal and democratic families (Ahlberg, 2008; Giddens, 1992, see also Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; 2002). As non-heterosexual couples, these women can be said to materialize the ‘negotiated family’ from the onset (e.g., Giddens, 1992). Their longing for some sort of script or definable roles does, however, point to the situation as not being as ideal as the theory proposes. In the follow-up interviews, the women expressed a need for fewer negotiations and more practical solutions to their everyday life.

As in the pre-birth interviews, most women adhered to what can be classified as intensive motherhood ideals (Hays, 1996). Being two ‘very committed’ mothers was, however, described with ambivalence by some. On the one hand, the women felt they collectively carried the burdens of motherhood and gendered expectations. This was often described as a fortunate and advantageous situation. On the other hand, this also brought with it challenges that are not easy to address, make intelligible, and change. Although both women reinforce a highly gendered and normative ideal, their family configuration of two ‘main caregivers’ or two ‘intensive mothers’ also display a negotiated family form. In the study, I discuss this from the perspective of not having a script for two-mother families and that such scriptlessness may give space for additional conflicts or distress.

Concluding remarks

The aim of this thesis was to explore the experiences and reasoning within lesbian couples in Sweden during their transition to motherhood. The initial interest was broad, and I maintained an open curiosity as to what these women would tell me about the decisions they had made, what their present concerns were, as well as what they imagined their future as two mothers to be like. In total, I met 20 expectant couples, and I interviewed both partners individually during their pregnancy with their first child. These interviews were semi-structured and thematically organized around topics about their past, present, and future lives. The first 40 interviews I ended up with were rich, moving, and, not least, full of expectations. After all, these women were about to welcome a long-awaited child. Between two and four years later, I revisited 12 of these families again, out of which 23 women were interviewed a second time. The empirical material that forms the basis for my research was therefore both comprehensive and complex. The story I tell with this thesis is just one of many possible stories.

During the interviews, the women shared many things with me. One thing that dominated their stories was how they related to the Swedish gender equality discourse and to heterosexual couples, real and imagined. It is well-documented that both heterosexual and lesbian couples relate to the Swedish gender equality discourse (Alsarve et al., 2016; 2019; Dahl, 2018a; Forsberg, 2009; Norberg, 2009; Ryan-Flood, 2005; 2009), but no study has previously examined how it is brought into play during the transition to parenthood for lesbian couples. Most studies have focused on lesbian couples without children (Norberg, 2009) or those who are already parents (Dahl, 2018a; Ryan-Flood, 2005; 2009; see also Malmquist, 2015a). One of the main contributions with this thesis is thus the insights on what women in lesbian couples expect, and imagine, for their future as two mothers—and how these imaginaries shape their experiences as mothers.

Drawing on insights from critical feminist perspectives, I have approached the Swedish gender equality project as a construct based on certain heteronormative assumptions. The targeted problem is the potential inequality between women and men. However, the Swedish word for gender equality (*jämställdhet*) is gender-neutral and it is often used in contexts beyond heterosexual couples, such as lesbian households. Indeed, the interviewed women would habitually also refer to themselves as (more or less) *jämställda*. As such, the term travels to contexts beyond its original intent. But as the studies in this thesis illustrate, applying the gender equality framework to lesbian families is not seamless. My research shows that lesbian couples' position in the

gender equality discourse is ambivalent. In part, this has to do with the underpinning heterosexual assumption in the discourse, but it also has to do with how women in lesbian couples relate to it (see also Norberg, 2009).

For decades, the Swedish gender equality project has encouraged heterosexual families to shift away from traditional family structures (e.g., breadwinning father/caregiving mother) to a dual earner/dual caregiver model. In both academic and popular discourses, the ‘gold standard’ of gender equality is that of a 50–50 share (Doucet, 2015; Orloff, 2009; Twamley and Faircloth, 2024). It is a symmetric model that encourages partners to act alike, both in the home and in the labor market. When sameness discourses are strong, differences tend to be perceived, and portrayed, as threatening to equality, and, therefore, in need of adjustment (Dahl, 2018b; Gullestad, 2002; Wahlström Henriksson and Rubertsson, 2021).

As the title of the thesis suggest, the pre-birth interviews with the lesbian couples revolved around various ideas and meanings related to sameness. That is, that they as two women—and, not least, two potential birth-givers—were similar to one another was a central theme across interviews. In many cases, the partner’s (imagined) sameness was presented as an obvious advantage for them as a couple. This was also, as Study I illustrates, reinforced in couple’s long-term plans of carrying one child each. Most of the couples planned to take turns in being pregnant, motivated by the shared experience it would generate. However, not all couples wanted—or could—plan for both to eventually become birth mothers. Due to age or fear of giving birth, some couples considered only one of them to be eligible for pregnancy. Regardless, the pre-birth interviews were permeated by an emphasis on the women’s embodied and/or social similarities. Indeed, becoming a mother together with another mother was often presented as a guarantee for equal parenthood. As such, the women seemed to perceive their families as always already equal—or, differently put, as exempt from the Swedish gender equality project.

When sameness is understood to already exist within the couple, as was the case in most of the interviews I did, it followed that certain equality ideals (such as 50–50) was seen both as their obvious starting point, as well as what they could afford to diverge away from. Indeed, many of the couples seemed to rework dominant meanings of equality in the household as well as in parenthood—evident not least in how the couples approached parental leave.

Parental leave is considered the flagship of the Swedish gender equality project. The policy is designed so that parents are encouraged to take equal amounts of leave. For a long time, parents did not have the possibility to take paid leave at the same time (beside the first 10 days during which the non-birth parent is granted temporary leave). Throughout the decades, the policy has seen a number of revisions, with the explicit goal of increasing fathers’ uptake and, thereby, of fostering more ‘gender-equal’ families. In Study II, I explored how the interviewed couples planned for the parental leave. Among the couples, I identified two distinct types of parental leave plans: split leave

and combined leave. All of the couples adhered more or less firmly to one of these two types. This study illustrates three important things: first, that contemporary lesbian couples are not a homogenous group who all act the same. Second, that when equality in parenthood is valued—as it was across all of these couples—the meaning of equality can come in different forms; and finally, the comparison of the two leave-types makes visible norms and taken-for-granted ideals embedded in Swedish family policies. The couples who planned to split their leave into two equal and separate halves explained their approach by stating that it was the ‘most natural’ and obvious choice. This is understandable, given that parents are encouraged to do as such. In contrast, the couples who planned to combine parts of their leave motivated their plans based on a rejection of the 50–50 ideal, and of taking separate leave periods. In particular, these couples imagined certain care needs during the first weeks and/or months after birth, and in order to attend to these, they had to rework the expected way of sharing parental leave. Specifically, the study shed light on the obligations of postpartum birth motherhood, and that this period has largely been overlooked in discourses on gender equality. Interestingly, it also demonstrates that the purpose of taking parental leave can go beyond taking care of the child, to also include taking care of the birth mother.

