

# Political Language and Conceptual Change: The Politics of the Discourse on Family in 1980s Britain

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## Introduction

During the May 1986 local election campaign, the Haringey Labour Party adopted a policy to promote “positive images” of gays and lesbians through sexual education in local schools. The decision triggered a nation-wide debate continuing for two years, in which the Conservative Party's vehement counterattack prevailed. Finally, a controversial bill, Section 28 of the Local Government Act prohibiting local authorities to “intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality,” passed into British law on 9 March, 1988.

Aside from the ‘political correctness’ of the bill, it is a controversial one as it marks the first and the only time ‘sexual *identity*’ — in this case homosexuality — was separated from ‘sexual *act*’ in British law.<sup>1</sup> It designates a private sphere where the civil law is authorised to intervene. The blurring of the public/private boundary must be discussed in the context of Thatcherite restructuring of British national life.

More importantly, the bill politicises the concept of ‘family.’ Article 2A(1)b prohibits the teaching of “the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.” In addition to the legitimacy of homosexual identity, it denounces “pretended family” as opposed to “normal family.” In associating homosexuality with “pretended family,” Section 28 tacitly points to the fact that the differentiation between ‘family’ and ‘not family,’ is no longer a given one. The concept of ‘family’ is no longer allocated to the collective unconscious; it is now an openly contested idea, the content of which has to be defined by legal and political terms.

In this paper I will analyse sexual politics underlying the debate on Section 28, arguing how this debate uncovered the ideology of modern family and became a moment to reconsider the nation-form itself as a space of dynamic contestations.

## 1. Section 28

Section 28 is now known as a law that prohibits local authorities to promote homosexuality. As stated above, it passed into British law on 9 March 1988. Susan Reinhold tells us how debates on Section 28 began after the Haringey Labour Party adopted the policy to promote “positive images” of lesbians and gays through the sex education curriculum in local schools. During the May 1986 local elections, the newly established Lesbian and Gay Unit of Haringey Council sent letters to school head teachers requesting them to promote “positive images” of lesbians and gays in schools. Although Labour won the Borough, this plan was soon attacked by local opponents. The newly elected Council and its supporters stood accused of jeopardising the normal family, corrupting children, helping contribute to the spread of AIDS and undermining the moral consensus. Opponents criticised the policy as “turning abnormal normal and normal abnormal.” <sup>2</sup>

The issue in Haringey was picked up by the Conservative Party and scandalised the nation. In this context, the Haringey debate was strategic. As Reinhold points out, before the Haringey policy became so problematic, the Tory Party agenda on the issue of sex education and family was about “a variety of social ills,” such as contraception, pregnancy, young people's sexual activity, divorce and the single-parent family, rather than exclusively about homosexuality.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the structure of the actual British household was far from the “normal family unit of husband, wife, children.” Rates of divorce, cohabitation, the number of single-parent families and the children born to unmarried woman were increasing. Feminism also had a great impact. Family values and forms had become diversified. However, after the debate about the Haringey policy, these earlier concerns disappeared, and instead the question of family was raised in relation to homosexuality and of how this promoted both “not family” and “pretended family.”

For example, in the following 1987 Conservative Party election campaign, four books with the following titles were represented in one official party poster: *Young, Gay and Proud*, *Police Out of School*, *Black Lesbian in White America* and *Playbook For Children About Sex*. The aim of these campaigns was to construct the image of the Labour Party as being associated with ‘Loony Left,’ which is a permissive and radical blackness, queerness and feminism, and was said to erode the entire social order. <sup>4</sup>

Section 28 was first introduced as a part of a private member's bill in the House of Lords by Lord Halsbury on 12 December 1986. In the original wording, local



Conservative Party, Election campaign poster, June 1987,  
Camden Town (photo. Simon Watney)

authorities were to be prohibited from “financial or other assistance to any person for the purpose of publishing or promoting homosexuality.” Following the acceptance of the bill by the House of Commons, there were heated debates over the idea of “positive images” of homosexuality in sex education during the subsequent two years from 1986 to 1988. The family became increasingly considered as a problem area in social arrangements.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. The School System and the Hidden Ideology underneath the Naturalisation of Family

Supporters of Section 28 were quite afraid of the claim that the act of homosexuality should be considered as ‘normal.’ This concern led directly to the debate on children's education. Both the Parliament and the Parents Right Group focused on the problem of sex education in the school curriculum. On 23 September 1986, *The Daily Mail* also took up this subject with an article with the warning “Sex

and your children - Did you know that they could be seeing textbooks and films like these?," which published a list of 11 books and films that the anti-sex education lobby considered improper for school education. Further more it featured a special column, entitled "for and against the right to say no to these lessons."

