

Fatherhood & family diversity

A content analysis of constructions of gay fathers in SA news media

CHILDREN raised by gay couples will suffer serious problems in later life, a major new study into parenting has found. The biggest investigation into same-sex parenting to be published in Europe claims that children brought up by gay couples are more likely to experiment with homosexual behaviour and be confused about their sexuality.

There is 'proof' that gay parents are bad for children, writes Rachel Ellis

SHOULD GAYS BE ALLOWED TO ADOPT?

The Star

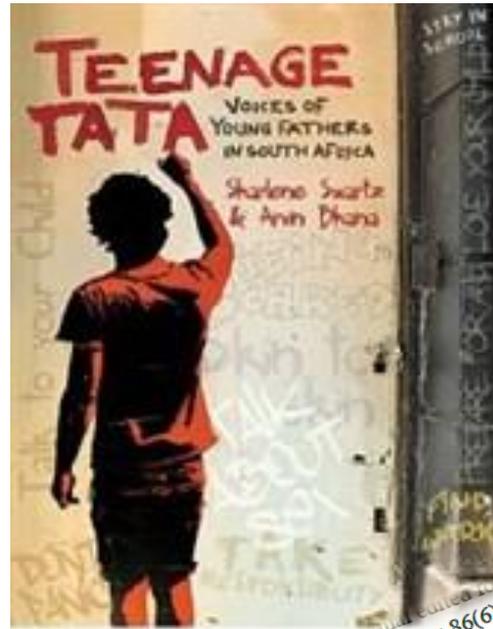
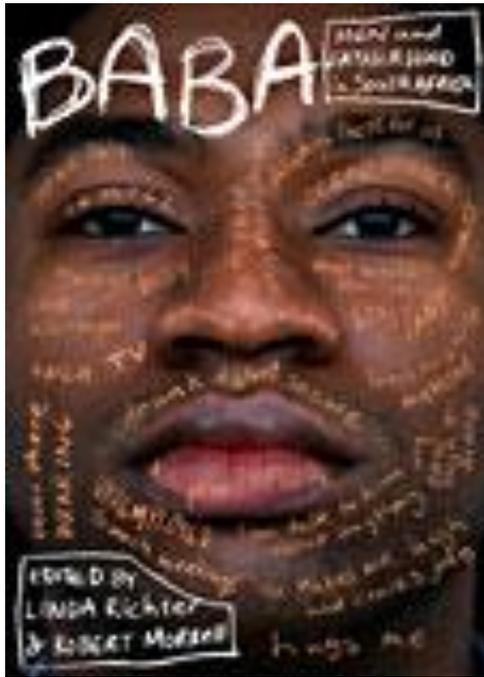
P.....

Datum 2011 2011

Becoming a parent against all the odds

Perfectly capable parents are being rejected for one or other reason and the children are left in institutions or foster care

SA Fatherhood research



Published in *Child Education in South Africa*
Child Educ. 2010 ; 86(6): 360-365. doi:10.1080/00094056.2010.10523170.

The status of fatherhood and fathering in South Africa

Linda Richter, PhD*,
Human Sciences Research Council and the University of the Witwatersrand
Jeremiah Chikovre, PhD, and
[Name obscured], MA
[Name obscured], PhD, and
[Name obscured], MA
[Name obscured], PhD, and
[Name obscured], MA

Journal of Gender Studies, 2013
Vol. 22, No. 3, 255-267, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2012.708823>

South Africa, in the absence of formal measures
fatherhood in the country, particularly low
as their roots in colonialism and
were systematically



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Who needs a father? South African men reflect on being fathered

Lindsay Clowes^{a,*} Kopano Ratele^{b,c} and Tamara Shefer^a

Our project

1. **Analysis of constructions** of gay men & fatherhood in mainstream SA media
2. **Interviews** with gay men about fatherhood (photo-voice)
3. **Advocacy** component using photography



Representing queer fathers

The media “filter & frame everyday realities, through their singular and multiple representations, providing touchstones, references, for the conduct of everyday life, for the production and maintenance of common-sense”

(Silverstone, 1999 cited in Prinsloo, 2006, p. 132).

Jeanne Prinsloo (2006, p. 144): the media “could enable creative engagement with a broader repertoire of images. They could expand how we imagine the world, and how we envisage relating and caring...”.

