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Donor Conception in Lesbian and Non-Lesbian Film and Television Families

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Donor conception touches on a range of philosophical, psychological, and political issues, including the role played by genetics in the creation of individuals, and matters such as what makes a family and who should gain access to relevant conception technologies. Donor-conceived children exist in all kinds of families, including those headed by single parents, lesbian couples, and heterosexual couples. The separation of genetics from parenting, and the need to reach outside the parental unit in order to make a family, especially distinguish donor-conceiving parents. While many donor-conceiving parents do not identify as queer, donor conception is easily associated with sexual outlaws and practices: lesbians, infertile women and men, men who masturbate for money. In popular discourse, donor conception and queerness participate in similar debates—for instance, “nature vs. nurture” and the limits around what counts as a family. For these reasons, donor conception has an association with queerness that normative reproduction does not, and there are elements of queerness in all media work oriented around donor conception. Images of donor conception appear everywhere of late: in commercial feature films, documentaries, independent films, and elsewhere, though the incarnation of queerness varies in terms of the emphasis that each work gives to it. In this paper, I look at a variety of representations of donor conception, scrutinizing how the thornier issues are dealt with, how donor conception figures generally, how the queerness is managed, and posing key

questions: Which aspects of donor conception are represented in which media and to what effect? Whose perspective is represented, and who participates in discussions about the topic?

Donor Conception and the Hollywood Rom-Com

Commercial comedies about donor conception date back at least as far as 1993, when Whoopi Goldberg appeared with Ted Danson in *Made in America*. Given its association with sexual fluids and “failed” or “inappropriate” sexuality, donor conception continues to lend itself as a subject of humor, as the recent comedies *The Switch* (2010) and *The Back-up Plan* (2010) demonstrate. In these movies, the focus is especially on the “front end” of the donor-conception process—coming to terms with the idea of non-normative conception, selecting a donor, insemination/conception, birth. In these movies, jokes about bodily fluids, reproductive technologies, and gynecological hardware abound, dominating the more controversial topic of women choosing to make families without men. Featuring images of conventionally “squirmy” events like birth, ejaculation, and breastfeeding, *The Back-up Plan* especially contains elements of the gross out comedy,¹ although the greatest generic influence on both films is the contemporary romantic comedy. Both films tell stories of heterosexual romance that cannot be consummated or (in the case of *The Back-up Plan*) fully committed to because of impediments that stand in the way. Overcoming such impediments is the task the narratives need to accomplish before moving the protagonists towards the ultimate union, which is of course heterosexual marriage.

The motivation for donor conception in both *The Switch* and *The Back-up Plan* is relatively circumscribed: Kassie (in *The Switch*) and Zoe (in *The Back-up Plan*) are single heterosexual women who have grown tired of waiting for male companions and who decide to

become single parents with the help of sperm donors. In both films, the state of singlehood is neither chosen nor desired, and donor conception is construed as being the choice of last resort. As with most romantic comedies, the state of being single is a topic neither film wants to explore but is rather the convenient departure point for the inevitable new budding romance. Very early on in each film, romantic male leads are introduced, and it is their learning about, and responding to, ideas of donor conception that the films then chart.

In *The Switch*, “best friend” Wally has too much to drink one night and swaps a cup from the chosen sperm donor with a cup containing his sperm, with which Kassie then conceives, never realizing that such a swap has occurred. Seven years later, Wally meets Kassie again, proposes to her, and confesses to the sperm swap. In *The Back-up Plan*, Zoe has also taken steps to become pregnant with the help of an anonymous donor, just before meeting Stan, the “man of her dreams.” While there is no donor mix-up as there is in *The Switch*, the drama concerns similar issues of secrecy and acceptance, as Zoe withholds from her new partner the fact that she is already pregnant. Eventually revealing that Stan and Zoe will stay together after the birth, the film reassures viewers that Stan will also be father to children who share his genes (the final scene shows Zoe throwing up in a garbage can, inferring a pregnancy, now with Stan’s “own” child).

If *The Switch* is a drama of mistaken identity, *The Back-up Plan* deals with a man’s ability to cope with the prospect of raising a child with whom he has no genetic link. In both films, the idea that women have the right to conceive children within whatever family structure they choose is a marketing premise enlisted to add liberal social caché that neither film has an interest in exploring. Concluding with the promise of marriage and the eradication of single parenthood, both films end by firmly reinstating the heterosexual married couple as the preferred

family unit, obliterating or downplaying the significance of both the single woman and the sperm donor in favor of a “proper” father—literally (in the case of *The Switch*) and over the course of time (in the case of *The Back-up Plan*).