In June 1987, the Committee for a Free Britain's advertisements used the statement of Betty Sheridan, a member of Haringey Parents Right Group. She had angrily stated, "My name is Betty Sheridan. I live in Haringey. I'm married with two children. And I'm scared. If you vote LABOUR they'll go on teaching my kids about GAYS & LESBIANS instead of giving them proper lessons."<sup>6</sup> The inclusion of homosexuality and lesbianism in school textbooks was questioned repeatedly.

In the House of Lords on 8 May 1987, Dame Jill Knight warned that *The Playbook for Kids about Sex* is "written for young children and is presented in the type of colour and line drawing that would appeal to a child," while *The Milkman's on his Way* is a description of "intercourse between a 16-year-old boy and his adult male homosexual lover." Knight attacked the latter as it "glorifies homosexuality and encourages youngsters to believe that it is better than any other sexual way of life." Knight also attacked a video called *How to become a lesbian in 35 minutes*, produced by the lesbian and gay development unit of Haringey. These were presented as "the most frightening piece of propaganda against children."<sup>7</sup> The most controversial book for Knight, however, was *Jenny lives with Eric and Martin*. She criticised it as follows:

That book has been the subject of a great deal of public protest. It pictures a little girl of about six in bed with her father and his lover, both of whom are baked. It is a picture storybook, aimed at six to eight-year-olds, and is made available by education officials in and for junior schools.... Anyone who could oppose the Bill should read that book and consider how they feel about it. It tells youngsters:

"Jenny is a little girl. Martin is Jenny's dad and Eric is Martin's lover. They all live happily together."

Eric draws Jenny a series of cartoons of two men saying:

"I love you, Fred. 'I love you too, Bill.' Why we don't we move in together? 'that is a good idea.'"

It is terrifying to me that local councils have been promoting that kind of stuff. <sup>8</sup>

The MP. Peter Bruinvels also attacked these books by stating that “irresponsible and unpoliced sex education lessons which occur at present have possibly encouraged children to experiment and put this new knowledge into practice. That will certainly corrupt them.”<sup>9</sup> Mr. Bruinvels stated that sex education should “encourage all children ... to want to live decent, happy and normal family lives and not to be corrupted by some of the books.”<sup>10</sup>

In this context, the requirement by the Parents Right Group and the debate in the Parliament seem to be constructed under the idea that sex education in the school should be given “to protect children.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, what should be taught in the school was heterosexuality as a “proper” and “normal” sexual identity.

However, the core of their discourse is hollow and shows how the family functioned as a naturalised (unquestioned) concept, which can be identified with a symbolic kinship based on procreation.

### **3. Xenophobic Discourse and the Construction of the “Healthy” Nation as a Family**

In “The Nation Form,” Etienne Balibar discussed family and school as follows:

[T]he contemporary importance of schooling and the family unit does not derive solely from the functional place they take in the reproduction of labour power, but from the fact that they subordinate that reproduction to the constitution of a fictive ethnicity - that is, to the articulation of a linguistic community and a community of race implicit in population policies.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, school and family are considered as constitutions of a fictive ethnicity through reproduction in bourgeois societies. Although the debate on Section 28 appears to focus on homosexuality, it is also addressed to race and ethnicity.

As Kobena Mercer points out, the Haringey scenario contained a contradiction.<sup>13</sup> Originally, the campaign for lesbian and gay inclusion in the school curriculum was built on a recognised equivalence in the discourse of “positive images.” Clearly this concept derived from the idea of multicultural education in the 1970s. The idea of multicultural education was “neutralised” and “accommodated” within a liberal-pluralist conception of cultural diversity, in response to black struggles against the inequality of “underachievement.” With the slogan of “positive images” against

homophobic practices, lesbian and gay activists introduced what they considered to be legitimate arguments for educational equality.

