

Lesbian Family Life, Like the Fingers of a Hand

Under-Discussed and
Controversial Topics

Edited by
Valory Mitchell



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In this book, an array of approaches - first person and theoretical accounts, clinical understandings, qualitative and quantitative research - are brought to bear on controversial or under-discussed topics in lesbian family life.

From conception all the way to care for elderly parents, this book takes a fresh look at lesbian family relationships. Topics include: butch/femme couples, infidelity, the psychological meaning of family for lesbians, age-discrepant couples, lesbian nuns as family, Listservs as family, intentional family for aging women, women raising sons, mothers who come out late in life, mothers and children in situations of domestic violence, lack of support for lesbian domestic violence survivors, death of a partner, psychological issues in the use of sperm donors or surrogates, and middle-aged lesbians caring for homophobic elderly parents. Some authors use self psychology and Jungian psychology to describe aspects of family life. The richness and diversity of topics makes it a text on "lesbian lives".

Therapists and academics from throughout the U.S. have contributed to this collection. Many lesbian women, as well as teachers (who can use this book as a teaching aid) and mental health professionals who work with children, families, couples and elderly will find useful material here.

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Barbara Collier, the cover artist, has done over 200 pen-and-ink drawings of hands. In addition to her art, Barbara teaches death and dying, and is director of the Martin de Porres Foundation, which maintains hospice care, a house of hospitality, and a soup kitchen serving over 200 free meals each day in San Francisco. Pictured here is the hand of her daughter, Camilla.

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FOREWORD

Lesbian Family Life, Like the Fingers of a Hand: Under-Discussed and Controversial Topics

Valory Mitchell

Lesbian identity does not follow the well-worn ruts in the conventional road that lead from sex to gender to gender-role to gender-of-partner. In the same way, our families cannot be neatly mapped according to a conventional family tree, where connections are established by law (as in marriage) or by genetic connections. Invisible through those lenses, our families have thrived nonetheless. And they are very visible now; same-sex marriage, the “lesbian baby boom,” and lesbian/gay “families of choice” are front-page news for some, old news for others, and have become “just how it has always been” for the generation of young lesbian women in their 20s. There was a time, not so long ago, when no one spoke aloud that another woman was a lesbian. “She’s family,” they’d say. It was closet-code, intended to keep us safely invisible to the straight community, yet identifiable to others like ourselves. An interesting choice for a code word. Why “family”? Perhaps it not only designated something we shared, but also hinted at a loyalty, an understanding, an inner circle.

Much has changed in a short time. Just over a decade ago, Laird and Green (1996) edited *Lesbians and Gays in Couples and Families*; they documented the important news that lesbians had families! The papers in that volume showed that many of us were closely connected to parents and siblings, had enduring marriage-like couple relationships, children (even grown children), extended family, in-laws, grandchildren—and, as well, the special families that we made—our families of choice. Today, the existence and richness of lesbian family life is no longer controversial; we, and the scholars who write about our lives, have established our presence.

One thing, however, has not changed: because most laws and institutions continue to penalize, exclude or ignore lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, we have the challenge and the opportunities that come from living outside them. We can, and must, decide for ourselves what we mean when we say “family” (Green and Mitchell, 2002).

Of course, just as we are a diverse lot, so our families will reflect our many cultures and contexts. There can no more be “THE lesbian family” than there could be one person who represents “THE lesbian.” Still, the relationships that make up our families are like the fingers on a hand. Each hand is unique; each finger has a separate name and does a particular set of things; yet they are naturally connected, need each other, and often work together to do things that none could do alone.

WHAT IS CONTROVERSIAL IN LESBIAN FAMILY LIFE?

When I announced the call for papers on under-discussed and controversial topics in lesbian family life, it occurred to me that the submissions could be imagined as data in a social psychology experiment. Taken together, this rich collection—of first-person accounts, theoretical and clinical papers, qualitative and quantitative research—becomes the “evidence” that helps us articulate and define our ideas about lesbian family. Let us consider what is controversial (and why), what we do not (or rarely) talk about (and why), what we have stopped talking about because we take it for granted.