As commercial romantic comedies, neither film is in a position to explore donor conception as it is practiced by anyone other than conventionally attractive women who are fleetingly single and ultimately marriageable—that is, as it is practiced by the real donor-conceiving parents: lesbians, infertile heterosexual couples, and single women. Yet because of the association of donor conception with outlaw groups, the way it is depicted within each film needs to be made distinct from the way it is practiced within queer communities. While each film’s heroine is resolutely heterosexual, the potential queerness of donor conception is such that the films must placate the fears of the commercial movie-going audiences, actively denying any link between the women depicted and lesbian and/or permanently single women (which the films see as more or less the same). In both films, the question of the sexuality of the female lead is raised early on, which question is immediately put to rest. For example, Zoe says to Stan in *The Back Up Plan* that she’s “not interested in men right now,” to which he responds, “so, are you gay?” Zoe answers hastily and with annoyance, “no, I’m not gay.” In *The Switch*, the link between lesbians and donor conception is more lengthily spelled out—also so as to be denied. In a conversation with Wally about her donor-conceived child, Kassie says: “he thinks I’m a lesbian. I guess the only mothers he knows with seed guys for fathers are lesbians.” In so doing, the films raise the specter of the lesbian donor recipient, only to make clear that this is not the subject being presented. Single women parents are also portrayed as outlaws or outsiders to whom the heroine must be firmly opposed. In *The Back-up Plan*, the heroine turns early on to a single mothers’ group. Construed as “freakish,” women from this group breast-feed their children

past an age that is socially acceptable, act aggressively and make loud unfeminine noises (especially in the birth scene), are coded visually as lesbians—sporting short hair, wearing unfashionable hippy-style clothing, posing in “unfeminine” postures—and, overall, are portrayed, in the logic of the film, as having counter-cultural opinions (they are advocates for breast-feeding, after all) from whom the heroine must be distinguished.

The donor-conceived child is likewise portrayed as worryingly maladjusted. In *The Switch*, the donor-conceived boy is a cheerless introvert who lives in a false fantasy world. In what is meant as a heart-wrenching scene, seven-year-old Sebastian introduces (not-yet-father) Wally to the fantasy families he collects images of. Pointing to a rugged-looking, turtleneck-wearing male model in a new yet unwrapped photo frame, Sebastian fabricates, “that’s my uncle Rick. He’s my father’s younger brother. He got me an iPod for my birthday.” Suggesting that fatherlessness implies material as well as emotional deprivation (“he gave me an iPod”), Sebastian makes clear the inferiority of the donor-conceiving family. Overall, the donor-conception process is depicted as artificial.

While not much is revealed about *The Back-Up Plan*’s anonymous donor, a clinical insemination scene at the start of the movie, presented in cold sterility, emphasizes the overall “unnaturalness” of the practice. In *The Switch*, Kassie’s selection of her donor is initially presented as positive. Roland is a tall blond university professor whom Kassie’s friends refer to as “the Viking.” While the Viking is conventionally physically attractive, he is ultimately shown to be ill-fit as both donor and father—insisting on a birthday party that Sebastian doesn’t want, and pushing the boy to climb a wall that is out of his reach. Roland’s behavior is contrasted sharply with that of Wally, who seems to understand Sebastian’s needs and whom Sebastian expresses an “innate” preference for.

In its depiction of the goodlooking but ultimately socially-insensitive sperm donor, *The Switch* advances the pernicious idea that donors are somehow genetically more advantaged than normative heterosexual partners and that potential donor-conceiving parents are superficial (even eugenicist) in their approach to the process.² While we don't know what informs the selection process in *The Backup Plan*, *The Switch* fronts the notion that donor-conceiving people choose donors primarily on the basis of appearance and educational pedigree over emotional, health, and/or other factors. The film also refers negatively to the commercial aspects of the process, as Wally disparagingly names Kassie's selection of a donor "shopping." The film ignores the fact that, in reality, prospective parents may not have a "choice" of donor to "shop" for, or may have extremely limited information on which to base any "choice."³ The two distinguishing features of donor conception—the separation of genetics from parenting and the practice of going beyond the parent unit in order to build a family—are simply not within the films' exploratory scope.

