

Intercountry Adoption and the Inappropriate/d Other: Refusing the Disappearance of Birth Families

Damien W. Riggs

School of Social and Policy Studies, Flinders University
E-mail: damien.riggs@flinders.edu.au

Dominant social norms relating to families shape the lives of all people. This can have negative effects upon non-traditional families. This is especially the case in terms of adoption, where a focus solely on the adoptive family can often result in the 'disappearance' of the birth family. This paper explores the location of birth families in relation to adoptive families by examining a sample of children's storybooks aimed at adoptive children living with lesbian or gay parents as but one example of how policy makers may come to identify dominant cultural norms that circulate about birth families in the context of intercountry adoption. A number of key tropes are identified across these books, namely the ghostly presence of birth families, and the representation of birth parents as deviant (thus warranting the removal of their children).

Keywords: Intercountry adoption, gay and lesbian parenting, birth families, children's literature.

Introduction

As those of us who study the discursive effects of language know, the words we use have powerful effects. A clear example of this appears in the language used to describe families, particularly when the family under discussion falls outside the norm of the heterosexual nuclear family (Riggs, 2007). One instance where this is especially evident is when adoptive families seek to talk about their journey to family formation, especially when they rely upon the language of family formation as it pertains to families formed through sexual relations between the intended parents (Modell, 2002). Whilst claiming a familial connection is a valid and important practice for adoptive families to undertake (Yngvesson, 2010), the present article argues that this may often occur at the expense of birth families, who are (at best) marginalized, if not completely written out of the picture. This outcome is often further compounded when the adoption is intercountry, where the disappearance of birth cultures is typically both physical and psychological.

Keeping in mind the power of language, this article seeks first to explore representations of adoptive families in terms of family formation (and how birth families are included or not in such representations), and from there to consider some alternate ways of thinking about adoptive families as *always already* being in a relationship to birth families. In terms of representations of adoptive families, an analysis is provided of a sample of children's storybooks aimed at children adopted by lesbian or gay couples. These books were identified through a search of amazon.com, utilising 'lesbian adoption' and 'gay adoption' as keywords, in addition to a search of two key resources (Day, 2000;

Sapp, 2010) that extensively document books focusing on lesbian and gay families. It is likely that there are other books focusing on the topic that were not included in the sample. This sample should be considered broadly representative of children's storybooks for lesbian- or gay-headed families formed through adoption, and certainly includes the most well-known titles in this genre. Importantly, the focus on these books is not intended to demonise or argue against the legitimacy of lesbians and gay men as parents. Rather, the focus upon representations of adoption within books aimed at marginal, non-traditional adoptive families is to highlight how ubiquitous the normative language of family is in terms of families formed through adoption (Ayres, 2004).

It is also important to explain why children's storybooks were chosen as a site for examining representations of adoptive families, and how this relates to social policy. In order to develop policies that are mindful of cultural norms (but which also challenge such norms when they have marginalising effects), it is vital that policy makers are aware of the norms currently in circulation. Discourse analysts have long argued (Blackman and Walkerdine, 2001) that what we see represented in a range of media forms are iterations of broader cultural norms and practices. In terms of children's storybooks, then, it is argued that such books tap into cultural norms, and in so doing are useful sites of analysis. Examining children's storybooks thus affords some insight into the discourses of family (both birth and adoptive) that are considered intelligible by authors and publishers, and indeed by those who read the books. In other words, the books examined here would likely not be published or read if they did not speak some 'truth' about adoption as it is understood within the current western discursive framework.

Following an analysis of the children's storybooks, the article then moves on to explore alternate ways of thinking about the location and role of birth families relative to adoptive families. Drawing upon the work of Trinh (1987), and specifically her concept of the 'inappropriate/d other', the paper considers how adoptive families (in the overdeveloped west in particular) might rethink their family-making practices and discourses in terms of the inclusion of birth parents. The article concludes by offering some reflections on the implications of this discussion for policy on intercountry adoption, with a specific focus on the support mechanisms required to make it possible for birth parents, families and cultures to be truly recognised as part of the adoptive child's life.