Feminist research methods (Stewart and Gold-Steinberg, 1990) and hermeneutic deconstruction techniques (Cushman, 2000) have taught us to look at silences, at those who rarely have a voice. By considering what is “marginal” as well as what is “in the text” about our families, we can see what has become an accepted part of lesbian family life, and glimpse those issues and themes that challenge us or make us uneasy. And we can confront the tasks ahead. *All in the family? Or are some left out?* Many

lesbians feel marginal in our “community,” and have responded by creating special families for themselves. Several articles in this book contend that, as a group, we prefer to look away and not talk about our patterns of exclusion. Like the larger culture in which we are embedded, the lesbian community (including the lesbian academic and scholarly community) has played its part in maintaining class, color, creed, disability, and age barriers. Working-class lesbians and lesbians of color (Fisher, 2007), older lesbians (Ariel, this book), and religious lesbians (Hunyady, this book) feel marginalized, rendered exotic or even unwelcome. As voices from these silenced sisters emerge, they describe examples of extraordinary relational creativity.

Age differences and aging. Age differences and aging recur among our under-discussed topics, perhaps because we live in such an ageist culture. Voices of middle-aged (Cayleff, this book) or older lesbians (Cruikshank, 2002), of young women in age-different couples (Bruns, this book) or adult daughters of lesbians (Davies, this book) are rarely heard. As women expand beyond the procreative and paid-work focus that tends to dominate the first half of our adult lives (Helson, Mitchell and Moane, 1984), they become available for profound relational endeavors; as we lift our ageist (and perhaps patriarchal?) blinders, there is much about family building to see here.

Masculinity/femininity in lesbian couples and parents. Lesbians’ relationships to gender roles are among the under-discussed topics in lesbian family life. Perhaps homophobia has made us experience lesbian masculinity and lesbian femininity as too dangerous to address. Yet the emergence, in our communities, of people who choose a permanent transgender identity, one that is not on-the-way to one side of the gender binary, demands that we consider anew our confusion of sex with gender. Lev (this book) has suggested that part of our silence about lesbian masculinity and femininity is in response to a mis-reading of the androgynous ideals of second wave feminism. And, in something of a paradox, at the same time that our community embraces gender fluidity, although it has been established that our sons grow up psychologically healthy and comfortable in their lives (Drexler, 2006), the relevance of masculinity for sons has been a conscious concern for many lesbian parents and others (Weston, this book). Here, again, we are not so different from the larger community in our discomfort and inconsistency.

Families in danger: Betrayal and loss. When family is not defined by procreative relationships, we define it by what it brings us—trust, solidarity, continuity. We prefer not to think about relationships where the

connection is ruptured—families that are “in trouble” or have lost their sense of safety—particularly when the dangers emerge from ourselves or our partners. Several under-discussed topics concern families in danger—from intimate partner violence (Turrell & Herrmann, this book), from the emotional and psychological violence that is the aftermath of infidelity (Burch, this book), or through the death of a partner (Broderick, Birbilis, and Steger, this book).

These painful experiences are rendered more harsh and isolating by the failure of our community to acknowledge them, or to provide support (Hardesty, Oswald, Khaw, Fonseca, and Chung, this book). Again, we resemble the larger culture in wanting to look away, in being unwilling to integrate death with life, in wanting to pretend that families don’t hurt each other. These illusions join with other illusions that are uniquely our own—of a lesbian utopia where we won’t get hurt, of women as incapable of aggression—to make us unwilling (as a community) to hear these voices.

Children: Blending “blood” and “choice.” In 1991, when the anthropologist Kath Weston published her book *Families We Choose: Gays, Lesbians, Kinship*, she considered the juxtaposition of “blood” and “chosen” family. Was one modeled after the other? Was one a replacement or substitute for the other? Her research led to a clear “No!” on both counts. And the articles in this collection confirm those conclusions.

Because, in lesbian couples, only one partner has genetic ties with the children (unless a member of the other partner’s family is a sperm donor), our families of procreation epitomize the blending of “blood” and “choice.” Lesbians (and gay men) choose children (no “accidents” here!), and we have chosen them in great numbers. A recent survey of lesbian and gay youth (Savin-Williams, cited in Rothblum, 2007), found that the majority expect to marry their (gay/lesbian) partner and raise children. To do so, we are unique in that all of us require the help of others, birth parents of adopted children or donors and surrogates. Which of these people is and is not family? As our fears of custody loss fade with years of established precedent, we may now become able to look more deeply at this question, in ways that make many of us uneasy (Ehrensaft, this book).