To sum up: commercial romantic comedies about donor conception accomplish several things. To begin with, they condemn non-normative reproduction, specifically reproduction where genetic contributions are distinct from parenting contributions. Such a condemnation belies the facts of heterosexual reproductive anomalies (illegitimacy, infertility, adoption) while maintaining there is only one "right" way to go about family-making. Secondly, both movies eliminate the sperm donor's position, resolutely replacing it with the preferred term "father." Thirdly, the movies eradicate the non-normative parent—including lesbian and single-woman parents—and reinstate the married heterosexual couple at the head of the family. Fourthly, the focus is on the beginning (and arguably simpler) end of the donor-conception process, including the selection of a donor and conception, sidestepping the more complex parent- and child-oriented negotiations that emerge ten to fifteen years later.

Donor Conception and Queer Parents on Television

During the 2000s a new leaf got added to the queer-themed programming repertoire, as previously single, quirky, sidekick- or “best friend”-styled gay characters began to couple up, get committed, and start families. Throughout the 2000s, gay parent characters had minor roles in cable and network shows such as *Nurse Jackie* and *Desperate Housewives* and became part of the ensemble casts of two gay-themed cable shows, *The L Word* and *Queer as Folk*. At the end of the 2000s, gay parents became major characters on two critically acclaimed, massively popular network television shows, *Brothers and Sisters* and *Modern Family*, where they regularly appear as part of an ensemble cast. Given these developments, the contemporary moment would indeed seem auspicious for more up-to-date depictions of queer-headed families, including families with donor-conceived children.⁴ But is this the case?

Within commercial network shows where queer parents figure prominently, donor conception has not been a significant theme. Network shows such as *Brothers and Sisters* and *Modern Family* express interest exclusively in gay-male-headed families over lesbian-headed ones, more or less obviating the possibility of sperm donor conception as a central theme.⁵ While *Brothers and Sisters* features egg donor conception, most of the narrative is given over to negotiations with the surrogate, making negotiations around donated genetic material less significant. Overall, the preferred means of family-making in both shows is transnational or cross-cultural adoption.⁶ Cable television’s approach to donor-conceiving queer families is only somewhat more engaged than that of network television. While both gay-themed shows *Queer as Folk* and *The L Word* feature lesbian couples who conceive by means of donor conception, both shows feature infant children and conclude their run before the children become verbal. As in

The Back-up Plan, the script covers largely the conceiving end of the donor conception process (the selection of a donor, insemination, and so on). Because the children who are depicted are of a very young age, there are limits on the number and depth of conversations that can occur, about identity, family, and life in a queer-headed family unit, that become potential story threads only as children come of age. For these reasons, in spite of their niche-market audiences, *Queer as Folk* and *The L Word* do not advance the subject of queer family donor conception much further than the commercial network show *Brothers and Sisters* does. As with *Brothers and Sisters* and *Modern Family*, and indeed the non-lesbian rom-com representations, children's voices about donor conception are simply not heard, questions are not posed, conversations between children and adults do not occur.

Romancing the Family: Unknown Donors and Alright Kids

In contrast to the media work I have discussed so far, independently-produced films *Donor Unknown: Adventures in the Sperm Trade* (2011) and *The Kids Are All Right* (2010) take seriously the time in the donor conception process when children come of age, showing the perspective of donors and children—that is, two parties excluded from the screen works discussed so far. A feature-length documentary from award-winning UK producers Redbird and Metfilm, *Donor Unknown* turns a nonfiction gaze on the topic, showing the perspective of children born to a single donor in the late 1980s.⁷ At the center of the film is 20-year-old JoEllen Marsh, who discovers her “donor-siblings” by means of an online registry for donor-conceived children. After encountering the registry, JoEllen arranges to meet with Danielle Pagano, who was conceived from the same donor; Danielle also happens to be the sole child shown in the film born to heterosexual parents. The story of the meeting is picked up by the *New York Times* and

appears in an article entitled “Hello I’m Your Sister. Our Father is Donor 150,” which is seen by Jeffrey Harrison, the donor named in the article. Jeffrey lives a humble existence with four dogs and an injured pigeon in a broken RV in a parking lot on the beach in Venice, California. Growing up originally in a “middle upper-class” family in Delaware, Jeffrey successfully escaped a challenging childhood to become, by his own admission, a “fringe monkey” and “beach bum.”

