How Do Gay Couples Talk about Caring for Children?

Deconstructing Gay Family Value Discourse

Abstract

Gay and lesbian people keep fighting for their rights for several years and this promote the same-sex marriage and adoption in many countries. However, those novel same-sex families with their adopted children are still challenged by the entire society, especially opposed by those conservative and religious people. How their families works becomes a concerned issue to the public. In this research, one speech video from YouTube website which is made by a gay family consisting of two male parents, a daughter and a son is totally transcribed, in which their discourses are analyzed. Results show that (a) gay parents take a respectful and democratic parenting strategy among their children; (b) same-sex couples and their children are living in a normal life as other families; (c) the discourse of gay parents' strategy also become a model for other parents. Discussion focuses on the discourse of gay parenting sharing and practicing in the community with its influence and implication.

Introduction

On February 10, 2014, British Columbia Province in Canada celebrated Family Day as a state public holiday for the first time, which consists of a long weekend between Christmas and Easter.

And on that day, CBC news reported a new regulation in relation to my research that a new born baby can have three or even more parents on the birth certificate, legitimated by B.C. new Family Law Act (Rolfsen, 2014). In that piece of news, a lesbian couple firstly helped their baby get a birth certificate with both of their names. Importantly, biological father's name is legalized, which shared the caring responsibility among three parents. From this news, it is not only to consider the legalization of same-sex parents' rights, but also the situation for lesbian and gay people that they emerge to a new and visible social stage.

In the traditional family structure, parents consist of a mother and a father. This configuration is accepted by the public. However, when the same-sex couples come together and adopt children, the original discourse of family relationship including "mum" and "dad" is no longer suitable for their children. When heterosexual couples raise children, their discourse clearly distinguishes between mom and dad, often assigning specific roles and functions to each. In gay and lesbian families, such discourse no longer is intelligible, as there are two moms or two dads. What then is the discourse of gay families about parenting? What are salient topics in this discourse? How is normality constituted in gay discourse on parenting? In this study, the parenting discourse in gay couples is analyzed by focusing on relevant talk gathered from online video materials.

Literature Review

Western scholars who work with homosexual people community have presented several research

results of those new style families. Through those previous works, I figure out the current situation of gay/lesbian people and their trouble from the society.

Out or In

The title "out or in" is related to one concept in gay and lesbian culture. Because of the conflict existing among heterosexuality and homosexuality, and the domination of mainstream value, social majority power is held by the heterosexual population, an imbalanced relationship between two sides makes the homosexual people invisible, as the metaphor, in the closet (Taylor & Richardson, 2005 and Sumara & Davis, 1999).In *The Right to Be Out* this concept is described "a condition or state of genuine openness" (Biegel, 2010, p xiii), in other words, no hiding sex-orientation, considered as the vital issue for gay and lesbian people.

To individual gay and lesbian, whether to come out or stay in the closet usually depends on personal condition, however, if people of same sex orientation get marriage and adopt kids, and that becomes a unit, it is vital for them to consider the strategy whether stay in or come out the closet. They need to face the inquiry from school teachers and other families (Casper, 1996, p274). For example, seven lesbian couples take different strategy to deal with their family structure to the public, that is most of them are open themselves to the kid care center teachers, while one or two couple choose "a low-key approach" (Lee, 2010, p20). Those who articulate their sex-orientation and family structure to others claim this action as a way to establish a clarified concept in kids' mind and strive for the respect and rights (Lee, 2010). This is similar to the results in another research which shows that seven gay couples take the "coming out"

strategy to confront the discrimination successfully and is meaningful for their children (Tuazon-McCheyne, 2010). Nevertheless, some of the children from same-sex families narrate their passive "coming out" experience. For instance, one student was judged by her peers in the school context about her family structure because of the curiosity and discrimination, which makes the student uncomfortable (Lubbe, 2007).

Thus, when those individuals come together as a family relationship, they get more challenges of the identification within the society. While, part of them and their kids choose a invisible life style but is still forced to come out, and most same-sex couples take a braver strategy as exposing the family characteristics to fight for more equality and respect as well as a good teaching materials to their children.

How do Same-sex Parents Work in the Family Context?

Initially, it is not easy for the homosexual couples to become the same-sex parents legally. The most significant foundation for gay men is to prove their sufficient financial resource. Despite meeting the funding requirements, they still have a over two years preparation for adopting a kid from oversea which should be written in their agenda (Tuazon-McCheyne, 2010). Nevertheless, once the children enroll into their family, those couples show a more careful child care and lovely family education. In a quantitative research, the co-parenting among 117 lesbian, gay and heterosexual couples with adopted children aged from 1 to 5 are examined by questionnaires of care labor, at the same time, their unstructured play are videotaped to figure out the behavior. In the result, same-sex parents show more balanced child-care labor than heterosexual parents,

especially those mothers. Especially, lesbian couples have the most supportive interactions among all cohorts (Farr and Patterson, 2013). Lesbian mothers articulate their honesty and make entire efforts on kids, such as teaching kids to be proud, finding suitable childcare center, etc (Lee, 2010). Undoubtedly, in spite of the heavy stress, same-sex couples take their responsibility to take care of their adopted children as well as fight for their children's rights.

Same-sex Parents Encountering the Challenges of the Society

Same-sex parents often live in a not easy-going social context, which comes with discrimination, unfairness, and conflict. The strongest opposition is from the religious perspective. Some religious school teachers see homosexuality as danger and harm, which also threatens the heterosexual family or traditional family structure (Casper, 1996). And if racialism integrates with religion or homophobia, it will bring stronger negation (Biegel, 2010 and Lubbe, 2007). For instance, a student Harper wears a T-shirt with anti-gay words and quotation from the Bible in the public place of school (Strike, 2007 and Beigel, 2010). It can be considered as the brief opposed action to the gay/lesbian couples as well as a representative of religious perspective.