THE BAD NEWS . . . AND THE GOOD NEWS

The bad news is that we bear a striking resemblance to the heterosexual community (and to the heterosexual academic community) in what makes us uneasy, what we avoid talking about, what we consider controversial.

Like the straight community, we avoid facing our patterns of exclusion—our class, creed, color, age, even our gender biases. Like them, we would prefer to think that violence, infidelity, death do not visit our doors—even if that means turning away from sisters in pain. While we acknowledge donors’ and surrogates’ contribution, like the straight community we are reluctant to think deeply about the meaning—for us and our children—of the role they have played in helping us build family.

Some of this similarity results from all of us being citizens not only of LGBT communities, but of the larger culture—with its biases and blindness—as well. Some is a legacy of the danger felt by LGBT people. Many still believe that it is essential, for survival and acceptance, to hide our problems, lest they be seized on by homophobic hate mongers and used against us, individually or as a group. To explain our vulnerability to these prejudices and illusions is not, however, to condone it. For the sake of us all, we must listen.

The good news is that we have come so far, as a community. We (and the straight community) are now able take for granted many of our strengths; they are well known, well documented, not news. Here are some aspects of lesbian family life that are no longer among the controversial: (1) We make families, independent of legal and blood ties, that are satisfying and enduring; (2) we are parenting couples whose children and community accept, enjoy and legitimate the two-mom family; (3) children raised in our families do as well (or sometimes better) than children of heterosexual parents; (4) lesbian couples, compared to other couple types, experience high satisfaction, high closeness, and high autonomy; (5) lesbian families emphasize equality, and live it out in the distribution of tasks and responsibilities; (6) lesbians blend members of their families of origin, families of procreation, and families of choice to create a fabric of family life across generations and of lifespan duration.

As we celebrate that the existence of our viable and satisfying families is no longer a surprise, a carefully guarded secret, we can recognize that, in a backhanded way, it is an accomplishment that we are now free to grapple with the same sorts of problems as those in the dominant culture.

KINSHIP

In Weston’s anthropological study, she described the creation of families of choice as a “foray into uncharted territory” (1991: 110). At that time, everything about lesbian family life was under-discussed and controversial.

And yet the 200 participants in her study listed many characteristics—none of them definitive, yet all descriptive—of their “family” relationships: trust, regular contact over time, mutual assistance, who comes early to decorate for the birthday party, shared history, ability to work through conflict and differences, persistence, continuity, solidarity. We know what we want from family, even while each family relationship truly is a choice, a “customized individual creation” (Weston, 1991: 136). The academic lesbian community has worked hard and long to establish the existence, viability, and validity of our family lives. Perhaps that allows us, now, to take perspective on our families—what they mean to us and why, who is “chosen” in a “family of choice” and why (Mitchell, this book)—and to take up the work of making more conscious choices about inclusion, lifting our blinders and exchanging our illusions for a robust and rewarding reality.

The cover artist, Barbara Collier, has done pen-and-ink interpretations of several hundred hands, including the hand of her daughter, pictured here. Perhaps we know the boundaries and experience of kinship like we know the boundaries and experience of our hands. Like a hand, family is a natural part of each of us—it belongs to us, stays with us, is not separate from who we are. Often, although not always, we can guide its actions—and today we are called on to reach out. It changes, too, with time and experience, and yet is always here, across our lifetimes.

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More than Surface Tension: Femmes in Families

Arlene Istar Lev

SUMMARY. This article raises questions about the lack of scholarly focus on butch/femme couples and their absence in studies of lesbian couples and family-building. In an era of lesbian marriage and lesbian parenting, femme and butch coupling and family-building remain unspoken topics within family studies, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT)–specific research. Moving beyond a focus on eroticism within the femme/butch couple, questions about how gender expression impacts other relationships dynamics, including the maintenance of long-term relationships, power and intimacy, domestic chores and child-rearing, are raised. The femme role in “homemaking,” that is, building and maintaining families, especially needs further exploration.