However, the strategy of folding the homosexuality issue into that of race and ethnicity did not work out. The Parents' Right Group and other local grass-roots organisations, including the Haringey Black Pressure Group on Education, argued that "homosexuality is something that has been introduced into our culture by Europeans: it is an unnatural set of acts that tend toward genocide." Black parents joined the New Patriotic Movement whose banner slogan was "Gays = Aids = Death." It was a stronger rallying call than its left wing alternative. In the House of Commons, Dame Jill Knight stressed the link between AIDS and homosexuality, saying, "I think that 95 per cent of those who start AIDS come from the homosexual section. It is undoubtedly true that the desperate disease of AIDS starts with and comes mainly from homosexuals and spreads to others."<sup>14</sup> During this period, homophobia became a stronger source of unity in mobilising right-wing populism than the issue of race.

However, the deliberate attempt on the part of the black community to distance themselves from the issue of homosexuality was soon to be thwarted. In the late 1980s, the discourse of homosexuality was deeply connected with the threat of AIDS. According to Mercer, from 1981 to 1983, awakening anxiety was directed at the white gay male community and the disease was understood as a "gay plague." But, around 1984 to 1985, as its plague was transmitted and unwillingly acknowledged within the heterosexual population, it was black people that were made the scapegoat.<sup>15</sup>

The discourse on the threat of illness has often adopted the image of the "foreign invader" while referring to such diseases as the bubonic plague and cholera.<sup>16</sup> This xenophobic discourse depicted the immigrant as the bearer of illness in the late nineteenth century. At the start of the century, health checks of immigrants were mandated. The immigrants were considered as bearers of tuberculosis that threatened the European people with "degeneration." The representation of disease as a foreign threat has constituted a basic source of identity for Europe.

The anxiety of foreigners as bearers of disease began to grow more and more in the early 1960s. The pressure created by anti-black immigration movements forced all immigrants to have health examinations. In 1966 the British Medical Association conducted health checks on all black immigrants after an outbreak of smallpox in Bradford. Thus, Europe was seen as being "colonised" by foreign disease, which in

turn reinforced the representation of the British nation as a “healthy” body.

Thus, the construction of the narrative of the “healthy” nation, in tandem with the discourse of AIDS, formulated Thatcherite racism. Anna Marie Smith points out as follows:

Although AIDS anxiety certainly did give the prohibition of the promotion of homosexuality project its force, racism provided some of its most important structures. If British voters were able to recognize the quite extraordinary obsession by various Conservative Party politicians with homosexuality as an acceptable expenditure of their political capital, it is because the radically new discourse on homosexuality was represented within already normalized racist structures.<sup>17</sup>

So we see that even if Powellism and Thatcherite racism went unnoticed by most commentators on Section 28, racist metaphors on disease were normalised and mobilised in the political discourse.<sup>18</sup>

In this context, Margaret Thatcher pointed out the difficulties of assimilation and called for reconstruction of the idea of “Englishness.” For the New Right, the answer to Britain’s difficult situation was clear. It was to return to its roots, to re-establish touch with its past, to revive past virtues and values.

Following the victory of the Conservative Party in 1987 election, the gay question was used as a strategic issue. Margaret Thatcher stated that:

[W]e must draw on the moral energy of society. And we must draw on the value of family life. For the family is the first place where we learn those habits of mutual love, tolerance and service on which every healthy nation depends for its survival.<sup>19</sup>

The equation of family and nation is the key strategy in Thatcher’s celebration of the hegemonic identity. In her speech, “the moral energy of society” and “the value of family life” were emphasised as leading to a “healthy nation.” These ideas were formed as early as 1979 when at the Conservative Party Conference, Thatcher stated, “[L]et us consider we are a nation, and a nation is an extended family.” The Tory’s strategy against a set of discursive matters over homosexuality was considered as a

trial of reconstructing a nation as a “healthy” family. Therefore, the health of the family was necessary for the survival of the nation. In October 1987, Thatcher stated, “[Y]ou know, there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families.”<sup>20</sup> In this context, Section 28 highlighted how unspeakable private concerns had been brought into the public sphere and given an inappropriate place in ‘public’ official discourse.