Subsequently, teachers also worry about children's sex-orientation development in that kind of family (Casper, 1996). Teachers frequently do not know how to talk about homosexual topics because of age appropriateness (Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2011). Another quantitative research presents that the sons of lesbian couples are less masculine in their play behavior than other kinds of families (Goldberg, Kashy & Smith, 2012).

It should be considered that although all these articles mention the legalization of gay

marriage in their research context, it is still the gap between legalization and real life that participants from that kind of community still suffer from the social challenges from religion, morality and rooted social mainstream value in their hard life.

Research Question

Although life is not easy for same sex parents, they never give up their rights to foster children through different strategies. Therefore, focusing on current life, gay/lesbian family's experience should be presented and taken into account as the evidence which demonstrates the value of that new type family structure. Past research pay more attention on lesbian mothers and few studies were conducted in the (male) gay community. In this study, therefore, I investigate the discourse within gay couples about parenting. How gay couples talk about caring their children. How do the family members (parents and children) identify themselves in the structure?

Method

This study was designed to investigate the gay community discourse related to parenting.

Data Source

In this paper, the data source is collected from a series of videos called "Ask a gay family" on YouTube made by Gay Family Values[1]. Until August 30, 2013, this series update to Episode 18.

---

[1] https://www.youtube.com/user/depfox?feature=watch

To narrow down and focus on my research questions, Episode 2 named "How did we tell the Kids" [2] which takes over ten minutes in which the gay couple talked about their parenting strategy is completely transcribed and selected into discourse analysis. It is a kind of autobiographical video that is hosted by one parent and all family members participate. Topics are collected and raised by their friends, fans and YouTube audience. The video is structured into four parts: greeting and acknowledgement, question one with answer about the calling for both male parents, question two with answer as the strategy that kids learn about their family, and epilogue.

Participants

In this video, there are four individuals sitting in front of the lens, two male adults and two children. Two male parents are Jay who is in yellow and Bryan who wears a black T-shirt. The boy is called Daniel, and the girl sitting on Jay's lap is named Selena (See Figure 1). Daniel and Selena are biological brother and sister who have been adopted in their five years and twelve months respectively. And Selena is four now, while Daniel is about eight years old and they have lived together over three years.

Setting

During this ten minutes video, they keep this seat setting. That is Daniel sits between Jay and Bryan and Selena sits on Jay's lap. They all wear T-shirts, very simple and casual. Bryan holds

his coffee cup, during the video process, he drinks the coffee optionally.

They also stay in one of their house rooms, which consist of yellow walls with a screen on it, two lamps beside the screen which is on a cabinet. On the right of the lens, there is a window that has the light coming in. They all sit on the sofa and another sofa is beside them on the left. Thus, it can be inferred that they are sitting in their living room and making this video to audience.

Figure 1, a captured picture from the video to show participant's family structure.

Data Analysis

The video was entirely transcribed including the gestures part because one participant Selena is only four years old so that some reflections or answers are expressed by her gestures.

The first step is to deconstruct the parenting strategy, so I look two parents' discourse about parenting behavior. During this process, I try to pick out two parents words about parenting thoughts and some examples in relation to two children. For instance, how two male parents deal with the name? What the attitudes they hold when children are not obedient to them? Continuing analysis of their discourse of children's acceptance of two male parents, I also find out gay couple takes strategy and efforts to help children get involved into family.

Subsequently, to see the normality in the gay family, I primarily hope to seek four individuals' own identity of same-sex family, for example, I circle children's discourse such as "pretty normal", "I think lots of kids have two dads and two moms because there were lots of

gay couples", or parents' discourse as "we live our lives just like any other family does", etc. Those discourses support their clarified identification of their family as their subjective perception of normality. For more detailed clues, their discourses about the events or issues with other people are sought as children's school study, their friends, and the time with female roles. In addition, I pay attention to the video background setting so that the discourse of the entire video setting is considered as supplement to support the normality in gay family.

In addition, for analyzing the discourse shared with the community, I also look their questions from audiences and answers from them in pairs. Initially, it should be clear that questions are selected from their audiences so that they should directly answer those two questions. However, the discourses are far more beyond the questions themselves. For example, the first question is about the name of parents, it is totally enough to present the negotiation process by the four family members. However, I can find the words as follows,

> *Jay: So, basically, you know, I think when you are a gay couple, you don't have*
>
> *kids yet, you get all these ideas about what things suppose to be? How it*
>
> *suppose to work? What role supposes to take?*

Here, Jay raises a hypothesis that how gay couples who don't have child deal with the coming adopted child. Then, Jay also presents a social phenomenon that how "lots of people" take care of their children, which leads them to "feel uncomfortable". In other words, he denies parenting of "lots of people" so that he uses his family experience as the discourse to suggest audience a better parenting strategy. Thus, their parenting style is spread through the video, which can affect the audience. There are more discourses like this example, which constitute a

series of pedagogy of gay couple parenting shared with the entire community.

The Parenting Discourse of Gay Couples

This study was designed to investigate the discourse of gay couples about parenting. The results of the analyses are summarized in the form of three assertions: (a) Same-sex couples discourse expresses democratic and balanced parenting attitude; (b) the discourse from same-sex family proves their life as normal; and (c) the discourse constitutes a form of parenting model which can affect other families generally. In the following, each of the three assertions is supported by evidence from the data.

Assertion 1: Gay parent discourse emphasizes respect to children's attitude through parenting.