From the pre-birth interviews, it was clear that creating families outside of the heterosexual nuclear family instilled a certain optimism in the women’s imaginaries. When I revisited the families, most of the couples had realized their parental leave plans, and many had also succeeded in their long-term plan of taking turns being pregnant. However, as I explore in Study IV, some things had changed in how they talked about their relationships. In particular, this concerned their notions of (not) having roles and scripts for their families. In the pre-birth interviews, their ‘unscripted’ scenario was largely conceived of as an advantageous position (as I demonstrate in Study III). In contrast to heterosexual families, whom they imagined had to deal with the cultural baggage of gendered norms, they perceived their relationships as less encumbered by conventional scripts. In the analysis in Study IV, I approach the ideal of scriptlessness from the point of view that negotiated families epitomize contemporary ideals for couple equality. Being two women and/or two mothers is, indeed, a form of negotiated family configuration according to this theory—and ideal. To that end, it is reasonable that the women were optimistic about their transition to parenthood as a family without clearly predefined roles. However, as is demonstrated in Study IV, the unscripted scenario was presented as challenging by many of the women—also by those who previously regarded it as an advantage.

Collectively, the studies that make up my thesis show that lesbian couples’ position in the Swedish gender equality discourse is productive as well as limiting. It is productive in the sense that many of the couples I interviewed reimagined how care, parental leave, and equality are often depicted. It is limiting in that these reworked models lack culturally intelligible scripts (Lamont,

2017), and consequently may become difficult to navigate. In the pre-birth interviews, the women laid a lot of hope—and trust—in that their similarities as two mothers would safeguard them from certain challenges. In particular, it appeared to solve the struggle that is at the heart of the Swedish gender equality discourse—e.g., the work–family conflict. Among the couples I met, the work–family conflict was relegated to the back seat, whereas maternal equality was in the front seat. In most of the couples, both partners were indeed more family– than work–oriented. While this may appear to solve the struggles that are at the heart of the Swedish gender equality discourse, it brought about other types of challenges. In contrast to the work–family conflict, which is a highly scripted scenario, the situation some of these mothers found themselves in did not provide cultural guidance. The promise of sameness did, in other words, not fully materialize.

In the literature, the challenges of shared motherhood are often framed as a conflict of maternal jealousy or hierarchy (e.g., Pelka, 2009) or the fear of developing a primary and secondary role (e.g., Malmquist, 2015b; see also Dahl, 2018a). The longitudinal perspective that my thesis offers expand this knowledge by showing that some of the challenges experienced as two mothers can be related to pre-birth imaginaries; and especially to the factors that are perceived as promising for them as a lesbian couple. That sameness, both social and embodied, seems promising for lesbian couples is—as I argue in this thesis—related to how couple inequalities and equality in parenthood, are framed in gender equality discourses. Moreover, lesbian couples are increasingly fronted as the forerunners in equal parenthood. However, this position is contingent on that they are measured against the assumptions of family conflicts that are associated with heterosexual couples and heteronormative scripts, such as the work–family balance.

In my research, I have focused on themes and patterns in the interviews that relate to dominant meanings and ideals in a contemporary Swedish context. In this way, it is my hope that this thesis can be read both as a contribution to a better understanding of the expectations and experiences of lesbian couples during the transition to parenthood, but also that it has shed new light on the Swedish gender equality discourse. Based on my research, I see a need for future research to further explore and theorize the different configurations of equality—or equity—that take place among lesbian couples. Many of the couples I met seemed to embrace other values than the measurable ideal of a 50–50 division. This allowed for other priorities, such as caring for each other and sharing responsibilities, with an explicit understanding that they can take turns in carrying different amounts of responsibility at different times. However, these reworked models and ideals lack culturally intelligible scripts—which could be challenging in and of itself when partners found themselves in undesirable situations vis-à-vis each other. As discussed throughout this thesis, the women repeatedly engaged with cultural images of (distant) fathers and (present) mothers, and the type of challenges a woman faces as she becomes a

mother in a heterosexual relationship. In contrast, the specific challenges that two mothers may face was rarely imagined—unless they had observed them in their near surrounding or experienced them first hand. In relation to this, I believe that future research could also explore more how lesbian families relate to each other, and how experiences and knowledges are exchanged in various (online and offline) LGBTQ+ communities.

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Sammanfattning på svenska

Denna avhandling handlar om lesbiska par i Sverige som skaffar barn. Det övergripande syftet har varit att utforska hur kvinnor i lesbiska par förstår, förklarar och resonerar kring sin parrelation i övergången från partners till föräldrar. Analysen bygger på två intervjuomgångar: den första under graviditeten och den andra några år efter barnets födelse. I den första omgången intervjuades 40 kvinnor (båda partners i 20 par). I den andra intervjuomgången, som ägde rum mellan två och fyra år senare, intervjuades 23 av dessa kvinnor igen. I avhandlingen undersöker jag hur kvinnorna berättar om besluten om vem av dem som skulle bära det (första) barnet (Studie I), och hur deras föräldraledighetsplaner (Studie II) tog form, samt vilka betydelser av moderskap och jämlikhet de förhåller sig till innan respektive efter att de blivit mammor (Studie III och Studie IV). I samtliga studier undersöks hur kvinnorna pratar om sina relationer och (det blivande) moderskapet mot bakgrund av att de blir mammor i en svensk kontext, där jämställdhetsdiskursen är inflytelserik. Avhandlingen har ett kritiskt feministiskt perspektiv på det svenska jämställdhetsprojektet, vilket innebär att de normer och underliggande betydelser som genomsyrar jämställdhetsdiskursen inte tas för givna. En viktig utgångspunkt är att jämställdhetsprojektet framförallt adresserat heterosexuella par. Tidigare forskning visar att par i Sverige, oavsett om de är heterosexuella eller lesbiska, förhåller sig till jämställdhetsdiskursen på olika sätt. Ingen studie har emellertid tidigare undersökt hur diskursen tar sig uttryck för lesbiska par under övergången till föräldraskap.