Thus, in New Right discourse, whiteness, Britishness (or more precisely, Englishness) and heterosexuality were represented as important components of Britain as a “healthy” nation. Therefore, any kind of aberration was seen as a dangerous element that could corrupt the nation. During the 1980s, the teaching of “multiculturalism” and the content of the British history curriculum were especially controversial issues, as schools such as Dewsbury had a large mix of children from different ethnic backgrounds. Beverly Bryan, Stella Dadzie and Suzanne Scafe point out that secondary schools often used multiculturalism and Black Studies to manage diversified communities.<sup>21</sup>

Thatcherite discourse represented white children as “natural” and vulnerable. They therefore must be protected from subversive elements such as radical black influences. As Smith argues, the classroom was asked to perform the impossible task of completing the “natural” development of the child.<sup>22</sup> The classroom was perceived as being “the supplement to the family,” since “the proper space for the development of racial and sexual identities was nevertheless supposed to be the domain of the family.” The classroom was urged to imitate family, which was to be the “normal space” for “known blood relatives” and strictly hierarchical.

Newspaper journalism was instrumental in transmitting this view. Simon Watney analyses how the press worked to strengthen the national family unit, by directly influencing and indirectly attempting to regulate the internal life of the family in the name of defending “privacy.”<sup>23</sup> Watney points out this also led to a framework of “popular memory” being accumulated where “the patriarchal white heterosexual nation is forever seen as the victim of dramatic crimes and assaults which stimulate the basic levels of homophobic anxiety.” Besides this feature, it was also important that newspapers offered themselves as “national publications.” Watney argues as follows:

The press champions national identity as a sense of personal value, establishing



a whole series of analogies between the security of the family and that of the nation. The sense of loyalty to one's newspaper thus feeds off other loyalties, which in turn are identified with it. This national identity is also, like "the family," presented as highly vulnerable, and is similarly established in terms of supposedly fixed and innate characteristics, resulting from "breeding."<sup>24</sup>

Projecting narratives of scandal on the homosexuality issue, the press helped create a xenophobic patriotism. The ideal of the national family unit was constructed against the backdrop of the awful spectacle dominated by the foreign, the criminal and the perverted.

#### **4. Family as a Contested Concept**

On 9 March 1988, Section 28 of the Local Government Act passed into British law. However, in the course of the two-year debate, the idea of "family" was questioned from both sides: Haringey and the House of Parliament. In spite of Conservative Party hegemony, "family" was now a contested concept.

Opponents argued that amendments introduced in the Lords did not go far enough. On the following day, *The Daily Telegraph* said, "[T]hey feared that the proposal would still lead to widespread discrimination against homosexuals and harassment of them, and could seriously infringe civil right."<sup>25</sup>

A leading supporter of the clause, Dame Jill Knight said her secretary had been subjected to a "most appalling campaign of pornographic telephone calls" and "[this] tells us quite a lot about the kind of people who have been taking part in opposition to this clause." The MP. Robin Squire commented, "There is a possibility that this clause as drawn, even with the beneficial amendments, will be taken as some sort of signal by a rather large number of people that matters are becoming more intolerant. I would regret that very much." While Mr. Chris Smith MP. who had previously declared his own homosexuality, said that the word "promote" remained open to dangerously wide interpretation and could potentially affect any services which councils provided to help gay and lesbian people.<sup>26</sup>

From the Opposition Front Bench, Mr. Alan Roberts questioned the definition of "normal" and asserted strongly that the clause was unacceptable:

But what is normal? Are single parents, step-parents, heterosexual couples living

together, married couples without children, single sexuality active heterosexuals and celibates normal? Is what the majority does normal? Most people who get married get divorced. Is that normal? Normal is hard to define. Morality is based not on what most people do but on what is acceptable.... The clause is unacceptable because it is based on unreasoned prejudice.... It exploits the fear of AIDS and the misinformation that has been whipped up around it. Fear of AIDS has whipped up prejudice against the gay people and the Government are cashing in on that.<sup>27</sup>