When parents talk about their children, they may emphasize a variety of forms of relations, for example, they may focus on children submitting to the parents' wishes/orders/rules. In the set of videotapes analyzed here, it is notable that the discourse emphasizes the parents' respect for the children. In this video, the entire family mainly talks about two important events in their life together: one concerns the way in which children name their parents (daddy versus papa); and the other is the children's acceptance of the family structure in this gay parent family. In both types of events, the parents talk about their parenting strategies to get children involved in family issues. Thus, the discourse that focuses on the children's involvement in various forms of

decision making thereby is a sign of the respect that the two dads have for their children. This is shown in the following two examples.

In the video, the first event concerned the way in which the two children are to name Jay and Brian. From the conversation, it is evident that neither Jay nor Brian imposed their preferred way of being called. Thus, in the tape, Jay states that he "was come to be 'papa'," and Bryan says that he "was glad to be 'dad'." However, Jay then recalls that "The kids did not like that!" Using subjunctive clause suggests that the two parents originally have had prepared how they wanted to be called by the children they would adopt. However, even though both had preferred ways of being called, they apparently did not insist on their preferences. As their conversation shows, the children do not like the expression "papa." Both parents apparently are comfortable following the children's presences, which we can see from Jay's statement that "they [children] do what they do". Thus, both parents accept the children's decision as the statement from Jay "they never like the 'papa', so me and Bryan together, they call us daddy Jay or daddy Bryan". Here we can see that the same form of expressing parenthood—i.e., daddy—is combined with the first names to make a distinction which one of the two daddy is meant, talked about, or addressed. The two parents do not talk about why they may have considered "daddy" and "papa" as the two forms of address. However, in a hetero family, a distinction is clear because language has two distinct words "mom/mummy" and "dad/daddy" to distinguish who is being addressed. This, of course, becomes an issue in a gay family, where there are two moms or two dads. This means that a simple address like "mom" or "dad" is ambiguous in a homosexual family, because one of two people might be concerned. My discourse analysis shows that the practice of

appending the "dad" with the first name removes the ambiguity that is the addressed or the person talked about. The discourse provides evidence that the children were involved in arriving at a form of discourse that meets the need to disambiguate the referent of "dad" while at the same time respecting the preferences that the children for the discourse to be used. In this situation, we see that a potentially big issue in any gay family is confronted with—i.e., how the parents are addressed given that there are two moms or two dads—here is resolved in a manner that respects the children by involving them in making the decision about how the two parents can be distinguishably called. From here we see both parents are convinced and make a concession on this name issue. To what extent, they show their respect to children's voice.

Subsequently, the second type of event concerns how children may adapt to being part of a gay family. In virtually all cultures and religions, hetero families are taken to be the norm: there is a heteronormativity at work (Sumara & Davis, 1999). So, for example, when children from gay families go to school, undoubtedly they will encounter their peers who are almost from hetero families, while the concept of family or the knowledge of family structure will directly come to those children. Thus, children from same-sex families will hold different or even opposed identification from those of hetero families, which will bring children of gay families suspect or uncomfortable feeling. Therefore, how gay parents help their children understand their family structure or relationship becomes an important issue.

In this family, this gay couple takes the strategy as having conversations with children to help them understand the meaning of gay family, in which way they do not force/order their children to accept this issue but treat them as friends respectfully. According to the transcript,

both parents mention they have some talk with their son Daniel. For example, Jay says they "have a few talks about" the issue of having "two daddies and not the traditional dad and mommy". This is similar to Bryan's statement that when "Daniel first come to live with" them, they "did talk about it a little bit". From both parents' articulation, as they positively concerns the issue of family structure identification encountering to Daniel's life, they are not cheating or imposing Daniel but carefully negotiate with him, in which situation they see Daniel as equal as them. Additionally, in their discourse, they both mention the quantity of conversations that they use the phrases "a few" and "a little bit", which means they keep talking this issue with Daniel and give the time for their son to understand it with their respect rather than compelling Daniel to accept that rapidly. While when this issue comes to Selena, their daughter, it happens a little bit different for Jay's narrative that Selena positively raise the conversation with their parents while both parents also reflect her in time with surprise. See the following excerpt:

> Jay: So I remember I was with Selena and there were a lot of gay families, a lot
> of two dads and two moms families there, and Selena goes, "hey, daddy Jay
> guess what?"... she goes, "I think lots of kids have two dads and two moms
> because there were lots of gay couples." ...Selena is thinking about that!
> Okay, she knows there are some differences!

Here, different from Daniel's experience, both parents encounter their daughter's comments and questions about the identification issue. However, they confirm their daughter's comments

as reflection as Jay's words "Selena is thinking about that". They do not avoid or ignore Selena's comments but face it and have the talk with her. As Jay goes on: "when they bring a conversation to you, do dialogue, I mean you talk about it", which reveals their strategy is positively response to children's need.

Generally, when most parents encounter tough issues, controversial topics, or embarrassed events, they will prevent their children from those things by hiding the truth or telling a so-called "white lie", in which way to protect their children not to suffer bullying or discrimination. To what extent, some parents will compel their children to accept what they think is correct. However, on the contrary, this gay couple face up to the truth of homosexual family and positively negotiate with their children and reflect respectfully. As a result, both children accept this truth and think their family is "pretty normal", which provides their strategy makes effort. In other words, showing respect and giving space as a good parenting strategy will receive children's understanding and agreement.