I avhandlingen visas hur jämställdhetsdiskursen både begränsar och möjliggör olika betydelser och tolkningar av familjepraktiker för kvinnor i lesbiska relationer. Till exempel tyder resultaten på att kvinnor i lesbiska par tenderar att uppfatta sig som jämställda från början, enbart genom att vara två kvinnor, något som framställs som en fördel. Att skapa familj utanför den heterosexuella kärnfamiljen omgärdas alltså med optimism. I avhandlingen teoretiseras denna optimism i relation till offentliga berättelser om jämställdhet, konstruerade kring heterosexuella par, och de särskilda utmaningar en mamma väntas stå inför genom att dela föräldraskap med en pappa. I intervjuerna pratade de lesbiska kvinnorna till exempel ofta om ”frånvarande fäder” och ”närvarande mödrar”, där de placerade sig själva – såväl som sin partner – i den senare gruppen. Som de fyra studierna visar kan dessa positioner vara både produktiva och begränsande. Produktiva i meningen att många kvinnor omförhandlade vissa modeller och betydelser av jämställdhet, till exempel hur föräldraledighet kan fördelas på ett jämlikt sätt. Att vara två mammor kunde också upplevas som en befrielse i relation till könade förväntningar på föräldraskapet, helt enkelt för att man var två som delade på moderskapets bördor.

Jämställdhetsdiskursen blir emellertid begränsande såtillvida att kvinnorna uttryckligen talade om att de saknade tillgängliga manus för sina specifika familjekonstruktioner. Att sakna manus och modeller uppfattades dock som en utmaning först efter att de blivit föräldrar. I de första intervjuerna framhölls de manusbärande scenarierna ofta som en fördel, särskilt för att de upplevde att de befann sig bortanför den överhängande risken att utveckla traditionella och könade roller. Med andra ord: att vara två närvarande mammor tycktes lösa den omedelbara frågan om jämlikt föräldraskap så som det representeras i den svenska jämställdhetsdiskursen, samtidigt som detta också för med sig särskilda utmaningar. Avhandlingen illustrerar således både hur ideal, och synen på den egna relationen, förändras över tid bland paren.

Attachments

Appendix I: Poster

FORSKNINGSPROJEKT SÖKER

SAMKÖNADE PAR SOM VÄNTAR BARN

Nu pågår en studie om samkönade par, vardagsliv och föräldraskap vid Stockholms universitet. Vill du och din partner delta?

Vi är intresserade av att höra om era erfarenheter av processen att bli gravida och hur ni planerar inför att bli föräldrar (när det gäller vardagsliv, föräldraledighet, arbete/studier mm). Vi vill också gärna träffa er efter cirka 1,5–2 år för att höra hur det är när ni har varit föräldrar ett tag. För mer information: www.genparent.wordpress.com

Vi önskar intervjua både dig och din partner var för sig på en plats som passar er. De första intervjuerna kommer att ske under 2019.

Till studien söker vi personer som

- Identifierar sig som lesbisk, flata, homosexuell, bisexuell, queer eller som kvinna som har relationer med kvinnor*
- Är gravid/lever med en partner som är gravid med ert första barn
- Är minst 18 år
- Bor i Sverige

**Din definition av kvinna behöver inte vara cis-definierad*

VILL NI DELTA?
Mejla kontaktuppgifter till:
genparent.su@gmail.com

GENPARENT finansieras av Europeiska Forskningsrådet. Syftet med forskningsprojektet är att öka kunskaper om samkönade par väg till föräldraskap.

Intervjuerna genomförs av Madeleine Eriksson, genusvetare och doktorand i sociologi. Frågor om projektet? Kontakta professor Marie Evertsson som är projektledare: marie.evertsson@prof.su.se



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Appendix II: Folder, outside and inside

FORSKNINGSPROJEKT SÖKER

SAMKÖNADE PAR SOM VÄNTAR BARN

Lever ni i en lesbisk relation och väntar ert första barn?

Nu pågår en studie om samkönade par, vardagsliv och föräldraskap vid Stockholms universitet. Vill du och din partner delta?

VÄND OCH LÄS MER →

The logos for Stockholms universitet, GEN PARENT, and the European Research Council (erc) are displayed in two rows. The top row shows the logos side-by-side, and the bottom row shows smaller versions of the same logos.

I forskningsprojektet **GENPARENT** är vi intresserade av att höra om era erfarenheter av processen att bli gravida och hur ni planerar inför att bli föräldrar (när det gäller vardagsliv, föräldraledighet, arbete/studier mm). Vi vill också gärna träffa er efter cirka 1,5–2 år för att höra hur det är när ni har varit föräldrar ett tag.

Vi önskar intervjuva både dig och din partner var för sig på en plats som passar er. De första intervjuerna kommer att ske under 2019.

Mer information: www.genparent.wordpress.com
Mejla intresseanmälan till: genparent.su@gmail.com

VILL NI DELTA?

Kontakta oss på
genparent.su@gmail.com

Till studien söker vi personer som

- Identifierar sig som lesbisk, flata, homosexuell, bisexuell, queer eller som kvinna som har relationer med kvinnor*
- Är gravid/lever med en partner som är gravid med ert första barn
- Är minst 18 år
- Bor i Sverige

*Din definition av kvinna behöver inte vara cis-definierad.

ANONYMITET
Den information vi får ta del av är konfidentiell. Era svar och redogörelser kommer att behandlas av i projektet anställda personer som skrivit under sekretessförbindelser. Informationen bearbetas och publiceras på ett sätt som gör att enskilda individer inte kan identifieras. De personer som deltar i studien blir därmed anonyma. Stockholms universitet är personuppgiftsansvarig. Alla personuppgifter kommer hanteras konfidentiellt i enlighet med Dataskyddsförordningen och Vetenskapsrådets etikkod. Ni kan när som helst välja att avbryta intervjuerna eller deltagandet i studien (även efter genomförd intervju).