Thus the concept of “normal” family was questioned. The debate on Section 28 uncovered the following ideological aspects of the family. Firstly, the Conservative Party’s argument for Section 28 hinged on the definition of “family” as both a “normal” and a “natural” unit. As one Haringey councillor puts it, the “normal family unit of husband, wife, children” was considered as an idealised conception of the family. However, the definition was hollow. According to Reinhold, though the term ‘family’ was used a total of 230 times in parliamentary debates on “positive images” and the “promotion” of homosexuality, a positive definition was made only twice.<sup>28</sup> The debates were controversial and the family was only defined in contrast to homosexuality. In spite of this vague definition, Conservatives strongly argued that the family was threatened by Haringey’s policy. Peter Murphy, the Tottenham Conservative chairman criticised Bernie Grant, the Labour Council leader, saying, “[T]he Labour proposals are an attack on ordinary family life as a prelude to revolution.” As Reinhold noted, for many during this debate the family was considered as an interchangeable term with marriage and heterosexuality.

Secondly, in arguing for the “real” family and making it equal with marriage and heterosexuality, the Conservative Party revealed how the “normal” family entailed the subordination of women.<sup>29</sup> The Parliamentary debate showed that the normal family consisted a heterosexual wage-earning man and a heterosexual woman working in the home and raising children. This point is considered as a pivotal element in the oppression of women in the “ideal” or “traditional” family order. Though the debate concluded that the “promotion of homosexuality” was a “disaster for the country,” the statements of the Earl of Halsbury, Lord Bell and Dame Jill Knight admitted that the structure of the normal family entailed an inequality of genders.<sup>30</sup> Lord Bell and Dame Jill Knight did not deny the claim from the Gay

Liberation Front that the “abolition of the family” leads to the “liberation of women.”

Thirdly, the connection between family and procreation was questioned. Most of the supporters of Section 28 considered the family as “the basic building block of society,” which they claimed was being fundamentally eroded.<sup>31</sup> Dr. Rhodes Boyson stated that this “could undermine the basis of our society... I am talking about death in a generation, because there is no future in it - it is the end of creation. Any society that is concerned for its future in every way and for its continuation must have a clear view about what it is doing.”<sup>32</sup> During the discussions in the House of Lords, however, the issue of physical reproduction in an ideal family seemed to shift to the issue of parenting. Lord Rea requested that everything should be deleted from the Clause except the phrase; “Local government shall not intentionally promote homosexuality,” referring to his own experience of being raised by two women. Rea insisted that his was a “good family” and there was no “pretence.”<sup>33</sup> His suggestion was not taken up in the House of Lords. However, the debate shows that the concept of family has been questioned in terms of sexuality, gender hierarchy and procreation.

## 5. Conclusion

The debate on Section 28 is often interpreted as the Left's loss in terms of a political struggle. Some point to its ineffectiveness in the game of identity politics. For example, Smith maintains that the constantly shifting identity games caused the opponents of Section 28 to fail in three ways. Firstly, “it failed to confront directly the ‘loony left’ charge, and tended to conceal its own pro-lesbian and pro-gay elements, especially those within the Labour Party.” Secondly, the Labour Party's position on the Section 28 itself was often ambiguous, and was much influenced by Party social activists. Thirdly, and most importantly, the opponents of Section 28 failed to recognise the mutability of identities.<sup>34</sup> Smith argues that “their discourse is largely structured around the arguments that the Section is nonsensical because everyone's sexuality is fixed at birth, such that no promotion of any sexuality is possible.”<sup>35</sup>

Thus, the Left's discourse can be contrasted with Thatcher's rhetoric. Margaret Thatcher abolished “society” and promoted a particular vision of Britain as made up of “individuals.” British politics in the 1980s and 1990s have been thus marked by contests between different visions of how people conceptualise themselves, their relations with each other and their relations with government. During this period, struggles over the meanings of key concepts underpinned policy changes. Among

ideological contestations about the family, the debate on Section 28 is a case in point.