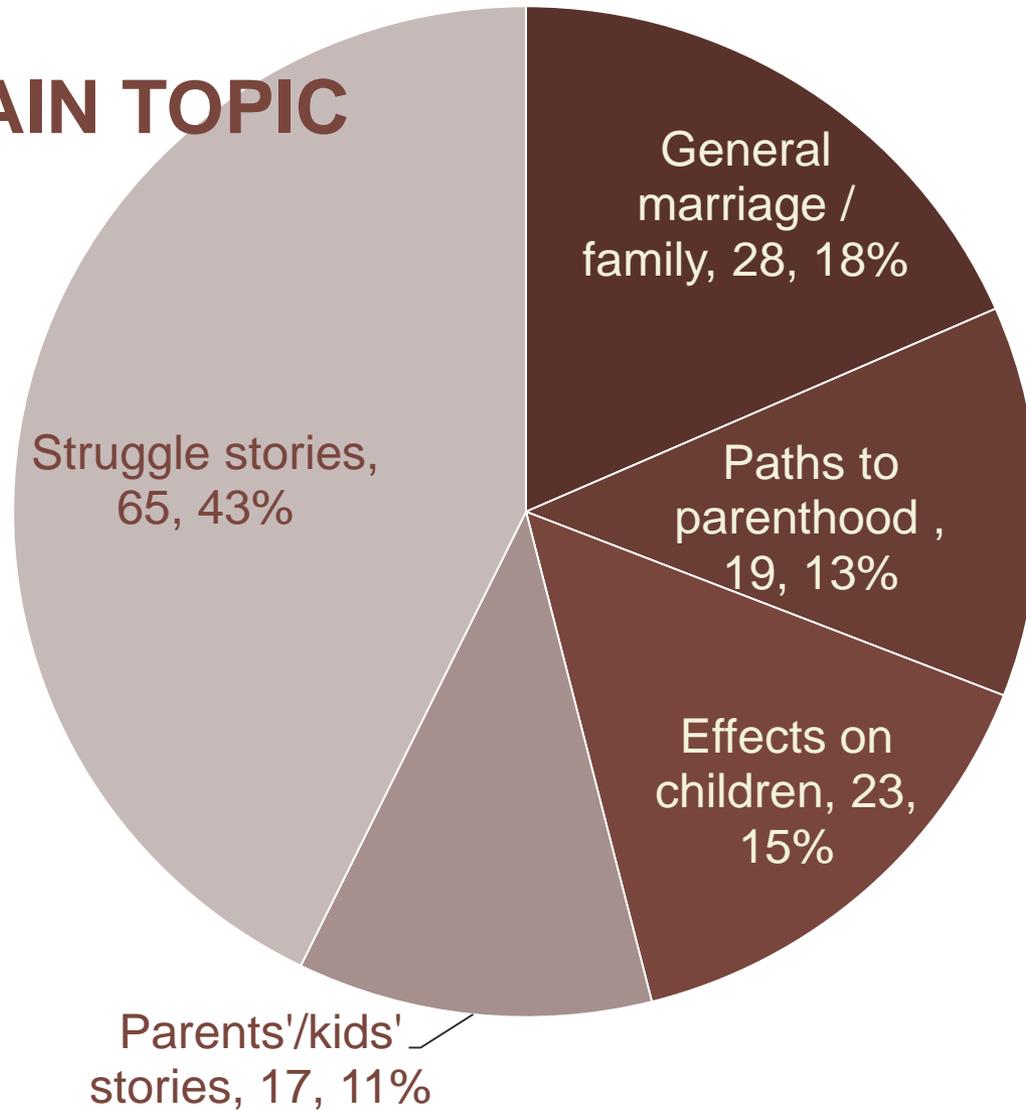
Content analysis

- 152 articles published in SA newspapers & magazines from 1985 to 2014
- ‘Lay of the land’
- RESEARCH QUESTIONS:
 - How are queer fathers and their children rendered visible in contemporary mainstream media?
 - What understandings of same-gendered parenting, and sexualities more generally, are constructed in mainstream media reports about same-gendered parenting and/or gay fatherhood?

