Appendix B. Interview Guide for Lesbian Mothers

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I’d like to ask you some questions about your personal beliefs, your work experiences, your ties to different communities and family members, and your personal relationships. The questions I am asking serve as a guide, so please feel free to elaborate on any of the questions and to ask your own questions.

1. Let’s start out by discussing how you got to be mothers. What events led up to your decision to be a parent?

2. Tell me about your definitions of mother. What words come to mind when you think about mother (e.g., biological, power, social, burdened, etc.). Did how your definitions of mother affect your decision to become a mother yourself?

3. What about your families of origin? What do you think their definitions of mother are? Do/did your parents have ideas of what “proper” mothers are like? Did your families’ definitions of mother affect your decision to become a mother yourself?

4. What about any larger communities you belong to (racial, class, religious, lesbian, gay, queer)? What do you think their definitions of mother are? Do/did people in those communities have ideas of what “proper” mothers should be like? Did your communities’ definitions of mother affect your decision to become a mother yourself?

5. Did having a partner or not having a partner affect your decision to become a parent?
6. Do any of you have partners of different racial-ethnic, class, or other backgrounds? If so, has that difference affected your decision to parent? For those with partners of similar backgrounds, have the similarities affected your decisions?

7. Has your employment situation (i.e., having a job, not having a job, future work aspirations) affected your decisions to become parents?

8. What has your experience been with the medical community, if any?

9. Did the anticipated need to work with the medical community affect your decision to parent?

10. What has been your experience with the legal and social work community, if any?

11. Did the anticipated need to work with the legal and social work community affect your decision to parent?

12. In choosing alternative insemination, did the choice between known and unknown donors affect your decision to parent?

13. In choosing adoption, did the potential of adopting a special-needs child or a child of a different racial-ethnic background from yourself affect your decision to parent?

14. Do you feel integrated into a larger lesbian or gay or queer community? Has your integration or lack of integration affected your decision to mother?

15. What lesbian- or gay-centered resources (e.g., support groups, other lesbian parents, etc.) were available to you that made your decision to parent easier or harder?

16. What other resources (e.g., medical personnel, social workers, family members, etc.) were available to you that made your decision to parent easier or harder?
17. What resources have not been available to you and have made this decision more difficult?

18. Have you come out to your family of origin? Has your coming out or staying closeted influenced your decision to parent?

19. Does your family of origin know that you are planning on having children? If so, what has been their reaction? Has that reaction affected your decision to become a mother?

20. By lesbians’ becoming parents, do you think that you are changing the nature of motherhood or trying to fit in to some heterosexual definition of motherhood? Did you think about this question before becoming a mother? If so, did it influence your decision to mother?

21. Did financial resources or constraints play a part in making the decision to parent? If so, how?

22. Has the HIV/AIDS epidemic affected your decision to mother in any way (e.g., wanting to bring children into a dying gay community, affected donor choices, affected choices about adopting children with HIV/AIDS, etc.)?

23. What have been some of the challenges you have faced in making the decision to parent?

24. Has your decision to parent been influenced by your own personal identity as a lesbian, as a woman, as having a career, or as belonging to a particular racial-ethnic or economic class? If so, how?

25. Have you felt any societal pressure to mother or to be childfree? If so, how has that affected your decision to parent?

26. Did you ever think that by having children, you would be forced to come out in more public situations? If so, did that affect your decision to mother?
27. Do you have anything you would like to add about how you arrived at the decision to mother or about how other lesbians might arrive at the decision to mother?

28. Do you think we’ve left anything out of this discussion that we should discuss?

29. Do you have any questions you would like to ask of me?