

THE WIDE LINE AND PROFILE OF THE FAMILY RELATIONSHIP OF HOMOSEXUALS: THE CASE OF THE WORD 'MOTHER'

Anne Cadoret

Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique,
Groupe d'analyse du Social et de la Sociabilité (CNRS-GRASS), Paris
anne.cadoret@grass.cnrs.fr

Abstract

Filiation is created with the help of three elements: blood, surname and daily life. In this communication, I propose to deal with the biological element as from homoparental families – one comprised by two lesbians and another by one gay – in which the “biological mother” is distant from the families. I shall start by presenting the families and then mention the logic of each family, finally ending with the problem of social links.

Presentation

Family A has two children; the first was handed over by an American friend of my interviewees, who comes to France to give birth, renouncing parent rights; the brother of one of the lesbians has declared the father's name as if he were an adulterous child, and leaves the education to his sister. After a few years, a tribunal decision supports a lesbian in her work as a mother: she has the simple adoption of the child and becomes a legal mother.

The second woman gives birth to another child. A man has given her sperm (an “artisan” insemination) asking that his name is not revealed. This woman has the status of a single mother. And so, according to the aspects of filiation.

- from a biological point of view, one of the children has two well identified biological parents (mother and father) and the other an unknown donor but also an identified mother.
- At a legal level, the two children each have a mother. In reference to the legal father, he is completely absent for the second, but present in the person of one of the lesbian's brother for the first.
- At a daily level, the two children have two mothers but no father.

In family B, the father is single. He is not interested in a matrimonial alliance, these relationships measured by uncertainty in love, and he opposes ephimerous relationships of the alliance to the perpetuity of filiation.

What is more, the filiation is supported by the biological link of the birth with is a gift, which is natural. The perpetuity of filiation is reinforced by this aspect of blood that escapes human will.

Then, this man wants a child of his own blood. Also, the filiation he expects has to be total, unique; in this case he cannot choose co-parenthood, with which the child would have a double filiation, paternal and maternal. Since

my character wants a child of his blood and a sole filiation he has to contract a rented mother.

To be a mother, but only a mother

Our three characters are going to use the same expression “biological mother” to talk about these women, refusing often the word “mother” when an adjective is not added that specifies the situation of these mothers. The role of my “fathers”, my informers recognise the other women, these women-mothers, is the role of body, the biological. None of them refuse this inheritance, going as far as to comment the similarities there can be between the children and the biological mother.

However there are differences between the three fathers according to, first the question of the situation given to the biological to construct the paternal links; and secondly, the question of social links that can be established between two units: the world of the biological mother and the world of the “legal” fathers.

The biological strength

Even though none of the fathers, neither of these two families deny the biological role, nor the existence in their framework of this biological presence in their children, it needs to be moved away. And so a difference is established between the individual link (the child of the progenitor) and the parental link, above all when the individual stresses the link of friendship (in the case of the first family); or a difference between the recognition and of a fact – an intellectual link – and an affective link (the case of the second family).

The social link

Which is supported by the process of donation or a process of merchandising.

«[...] such kin-based structures appear to be disappearing before the forces making for large-scale integration, leading one to think that in the future families (and their fragments) may find themselves articulated with one another not by kinship structures but by quite different principles » (Godelier., Trutman , Tjon Sie Fat, 1998: 3). For our two interviewees, the words “rented mother” have to be rejected because we enter the world of marketing; and they reject the marketing of motherhood, the economic link between “donor” parents and the parents “receivers” of the children. On the contrary, they accept the idea of mother for another person when there is not money between the two sides, comparing it with an open adoption as there are in the United States. They stay with an ideology of donation. In contrast with our interviewee who has been able to find a “producer of children” because there is a whole economic and cultural system in some countries that arrange the contact between the progenitor and the father and that clarifies the commercial transaction.

However, we need to note that, whatever the type of reference there is to institute a link, the body does not give family relationship.

Godelier M., Trutman T.R., Tjon Sie Fat F.E., (ed.) 1998, *Transformations of Kinship*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press.