The movie tracks the story from JoEllen’s and Danielle’s meeting, to their discovery of four more donor-siblings, to their journey to Los Angeles and eventual rendezvous with Jeffrey. Along the way we get to know more about the donor-siblings, Jeffrey, and a little about the donor-siblings’s parents. All of the parents who appear on-screen happen to be lesbian-identified (though the film makes very little of this and overall shows little interest in what it is like parenting or growing up in a lesbian-headed household). JoEllen’s “ultimate goal,” we learn, was always to meet her donor, while others are more measured in their enthusiasm. We hear of Danielle’s anger at not being told the particulars of her conception until age thirteen, and we become familiar with Jeffrey’s initial motivation for donating (altruism and financial compensation). Though the film is careful not to judge Jeffrey, who we learn donated numerous times over the course of eight years, it does not withhold judgment of the US donor-conception industry. Indeed, perhaps *the* key argument in the film concerns (what the film perceives as) the ongoing lack of regulation in the commercialized, user-pay system in the United States, which system would contrast significantly with the system in the United Kingdom, from where the film’s directors and producers hail. As part of this critique, the film introduces us to Dr. Cappy Rothman, the founder of California Cryobank (which handled Jeffrey’s donations and which is still in operation today), who proudly shares some statistics: that each of the large silver tanks

depicted contains billions upon billions of sperm, that the clinic has been responsible for more than 60,000 children born thus far, and that the institution is the sixth largest user of Fed Ex in California. Pausing to erase an imperceptible smudge on the glass of the clinic wall, Cappy exclaims excitedly, “we could populate the whole world!”

Viewing such an animated introduction, we might easily become enthusiastic about Cryobank’s role in the process were it not for the subsequent image that reveals a large red sign reading “Warning: Biohazard.” Such tempering of scientific fervor runs throughout the film—for example, as cheery comments from Cappy are crosscut with more alarming commentary from Wendy Kramer about the falsehoods that (she claims) are told to donors and donor-conceiving parents alike. Cofounder of the Donor Sibling Registry, a nonprofit that aims to help connect donor-conceived people (and thanks to which the donor-siblings in the film have made each other’s acquaintances), Kramer has strong views about the industry, particularly the lack of limits on the number of children born to a single donor. Kramer (without whose website, as stated, the donor-siblings would not have found each other, and without which there wouldn’t be a film) emerges as the voice of credibility in the film, which overall is careful to withhold criticism from both Jeffrey and from the conceiving parents. Indeed, Jeffrey himself scoffs when reminded how the bank packaged him to clients, questioning the veracity of some of the information that was entered on his behalf.⁸

The gap between fantasy and reality is a major theme in the film, which tries to detail the range of feelings in donor-conceiving families as they have developed over the years. Such a gap is evident in the idea of the “family romance,” which refers to the fantasy whereby children imagine their parents are step- or adoptive parents rather than “actual” parents, and that the true parents are of a higher social status. Animating a great deal of pop culture from Harry Potter to

Superman, the fantasy is engaged compellingly by many of the stories in *Donor Unknown*. Several of the donor-siblings in the film admit to having had strong fantasies about their donor when growing up. JoEllen, for example, says she used to wonder about him: “maybe he’s a celebrity, or a movie star, a businessman working in an office. Maybe he’s living in another country.” Fletcher Norris, another donor-sibling, describes thinking that his donor might be a “musician, maybe a pianist, something like that.” In the original Freudian description, the expression of the fantasy is particularly powerful at the time when children come of age and separate from parents. In *Donor Unknown*, the quest to find the donor is largely couched in stories of teenage self-discovery and independence. For example, Fletcher’s parents show desires to accompany him to travel to meet Jeffrey, which desires he resists; Danielle’s parents attempt to quash her engagement, which is also unsuccessful.