Although the discourse from two parents emphasizes respect, as such more symmetrical (Roth &Radford, 2010) rather than hierarchical relations, there are also aspects of the latter. To focus on unfolding of their conversation, Jay is considered as a host of this entire video, who leads all discussions and organizes the conversation between family members. For example, at the beginning after he finishes the acknowledgement to the audience, he gives the voice power to Bryan by saying "I let Bryan kick off the first question". Jay's language here expresses a transferring of the voice to his partner, to some extent, reflecting an asymmetrical conversation relationship between both parents. Furthermore, after Bryan gives out the question, he says "I

think best goes to Daniel and Selena to answer it", which implies they attempt to invite or encourage their children to answer. Then, the voice power (Bellous, 1994) flows to their children. Here, their conversation unfolding process shows a hierarchical power transmission from one parent to another then to their children. Nevertheless, the rationality should be considered in the hierarchical relations in gay family, which to some extent, does not conflict to their respect. In this video, they concerning the questions from audience about parenting, and they consider to reply those questions through children's voice so that they will take the strategy to encourage children get involved in the speech. As a result, Jay transfers the original question "why not have your kids called you 'daddy' or 'papa'" to "how do your guys don't call me Papa?", in which the language can be understood by their children so that the answers can be brought out through children's voice. In fact, this is also the way they are showing respect to their children. Compared with some extreme restrict hetero family, in which parents are not willing to let children express their idea, the hierarchical relation in gay family is not as serious as those but presents a more moderate interaction inside.

Based on these clues, gay parenting style is democratic and less demanding (Kemp, 2004). Rather than forcing their children to be obedient, both parents allow more space and freedom to their children with their respect.

Assertion 2: The (discursive, material) production of gay family life as normal

In many societies, gay relations and gay families are characterized as abnormal (often unnatural, and sometimes unlawful)(Casper, 1996). Against this background, gay discourse and practices

function to produce being gay generally and gay families in particular as normal. In the materials analyzed here, the production of normality may be observed on two levels: (a) in the discourse of gay families and (b) in the way gay families present themselves and their physical surroundings.

To the first level, the discourses from every gay family member present their identity as normal. From the perspective of Selena and Daniel, two children just completely adapt two parents and their family structure. When Jay states the conversations about the understanding of family structure they have with Daniel, he reminds Daniel's understanding as "pretty normal", while, at the same time, Daniel echoes "yeah" as a confirmation. Here, the phrase "pretty normal" convey two dimensions from Daniel. On one side, he has understand the meaning of having two same-sex parents as his fathers and accept this kind of family structure. On the other side, he looks himself as a common member in this family and feels "comfortable" in that situation. To take analogy to their daughter, Selena who uses gestures as the discourses, nods her head as confirmation to Jay's questions: "do you like having two daddies" and "is that cool to have two dads". Her answers demonstrate she also accepts both male parents and feels "cool" as a positive attitude. It should be considered the situation of adopted children and their real feeling in a new family, which will always be a tough period to those children such as they will contradict to the adopted parents or they won't feel being loved, etc. However, both children in this gay family present positive reaction to their parents and totally integrate with the family. To both children, the words "pretty normal" means they are fostered by a gay couple as the same as other children. In addition, from both parents' perspective, they present the similar feeling of this kind of family relationship. Jay is doing the work of normality in stating "Lots of kids have two dads and two

moms, because there were lots of gay couples." The discourse of normality tends to articulate what is normal, within a range; and most people lie within this range. "Lots of . . ." is a way of marking something as shared with many rather than a few others. Precisely because there are many, whatever is described as fitting within is normal rather than exceptional. So characterizing something as being (part of, shared with) plural is a discursive device to constitute normality. As well as Bryan says: "we live our lives just like any other family does". Bryan's summative statement represents the value of the entire family that they see themselves as normal. The normality is the same as any other family. It implies that gay family should not excluded but be included in the existing family structure. In other words, everything happens in hetero families, whether happiness or sadness, gay families will also experience. Therefore, self-identification establishes the first step of normality in a gay family.

Subsequently, to focus on the normal life of gay family, their narratives of practice also should be concerned as the examples or experience of normality. Like children from hetero families, gay family children also have their common school life and experience. As Jay mentions "his (Daniel's) best friend at school", he actually presents two truths that Daniel goes to school like other children and Daniel has connected with his friends through the discursive discourse. The relationship between Daniel and his friends does certain work that Daniel is treated as other children who is being concerned and integrated in a school context, which strongly reinforce the normality of children from gay family. To their daughter, Selena also gets preschool life "for a couple weeks". Nevertheless, when Jay reminds Selena about her preference of "mommy figure", he actually states to the audience that their children have female figures or

models in their life for he says:"you got some mommy figures like Grandma Ann. Who's mother woman you like to…" This clue should be highlighted as the supplement supporting the normality because part of opposition to same-sex parenting focus on the lack of one character (feminine or masculine model)(Casper, 1996 and Goldberg, Kashy, & Smith, 2012). However, in this tape, two parents' discourses demonstrate their children are exactly connected with feminine models such as "Grandma Ann, girl Jane" which is supplied the blank in their parenting. Thus, if in the hetero family, children are raised up by a feminine model (mother) and a masculine model (father) as considered as normal, in gay family, this also can be normalized through their parenting strategy like their children take time with those female friends.

In the second level, the normality also presents in their physical surrounding. Initially, it is necessary to reconstruct or contextualize (Bohnsack, 2008) their video setting (see Figure 1 below) and then continue to three levels of analysis: (a) objective sense (what is there, objectively to see), (b) expressive sense (what it expresses, like the clothing expresses "relaxed" the room "everyday, mundane family room", (c) documentary sense "normality"

Figure 1, a captured picture from the video to show participant's family structure.