Codes

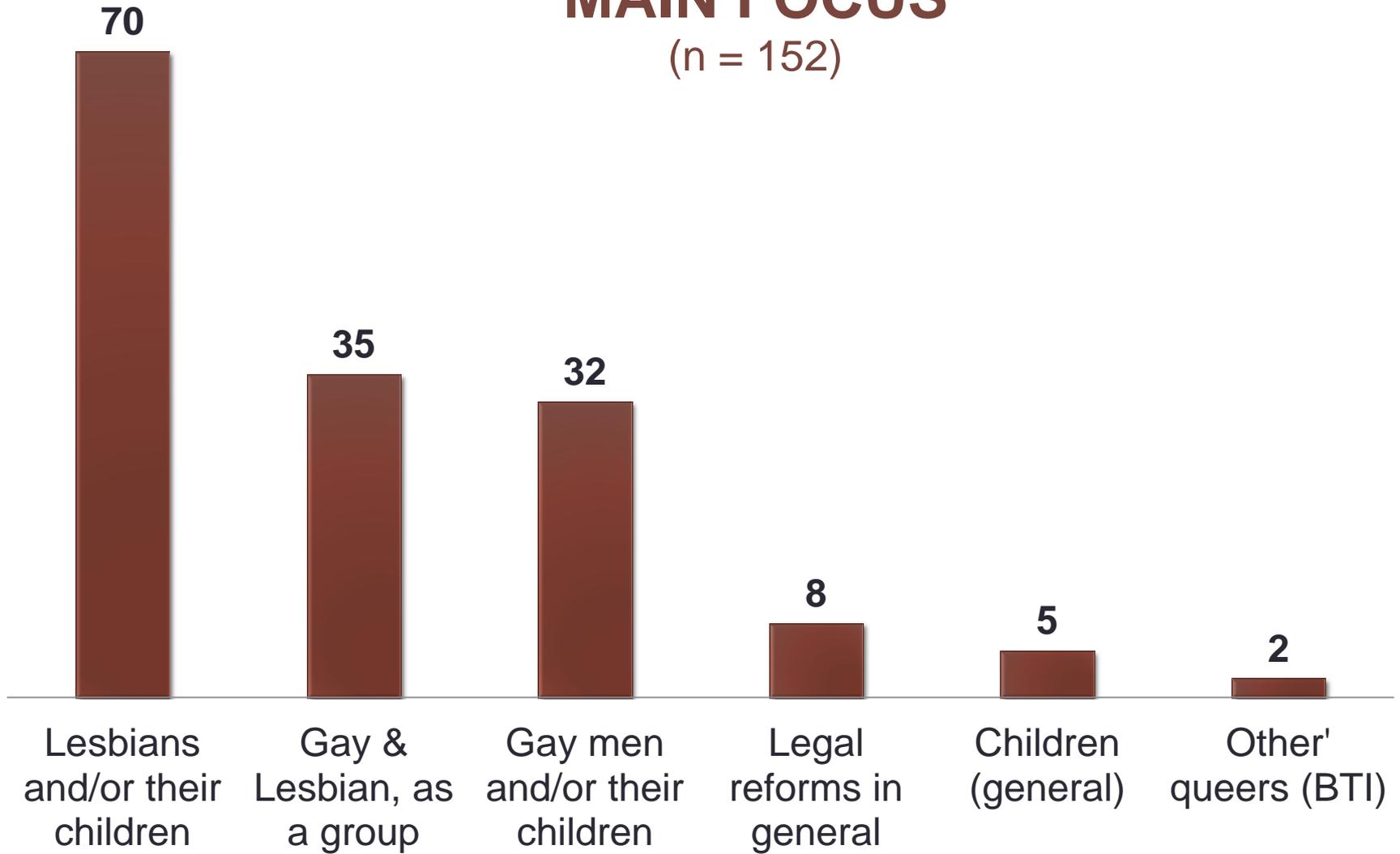
| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Epoch | <u>1985 - 1993</u> (Pre-democracy) ; <u>1994 - 2001</u> (Pre-civil rights) <u>2002 - 2005</u> (Adoption legal); <u>2006 – 2014</u> (Marriage legal) |
| Type | News - commentary/story Magazine article Letter; opinion editorial |
| Language | English Afrikaans |
| Tone | Against queer parenting; negative Pro queer parenting; positive Neutral; balanced; ambiguous Sympathetic |
| Topic | General queer marriage and family Adoption or foster care ART (Surrogacy; IVF) Parenting, child development and homosexuality; effects on children Testimonies/experiences of parents and/or their kids Struggle stories (custody struggles; legal battles; rights) |
| Focus | LGBTI or Gay and Lesbian Lesbians and/or their children Gay men and/or their children 'Other' queers Children (general) Legal reforms in general |