However, what the debate shows is not only victory or defeat in the game of political identity. Rather, the following points should be noted. Firstly, the borders between the private and the public were blurred through the debate. The debate shows that the state intervenes in civil society to decide what is right or wrong in individual morality and sexuality. Here, it is possible to say that it was inevitable that the state would control (participate in) this issue.<sup>36</sup> Secondary, in spite of the New Right's hegemony, the ideological nature of a naturalised family ("real" family) in bourgeois modernisation was uncovered. For instance, some of the Conservative Party's opinions implied the hierarchical structure (e.g. household division of labour) in the sphere of a heterosexual "real" family. The premise that a "real" family entails procreation also shows the relations between the sexes assigned to procreation. In this context, individual sexual identity is always guaranteed through the state in terms of the family aiding procreation. Further, and more importantly, school and the naturalised family were indispensable systems in the construction of the mythical nation form by reproducing a fictive ethnicity. Through the debate on Section 28, the ideological family unit functioned in tandem with a xenophobic discourse to construct the idea of the "healthy" nation as a family unit.

Since the 1960s, the Labour Party has often been associated with the dual issues of democratic equality and freedom.<sup>37</sup> However, during the 1980s, as the debates on the issue of Haringey highlighted, it was clear that such issues as the black community struggle, the women's liberation movement and lesbian and gay movements, were not constructed by and for the Left. Mercer argues that today everyone is beginning to recognise that "everyday life is so complex that no singular belief system or Big Story can hope to explain it all. We don't need another here. But we do need to make sense of the experiences that characterize postmodern structure of feeling."<sup>38</sup> It may be true that "no singular belief system or Big Story" can be formed. However, we should carefully re-examine whether we need to "make sense of the experience that characterize postmodern structure of feeling."

Through the debate, "family" was uncovered as a field of dynamic contestations rendering the dichotomy between "real" (original) and "pretended" (copy) ineffective. In this context, the debate on Section 28 is a significant moment in the re-arranging of common sense (in this case, what "real" family was). The reality of the "family" is no longer guaranteed by its supposed origin, procreation. Common sense

is now subjected to incommensurable political debate, while the content of the idea is determined by constant negotiations between the “performances” of individuals and the intervention of state power.

## Notes

- 1 Susan Reinhold, “Through the Parliamentary Looking Glass: ‘Real’ and ‘Pretended’ Families in Contemporary British Politics,” *Feminist Review* 48 (1994): 62.
- 2 Ibid., 62.
- 3 Ibid., 65.
- 4 Anna Marie Smith, *New Right Discourse on Race and Sexuality: Britain 1986-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 184. Stuart Hall, “Blue Election, Election Blues,” in *Hard Road to Renewal* (London: Verso, 1988), 259-67.
- 5 Jacqui Alexander argues that recently the Caribbean governing, as the state that represents and embodies ‘the nation,’ legitimates and arbitrates private morality, sexual practice and sexuality, from the precondition that nation itself is in a crisis of disintegration. Jacqui Alexander, “Not just (any) body can be a citizen: the politics of law, sexuality and postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas,” in *Feminist Review* 48 (1994): 5-21. With the ideological contestation about the family, British debates on sex and the state in the 1980s can be read in a similar frame.
- 6 Reinhold, 67.
- 7 Citations from parliamentary debate are drawn from Hansward’s copy of the following debates in *The House of Commons and Lords*. Commons, 8 May 1987, 997-8.
- 8 *Commons*, 8 May 1987, 997-8.
- 9 *Commons*, 21 October 1986, 1064.
- 10 *Commons*, 21 October 1986, 1064.
- 11 *Commons*, 21 October 1986, 1065.
- 12 Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991), 103.
- 13 Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Politics in Black Cultural Studies* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 264.