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If memory serves, it was 1980 or 1981. I was a young dyke living in the San Francisco Bay Area coming out in the glorious era of lesbian-feminism. I went out with friends to see a new slide show that had recently been put together by The San Francisco Lesbian and Gay History Project called She Even Chewed Tobacco: A Pictorial Narrative of Passing Women. Our movement was younger then and images of ourselves were hard to find. It was a fun and raucous event and the mostly lesbian audience hooted in joy at the butch dykes dressed in suits and ties and smoking cigars—not that many of us young dykes wore suits and ties or smoked cigars, but we could certainly appreciate that women "like us" had.

I found myself staring at the old photos, mesmerized by these handsome butches, but I was also aware—acutely aware—of the women standing next to them. One photo stands out in my memory all these years later, of a group of couples, butches in tuxes and their femme partners dressed to the nines for a night of dancing. The femmes looked like any other image of women from the 1940s, women who looked strangely like my mother did in pictures from the same era—in her early 20s—same hairdo, tight low cut dress, wide smile with bright lipstick. Yet, these women in the picture were clearly lesbian, obviously partnered with those handsome butches; they were, I suspected, nothing like my mother at all.

I shyly raised my 21-year-old hand. "What do we know about the other women?" I remember asking. "Their, uh, partners," I said, knowing that although the word butch was a strong, Amazonian, lesbian-friendly term, the word femme would not be so easily accepted. I knew it would bring undo attention to my long hippie skirt, dangling earrings, and extremely long hair that had already put my lesbian reputation into question. My question fell flat in the room, the presenters had little to say, someone shrugged, and we moved on to the next picture.

Decades later, I still find myself contemplating that question: "What do we know about the other women?" I am still surprised at the silence regarding femme identity in the alphabet soup of the now lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT)-queer community, and how that is mirrored in Gender Studies departments.

Themes of gender and sexuality abound, and are the focus of research in diverse fields from critical theory to child development, from family therapy to transgender medicine. Femme and butch identities are a theme in lesbian humor as well as erotica. Nonetheless, femme and butch coupling and family-building remain absent from discussions within family studies, including LGBT-specific research.

Feminists have examined gender bias in mental health and diagnosis (Ballou and Brown, 2002), and family therapists have raised critical questions about the role of gender in heterosexual partnerships (McGoldrick, Anderson, and Walsh, 1991). Lesbian and gay coupling has become a scholarly pursuit in family lifecycle development (Laird and Green, 1996; Savin-Williams and Cohen, 1996), and, in recent years, lesbian and (to a lesser extent) gay parenting has become an important site of research (Gartrell, Deck, Rodas, Peyser, and Banks, 2005; Golumbok et. al., 2003; Patterson, 2001; Patterson and Chan, 1996). Gender has been the focus of sociological analysis, psychoanalytic exegesis, and textual deconstruction (Butler, 1990; Dimen and Goldner, 2002).

However, there is a lack of scholarly research or clinical examination of butch and femme gender identities within lesbian couples and families. Lesbian identity is multifaceted, and lesbians have complex relationships to their gender and gender expression. Gender is a compelling and influential organizer of all human relationships, and masculine and feminine gender roles inhabit, motivate, and inspire many aspects of lesbian love. Butch and femme identities, for all their familiarity within lesbian communities, are under-explored and rarely analyzed as a significant factor in the development of intimacy, commitment, parental and domestic roles, and child rearing in lesbian butch/femme identified couples.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT: BUTCH/FEMME RELATIONSHIPS AND LESBIAN-FEMINIST CULTURE

Western culture has long linked lesbian sexuality with cross-gender behavior. Nineteenth-century sexological studies of “inversion” linked what we would now call homosexuality and transgenderism (Hekma, 1994; Trumbach, 1994; Vicinus, 1993). Simply put, lesbians were assumed to be females who dressed like men, acted like men, probably wanted to be men, and were attracted to women, or more to the point, were *therefore* attracted to women. Because lesbians were assumed to be more man-like than woman-like, their desire would “naturally” be heterosexual, that is, attracted to their opposite. Lesbian women with same-sex desire who were not masculine in their dress or manner were invisible; women who appeared to be just like other women, regardless of their sexual interests, were simply not considered lesbians. Lesbianism that did not involve cross-gender behavior was unimaginable, but gender inversion that was not lesbian was equally impossible (Cromwell, 1999), leaving femme lesbians to be a cultural impossibility.