Storybook representations of adoption by lesbians and gay men

This first section is framed by the growing empirical literature on representations of non-traditional families within storybooks for children. Some of this literature primarily emphasises the positive aspects of the fact that such storybooks exist (Chapman and Wright, 2008; Sapp, 2010), while other more recent contributions emphasise the privileged nature of the characters contained in most of the storybooks published to date (Riggs and Augoustinos, 2007; Stafford, 2009; Crisp, 2011; Jenkins, 2011). As an example of the latter approach, Shannahan offers an incisive analysis of a selection of storybooks aimed at children with lesbian or gay parents, and suggests that such storybooks promote a very white, middle-class and capitalist understanding of what it means to grow up with lesbian or gay parents (Shannahan, 2010). Most concerning, she notes, are the books that deal with adoption, a concern echoed in the present article. Regarding the book *King and King and Family* (de Haan and Nijland, 2004), for example, Shannahan suggests that the young child who is 'adopted' is treated as a commodity with no past and no identity

of her own. According to Shannahan, the implication of this is that the only image of adoption provided is of the benevolent white adoptive gay parents who have their 'wishes fulfilled'. To elaborate these points further with regard to birth families and cultures, it is important first to outline the story.

King and King and Family (de Haan and Nijland, 2004) extends the narrative presented in *King and King* (de Haan and Nijland, 2002). In the first book, a young prince is looking to wed, and cannot find his match in all of the princesses presented to him. The story closes with him meeting a brother of one of the princesses and the two princes getting married and becoming two kings. In the follow up book, the newly married (white, wealthy) couple leave on their honeymoon 'to a land far away from their kingdom'. From their vantage point in a plane, we are presented with an exoticised landscape of animals, trees, land and water, and one little brown person standing smiling but not looking up. No buildings are depicted, and no roads. Once the couple land, they hike into the jungle where they see many animal families. On the last day of their honeymoon, King Bertie says to King Lee 'I wish we had a little one of our own.' When they arrive home, it transpires that a 'little brown girl' had stowed away in their suitcase: the stowaway is 'a little girl from the jungle!' 'You're the child we've always wanted,' declare King and King. The child proceeds to tell the kings 'all about her adventures'. Then, and in order 'to make it official, King and King adopted the little girl who had travelled so far to be with them. This took lots of documents and stamps.' The book concludes with a celebration for 'Princess Daisy'.

We can see how the child's birth family and culture are routinely rendered invisible, though arguably not entirely non-existent. Importantly, the story is framed in terms of a 'land far away', thus both exoticising the child's homeland and depicting it as far removed from the lives of the kings. Indeed, so removed is it that it doesn't look like a kingdom at all – there are no houses, no roads, no civilisation, and importantly almost no people. Yet although the view from the plane presents no evidence of culture in the 'land far away', we glimpse traces of this as the story unfolds: Who built the rope bridge crossed by the kings? Who built and hired the boat to the kings? Questions such as these are important, as they highlight the fact that despite the illusion of emptiness portrayed in the story, the narrative cannot sustain this as a fact. What we are presented with, then, are ghosts of the culture and families from which the little girl in the story comes; ghosts that require our attention for the ways in which they depict birth families (as missing, as absent, or as lost).

Once the little girl 'appears' (from King Bertie's suitcase, like a souvenir or other commodity), this ghostly narrative continues. First, the girl is presented as intelligible only as something 'wanted', and as someone who has come 'from the jungle'. In other words, her utility is as a desirable object, emerging from 'the jungle' and not from other people, a family or a community. The narrative presents the child as easily inserted into the terms of reference of the kingdom, where she tells the kings about her 'adventures'. This is striking, both for the fact that she is able automatically to speak their language (as though cultural difference has been erased), and also for the fact that what she speaks of are 'adventures', not people, or family or her identity as a person. This assimilation of the child is completed by the reference to her as 'Princess Daisy' – a name not likely to have come with her 'from the jungle'. The de-identification of the child from her birth culture and family is again contradicted by the narrative, which makes recourse to the 'lots of documents and stamps' required for the kings to 'make [the adoption] official'. Again, we must ask: 'who co-signed these forms?' The ghosts of birth families again haunt the book.