But the fantasy of the family romance, as it were, is not confined to the donor-siblings alone. Several of the parents testify to idealizing Jeffrey when they first received his statement from the clinic many years ago. Fletcher Norris’s mother, Sue, quotes from his statement, then goes on to say: “we just thought, this guy’s a soulmate! I really had Donor 150 on a pedestal. He was someone who was handsome, a good mate, a good father, kind to animals. . . . I had knit this kind of dream about who Donor 150 was.” Lucinda Marsh, JoEllen’s mother, concurs. Also reading aloud from his testimony, she says: “‘I’m happy and happy-go-lucky. My deepest aspiration is spiritual.’ I mean, he had me right there!” As the film progresses, once Jeffrey becomes known to the families, the fantasy of the family romance becomes considerably more complex. Though charismatic, Jeffrey is (in his own words, as stated) a fringe monkey and beach bum, a foreigner to middle class rhythms of time and progression, who ekes out a subsistence life. In other words, he is a far cry from the “higher social status” person named in the Freudian

fantasy. The contrast between Jeffrey's lifestyle and the children's seemingly more promising prospects is noted by several in the documentary; the fact that he lives in an RV is clearly a disappointment to several. As Danielle puts it: "for such a smart and talented person, there's so many thing that he could've done with his life." Or as Sue Norris states: "I felt kind of the death of the dream, the more that we found out about Jeffrey." This image crosscuts directly to a shot of Jeffrey getting high in his RV, further underscoring the gap between the fantasy and reality. Although the film details the captivation of parents and donor-siblings by the fantasy, it also depicts how the fantasy's hold diminishes over time

A feature film by out lesbian director Lisa Cholodenko, *The Kids Are All Right*, resembles *Donor Unknown* in that it, too, focuses on the explosive and eventful coming-of-age end of the donor conception process; what further distinguishes Cholodenko's film from any of the work discussed thus far is its focus on the significance of this for members of a lesbian-headed family. The parents in the family are Nic and Jules; Nic is an obstetrician and breadwinner of the family, while Jules, starting up a landscape design business, takes a more relaxed approach to life. The couple live a comfortable middle-class life in suburban California with two appealing teenage kids, though the cracks of nearly two decades of marriage have begun to show in the petty, passive-aggressive comments that pepper the script (Jules: "go easy on the wine, hon, it's daytime." Nic: "Yeah, ok, same goes for the micromanaging"). The film opens on the story of the kids' contact with the donor. Fifteen-year-old Laser is too young, according to clinic policy, to make the contact himself, but his eighteen-year-old sister Joni agrees; the two of them set off to meet Paul Hatfield, an unmarried, motorcycle-riding owner of a successful organic restaurant. In spite of some initial wariness, both kids are soon impressed by Paul's charm: Joni appreciates his eco-sensitivities, while Laser (not "the brains in the family") welcomes the fact that he is a doer

and anti-school. Like Jeffrey, there is a lot that is initially appealing about Paul. Unfettered by domestic or familial obligations, he is in every respect a free spirit, living outside the bounds of the kids' suburban lives. As with the timing of Jeffrey's arrival in the donor-siblings' lives in *Donor Unknown*, Paul's appearance coincides with the kids' increasing demands for separation from Jules and Nic, apparent in Joni's immanent departure for college, and in Laser's request to spend more time with his high school friends. One of the aims of the family romance, as stated, is precisely to mark a separation from the previously idealized parents in favor of new parent/s; Paul's arrival in *Kids* works precisely to facilitate this.

Not long after Laser and Joni meet Paul, the two mothers find out about the meeting and are hit with feelings of protectiveness (regarding the children), but also betrayal by the kids and vulnerability as lesbian parents. While *Donor Unknown* stops short of engaging in a thorough way with the parents' responses, *Kids* extends its consideration of the fantasy to take in the parental point of view, which is initially quite negative. Forbidding the kids to see Paul again until they can meet him first, Nic says to Jules: "it still feels really shitty. Like we're not enough or something." While Nic holds on to these feelings throughout most of the movie, Jules's attitude soon begins to change. Agreeing to take on the job of landscaping Paul's garden, Jules lets herself participate in her children's "romance" with Paul, who praises her landscaping efforts, in contrast to the ever-critical Nic. It may be worth pointing out that there's another version of the family romance story where the child's birth is the result of maternal infidelity (again with someone of higher social standing); the expression of this story finds its way into the film. Although Jules harbors no fantasies of alternative parents for her children or of leaving her long-term partner, she gains an appreciation of Paul's contribution to her family, remarking one day, "I'm sorry, I just keep seeing my kids' expressions on your face." In a move that makes

literal the infidelity fantasy, Jules and Paul begin an affair. Eventually, the affair explodes violently and everybody is affected, as Nic and the kids find out. The kids roundly reject Paul, seeing the fantasy for the sham that it is. As Nic tells Paul in factual terms, he's an "interloper"; however, Joni puts it best: "I just wish you could've been . . . better."