Figure 1 as a snapshot shows four participants sitting on a sofa as if they are watching TV and wearing T-shirts and pants. Selena is sitting on Jay's lap and Daniel is in the middle. Bryan holds a cup of coffee which he keeps drinking during the video. Behind them as their background, there is a photo frame in the middle of two lamps. On the right side, the light goes through the window. As Jay mentions, it is morning. Through transferring the picture into description, it makes some senses that they make this video in a very home-based situation in the morning. All of those settings give audience the objective sense.

Through those objects from this captured snapshot like their clothes, the place as the video background, and the time, they bring some denotative messages (Bohnsack, 2008) as expressive sense that it is a not serious place to talk about the issue in tension but a free space with four common participants who talk their ideas on this topic. In other words, these materials imply an object setting is cause and simple. Compared to any other situation, there is not a place where

people can feel free and have the confidence to talk but at home and be with the family members. Thus, they are wearing T-shirts that express a relaxed feeling. When we focus on participants' facial expressions, they are common and peaceful, especially Selena keeps smiling. It gives out a piece of strong information that this entire family is confident with the gay family issue, which imply them totally accept that as normal. Continuing to the details, focusing on everyone's position, Selena is sitting on the Jay's lap, which conveys their intimate parent-child relationship like every father loves his daughter. While Daniel is sitting between both parents in the middle, to what extent, also demonstrates this gay couple concern about their son's position as the center in their mind.

Base on this objects setting and the emotional condition of the participants, the purpose of the video producer (Bohnsack, 2008) can be documented. The way they unfold their presenting makes audience feel casual and common from the visual part. To what extent, this setting is like a family portrait that you can see in every home. Perhaps, it is even simpler than some portraits as the clothes are really causal and Selena is barefoot, which conveys to audiences that they are as normal as others. Subsequently, the choice of background and the time is also a preparation for audience to disclose their real life at home. Although it shows a limited space and they just mention the time is morning, they intend to let audience know about their common daily life, which is absolutely similar with every family: morning with coffee and school preparing. Additionally, their positions and emotions that display a strong and concrete relationship between each member is a way to unfold their conversation easily which makes each other close to talk.

Assertion 3: The discourse presents the gay family as a model for the notion of family generally.

Commonly, people will learn some knowledge from each other. Especially when new parents begin to have their babies, they would like to hear from previous parenting experiences that suggestions can be transferred into their own strategies. Those previous successful experiences become empirical models benefitting others. It is normal to find books written by famous parents, videos or interviews of successful hetero families. Undoubtedly, they become the models affecting numerous parents. However, for same-sex families there tends to be a blank, for there is little literature on parenting by homosexual couples. What is more, same-sex couples are different from hetero couples so that the parenting strategies cannot totally refer to the old successful models in prevalence. In this video, therefore, this gay couple's discourses work as a model enriching the current strategies.

During answering the first question, when Jay uses the pronoun "you" in his comment, he shifts his role so as to talk to the audience of gay couples, for depicting their parenting or some educational thoughts to the gay community. See the following excerpt:

> Jay: So, basically, you know, I think when you are a gay couple, you don't have
>
> kids yet, you get all these ideas about what things suppose to be? How it
>
> suppose to work? What role supposes to take?
>
> ...

Jay: ...Lots of people want their kids do a lot of things, and when it comes down

to it. Kids find out what their feel uncomfortable with it and they do what

they do.

Jay raises a hypothesis or sets a situation by the words "when" and "you", which gets all of audiences involved in that situation. Moving on, he gives out several questions in the way of making people thinking. In fact, when a new baby is going to be born, that period can be the exciting and nervous time for all of parents so that most couples will get preparation for the coming life. Then those existing previous models work as the following excerpt "lots of people want their kids do a lot of things". Here, thoughts quoting from "lots of people" become the models of general ideas of parenting. In fact, we observe here an interaction between the discourse of normality and the discourse as a model, because both forms of discourse draw on the same discursive device: "what everyone knows" and "what lots of people [everyone] want." Actually, this gay couple also takes those into practice because Jay designs himself as papa and Bryan prefer dad, in which way they want children to call. However, they also provide the results as failure (children want to call them Daddy Jay and Daddy Bryan). Such accounting is in fact part of a dialectic that leads to the depiction of respect (see Assertion 1). The way of unfolding this part of conversation leads a comparison that some general parenting strategies cannot be a model in same-sex families and to some extent, those general models is partly hegemonic as Jay's words "kids find out what their feel uncomfortable with it". Thus, they change their attitude to let children "do what they do" which brings a successful result. They prove their

approach is also accessible, in which way their discourse forms a new model for the audience.

This can also be found during answering the second question. When Jay narrates the process of adopting Daniel, he says "I think kids are really easy going" and then supplies "I mean, I know not all kids but Daniel". In this discourse, Jay's first statement implies that he has a previous view point as" kids are easy going", with supplement "not all kids" which makes this statement not quite absolute. However, both former and latter sentences finally point to Daniel, which reveals that Jay has been influenced by the common sense as a model when he treats his son. As a result this approach works. Then he can go on conversations with Daniel to accept the new family structure. Thus, the experience in their family become a strategy which can enlighten others as Jay says" I think as what you try to do is to as open as possible to your kids. And when they bring a conversation to you, do dialogue, I mean you talk about it." Jay's conclusion again directs "you", the audience as a concrete model for those who struggles with family issues. From a practical perspective, not only gay families have those kinds of parenting problems, but hetero families will also encounter the acceptance of adopted children and the fostering problem. Therefore, the discourse of this gay family forms as a possible parenting model can support those who have adopted children. To what extent, even traditional hetero families also can learn from their discourse.