Turning to the next book examined here, the trope of the absent presence of birth families features again. In the storybook *Felicia's Favorite Story* (Newman, 2002), Mama Ness and Mama Linda are depicted as living in a lovely two-story house with their adopted daughter Felicia. The story of the adoption is told as a favourite bedtime story. The impetus for adoption is as follows: 'We have so much love between us [thought Ness and Linda], let's find someone else who can share our love and be part of our family.' From here, the narrative moves forward to the time when '[o]ur baby was born in a beautiful country called Guatemala. Sometimes . . . when a woman has a baby, she isn't able to take care of the child. So she does the most loving thing she can do: she allows the child to be adopted by parents who can take care of the baby and who want a child to love. Such a woman lived in Guatemala' (Newman, 2002: 13). At this point, we are presented with the image of Guatemala: Aztec temples and forest. The story continues by stating that once the women arrived in Guatemala, 'a baby girl with big brown eyes and shiny black hair was waiting for us' (Newman, 2002: 16).

And as soon as I saw you and Mama Nessa,' Felicia said, 'I cried'. 'That's right,' said Mama Linda. 'But only for a minute,' Felicia reminded her. 'Yes,' said Mama Linda. 'Only for a minute. You stopped crying as soon as Mama Nessa and I picked you up and held you in our arms. After that you hardly cried at all.' (Newman, 2002: 19)

In contrast to *King and King and Family* (de Haan and Nijland, 2004), *Felicia's Favorite Story* (Newman, 2002) does make mention of Felicia's birth mother. Yet even though this is the case, the theme of a ghostly presence continues: we see nothing of Guatemala as a modern civilisation populated by people. Rather, we see ancient temples and no representation of people other than the baby herself. While registering the existence of 'a woman who does the most loving thing', this narrative is not populated by people whose poverty and disadvantage mean that 'allowing' adoption is their only choice. This is compounded by the use of the words 'the child', which constructs children placed for adoption as divorced from the people who conceived and bore them: Felicia is *her* child (i.e., the child of the 'loving' mother who 'allowed' the adoption, not just 'the child' belonging to no one). In contrast to this disembodied and relatively disempowered image of the birth mother, Felicia is shown with some agency focused on her adoption, she 'waits' for her adoptive parents and 'only cries for a minute', as though all her needs are fulfilled by the adoption to which her adaptation is instant.

In the storybook *And Tango Makes Three* (Richardson and Parnell, 2005), we are told the story of two boy penguins who live in Central Park Zoo and who do everything together. 'They are in love', we are told, and part of this love involves the mimicry of the other penguin couples, in both the building of a nest and their attempts at trying to incubate a stone on the nest. Noticing their attempts, the zoo keeper has an idea: 'He found an egg that needed to be cared for and he brought it to Roy and Silo's nest.' They sat on and tended the egg until 'craack! Out came their very own baby! She had fuzzy white feathers and a funny black beak. Now Roy and Silo were fathers of baby Tango (because it takes two to make a Tango).' An important addendum is added in which we are told that the book is a true story of actual penguins in the zoo, and that 'Tango, their only chick, was born from an egg laid by another penguin couple named Betty and Porkey. That couple had often hatched their own eggs, but they had never been able to care for

more than one at a time. In 2000, when Betty laid two fertile eggs, Rob Gramzay (the keeper) decided to give Roy, Silo, and one of those eggs a chance to become a family.'