Studien är en del av forskningsprojektet **GENPARENT** som finansieras av Europeiska Forskningsrådet. Syftet med projektet är att öka kunskaper om samkönade par väg till föräldraskap.

Intervjuerna genomförs av Madeleine Eriksson, doktorand i sociologi.

Frågor om projektet? Kontakta professor Marie Evertsson som är projektledare: marie.evertsson@sof.su.se

Appendix III: Online ad

← → ↻ <https://genparent.wordpress.com> 🔍 ☆ ⓘ ⌵

MIN WEBBSIDA LIBRARY genparent.su@gmail.com

GENPARENT

ANSVARIG FÖR PROJEKTET ANMÄL INTRESSE

Lever ni i en lesbisk relation och väntar ert första barn?

Intresseanmälan skickas till: genparent.su@gmail.com

Just nu pågår en studie om lesbiska par och föräldraskap vid Stockholms universitet. Vill du och din partner delta?

I projektet GENPARENT som finansieras av Europeiska Forskningsrådet planerar vi att intervjua par dels under graviditeten, dels efter cirka 1,5 år. Vi är intresserade av att höra om era erfarenheter av processen att bli gravida, hur ni planerar inlösa att få barn (när det gäller vandagliv, föräldraskap, arbete/studier mm) och sedan hur det är när ni har varit föräkrar ett tag. Vi skulle vilja intervjua både dig och din partner var för sig. Intervjuerna genomförs på en plats som passar er. En intervju tar ungefär en timme.

Till denna studie söker vi personer som

- Identifierar sig som lesbisk, flata, homosexuell, bisexuell, queer eller kvinna som har relationer med kvinnor*
- Är gravid/lever med en partner som är gravid med ett första barn
- Är minst 18 år
- Bor i Sverige

*Den definition av kvinna behövs inte vara cis-konformerad.

Ad at WordPress, entry site part 1

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Jag som kommer genomföra intervjuerna heter Madeline Erikson. Jag är genusvetare och doktorand i sociologi vid Institutet för social forskning vid Stockholms universitet. Den information jag får ta del av är konfidentiell. Era svar och redogörelser kommer att behandlas av i projektet anställda personer som skrivit under sekretessförbindelser. Informationen bearbetas och publiceras på ett sätt som gör att enskilda individer inte kan identifieras. De personer som deltar i studien blir därmed anonyma. Stockholms universitet är personuppgiftsansvarig. Alla personuppgifter kommer hanteras konfidentiellt i enlighet med Dataskyddförordningen och Vetenskapsrådets etikkrav. Ni kan när som helst välja att avbryta intervjuerna eller deltagandet i studien (även efter genomförd intervju).

Skulle du och din partner kunna tänka er att delta i studien?

Har ni frågor berättar vi gärna mer.



Intresseanmälan och/eller frågor skickas till: genparent.su@gmail.com

Kontaktuppgifter:

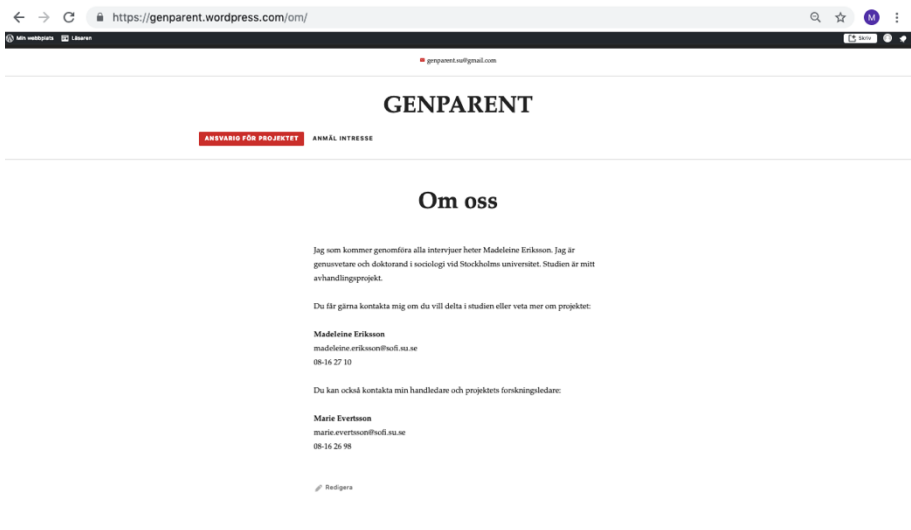
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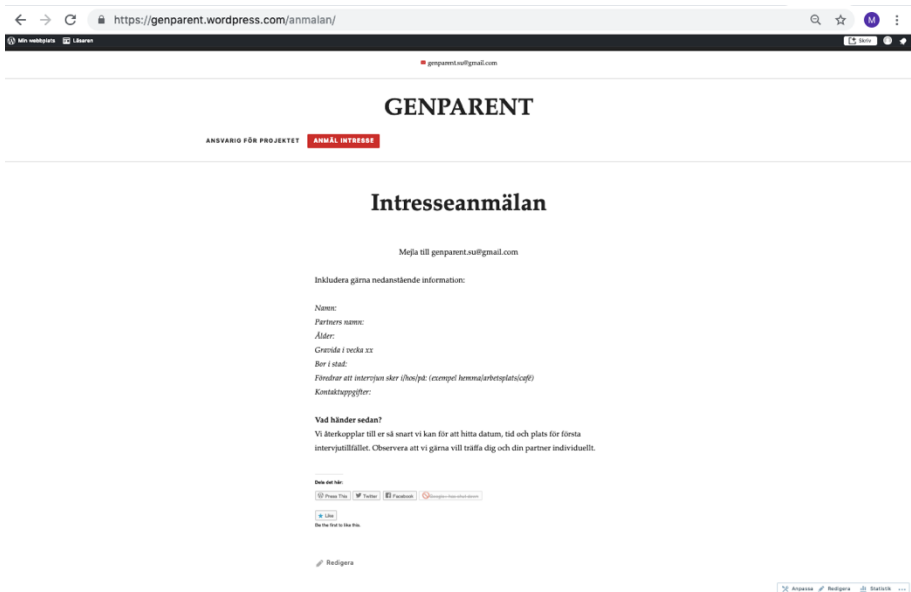
Institutet för social forskning (SOFI), Stockholms universitet



Ad at WordPress, entry site part 2



Ad at WordPress, section “Responsible for the research”



Ad at WordPress, section “How to participate”

Appendix IV: Interview guide in Swedish, interview 1

Inledning

- Berätta om när du och din partner träffades.
- När flyttade ni ihop?
(Hur ser er familjekonstellation ut?)
- Och nu väntar ni barn, hur har processen varit hittills? Mår ni bra?
- Ni går på regelbundna möten och kontroller på mödravårdscentralen?
- Hur har bemötandet från hälsovården /mödravården varit? (Beskriv/ge exempel!)