Discussion

This paper investigates the discourses from the gay couple. Research shows gay family holds a respectful attitude to their children; their discourses prove the normality of each family

member's life; and their parenting strategy forms a new pedagogical model that can support other families.

The data source of this research is a piece of video on the YouTube website which is a public open space. Through the entire video, one father of that gay couple, Jay who is the video host keeps using "YouTube" representing their audiences. That is to say, they totally come out to everyone through website. In this video, they articulate their attitudes to children's parenting and prove some strategies to deal with the acceptance of adopted children through answering friends' questions. This is the way for those same-sex couples to create a support structures (Tuazon-McCheyne, 2010) in the gay/lesbian community. Actually, this high-key approach compared with some lesbian couples in previous researches (Lee, 2010) is a way for those same-sex couples calling on their rights (Biegel, 2010). Through their narratives on the website, they disclose their family experience to prove that same-sex couples, especially gay couples consists with two men can also take their responsibility to foster their children for traditional heteronormativity (Sumara & Davis, 1999) that the laboring of child care is always mothers' responsibility. But for gay couples, this stereotype is challenged and no longer existing, in which way they provide the possibility of the careful care from men. To what extent, it represents gender fluidity between the social responsibility of men and women. Those comments or statements from gay parents also enrich the lack of current researches that mostly focus on lesbian couples. What is more, they use this strategy that posts their parenting on the website which helps different kinds of families generally. This already breaks through some current ways that parenting strategies only shared inside the communities.

Subsequently, each member in this family shows their completed normality in the gay community. To some extent, this is the fortunate to both of children who just begin to engage into school and social life. Our society keeps different perspectives to the gender issues and sex orientation, which leads to conflict among heterosexual and homosexual people. Certainly, this also happens in the school context (Lubbe, 2007). Therefore, same-sex couples always have the worry about the choice of children's schools, and even whether to disclose their family structure to teachers and peers (Lee, 2010 and Lubbe, 2007). Here, both of children have a strong self identification of their family structure and confidence that helps them to grow up healthily. They are also accepted by the community and society in which they get into school and meet best friends. The experience from both children presents a concrete example for other potential children from same-sex couples. Meanwhile, undoubtedly, the efforts from both parents also cannot be ignored. They keep conversations with children and show their respect to children's decision. In addition, they create the chance for children to get closed to female friends in order to supply the feminine care. It implies that although some researches claim those children from same-sex couples will less feminine or masculine because of the lack of parents from one-side gender (Goldberg, Kashy & Smith, 2012), gay/lesbian couples can make connection to the other peoples so as to build up feminine or masculine characteristics on children.

The limitation of this research focuses just on one video so that the discourses are limited. On the other hand, because the video addresses itself to an audience, the discourse inherently is for the audience, with which it is also shared. That is, the discourse reflects not only the values of this one gay family but also the shared values within the gay community. Precisely because it is a

shared discourse, it can also serve as a model for newcomers to the community. There are no words from this couple about their attitude to religious perspective that totally disagrees same-sex parenting and their argument to homophobia. However, to what extent, their discourses from this video can become some supportive evidences for defending gay/lesbian couples' rights of carrying children for they really present a harmonious family model. What is more, to powerfully demonstrate their democratic parenting, research needs more evidence from their discourses and observation of their real daily life. In this video their discourses shows their respectful parenting strategy, but the way of their talking is not quite balanced because most of the speech is given by Jay and they invite children to talk about their feeling through raising questions and encouraging their answers. Therefore, later research can pay more attention into their practice of parenting in real life. In addition, as this couple just mentions a little bit about children engaging with female friends, further research can also work on the way that gay/lesbian couples help children to get closed to opposite sex adults.

Conclusion

Research on gay/lesbian people has developed since 1960s in North America (Biegel, 2010), however, research on gay/lesbian parents is just a novel topic. Those couples with their families experience much harder life than traditional families, especially challenging by the whole society. This research is only one piece pitching into gay family and their discourse of parenting, which provides some evidences to support gay parenting strategy and shows a normalization of life in that kind of family. However, it is just a beginning, and considerable questions in this area need

to be answered. This is not only the way calling on homosexual parents' rights but also improving the most important status of children and their development.

Acknowledgement

Reference

Biegel, S. (2010). *The Right to Be out*, University of Minnesota Press

Bellous J. (1994). Should we teach students to resist? *Philosophy of Education: Introductory*

    Readings, HareW, PortelliJ (eds). Detselig: Calgary; 369–381.

Bohnsack, Ralf (2008). The Interpretation of Pictures and the Documentary Method [64

    paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *9*(3),

    Art. 26, http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0803267.

Casper, V. (1996). Toward a most thorough understanding of the world: Sexual orientation and

    early childhood education*, Harward Educational Review.66* (2). Retrieved

    from http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/docview/62696141?accountid=148

    46

Farr, R. H. & Patterson, C. J. (2013). Coparenting among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual adoptive

    couples: Associations with couple relationships and child outcomes. *Child Development,*

    84(4), p1226-1240

Goldberg, A. E., Kashy, D. A. & Smith, J. Z.(2012). Gender-Typed Play Behavior in Early

    Childhood: Adopted Children with Lesbian, Gay, and Heterosexual Parents. *Sex Roles,*

    67(9-10), p503-515

Kemp, H. V. (2004). Baumrind, Diana (b. 1927). *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood: In*

    History and Society. 1, 87-88.

Lee, D. (2010). Gay mothers and early childhood education: Standing tall. *Australasian Journal*

    of Early Childhood, 35(1), 16-23

Lubbe, C.(2007). To tell or not to tell: how children of same-gender parents negotiate their lives

at school, *Education as Change, 11*(2), 45-65

Martino, W., & Cumming-Potvin, W. (2011). "They didn't have out there gay parents--they just

looked like normal regular parents": Investigating teachers' approaches to addressing

same-sex parenting and non-normative sexuality in the elementary school

classroom. *Curriculum Inquiry, 41*(4), 480-501.