MAIN TOPIC

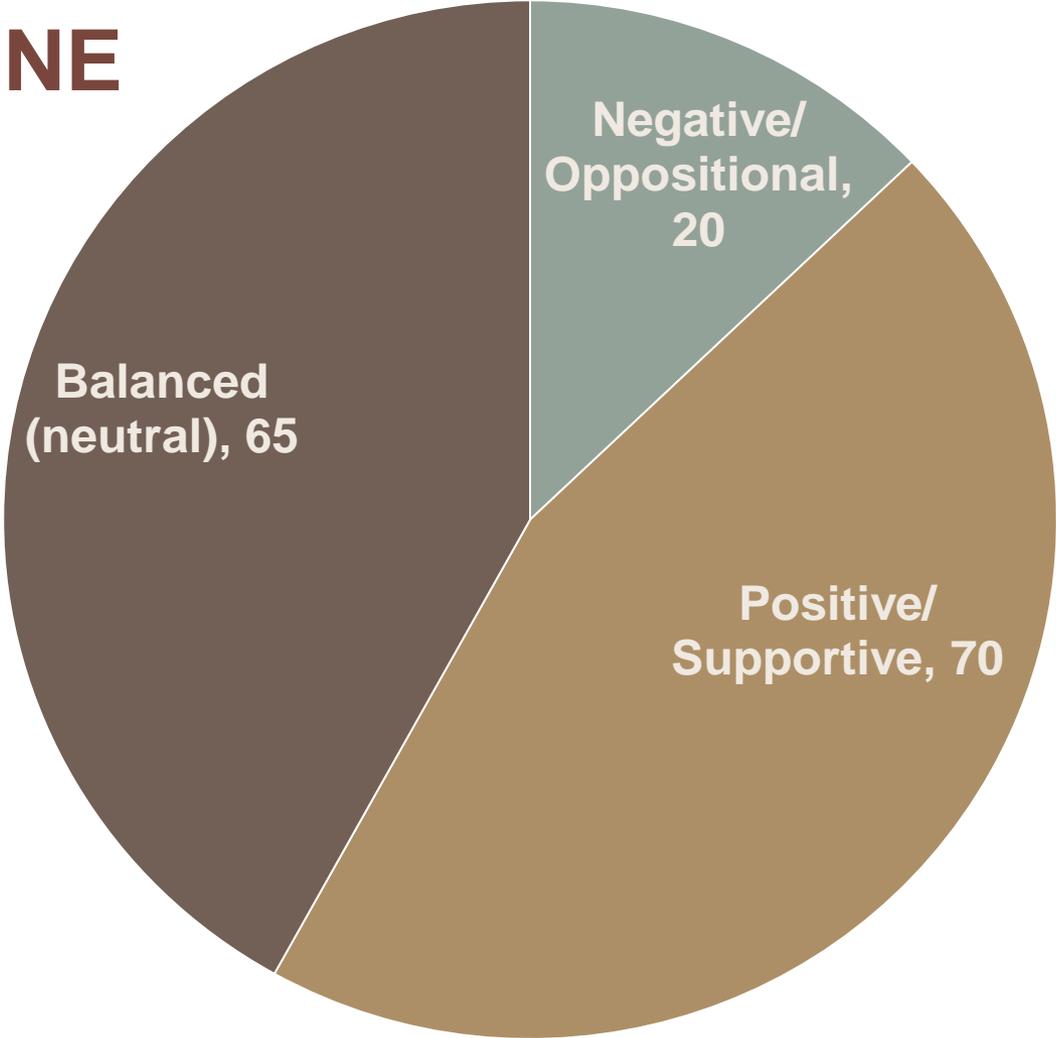


MAIN FOCUS

(n = 152)



TONE



Discussion of findings

1. Low visibility of gay fathers
2. Type and quality of constructions
 - Whose voices?
 - Narrow range of experiences
 - Lack of diversity
3. predominantly positive and/or balanced reporting
 1. Potentially allows for expanded ideas of 'family'
 2. Undermined by subtle heterosexism

“Gay dads do not have maternal instinct and basic parenting skills. They are inferior parents”: Parenting skills are not determined by gender or sexual orientation. All children need love, stability, and structure and the ability to give this is not determined by your gender or sexual orientation. Research shows that gay parents **do not differ much** from heterosexual parents. It also shows that gay fathers are **at least equal to heterosexual fathers** as far as the quality of parenting concerns. Parents' sexual orientation has a very **small impact on children**, says Maree. "In fact, the effect is so small that it can be seen as negligible." If **two** gay dads raise their children in a stable home in which the children are loved and feel secure, there is no reason why the children will suffer any emotional or social damage simply because their parents are gay men."

(“Myths about gay dads”, 2008, Beeld).

SHOULD GAYS BE ALLOWED TO ADOPT?

Same-sex parents have
a special duty to their children

2 ma's en g'n
wettige pa 'soos
wetenskapfiksie'

Is gay parenting bad for kids?



Conclusion

To help change perceptions and shift norms we need

1. varied constructions of families and experiences
 - ✓ a range of voices, stories, representations
2. to do away with and problematise the 'gold' standard
3. To embrace different ways of being and 'doing family'