Vardag

- Berätta om en typisk dag: börja när du kliver upp
- Regelbundna aktiviteter?
- Vad bråkar ni om? Berätta om en typisk konflikt

Hushållsarbete

- Hur fördelar ni hushållsarbete – vem gör vad hemma? (Ge exempel!)
Disk, städa, matlagning, handling/inköp
- Hur kommer det sig att ni gör så?
- Är du nöjd med hur ni gör idag?
- Tror du att ni kommer göra annorlunda när ni får barn? (På vilket sätt?)

Arbetsituation/sysselsättning

- Vad jobbar du med? / Vad studerar du?
- Kan du beskriva dina arbetsuppgifter?
(Vad förväntas av dig på din arbetsplats?)
- Har du fasta arbetstider eller kan du bestämma själv när du börjar och slutar?
- Har du berättat för din arbetsgivare att ni väntar barn? Hur var det?
- Hur tänker du kring din arbetsituation i framtiden efter att barnet kommit?
Och på längre sikt?
- Är ditt arbete viktigt för dig? På vilket sätt?

Planera inför barn

- Hur kom ni fram till att ni skulle skaffa barn när ni gjorde det? (Yttre faktorer?)
- Hur kom ni fram till hur ni skulle göra? (Landsting/Danmark/heminsemination)
- Hur bestämde ni vem som skulle bära barnet? (Några särskilda kriterier ni tog hänsyn till?)
- Hur tänker ni kring detta med den biologiska kopplingen, kommer det ha någon betydelse? (Relation till barnet/vem som är hemma först/längst?)
- Hur förbereder ni er nu inför att bli föräldrar?

- Har ni pratat om förskola? (Val av förskola? När barnet ska börja förskola?)

Föräldraledighet

- Har det varit lätt att få tag på information om föräldraledighet?
- Har ni pratat om hur ni vill fördela föräldraledigheten?

Om ja: När började ni prata om det?

Hur planerar ni att fördela föräldraledigheten? Hur har ni resonerat?

Om nej: Hur tror du att ni kommer fördela föräldraledigheten, och varför?
Hur vill du att ni ska fördela den?

Vänner, familj, kollektivet och andra resurser

- Har ni berättat för familj/vänner om att ni väntar barn? (Om ja, vilka? När? Och hur var det?)
- Upplever du att ni har ni fått stöd från vänner, familj, andra nätverk? (hbtq-sammanhang)
- Känner ni andra par som väntar barn?

Långsiktighet

- Har ni pratat om tiden efter föräldraledigheten? Kommer ni båda arbeta heltid?
- Var ser du dig själv i framtiden?
- Om du tänker dig 5 år framåt, hur ser livet för dig och din familj ut då?
- Tror du att ni kommer vilja ha fler barn? Har ni pratat om det?

Tårtdiagram

Ideal – nu tänkte jag ställa några frågor om ideal

- Vad är en ideal fördelningen av föräldraledighet?
(Hur skulle du vilja göra? Och hur tror du att ni kommer göra?)
- Vad är en ideal fördelning av hushållsarbete?
- Tycker du att det är viktigt med en jämlik fördelning av sysslorna?

Är det något du vill tillägga?

Hur fick du information om studien?

Appendix V: Interview guide in English, interview 1

Introduction

- Tell me about when you and your partner first met
- When did you move in together?
- And now you're expecting a child, how has the process been so far? How are you now?
- Do you go to the regular meetings and controls at maternity health care centers?
- How have you experienced the interaction with health care/maternity care? (Describe/give examples)

Every-day-life

- Tell me about a typical day: start from the morning
- Do you have regular activities?
- What kinds of disagreements do you and your partner have? Tell me about a typical conflict

Housework

- How do you divide housework – who does what? (Give examples!)
Dishes, cleaning, cooking, groceries
- Can you explain why you do it like this?
- Are you pleased with how you divide it today?
- Do you think the division will be different when you have a child? (In what way?)

Paid work

- What do you work with? / What do you study?
- Can you describe your tasks at work?
- What's expected from you at your work place?
- Are you able to adjust your schedule/have a flexible schedule or do you have to be there at specific times?
- Have you told your employer that you are expecting a child? (How was that?)
- What's your thoughts regarding your work situation for the future? (Part time/full time)
- Is your work important to you?

Planning for a child

- How did you come to the decision of starting the process when you did it?
- How did you decide who would carry the child?

- What's your thoughts on biology and “the biological bond”?
- What's your thoughts on known/unknown donor?

- How are you preparing for the arrival of your child now?

-Have you talked about pre-school? (Which one, where, and when the child should start)

Parental leave

-Has it been easy to get information regarding parental leave?

-Have you discussed how to divide parental leave?

If yes: When did you start talking about it? How do you plan to divide it? What are your reasons for dividing it this way?

If no: How do you think you will divide parental leave? And why? How would you like to divide it?

Friends, family, community and other resources

-Have you told friends/family that you are expecting a child? If yes, when did you tell them? How did they respond to the news?

-Do you feel that you get support from friends, family, other resources? (LGBTQ networks?)

-Do you know of other couples who are pregnant?

Future

-Have you talked about the time after parental leave? Like work and work hours for instance.

-Where do you see yourself in the future?

-If you think 5 years forward; what will your life and family look like?

-Do you think you will want to have more children? Have you talked about it?

Pie charts

Ideals

-What's an ideal division of parental leave?