Roth, W. & Radford, L. (2010) Re/thinking the Zone of Proximal Development (Symmetrically).

Mind, Culture, and Activity 17(4), 299-307.

Sumara, D. J., & Davis, B. A. (1999). Interrupting heteronormativity: Toward a queer curriculum

theory. *Curriculum Inquiry,29*(2), 191-208. Retrieved

from http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/docview/194740924?accountid=14

846

Taylor, A. & Richardson, C. (2005) Queering home corner. *Contemporary issues in early*

childhood,6(2), 163-173

Tuazon-McCheyne, J. (2010). Two dads: Gay male parenting and its politicisation - A

cooperative inquiry action research study. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of*

Family Therapy, 31(4), 311-323. Retrieved

from http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/docview/856406706?accountid=14

846

Rolfsen, C.(2014), Della Wolf is B.C.'s 1st child with 3 parents on birth certificate, CBC NEWS,

Retrieved   from:

http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/della-wolf-is-b-c-s-1st-child-with-3-parents-on-birth-certificate-1.2526584

Appendix-Transcript

All: Hi YouTube!

Jay: OK, good morning, YouTube! So..thank you for making our "Ask a gay family" episode one such great success. We've got a lot of really nice comments, a lot of nice..a…more questions about which I was really surprised by. So this is "Ask a gay family" Episode…

All: Two!

Jay: And before we start we get some (profits?) to couples of people. Thank you "Fight Dog",((point to the clothes)) for sending his really cool T-shirts. He is a friend of us on YouTube who (trans?) check out these kinds of video, and he says this shirt is really thing for his gym. So I am really happy about that. En…the second thing is we just hit fifteen hundred scribers. ((Daniel and Bryan said "yes" with action)) So for all of our scribers, thank you, we really appreciate it. It means a lot to us. So you just here you guys comments, you guys are there supporting us. It means a world, so we really appreciate that. So I let Bryan kick off the first question this week.

Bryan: OK, today's first question comes from a YouTube viewer, who goes by Troy. And it is "Why Daddy Jay & Daddy Bryan? Why not have your kids called you "daddy" or "papa" or some variation about that?" And this one actually I think best goes to Daniel and Selena to answer it.

Jay: ((look at Selena)) How do your guys don't call me ah…Papa? (Look at Daniel) How can your guys call us both "Daddy"?

Daniel: It is you use saying that.

Jay: Is this easier?

Daniel: yeah! Selena: eh!

Jay: You know, when you…when you first came to live with us, do you remember what I try to get you call me?

Daniel: Papa?

Jay: Papa. You don't like "papa".

Daniel: Ah…((Shake head))

Jay: So, basically, you know, I think when you are a gay couple, you don't have kids yet, you get all these ideas about what things suppose to be? How it suppose to work? What role supposes to take? And I was come to be "Papa". ((Look at Bryan, who is drinking)). And Bryan was glad to be "dad". And, ((change the tone)), the kids did not like that! ((Look at Selena)) Why don't you call me Papa?

Selena: Because, I think…I think I like both calling you daddy.

Jay: eh yeah, call me daddy..

Daniel: I think…

Bryan: and she likes calling me (??)

Daniel: yeah!

Jay:(??) ((laugh)) So I think it just wrap that and broke it up quick, let me you can't. Lots of people want their kids do a lot of things, and when it comes down to it. Kids find out what their feel uncomfortable with it and they do what they do.

Daniel: yeah.

Jay: so they never like the "papa", so, you know, me and Bryan together, they call us daddy Jay

or daddy Bryan. But if we just here by ourselves, like Bryan works as a teacher up today,

and I'll just be dad. So they makes very simple.

Bryan: usually sounds like "da…d!"

Jay: yeah! ((Daniel echo)) usually… (look at Selena, change the tone)"Dad, you will dance

something" ((Selena covers her ears))

Bryan: Daddy Jay!

Daniel: Se-le-na~~~

Jay: OK. So second question…because his video could be run a little bit long so we will speak

up a little bit about it. Ah…it's from Cesar Brute and he has been our fan for a long time and

he sent us a video response. And his response is said our question is really good, and

something we had necessarily talked through with the kids. So I think something, you know,

we can, you know (it's kind of thing) should be some learning experience you guys brought

to me and Bryan.

((Change the lens))

Cesar Brute: Hi guys. My question is "how explain to Daniel and Selena that you being gay?"

((shrug his shoulder)) How did they take it? I mean, obviously, they have taken it now. I

mean what was like in that process? Thanks.

((lens change back))

Jay: So, Daniel was five years old when we adopted Daniel. ((Daniel: yep!)) He came from a

foster family at (? A place name). And he ((pause, a glance at Daniel)) was (under the pressure?) all gay people live in San Francisco so I think his parents have told him that he has been adopted by two gay men. And we all live in San Francisco!

Daniel: Actually NO! ((shake head))

Jay: NO?

Daniel: (they) didn't tell me gay.

Jay: Should we do? Because you were adopted in San Francisco!

Daniel: Ohp.. yeah…

Jay: You kept saying "I adopts, you guys come from San Francisco. "

Bryan: How far is to San Francisco?((Look at ceiling, laughing))

Jay: He was in the (pression?) that all gay people live in San Francisco. Right?

Daniel: yeah.