Leaving aside the issue of anthropomorphism, *And Tango Makes Three* (Richardson and Parnell, 2005) is troubling for the ways in which it presents, only to dismiss, the role of 'Betty and Porkey'. Whilst in the author's note we are told that the egg was theirs, in the story of the egg hatching we are told that the chick is named 'Tango because it takes two to make a Tango', and further that 'Tango was the very first penguin in the zoo to have two daddies'. This information is factually incorrect and contradicts the narrative: it took four penguins to make Tango (Betty and Porkey as 'birth parents' and Roy and Silo as 'adoptive parents'), and Tango has three dads (Porkey, Roy and Silo). This storybook is somewhat more transparent in its inclusion of information about Betty and Porkey, however they still only function as plot narratives in the reported desires of Roy and Silo. Further, the language of deficiency is introduced, where the egg 'needed to be cared for', but Betty and Porkey 'had never been able to care for more than one at a time'. This construction of Betty and Porkey as inadequate parents thus paves the way for the construction of Roy and Silo as the only ones who could give the egg 'a chance to become a family'. Thus, again, it is the agency of the adoptive parents that centres the story, not that of Tango, Betty or Porkey.

These notions of deficiency are repeated in the final storybook examined here. *Dad David, baba Chris and ME* (Merchant, 2010) tells the story of Ben who at seven years, is adopted by David and Chris. We are told that Ben cannot live with his birth dad Alex and birth mum Val because they 'weren't looking after me properly' (Merchant, 2010: 4). Ben tells us that 'I wanted to have an ordinary family of my own' and 'I wanted (David and Chris) to adopt me because they were fun and caring and ordinary' (Merchant, 2010: 5) David shares some of his anger about being removed from his birth parents, but states that 'Dad David talked to me about my birth mum Val and my birth dad Alex. I said I often worried about them and wondered how they are. But Dad David said he knew they were OK or we would have heard and he promised that when I am older, and if I want, he would help me find out more about them' (Merchant, 2010: 7). With this information in mind, David is able to settle into the family and enjoy life with his adoptive fathers.

Of the four storybooks examined here, *Dad David, baba Chris and ME* (Merchant, 2010) provides the greatest recognition of the birth parents, however it does so through a frame of deficiency. The book provides some depth of detail into aspects of David's journey as an adopted child, but only two pages are devoted to his birth parents, and this part of the narrative constructs them as deficient, and then dismisses them as something that can be easily gotten over – only of possible relevance in some abstracted future. The here and now of David's birth parents and their possible ongoing desires and wishes are swept away by the celebration of 'ordinariness' and 'specialness' offered by his adoptive fathers. This is not to deny that children placed for adoption may experience abuse and neglect prior to their removal, but rather to insist that this is not something that can be simply 'made better' by adoption. Indeed, the issues of identity and belonging that are experienced by children who are adopted may be lifelong, and are not adequately addressed through a narrative that compartmentalises or reduces such issues, or relegates them to some uncertain future time (Yngvesson, 2010).

As discussed, the presence of birth parents, families and cultures in the sample of children's storybooks examined here is either a ghostly one marked by stereotypes and dehumanisation, or a presence of deviancy/deficiency used to legitimate adoption. In

a number of the stories, the children themselves become objects alongside their birth parents, with both children and birth parents operating as plot devices for the fulfilment of desires of the adoptive parents. As suggested in the introduction, this type of narrative is not limited to the storybooks presented here, but rather may be considered ubiquitous to the narratives of adoption that circulate within western societies (Ayres, 2004; Riggs, 2009). As a counter to these negative depictions of birth parents, families and cultures, the following section engages the work of Trinh (1987) to explore some alternate ways of thinking about the location of all members and aspects of the adopted child's family.