Conclusion

Apart from its reworking of the family romance, what is distinctive about *Kids* and what sets it apart from any of the works discussed thus far is the film's interest in the world of the donor-conceiving lesbian-headed family. This world is significantly different from the world of normative parenting in several key ways: firstly, the film evidences the pressure facing sexual-minority families to be model families, which pressure Joni especially feels. Coming home drunk the night before going off to college, Joni states: "I did everything you wanted! I got all A's, I got into every school I applied. Now you can show everyone what a perfect *lesbian* family you have. . . . I'm so sick of both of you!" Secondly, there are indications of the anxieties and vulnerabilities felt by the same-sex, donor-conceiving couple, voiced on occasions by both women, whereby a donor could gain recognition and rights regarding children that he has not taken time to raise. Resisting Paul's unasked-for advice about Joni, Nic spits, "look, when you've been a parent for eighteen years, you come and talk to me. . . . I need your observations like I need a dick in my ass!" Continuing the same line, Nic says to Jules one night: "it's this whole Paul thing. I feel like he's taking over my family." Expressing anxieties which take into account the lack of recognition nonbiological parents sometimes face, Jules puts it succinctly: "I don't want to time-share our kids." Thirdly, what makes the film's vision of family different from representations of heterosexual-headed families is the suggestion that Nic and Jules are a unified

block, made so by the fact of their shared gender. Evidence of this is in the undifferentiated term “moms” used to refer to both women, and in Joni’s closing comment to Laser as she leaves for college (“sorry to leave you alone with *them*”). Finally, evidence of the lesbian-parent specificity of the story appears in the representation of the betrayal itself. While the movie received criticisms for recycling stereotypes in its depiction of the affair (e.g., that lesbians can “switch” if given a chance, that lesbian sex is mundane compared to heterosexual, etc.), it is hard to imagine a more powerful metaphor for betrayal and emotional chaos than what the film has chosen to show. The film’s point is obviously that donor encounters are compelling but also tumultuous and emotionally hazardous for potentially all involved; what better way to represent the volatility? As Nic herself puts it on finding out: “he’s our *sperm* donor. You couldn’t have picked a more painful way to hurt me.” For all these reasons, for its representation of the depth and complexity of donor-conception within a lesbian-headed family, for its serious and honest engagement with this queer practice of family construction, *The Kids Are All Right* makes a contribution that is without precedent.

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Notes

1. For a useful overview of the subgenre, see King.

2. A brief look at industrial promotional information, such as sperm bank websites, reveals eugenicist fantasies about “superior” children formed from the genetic material of PhDs, movie stars, and gold medallists; websites feature snapshots of white middle-class women cuddling sparkling white children. Commercial sites encourage women to “meet” the “donor of the month,” and to “wonder if your donor looks like anyone famous” (see California Cryobank).

3. In the event parents can select a donor, this action is likely to be based on a range of different components, depending on whether the donor is known or unknown, and depending on policies of identity—and information—availability, which vary from clinic to clinic. But the films have no desire to explore these issues.

4. The body of queer television studies literature is extensive. Foundational texts from around or just after 2000 include Capsuto; Tropiano; Gross; and Joyrich; more recent books and anthologies that include articles on shows such as *The L Word* and *Queer as Folk* include Davis; Akass and McCabe; Keller and Stratyner; Peele.

5. The commercial viability of gay male characters over lesbian ones on network television has been discussed elsewhere (see Collis; Moritz; and more recently Kessler), so I won't rehearse that discussion except to say that the preference continues when the gay characters become gay parents.

6. Space limitations prohibit me from discussing the commercial factors motivating the configurations of gay-headed families on network television (typically fathers with girl children),

which include cultural prohibitions on showing gay men with boys, stereotypes of gay male effeminacy, and so on.

7. The children depicted include JoEllen Marsh, born to lesbian mothers who are now separated; Danielle Pagano, born to heterosexual parents, whose first knowledge of having a sperm donor came at age 14; Fletcher Norris, a child of two moms; Rachelle Longest, a child of two moms; Ryann, born to lesbian mothers who split up when she was a baby; and finally Roxanne, the youngest child in a family composed of a single mother and three children.

8. It is worth acknowledging that the praise for the Registry may not be as uniform as the film makes it seem, in that the choice of “donor-siblings” appearing in the movie would have been a self-selecting process, with those uninterested in the work of the Registry choosing not to appear.