Jay: and I think it was six month before he…((look at Bryan))

Bryan: (nodding)…finally figure it out we were going to San Francisco. ((Jay echoes "Francisco"))

Jay: we did not live in San Francisco. Yeah? ((look at Selena, kid nodding)) And…so…when did you ((look at Daniel)) start to realize that you have two daddies and not the traditional dad and mommy?

Daniel: Eh…e…I tell my (congression?).

Jay: Yeah, I mean, did I mean you are kind of (a sentence missing here) we have a few talks about it, what that mean,Dan? Was that a big deal for you?

Daniel: No…not so much.

Jay: No, man. So it just pretty normal.

Daniel: yeah.

Jay: Because you seem very comfortable. I mean you don't see a lot of problems…you seem pretty open, easy going…Dan..

Daniel: yeah.

Jay: (Look at Bryan) Do you remember we have some deep conversations about that?

Bryan: I remember that Daniel first come to live with us, and we concerned that he would have some issues with it, so we did talk about it a little bit. (Daniel: yeah.) But pretty much I got the same answer as we just get here. So…

Jay: I think kids are really easy going, and I think like Daniel, I mean, I know not all kids, but Daniel was very easy going. Um, if you have, you know, he has never any problem with it. He just accepts he has two dads. He's actually , his best friends at school which is a kind of funny which has two moms. So, I don't know how that relationship starts with (tum?) but they obviously found each other. And his best friend Joseph who has seen a couple of our videos has two moms! So I think that sense they found making comments. You guys ever talk about that at all? ((Ask Daniel))

Daniel: No..

Jay: Not really. You just kind accept it.

Daniel: yeah.

Jay: Now this little one, ((tickle Selena)) do you know what means you have two dads?

Selena shakes her head.

Jay: No? Do you like having two daddies?

Selena nods her head.

Jay: yeah? Is that cool to have two dads?

Selena nods her head.

Jay: Yeah? You don't think about it too much?

Selena shakes her head.

Jay: No. So Selena was, you know, a baby. She was twelve month basically when she came to stay with us, when Daniel and Selena are biological brother and sister. And you know, she just always only knows two daddies. So I remember the first thing she had said to me, which makes me think, okay, she is thinking about it is we went to the (Caster?) Theater in San Francisco. And they had, ((Look at Selena)) remember, (we talk?) a little bit more, baby?

Selena nods her head.

Jay: yeah. Was that fun?

Selena nods her head.

Jay: you got dress up.

Daniel: I was inmy (?)

Jay: So mean Bryan took a little baby to the (Casual?) Theater. It was one of those where the kids got dressed costume.

Selena: And I got food snack!

Jay: you got food snacks. And there was an actor on the stage and they were playing out the (? ?)

with the movie in the background. And we got the clap thing (shake his hands) those kind

are cool? (Selena nods her head.) So I remember I was with Selena and there were a lot of

gay families, a lot of two dads and two moms families there, and Selena goes, "hey, daddy

Jay guess what?" And what's we (?)? And she goes, "I think lots of kids have two dads and

two moms because there were lots of gay couples." And I was like, when she was about?

two and half or three? ((Bryan: un hen)) And I was like, Wa… Selena is thinking about that!

Okay, she knows there are some differences! So do you know at school, a lot of your friends

have mommy and daddy,(Selena nods her head.) do you know why that it is?

Selena shakes her head.

Jay: you are not sure so much?

Selena shakes her head.

Jay: Do you like have two dads?

Selena nods her head.

Jay: yeah. And you got some mommy figures like grandma Ann.. (pause) who's mother woman

you like to (?) You like to spend time with?

Selena: girl Jane.

Jay: girl jane. How about Pumpkin? You have spent more time with Pumpkin and Angee.

Bryan: grandma Sandy.

Jay: Grandma Sandy. Jane.

Bryan: (holy star?)

((messy from 7:56-8:09))

Jay: So YouTube, I think I guess Selena is still growing. She's four. She's going to preschool
one couple of weeks. And you know, I think as what you try to do is to as open as possible
to your kids. And when they bring a conversation to you, do dialogue, I mean you talk about
it. Selena does know she has a mommy. ((pause, look at Selena)) You know where your
mommy lives?

Selena thinks a while and shakes her head.

Jay: when we talk about it? (Sckemantole?)

Selena nods her head.

Jay: yeah. She knows she has a mommy. She has two daddies. And (those conversations are?)
that four years old girl Selena, and she's a very bright little girl. ((kiss Selena)) and very shy
now.

Daniel grasp and astonishing. Bryan smiles.

Jay: So you know, you just take day by day and as your kids ask you questions, you open, and
you have a dialogue.

Bryan: and she has a brother who has very clear memories and he can help her to get to know her
mom. But maybe we can't. (Look at Daniel, so do Jay)

Daniel: un..

Jay: Not so bright. So is there anything you like to say?

Bryan: No. I think we cover it.

Jay: No conversation or anything you have to the kids? Maybe just all of topic now..((pause))
Bryan just woke up. You can see he has his coffee.

Bryan: yeah, talking to me before a cup of coffee is never good. ((All laugh.)) No, I mean, in all
the years living with Daniel and Selena, and our lives and our families together, we live our
lives just like any other family does. You know that I know that everyone wants know while
a little a hard moment goes off, and we have a conversation. But those moments are (prefill?)
and fall between overall. That's our life. That's the way we live. We only do the best we can
to give the Daniel and Selena. Everything needs to be grown up to be happy, healthy, and
strong people.

Jay: OK, YouTube. So I guess we want to say goodbye. We got a busy day head us. Daniel starts
school this next week…((Daniell: No~~~))Summer is almost over. We look forward to talk
to you. Leave a lot of comments and make sure you rate those videos. Take care! Bye!