The inappropriate/d (m)other

Trinh's writings on representations and experiences of otherness provide valuable insights into how dominant discourses of the other can be challenged. Trinh's central argument is that it is only through recognition of the fact that otherness is within us as much as it is outside us that we can truly grapple with the operations of otherness as a practice of exclusion. In distinction to positioning difference as the province of the other, it is necessary to recognise both that those other than ourselves indeed represent an incommensurable otherness that cannot simply be assimilated as a counterpoint to ourselves, but at the same time that we are foreign to ourselves – that we are never self-identical. Trinh uses the notion of the 'inappropriate/d other' to highlight both that the other cannot be appropriated in the simplistic ways that are often attempted in western discourses of otherness, and, simultaneously, that those other than ourselves are located right at the heart of our sense of self. It is only through our relationship to others that we come to be in the first place, and thus we are fundamentally reliant upon others to maintain our sense of a coherent self.

With this summary of Trinh's theorisation in mind, we can reflect upon what this might mean for families formed through adoption and their relationship to birth families. In terms of appropriation, it is important to consider how it is that birth families are treated as sites of appropriation in the context of intercountry adoption. Appropriation occurs when something belonging to someone else is taken by another. In the context of adoption, what is taken is complex: it is relationships (between birth parents and children), it is reproductive labour, it is future opportunities or outcomes that might arise from raising a child and, for some birth parents and children, it might well mean the taking of psychological well-being.

Given the negative nature of the appropriations that occur in the context of adoption, it is thus important to consider how this is rendered acceptable to adoptive parents. As per the examples provided earlier from children's storybooks, it is primarily the case that appropriation entailed in adoption is made acceptable via the construction of birth parents as invisible or as inadequate or deviant. Of course, what disappears in this construction is the fact that the formation of adoptive families is entirely dependent upon the fertility of birth parents, alongside the existence of a context that positions them as incapable of raising the children they produce. It is the capacity of others to reproduce and the ways in which they are incapacitated by societies that fail to support them to raise their children that makes it possible for the incapacities of adoptive parents (i.e. infertility) to be resolved.

Putting together Trinh's notion of the inappropriate/d other, and the points about adoption summarised above, it is possible to suggest that the reproductive and familial

role of birth parents can never truly be appropriated. Rather, attempts at appropriating or overwriting the role of birth parents are already a reactionary response to their 'inappropriate' location. That is, birth parents highlight the dependency of adoptive parents upon others. Further this dependency doesn't simply disappear, and for this reason the ghost of birth parents continues forever as an *absent presence* for adoptive families. Birth mothers in particular are thus 'inappropriate/d (m)others': they are treated as sites of appropriation (as are adoptive children), but their experiences and existence can never be entirely appropriated or rendered invisible.

So what does this mean for adoptive families and their relationships to birth families? Trinh's work again here provides insight into alternative ways of conceptualising the complex relationships that shape adoptive families. Trinh suggests in relation to otherness and notions of the self that we need to move beyond an understanding of interdependency as one in which one party is always already enslaved to another. Rather, she suggests, what is required is the development of a ground *between* parties that belongs to no one – that is, a place that is marked by all parties' fundamental reliance upon others. At present, this ground does not truly exist in the context of intercountry adoption, as the depth of the interdependencies of all parties is not adequately recognised and the inequalities between them are also pronounced.

In terms of moving towards this place owned by no one in the policy, practice, and lived experience of intercountry adoption, for adoptive parents this requires recognition of their dependency upon the fertility of others, along with acknowledgement that their capacity to adopt that is underpinned by their relative economic and political power (i.e., white middle-class adoptive parents living in the overdeveloped west). For birth parents, the issue of dependency is highly complex, but this does not mean it should be skirted around. In most respects, the dependency of birth parents upon other people who are able to raise their children is entirely a product of a context that fails to support them to raise their children themselves. This arguably must be the first point given attention in any discussion of intercountry adoption. Given that for the foreseeable future disparities in access and capacities to parent are likely to continue, we must recognise that birth parents are to a degree dependent upon those who by the fact of their privileged social location are able to both access and raise the children of other (poorer and less powerful) people

Conclusion

Despite the existence of the *Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption*, intercountry adoption continues to fail birth parents in multiple ways (Manley, 2006). Manley suggests that such failures occur when adoption policies do not ensure that children are truly 'orphans', and when there is a lack of recourse for birth parents to challenge the adoption of their children. As the analysis of children's storybooks indicates, dominant discourses surrounding adoption in western societies appear to reinforce the idea of adopted children as *a priori* orphans. Where they are acknowledged at all, no agency or resistance is accorded to their birth parents. How then does policy respond to such discourses and the understanding they generate to better protect both birth parents and children who are adopted?