(How do you want to divide it? How do you think you will divide it?)

-What's an ideal division of housework?

-Is it important to you to have an equal share of housework?

Is there something you want to add?

How did you get information about the study?

Appendix VI: Interview guide in Swedish, interview 2

Inledning

- Berätta: hur har ni det nu?
- Hur är det att vara mamma? Är det som du förväntade dig?
- Hur ser en typisk dag i ditt liv ut nu?
- Har din vardag förändrats mycket sedan ni fick barn? På vilket sätt?
- Är du nöjd med ditt vardagsliv? Skulle du vilja ändra på något?

Första tiden med barnet:

- Om du tänker tillbaka, hur var det när bebisen kom?
- Hur länge var ni hemma tillsammans i början?
- Hur blev det med amning?
- Flaskmatade ni också?

Föräldraledighet

- Hur länge var du hemma och hur länge var din partner hemma? Blev det som ni hade tänkt er med fördelningen av föräldraledigheten? Varför/varför inte?
- Hur var det att vara föräldraledig? Var det som du förväntade dig?
- Hur mycket jobbade din partner när du var föräldraledig? Hur var det?
- Hade du velat göra annorlunda? Varför/varför inte?
- Hur gjorde ni när en av er var föräldraledig och den andra arbetade; hur fördelade ni hushållsarbete och tid/sysslor med barnet? Hur kom ni fram till att ni skulle göra så?

Arbete/sysselsättning

- Hur kändes det att gå tillbaka till jobbet och inte längre vara hemma?
- Jobbar du kvar på samma ställe som innan du fick barn?
- Har du och/eller din partner ändrat arbetstider eller arbetsuppgifter sen ni fick barn?
- Har dina arbetsuppgifter eller möjligheter på jobbet förändrats, tycker du?
- Upplever du att din inställning till jobbet ändrats sedan du fick barn? På vilket sätt?
- Hur ser dina yrkesmässiga framtidsplaner ut? Upplever du att du skulle kunna genomföra dina planer/drömmar? Om ja, vad möjliggör det, om nej, varför inte?

Barn på förskola

- Går ert barn på förskola/liknande nu? Om ja, när började barnet på förskola?
- Hur gjorde ni med inskolning, vem tog hand om det?
- Hur fungerar det om barnet blir sjuk? Vem vabbar? Hur brukar ni resonera kring det?
- Hur gör ni med hämtning och lämning?
- Hur sköter ni kontakten med förskolan? Vem av er skulle du säga håller reda på

saker som utflykter och vilka kläder som behöver tas med? Hur kommer det sig att ni gör så?

Hushållsarbete och barnomsorg

-Hur fördelar ni hushållsarbetet idag? Vem gör vad hemma? (Ge exempel!)

Diska, städa, laga mat, inköp. Barn: mata, natta, leka, tvätta

-Hur kommer det sig att ni gör så?

-Pratar ni om hur ni ska lägga upp de sysslor som behöver göras runt barnet?

-Vem brukar ta initiativet till att prata om dessa saker?

-Är du nöjd med hur ni gör idag?

Parrelationen

-Hur har er relation förändrats sedan ni blev föräldrar? Något som är bättre? Något som är sämre?

-Vad bråkar ni om? Berätta om en typisk konflikt

Relation till barnet

-Vad är det bästa med att vara mamma?

-Vad är det sämsta med att vara mamma?

-Vilka utmaningar tycker du att det finns i föräldraskapet?

-Hur skulle du beskriva din relation till barnet? Finns det någon skillnad i din och din partners relation till barnet? Vad tror du isf att det beror på?

-Händer det att ni har olika uppfattningar/åsikter om barnuppfostran och hur man ska göra? Till exempel med gränssättning, rutiner, utveckling.

Vänner, kollektivet och andra resurser

-Har ni vänner med barn? Andra HBTQ-föräldrar?

-Brukar ni diskutera föräldraskapet och småbarnslivet med vänner och familj? För att t ex fråga om råd och så.

-Upplever du att andra har åsikter om ert föräldraskap? Vilka har det och hur visar det sig?

Syskon

-Planerar ni för fler barn? Hur ser planerna ut?

Om inte gravida igen, men planerar att bli eller försöker nu:

-Vem ska vara gravid? Hur bestämde ni vem som skulle bära den här gången?

-Samma eller annan donator? Hur resonerade ni kring detta?

Om gravida igen:

-Hur kom ni fram till att ni skulle bli gravida igen vid den tidpunkt ni gjorde det?

-Hur kom ni fram till vem som skulle vara gravid? *Om bytt bärare:* hur känns det att vara gravid/inte vara gravid denna gång?

- Har ni samma donator eller har ni bytt? Hur resonerade ni kring det?
- Har denna graviditet haft inflytande på hur ni fördelar tid med ert första barn? På vilket sätt?
- Hur planerar ni att göra med föräldraledigheten denna gång?

Om paret fått ett till barn:

- Hur kom ni fram till att ni skulle bli gravida igen vid den tidpunkt ni gjorde det?
- Vem bar barnet denna gång? Hur kom ni fram till det? *Om bytt bärare:* hur kändes det att vara gravid/inte vara gravid denna gång?
- Har ni samma donator eller har ni bytt? Hur resonerade ni kring det?
- Hur har ni fördelat föräldraledigheten denna gång? Hur har ni resonerat kring det?

Breda frågor:

- Vad innebär det att vara mamma (enligt dig)?
- Upplever du att ni har utmaningar som heterosexuella föräldrar inte har?
- Upplever du att ni har fördelar som heterosexuella föräldrar inte har?

- Statistiken visar att lesbiska oftare separerar som småbarnsföräldrar än heterosexuella, känner du till det? Hur tänker du kring det, har du någon fundering kring varför det är så?

Avslutande frågor:

Sist så pratade vi lite om ideal, jag tänkte att vi skulle prata om det igen.

- Vad är jämlikhet för dig?
- Tycker du att det är viktigt med en jämlik fördelning av sysslorna?
- Vad skulle du säga är en ideal fördelning av föräldraledighet?
- Vad är en ideal fördelning av hushållsarbete och tid med barn?
- Hur tror du att man uppnår en jämlik relation om det är ett mål?