Despite limited anthropological and historical research, gender role expression in lesbian relationships has been discovered in diverse cultural contexts (Blackwood, 1999; Faderman, 1992; Murray and Roscoe, 1998; Nestle, 1992; Smith, 2002; Vicinus, 1993). Butch and femme identities have an especially long history within lesbian cultures in the United States and Europe, particularly within urban working-class communities and communities of color in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s (Kennedy and Davis, 1993; Nestle, 1992). Fictional accounts that reflect their own histories and experiences, reveal butch/femme culture as a vibrant part of American culture in the twentieth century (Feinberg, 1993; Lynch, 1986). Indeed, perhaps butch/femme culture was so ubiquitous throughout lesbian communities that it may have been the only way to actively engage in a lesbian culture at that time. However, the history of butch/femme communities has more thoroughly documented the butch narrative (see Nestle, 1992; Smith, 2002), once more obscuring femme identity and meaning.

The rise of lesbian-feminist politics in the 1970s effectively drove butch-femme identities, communities, and expression underground, silencing, and therefore historically distorting, discussions of gender expression in lesbian relationships. Lesbian-feminism challenged cultural assumptions about gender, sexism, and patriarchal power, and raised important issues regarding women's oppression and compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1973). However, the *either* masculine *or* feminine role expression of butch/femme dyads became fodder for the early lesbian-feminist critique, which charged butch/femme couples with mimicking heterosexual patriarchal roles (Harris and Crocker, 1997). Feminist theory asserted that the oppression of women was maintained by the social construction of traditional male/female roles (Jeffreys, 1989). Masculinity, in early feminist theory, became a synonym for patriarchal domination.

At the same time, in a twist of logic, lesbians celebrated sisterhood by taking pride in doing traditionally male tasks and asserting and co-opting manners, stance, and behaviors that conveyed male privilege and power. Traditional female clothing was rejected and a watered-down masculine dress code was embraced—wearing male attire was experienced as liberating. In this paradox, lesbian-feminists celebrated much of what was masculine—although this was referred to as androgynous—and aspired to be “like” men, all the while despising male power.

Lesbian-feminist culture and theory, despite its elevation of the mystical concept of “woman,” also denigrated what had been traditionally perceived as feminine. The misogyny of the wider culture, which had been played out in various ways within butch/femme bar culture, continued, unabated

and unexamined, into feminist politics. Women who enjoyed feminine attire, who expressed their sexuality and identity through use of makeup, nail polish, and wearing high heels, were seen as un-liberated dupes of male oppression. Admitting one was attracted to a feminine woman was as intolerable as wanting to express oneself in a feminine manner. Gender expression itself became seen as a tool of the patriarchy.

Lesbians were critiqued for engaging in role-playing because feminist belief insisted that “all role-playing replicates the very (hetero)sexual structure from which lesbians are supposedly free” (Goodloe, 1999: 2, paragraph 1). It was never explicit what a life outside of “role-playing” might look like, and the dress code of lesbian-feminist culture was itself critiqued by the generation that followed for enforcing an androgynous look (Faderman, 1992).

Assuming that butch/femme couples are replicating heterosexual roles assumes butches wield a male power they may not have access to; it also assumes that femmes are subservient to their butches, the way heterosexual women were traditionally expected to be. Newton (1984) suggests that butch/femme dynamics deconstruct hetero-patriarchal roles, challenging them rather than imitating them. From this alternative perspective, butches could be viewed as brave, visible lesbians who are/were rejecting the limits of what has been possible for women. Butch/femme relationships and desire can be viewed, not as feeble replications of patriarchy, but as women acting from their own agency and desire (Case, 1988–1989). As Rubin (1992: 177) has said, “Butch and femme were brilliantly adapted for building a minority sexual culture out of the tools, materials, and debris of a dominant sexual system”.

A lesbian-feminist critique of butch/femme culture was necessary to open up a middle ground for ways to express being female that were not limited by traditional masculine or feminine expressions. It allowed for androgynous dress and social freedoms that mirrored the greater feminist movement’s liberation of women. Expressions of lesbianism that are not particularly gendered reveal that butch/femme desire and sexuality may actually be a minority experience within the wider experience of lesbian sexuality.

QUEER CONSCIOUSNESS AND GENDER EXPLORATION

Pair bonding and the development of intimate relationships have been grounded in assumptions about human sexual and gender identities.