First, there must be a commitment on the part of receiving countries and adoptive parents to address the inequities that give rise to adoption in the first place (Fronck and

Cuthbert, 2011). There must be a long-term agenda for addressing issues such as war and poverty, both of which contribute significantly to the circumstances that prevent birth parents from raising their children. Such an agenda must take into consideration the place belonging to no-one as outlined by Trinh, a place with which western governments to date have been reticent to engage. Place for most national governments is about territory to be claimed, with rights apportioned on the basis of citizenship. With the ongoing impact of globalisation upon the poorest nations, affluent western nations must take some responsibility for those nations upon whose backs and labour the privileges of the overdeveloped west are built. Efforts must be directed to a place beyond the nation state in which policy, such as that governing intercountry adoption, does not directly benefit receiving nations and their citizens. Such a place would represent a step towards creating some greater parity between the needs and interests of adoptive parents, birth parents and children.

Secondly, there is the need to ensure that all adoptive parents engage in pre-adoption support and education services that are external to their adoption agency. While post-adoption services are available to support adoptive parents in most receiving nations, there is often a comparative paucity of pre-adoption services aimed at supporting adoptive parents to explore the loss and grief that likely informs their journey to adoption. In terms of moving away from a place of appropriation and towards one in which recognition of interdependencies is possible, it is vital that pre-adoption services are available to help adoptive parents to undertake this work. Importantly, such work may help to engender *the place in between* that is owned by no one by facilitating recognition that both adoptive and birth parents come together in the context of loss and grief, but that their losses and grief are incommensurable. To recognise the loss and grief of another is not to assimilate it. Rather, it is to recognise that we are implicated in the loss and grief of others in contexts where discourses of family continue to privilege certain family forms over others, and where children are treated as prize possessions and thus objects of commodity exchange (Riggs, 2010).

Any policy that seeks adequately to recognise birth parents in regard to intercountry adoption must properly support adoptive parents, not only to explore their own loss and grief, but to have some comprehension of the context in which the other lives. Appropriation is best facilitated by distance and emotional remove from those whose possessions or lives are being appropriated. Presently, at best adoptive parents might travel to the child's home country to negotiate the adoption. Unfortunately, there is nothing inherent in this experience that allows for any comprehension of the lives of the birth family and their culture. Deep, respectful engagement with the child's birth culture should precede intercountry adoptions. This should not be in the form of an exoticised spectacle of the other, but rather an embodied opportunity to comprehend the incommensurabilities that shape birth and adoptive family lives, so that the latter can begin to come to terms with the responsibility they have to the former.

Finally, the language we use to describe families in the west all too easily allows for the treatment of adoptive children as possessions that are appropriated from their birth families and inserted into the lives of their adoptive parents. As noted in regard to the children's storybooks examined in this article, traces of birth families and cultures often remain, but such ghostly remnants in no way suffice to recognise the loss and grief of birth families, nor the often enduring connections between children and their birth families and cultures. Without reifying the logic of blood being thicker than water, it is

vital that those involved in intercountry adoptions recognise the complexities associated with family formation in this context to avoid occupying a space in which one party's proprietary claims trump those of another (at the expense of the child). Far preferable is a place in which interdependencies are recognised and responsibility is taken for ensuring that the complexities of adoptive family formation which are always dependent on birth families is acknowledged, rather than sidelined.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the sovereignty of the Kurna people, upon whose land I live in Adelaide, South Australia.