Det finns många normer/förväntningar på mammor i samhället, jag tänkte vi skulle avsluta med att prata lite om det.

- Vad tycker du kännetecknar en bra mamma? Beskriv med tre-fem ord och resonera kring dem.
- Stämmer din uppfattning om vad en bra mamma är med samhällsnormen, tror du? Om inte, hur skiljer de sig åt?

- Var ser du dig om fem år?
- Är det något du vill tillägga till intervjun?

Appendix VII: Interview guide in English, interview 2

Introduction

- Tell me: How are you now?
- What does a typical day in your life look like now?
- How do you experience life as a mother? Is it like you expected?
- Have your everyday-life changed much since you had children? In what way?
- Are you satisfied with your everyday-life? Would you like to change anything?

In the beginning:

- If you think back, how was it when the baby arrived?
- How did it go with breastfeeding? Did you bottle-feed?
- Were you home together in the beginning? If yes, for how long?

Parental leave:

- How did you experience being on parental leave? Was it like you expected?
- How much did your partner work when you were on parental leave? How was that?
- For how long were you home, respectively? Did you share parental leave according to your plans? Why/why not?
- Do you wish you shared the parental leave differently?
- How did you divide housework and care around the child when one of you were on parental leave and the other was home?

Paid work:

- How did you experience going back to work and no longer be home with the child?
- Do you work at the same place as last time we met?
- Have your work situation changed, in terms of hours or tasks? Is it in any way related to you having a child now?
- Did your time on leave affect your work situation in any way?
- Have your attitude or feelings towards your job changed since you had children?
- Tell me about your work-related plans for the future, do you feel that you would be able to achieve them? If not, why?

Kindergarten:

- Does your child attend kindergarten? If so, when did s/he start?
- How did you do with schooling (inskolning)? Who took care of it?
- When the child is sick, who is home for vabb and how do you reason?
- How do you divide the pick-ups and the drop-offs from kindergarten?

-Who's in charge of being in contact with the kindergarten? Which one of you knows when there is a planned activity for example, and which clothes the child needs to bring et cetera. How come you divide it like you do?

Housework and childcare:

-How do you divide housework today – who does what? (Give examples!)

Dishes, cleaning, cooking, groceries. Child: feed, put to bed, clean, play

-Can you explain why you do it like this?

-Do you discuss how you distribute these tasks around the house and with the child? If so, who, would you say, usually bring it up?

-Are you pleased with how you divide it today?

The couple-relationship

-How have your relationship with your partner changed since you became parents? Something's better? Something's worse?

-What kinds of disagreements do you and your partner have? Tell me about a typical conflict

Relationship to the child

-What is the best thing with being a mother?

-What is the worst thing with being a mother?

-Which challenges do you see with parenthood?

-How would you describe your relationship with your child? Is there a difference between you and your partners relationships to her/him?

-Does it ever happen that you have different opinions about parenting? (Give examples: limits, routines, developments et cetera)

Friends, family, the community and other resources

-How's the contact with your parents/siblings?

-How's the contact with your partners parents/siblings?

-Do you have friends with kids in the same age? Are there any other LGBTQ-parents in your network?

-Do you ever discuss/reason around parenting with your friends or families? (To ask for advice et cetera)

If pregnant again:

-How did you come to the decision of having a second child when you did it? (Time-aspect)

-How did you decide which one of you would carry?

-If switched carrier: How does it feel to carry/to not carry now? Is it like you expected it to be?

-Have you changed donor or do you have the same donor? How did you reason?

-Do you think that this pregnancy has affected your distributions of tasks in the home and with your child, or the parental leave?

-How do you plan to divide parental leave for this child?

If not pregnant again:

-Are you (still) planning for more kids?

-If yes, what does these plans look like? Who will carry and will you use the same donor? Have you talked about when you should start the procedure?

If you had a second child:

-How did you decide to start the process for the second child when you did?

-Who carried?

-How did you decide on this carrier?

If switched carrier: how does it feel to be pregnant/not pregnant this time? Is it like you expected?

-Do you have the same donor or have you changed? How have you reasoned?

-How did you divide parental leave this time? How have you reasoned?

Broad questions:

-What does it mean to be a mother?

-Do you think you have other challenges than heterosexual parents? If yes, what type of challenges?

-According to statistics, it is more common for lesbians than for heterosexuals to divorce as parents. If you were to guess, why do you think this is more common among lesbians than heterosexuals?

Some last questions:

-What does equality mean to you?

-Is it important to you to have an equal share of these things?

-What's an ideal division of parental leave?

-What's an ideal division of housework and childcare?

-How do you think a couple achieve an equal relationship?

-Do you think that you and your partner do things differently than heterosexual parents? When and how?

There are many norms/expectations in relation to motherhood in our society, before we end the interview, I would like to talk a bit about that with you...

-According to you, what characterizes a good mother? Try to pick three-five words.

-Is your idea of "a good mother" different from the norms in society? Try to pick three-five words.

-Where do you see yourself in five years?

Is there anything you want to add to the interview?

Appendix VIII, Consent form in Swedish, interview 1

GENPARENT. Ett projekt finansierat av Europeiska forskningsrådet (ERC),
Grant agreement #771770.

Forskningshuvudman: Stockholms universitet
Marie Evertsson, professor i sociologi
Madeleine Eriksson, doktorand
Institutet för social forskning,
Stockholms universitet, 106 91 Stockholm.
Telefon: 08-16 26 98
Email: marie.evertsson@sofi.su.se / madeleine.eriksson@sofi.su.se

Informationsbrev

Tack för att du visat intresse för att delta i en intervju kopplad till forskningsprojektet GENPARENT.

I det här dokumentet får du information om projektet och om vad det innebär att delta.

Projektet är ett samarbete mellan Stockholms universitet och Utrechts universitet i Nederländerna. I projektet görs intervjuer med par som väntar och/eller har fått barn. Vi vill veta mer om hur par och föräldrar tänker kring arbete, föräldraledighet och tid med barnet/barnen. Vi vill även gärna intervjua din partner.