- 14 *Commons*, 8 May 1987, 999.
- 15 Mercer, 154.
- 16 Susan Sontag, *Aids and Its Metaphors* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989 rpt. 1990).
- 17 Smith, 22.
- 18 Raymond Williams argues in *Towards 2000* the following: "[I]t is a serious misunderstanding ... to suppose that the problems of social identity are resolved by formal (merely legal) definitions. For unevenly and at times precariously, but always through long experience substantially, an effective awareness of social identity depends on actual and sustained social relationships. To reduce social identity to formal legal definitions, at the level of state, is to collude in the alienated superficialities of 'the nation' which are limited functional terms of the modern ruling class." Williams provides an alternative conception of race except for its formal legal definition by emphasising social identity as a product of "long experience" which "depends on an actual and sustained social relationship." However, as Paul Gilroy points out, Williams does not mention 'how long is long enough to become a genuine Brit?' Is it possible to 'assimilate' into that meaning? Raymond Williams, *Towards 2000* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1983), 195. Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (London and New York : Routledge, 1987), 49.
- 19 *Conservative Party News Services Release*, 664/87.
- 20 *Women's Own* 31, (October 1987).
- 21 Beverly Bryan, Stella Dadzie and Suzanne Scafe, eds., *The Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain* (London: Virago, 1985).
- 22 Smith, 218.
- 23 Simon Watney, *Policing Desire: Pornography, Aids and the Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1987 rpt. 1989), 83-4.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 84.
- 25 *Daily Telegraph*, 10 March 1988.
- 26 *Commons*, 9 March 1988, 379.
- 27 *Commons*, 9 March 1988, 427.
- 28 Reinhold, 63.
- 29 In relation to this, Jeffrey Weeks points out three interrelated factors that threatened the "normal" family. First, the contradictory demands for family on the parts of men and women. On the one hand, upon women were the growing

demands of care child. On the other, with changes in demography and the pattern of employment, women were increasingly going to work. As a result, women and men had contradictory interests in domestic life. Secondly, the changes in household composition, the demography of kinship and the relation between the family and other institutions intensify the importance of the family. Thirdly, the diversity of family and household forms poses the question of what exactly a “family” is. What ought to change? What are the most appropriate means of satisfying individual and collective needs? Although the family is an issue that goes beyond traditional political boundaries, a combination of these factors pushed the family into the arena of the political discourse. Jeffrey Weeks, “Pretended Family Relationships” in *Marriage, Domestic Life and Social Change*, David Clark, ed. (London: Routledge, 1991), 214-234.

- 30 In fact, from the gay, lesbian point of view, Kath Weston argues for reengineering biogenetics in *Families We Choose*. She points out that the gay family has the usual household division of labour, although its organisation is without a hierarchical structure. Kath Weston, *Families We Choose* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991). In this context, Ellen Lewin argues that there are strong similarities among lesbian mothers, and heterosexual and single mothers. In spite of these, the ideal family form was strongly advocated in the parliamentary debate. Ellen Lewin, *Lesbian Mothers: Accounts of Gender in American Culture* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1993).
- 31 *Commons*, 8 May 1987, 1002.
- 32 *Commons*, 8 May 1987, 1993.
- 33 *Lords*, 16 February 1988, 617. Lord Rea said: “from the age of seven, after my parents separated, I was brought up by two women, one of them my mother, in an actual family relationship. There was no pretence there.... It was a good family, and I maintain that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with a homosexual couple bringing up a child.”
- 34 Smith, 237.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 237.
- 36 It is possible to examine the royal family boom of the 1980s in this context.
- 37 In this context, Jeffrey Weeks (1991, 221) suggests that for both practical and ideological reasons we should start with the 1960s. The 1960s was the period of new, and much sharper attacks on the family than ever before. Examining the

different origins and implication, in the critique of the family in the 1960s, such as anthropological, psychological, Marxism, feminism and commune movements, Weeks (1991, 222) following on from Morgan, points out that the "family was becoming increasingly dysfunctional" and in the 1960s, the challenge to the concept of the family was a major theme of hierarchical, class society.

It is possible to say that in the 1960s, the boundary between the private and the public sphere began to change. For example, the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, which at last put the Wolfenden recommendations into law, decriminalised consensual sexual practices in private places between male adults. However, the Act also made distinction between homosexual and heterosexual sex. While the age of 16 was recognised as an appropriate age of young male adults to consent to heterosexual sex by British law, the age of consent for male homosexuals was 21 under the 1967 Sexual Offences Act. Thus the official "public" discourse remained protective and vigilant of young males' sexuality.

38 Mercer, 265.