References

- Ayres, S. (2004) 'The hand that rocks the cradle: how children's literature reflects motherhood, identity, and international adoption', *Texas Wesleyan Law Review*, 10, 315–42.
- Blackman, L. and Walkerdine, V. (2001) *Mass Hysteria: Critical Psychology and Media Studies*, Hampshire: Palgrave.
- Chapman, E. L. and Wright, C. (2008) 'Provision of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT) materials for young people in UK public and secondary school libraries', in S. McNicol (ed.), *Forbidden Fruit: The Censorship of Literature and Information for Young People*, Boca Raton: BrownWalker, pp. 19–40.
- Crisp, T. (2011) 'The problem with Rainbow Boys', in M. A. Abate and K. Kidd (eds.), *Over the Rainbow: Queer Children's and Young Adult Literature*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, pp. 215–68.
- Day, F. A. (2000) *Lesbian and Gay Voices: An Annotated Bibliography and Guide to Literature for Children and Young Adults*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- de Haan, L. and Nijland, S. (2002) *King and King*, California: Tricycle Press.
- de Haan, L. and Nijland, S. (2004) *King and King and Family*, California: Tricycle Press.
- Fronek, P. and Cuthbert, D. (2011) 'The future of inter-country adoption: a paradigm shift for this century', *International Journal of Social Welfare*, doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2397.2011.00799.x.
- Jenkins, C. A. (2011) 'Young adult novels with gay/lesbian characters and themes, 1969–1992: a historical reading of content, gender, and narrative distance', in M. A. Abate and K. Kidd (eds.), *Over the Rainbow: Queer Children's and Young Adult Literature*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, pp. 147–63.
- Manley, K. L. (2006) 'Birth parents: the forgotten members of the international adoption triad', *Capital University Law Review*, 35, 627–61.
- Merchant, E. (2010) *Dad David, baba Chris and ME*, London: British Association for Adoption and Fostering.
- Modell, J. (2002) *A Sealed and Secret Kinship: The Culture of Policies and Practices in American Adoption*, New York: Berghahn Books.
- Newman, L. (2002) *Felicia's Favorite Story*, Pennsylvania: Two Lives Publishing.
- Richardson, J. and Parnell, P. (2005) *And Tango Makes Three*, New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Riggs, D. W. (2010) *What about the Children! Masculinities, Sexualities and Hegemony*, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press.
- Riggs, D. W. (2009) 'Race privilege and its role in the "disappearance" of birth families and adoptive children in debates over adoption by non-heterosexual people in Australia', in C. Spark and D. Cuthbert (eds.), *Other People's Children: Adoption in Australia*, Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, pp. 161–75.
- Riggs, D. W. (2007) *Becoming Parent: Lesbians, Gay Men, and Family*, Tenerife: Post Pressed.
- Riggs, D. W. and Augoustinos, M. (2007) 'Learning difference: representations of diversity in storybooks for children of lesbian and gay parents', *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 3, 1, 81–95.

- Sapp, J. (2010) 'A review of gay and lesbian themed early childhood children's literature', *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 35, 1, 32–40.
- Shannahan, D. (2010) 'Heather has two mommies and they're both Caucasian and moneyed: unsaid in international "queer" children's literature', *Dark Matter*, 7, <http://www.darkmatter101.org/site/2010/09/28/heather-has-two-mommies/> [accessed 30.01.2012].
- Stafford, A. (2009) 'Beyond normalization: an analysis of heteronormativity in children's picture books', in R. Epstein (ed.), *Who's the Daddy? And Other Writings on Queer Parenting*, Toronto: Sumach, pp. 169–78.
- Trinh, T. M. (1987) 'She, the inappropriate/d other', *Discourse*, 8, winter, 1–37.
- Yngvesson, B. (2010) *Belonging in an Adopted World: Race, Identity and Transnational Adoption*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.