Den undersökning du deltar i bygger på ett antal frågor. På nästa sida får du möjlighet att indikera om du samtycker till att bli kontaktad för en till intervju längre fram (om cirka 1,5–2 år). Intervjun tar ca en timme. Den rättsliga grunden för behandlingen är samtycke. Deltagande i forskningsprojekt är frivilligt och du kan när som helst, utan särskild förklaring, avbryta ditt deltagande. Om du ångrar dig under intervjuens gång kan du begära att den inspelning vi har förstörs. Om du ångrar dig efter att du deltagit i intervjun så kan du också, genom att kontakta Marie Evertsson (se ovan för kontaktuppgifter), begära att intervjumaterialet förstörs.

Dina kontaktuppgifter kommer låsas in och förvaras separat från det inspelade och sedermera transkriberade (utskrivna) intervjumaterialet.

De transkriberade intervjuerna kommer att avidentifieras och personliga namn, orter etc. kommer att ersättas med fiktiva namn. Dina svar och redogörelser kommer att behandlas av i projektet anställda personer som skrivit under sekretessförbindelser. Obehöriga kommer inte kunna ta del av personuppgifterna.

Stockholms universitet (org. nr. 202100-3062) är personuppgiftsansvarig för behandling av personuppgifterna och kommer att spara personuppgifterna. Forskningsdata ska lagras i minst 10 år, i enlighet med *Regler om bevarande och gallring av handlingar inom forskningsverksamhet vid Stockholms universitet* (Stockholms universitets tillämpningsföreskrift av Riksarkivets författningssamling, RA-FS 1999:1). Forskningsdata som bedöms ha ett bestående värde enligt de riktlinjer som anges i 6–8 §§ i RA-FS 1999:1 ska bevaras.

I enlighet med EU:s dataskyddsförordning 2016/679 (GDPR) samt nationell kompletterande lagstiftning har du rätt att:

- återkalla ditt samtycke
- begära tillgång till dina personuppgifter
- få dina personuppgifter rättade
- få dina personuppgifter raderade
- få behandlingen av dina personuppgifter begränsade
- inge klagomål till datainspektionen

Om du vill göra något av ovanstående kontaktar du Marie Evertsson.

Email: marie.evertsson@sofi.su.se

Universitetets dataskyddsombud är Benita Falenius.

Email: benita.falenius@su.se.

Eventuella klagomål kan inges till Datainspektionen.

Samtycke till att delta i studien

Jag har fått muntlig och skriftlig information om studien och har haft möjlighet att ställa frågor. Jag får behålla den skriftliga informationen.

- Jag samtycker till att delta i studien GENPARENT
- Jag samtycker till att uppgifter om mig behandlas på det sätt som beskrivs i forskningspersoninformationen.

Plats och datum	Underskrift

Var vänlig fyll i dina kontaktuppgifter så att vi kan kontakta dig vid eventuella frågor och vid en ev. andra intervju.

Kontaktuppgifterna kommer att förvaras separat från övrig information som framkommit under intervjun.

Fullständigt namn:

.....
.....

Adress:

.....
.....
.....

Mobilnummer:

E-postadress:

Jag samtycker till att bli kontaktad för en ny intervju

Jag vill inte bli kontaktad för en ny intervju

Appendix IX: Consent form in Swedish, interview 2

GENPARENT. Ett projekt finansierat av Europeiska forskningsrådet (ERC),
Grant agreement #771770.

Forskningshuvudman: Stockholms universitet
Marie Evertsson, professor i sociologi
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Stockholms universitet, 106 91 Stockholm.
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Email: marie.evertsson@sofi.su.se / madeleine.eriksson@sofi.su.se

Informationsbrev

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I det här dokumentet får du information om projektet och om vad det innebär att delta.

Projektet är ett samarbete mellan Stockholms universitet och Utrechts universitet i Nederländerna. I projektet görs intervjuer med par som väntar och/eller har fått barn. Vi vill veta mer om hur par och föräldrar tänker kring arbete, föräldraledighet och tid med barnet/barnen. Vi vill även gärna intervjua din partner.

Den undersökning du deltar i bygger på ett antal frågor. Intervjun tar ca en timme. Den rättsliga grunden för behandlingen är samtycke. Deltagande i forskningsprojekt är frivilligt och du kan när som helst, utan särskild förklaring, avbryta ditt deltagande. Om du ångrar dig under intervjuens gång kan du begära att den inspelning vi har förstörs. Om du ångrar dig efter att du deltagit i intervjun så kan du kontakta Marie Evertsson (se ovan för kontaktuppgifter) och meddela att du inte längre vill att vi använder dina uppgifter i projektet. Stockholms universitet kommer då enbart behandla de uppgifter du lämnat för arkivändamål enligt Riksarkivets föreskrifter nedan.

Dina kontaktuppgifter kommer läsas in och förvaras separat från det inspelade och sedermera transkriberade (utskrivna) intervjumaterialet.

De transkriberade intervjuerna kommer att avidentifieras och personliga namn, orter etc. kommer att ersättas med fiktiva namn. Dina svar och redogörelser kommer att behandlas av i projektet anställda personer som skrivit under sekretessförbindelser. Obehöriga kommer inte kunna ta del av personuppgifterna.

Stockholms universitet (org. nr. 202100-3062) är personuppgiftsansvarig för behandling av personuppgifterna och kommer att spara personuppgifterna. Forskningsdata ska lagras i minst 10 år, i enlighet med *Regler om bevarande och gallring av handlingar inom forskningsverksamhet vid Stockholms universitet* (Stockholms universitets tillämpningsföreskrift av Riksarkivets författningssamling, RA-FS 1999:1). Forskningsdata som bedöms ha ett bestående värde enligt de riktlinjer som anges i 6–8 §§ i RA-FS 1999:1 ska bevaras. Kontaktuppgifterna kommer att förstöras efter tio år från det att den senaste intervjun genomförts, under förutsättning att ytterligare en intervjuomgång inte är planerad, etiskt prövad och godkänd vid samma tid.

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Om du vill göra något av ovanstående kontaktar du Marie Evertsson.

Email: marie.evertsson@sofi.su.se

Universitetets dataskyddsombud är Björn Gustavsson.

Email: dso@su.se

Eventuella klagomål kan inges till Datainspektionen.

Samtycke till att delta i studien

Jag har fått muntlig och skriftlig information om studien och har haft möjlighet att ställa frågor. Jag får behålla den skriftliga informationen.

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