Western civilization describes sex and gender as dichotomous. Males and females are considered opposites, and gender identity is assumed to flow from biological sex. Considered immutable and unchanging, masculine and feminine expression is expected to follow the biological assumptions about sex and gender identity (i.e., biological females are socialized and culturally ascribed as women who are comfortable expressing feminine behavior). Sexual orientation is assumed to “naturally” flow from this paradigm, creating a hetero-normative model where opposites (i.e., males *or* females, men *or* women, masculine *or* feminine) literally attract, like the poles of a magnet.

This model virtually disappears from the human family large groups of people who do not fit into this bipolar diagram, including those who are intersex and transsexual. Postmodern and social construction theory, influenced by feminism, initiated a deconstruction of the definitions and boundaries of sex and gender, the meaning of masculinity and femininity, and the assumptions of hetero-normativity. Contemporary understandings of human sexuality have decoupled masculinity and femininity (i.e., gender roles) from exclusively male and female sexed bodies. Additionally, the distinctions between sexual orientation and gender identity, so confusing for the sexologists of the nineteenth century, have become increasingly developed, producing identity constructs for same-sex desire between people with similar gender identities and expressions. In the early years of the twenty-first century, new narratives of sex and gender identities are emerging, that reveal new possibilities for intimate relationships beyond the old binary system (Boyd, 2007; Kane-Demaio and Bullough, 2005; Nestle, Wilchins and Howell, 2002).

The very concepts of heterosexuality and homosexuality highlight the perceived differences in male and female bodies; homosexual relationships are often referred to as “same-sex,” signifying the importance of biology, and in particular the identical-sexed genitalia of the partners. Currah (2001: 182) states that the term sexual orientation “remains intelligible only if sex and gender remain relatively stable categories,” and butch/femme coupling confounds the simple stability of sex/gender categories. Lesbian couples who identify as butch/femme are (generally) in a same-sex relationship (i.e., they have both been assigned as females), and yet are not a same gender relationship (one partner has a more masculine gender expression and the other a feminine gender expression).

Lesbian-feminist theory presumed that “...the seemingly unequal power dynamic of butch/femme relationships [were] a mirror of heterosexual oppression” (Gusnoski, 2000, paragraph 2). Feminist theory, with

the goal of liberating women, conflated masculine and feminine gender expression with women's oppression, assuming that if people could somehow become gender-free then the power dialectic would be effectively dismantled. This assumes that lesbian relationships that are not constructed within the dialectic of gender opposites could somehow avoid power struggles. Power is, of course, multi-sited, and like race and age oppression, one cannot simply eradicate the constructs in which our lives are embedded—as if gender could simply be eliminated from women's lives.

Butch and femme can only be considered role-playing if all gender expression is role-playing. Butler (1990: 33) has taught that, "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its result." Both butch and femme have the subversive potential to bring attention to the masquerade of all gender roles. Gender has surely played an enormous role in maintaining subjugation in the lives of both women and men, and the task of postmodernism and queer theory has been to examine the limits of not just gender itself, but the ways the concept of gender is defined, constrained, mandated, and reified within the cultural discourse. And also the ways it can be reclaimed and resignified.

Pratt says that what "looks like power and domination from the outside . . . that's not what it is from the inside . . . everything looks different from the inside" (1995: 99). Indeed, a movement that began with the concept "the personal is political," had politically analyzed the meaning of gender in lesbian relationships without listening carefully to personal, subjective narratives of the very people for whom these ideas were a vivid reality. As Epstein (2002: 43) says, "Butch/femme roles take place in the context of and are enabled by the hegemonic categories of heterosexuality, but their significance is the internally dissonant and complex way they refigure these categories."

One of the greatest shortcomings of the lesbian-feminist critique of butch/femme dynamics was downplaying the importance of eroticism in the building of intimate relationships. Nestle has said that butch and femme are "complex erotic and social statements, not phony heterosexual replicas" (1992: 138). Butch and femme are, at their root, gendered erotic identities. Butches, assigned and identified as females, experience their sexuality as mediated through masculinity. Femmes, by reclaiming a social scorned femininity, broadcast their sexuality—a lesbian-specific sexuality—by publicizing their attraction to masculine females. Pratt (1995: 117–118) comments on this sexual dance: