



MAKING GAYBIES

QUEER REPRODUCTION AND MULTIRACIAL FEELING

JAYA KEANEY

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BUY

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Introduction

ORIGIN STORIES

In one of my first interviews for the project that would become this book, I saw a photograph that would stick with me. The image was shared by a gay father named Timothy, a tall white Australian lawyer in his early fifties, with dark hair graying at the temples and a welcoming confidence about him. He was calm and forthcoming as we chatted for several hours in the lounge room of his spacious home in Melbourne's affluent eastern suburbs. The photograph that Timothy shared depicted a Father's Day picnic of the gay dads community group that he convenes. A cluster of beaming, racially diverse men and babies, toddlers, and young children smiled up at me from Timothy's iPad screen, all gathered at a lush green park on a sunny day in September. Pointing out several families, Timothy told me their origin stories. He homed in on a gay couple who are an Italian expat and a white Australian, who conceived their children through surrogacy in India with a white egg donor. Their children are "white as white," he said, but the fathers teach them about Indian culture and national holidays, in recognition of their birthplace. Apparently, "Italian culture always wins out" as most interesting to the children. Another couple, one who is Thai and the other white Australian, were pictured with their three daughters, all born to a surrogate in Thailand. "There's a huge influence of Thai culture in these girls' lives," Timothy described. A third couple, an Iraqi father and his white Australian partner, were pictured with their biracial Indian/Anglo child born through

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surrogacy in Delhi. A fourth, of Rwandan and Malaysian backgrounds respectively, planned to conceive through surrogacy in the United States and had shared many discussions over coffee in Timothy's living room as they started to plan their path to gay parenthood.

In this young community, Timothy is something of a veteran. He and his partner, Charlie, had their son, Samuel, in 2005, when transnational surrogacy was still rare for gay men, and same-sex couples and single Australians were banned from domestic surrogacy, in vitro fertilization (IVF), and adoption. Longing for a child, the men traveled to California, where they conceived through commercial surrogacy and egg provision with a US surrogacy agency, an arrangement that conservative estimates would price at US\$100,000–\$150,000.

As an interracial couple—Timothy is white Australian and Charlie is Taiwanese—they considered questions about racial and cultural inheritance to be important, as they were for so many of the families in the photograph. Timothy and Charlie wanted their child to share a physical resemblance and a cultural connection to both fathers. And it was vital that the child have a strong Taiwanese culture around them, to maintain Taiwanese identity in the diaspora. To this end, Timothy and Charlie selected two egg donors: one Chinese American, whose eggs were fertilized with Timothy's sperm; and the other white and European, whose eggs were fertilized with Charlie's sperm. Their white American surrogate was inseminated with both sets of embryos, and from there, they left the course of genetic paternity up to chance.

When making a gayby, a term for a child born to queer parents, racial inheritance is encountered as something of an open question. Queer family-origin stories rearrange the gendered and sexual tenets of reproduction, unhooking parenting from binary gender with the aid of reproductive technologies and laborers. In doing so, such origin stories make trouble for race by disrupting one of its foundational axioms: that race is derived from one's parents. This axiom is at once a theory of racial belonging and heterosexual kinship. It presumes that a family is a reproductive unit, linked by shared racial substance transmitted through heterosexual sex. Heterosexuality is the engine of race and is integral to the endurance of the race concept. It naturalizes what Alys Eve Weinbaum terms the "race/reproduction bind" that is foundational to the modern episteme.¹ Reproductive lineages, naturalized in families, are seen to hold the truth of our biological makeup and our identities. The idea of races as heritable groups undergirds formations of nation, racism, and community identities of many kinds.²

In Timothy's family, though, race does not cohere in the way we are taught to expect. As a gay couple, Timothy and Charlie disrupt the key tenet of inheritance, detaching their child's race from the biological substance of their bodies. Here, the reproductive substances that we perceive as transmitting race come, at least in part, from third-party providers who are not the intended parents—women who are carefully selected through a Californian surrogacy agency and paid for their contributions of eggs and gestational labor. Yet, while disrupting the nuclear passage of inheritance in this way, Timothy and Charlie simultaneously draw heteronormative logics into the queer family space by emphasizing the importance of shared physical and cultural characteristics. For them, the look and feel of family relies on the appearance of shared racial substance, if not the reality. To understand their experience requires attention both to how sperm and eggs become racialized in reproductive markets and to how race functions as a system for ordering not only biological relations but also affective attachments.

For Timothy, racially and sexually minoritized collectives are united in a model of kinship as made through chosen love and shared practices, not mere biogenetic ties. He called this his “mixed gay dads theory.” For Timothy, this social understanding of family provides a framework for his donor-conceived, surrogate-born son to be accepted by the queer and diasporic Taiwanese communities in which he grows up. Timothy's theory draws the queer and the nonwhite into a resonant collision, plotting racialized kinship, diasporic culture, and futurity through a queer lens. Each term in his theory—the “gay” and the “mixed”—hems at the boundary of a prevailing model of family as heterosexual and monoracial, exposing the entwined logics of sex and race that travel in ideas of family as defined by biology.

It is this collision, what José Esteban Muñoz calls the “sticky interface between the interracial and the queer,” that originally brought me to work on queer family making.³ This sparking borderland is familiar terrain to me as a queer, mixed-race woman who grew up in white suburban Sydney in the 1990s and 2000s, forging identifications out of the minor registers of dominant culture. Yet, in my own life, the queer and the mixed have often functioned as dual sites of abjection in the sacrosanct realm of family, heralding the end point of intergenerational plots. The queer has long been placed outside the heteronormative cycles of the life course. And the mixed has been marked in my life with the specter of fading into whiteness, in a settler colonial Australia that favors culture and corporate diversity talk as its weapons of choice. But for Timothy and his cohort of queer parents, queerness is the origin of

a happy family life that is increasingly legitimized by the medical establishment and the state. The interracial, the transnational, and the mixed enter this reproductive story with striking regularity, as happy objects that thread through tales of queer family origins.

Making Gaybies argues that reproductive technology and its associated cultural transformations foster a multiracial imaginary of queer kinship. Queer family building proceeds through a prism of multiraciality in which the hard lines of racial categories are rendered malleable in everyday practices and intimate attachments. I engage the multiracial in two senses. The first captures the multiple racialized and transnational lineages of many children born into queer families today. Families like Timothy's—queer couples with children born through donor conception and surrogacy—are the poster children for a new queer reproductive discourse. Their origin stories routinely involve transnational travel, the cross-border importation of sperm and eggs, and racialized and ethnic differences between parents, donors, surrogates, and children. In this first usage, the multiracial indexes the increasing emergence of queer families with mixed racialized lineages, a kinship formation made possible by the conjuncture of reproductive technologies, queer movements, and a multicultural discourse of intimate citizenship.

Cross-cultural, cross-racial, and transnational lineages are particularly common in Australia, the empirical point of departure for this book. National restrictions on fertility care and an extremely constrained local supply of donor sperm and eggs lead many queer prospective parents either to search for donors or surrogates overseas or to conceive with local donors who have very different backgrounds from their own. In these families, mixedness is a valued and at times sought-after characteristic. Mixedness is a broad concept here—it can encompass felt hybridities of all kinds, from physical features, skin tone, culture, and ethnicity, to nationality, parentage, heritage, or lines of belonging. It is an affectively different concept from multiraciality, though it is often flattened into it. A felt sense of mixedness is comprehended most readily in the reproductive grammars of race and skin color, and mixed people are commonly interpellated as multiracial, puzzled out in the language of cross-racial biogenetic parentage. The valuing of mixedness among my interlocutors is buttressed by Australia's state-sponsored multiculturalism, which provides a postracial explanatory framework for celebrating diversity in the family. In some contexts, mixedness is actively cultivated through assisted reproduction as part of a broader national reproductive project of whitening, such as the process of *mestizaje* in Latin America.⁴ In Australia, the pursuit of mixedness does not take such an explicit or targeted form;

rather, colorblind vernaculars affectively reorganize racial categories to enable multiracial intimacy as a depoliticized terrain of personal choice. As a liberal democratic tradition, multiculturalism is also the political horizon in which queer people are hailed as reproductive citizens and seek civil recognition in Australia today.

The second engagement of the multiracial in this book captures how queer families dramatize a conceptual understanding of race as a technology of intimate attachment. By separating racial inheritance from the heterosexual, monoracial family form, queer families made through fertility markets highlight the fictive nature of biological race. Race is rather foremost an affective system for ordering relations of belonging and desire. The queer people who populate this book explicitly choreograph racial inheritance in their families through careful arrangements of biomaterial, gestational labor, parenting, and place. In these arrangements, biological substances and processes like sperm, eggs, genes, and gestation do not hold race but rather become racialized in the practices of fertility clinics and everyday life. Queer reproduction is not less or more entangled with race than heterosexual reproduction—a central premise of this book is that race and reproduction are inseparable, such that all reproductive forms are at once concepts of race. Rather, queer reproduction lays bare the shifting racialized logics of reproduction by separating them from the heterosexual container in which they are often naturalized. In this second sense, the multiracial indexes the open-ended processes through which racial inheritance is crafted, not as a biological possession but as a terrain of feeling.

Across this book, the queer and the multiracial are threaded together, appearing both as minoritized family forms and conceptual frameworks for reworking the bounds of kinship. As queer family-making practices highlight so clearly, race and (hetero)sexuality are densely entangled systems for ordering our intimate attachments. The way that queer families enact race in fertility markets can be marked by conservative aspirations to a nuclear kinship structure and civil recognition on the white and heteronormative terms of the state. But it need not necessarily be so; as a mechanism for reworking relations across generations, reproduction can also be a paramount site of transformation. In this sense, queer reproduction can instruct us in how to craft ways of belonging to one another outside the terms of the heterosexual, monoracial family, even as racism and queerphobia remain the unassailable conditions of possibility for our intimate and reproductive lives.

This book explores the multiracial politics of queer family making in dialogue with scholarship in queer theory, critical race theory, and feminist

studies of reproduction. By foregrounding reproduction as a key site for the reformulation of queer intimate citizenship and one typically undertheorized in queer theory, I argue that the queer and the multiracial are co-constituting, with mixedness at times transformed into a kind of queer capital. I also extend critical race scholarship about the role of mixed-race bodies in visualizing collective futures by arguing that assisted reproduction is a salient contemporary technology for imagining the reproducibility of race and fostering multiracial feeling and kinship attachments, most notably through the desirable figure of the mixed child born through these technologies. Finally, I contribute to feminist scholarship on reproduction and the fertility industry by theorizing the biosocial construction of racial inheritance from an understudied national site and the novel empirical vantage of queer families. These geographic and empirical points of departure produce both new insights into racialization in reproductive markets, such as in practices of deliberately conceiving mixed-race children, and nascent understandings of the womb as racializing.

This introduction sets the scene for the chapters to come by situating the queer family in historical context and providing an overview of the book's central arguments and critical investments. I first explore the contemporary gayby boom, considering the crucial role of the fertility industry and describing an emergent discourse of queer reproductive citizenship. I then outline a central conceptual springboard of the book—the concept of choice. Queer reproductive narratives today rework a decades-long vernacular of “chosen family” to accommodate kinship relations that center the gayby. In certain renderings, however, “choice” limits our ability to critically reckon with racial imaginaries of reproduction and to grasp the embodied experience of queer family making. Instead, I foreground material practices and affective charges, attending to how queer reproduction is assembled in situated enactments, which are at once always enactments of race. The introduction concludes with a discussion of the interview archive at the heart of this book and of the methodological practices and critical commitments through which it was assembled.

As an interview-driven project, *Making Gaybies* is rooted in one local context: queer Australia, and more specifically, the country's two largest cities, Sydney and Melbourne. These cities are generally considered to be among the most queer-friendly in the country (and, indeed, globally). Multicultural and cosmopolitan, they are home to large queer populations. Australia has also been a world leader in reproductive medicine and IVF since its outset in

the 1970s, when Australian scientists kept pace with the United Kingdom's Robert Edwards and Patrick Steptoe, the physiologist and gynecologist with whom the popular tale of IVF often begins.⁵ Today, Sydney and Melbourne are home to rapidly expanding, commercially driven fertility industries in which queers are a core target market. These factors position Sydney and Melbourne as rich contexts from which to explore reproductive practices among a privileged queer cohort. Targeted to the middle class and accessible in urban centers, fertility treatment is now within reach for this cohort, and, in narrating their reproductive decisions, they gravitate toward the language of choice and multiracial harmony.

While strongly rooted in local conditions, queer reproductive journeys also often cross state and national lines. Fertility markets are transnational in scope, and many parents conceive overseas or with imported sperm and eggs. Queer movements for marriage and reproductive rights gather steam through popular representations and activist campaigns emerging from far-flung locales. In these senses, the forms of family creation at play in this book are networked and readily exceed the nation-state container. The Australian national context with its settler colonial genealogy affords deep insight into how multiraciality operates as a reproductive imaginary, an argument unique among preexisting accounts of assisted reproduction and homonationalism. This book thus draws on the narratives of one specific group of families to tell a broader story about the changing nature of queer kinship, which is constituted with postracial multiculturalism and transnational markets in reproduction.

Gayby Booms

Timothy, Charlie, and the other people depicted in this book are part of a growing cohort of queer people making their families in an era of increasing social acceptance and medical and legal enablement. Although accurate figures on queer reproduction are notoriously difficult to obtain, the rapid rise of queer reproduction and parenting in recent decades is undeniable. While Timothy and Charlie, who had their son in 2005, were among the first gay fathers through surrogacy documented in Australia, the country is now replete with queer families like theirs. The most recent Australian census, taken in 2021, documented 13,554 children living in "same-sex couple families," compared with 10,484 in 2016 and 3,400 in 2001.⁶ Eighty percent of these children were under fifteen years of age.⁷ The growth of same-sex

couples with children reflects the rise of queer conception and also the institutionalization of queer families within national governance mechanisms, albeit through the rigid terms of cohabitating coupledness.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the early decades of markets in fertility, queer people occupied a position of alterity. They were outside the scope of intended users in the development of reproductive medicine, intended for married, infertile heterosexual couples. And they were anathema to a prevailing Euro-American cultural imaginary of parenthood and family, which was premised on binary gender.⁸ In these decades, reproduction among same-sex couples, solo parents, and transgender people was often a specter for straight society, sparking fierce debates and moral panics among scientists and cultural commentators.⁹ Treatment protocols and regulatory regimes reflected a tacit and pernicious understanding of parenthood as heterosexual, by defining infertility and access to treatment in terms of heterosexual intercourse.¹⁰ And explicit clinical and legal barriers prevented queer people from accessing reproductive technologies across varied national jurisdictions.

In these early decades, queer people devised ways of having children outside of heterosexual models or socially and medically ordained methods. Lesbian and queer women in Australia have a long history of conceiving children in nonclinical settings, through home insemination or through sex with cisgender men.¹¹ Gay men, including many in this book, have often acted as sperm donors or “donor dads” for lesbian and queer mothers, and many gay and queer people have conceived children together, as coparents but not as lovers.¹² Gay men, lesbians, and other queers have also historically become parents through foster care, adoption, and, to a lesser extent, altruistic surrogacy arrangements with friends or family members.¹³ Many have also had children in heterosexual relationships whom they subsequently raise in queer family structures and communities.

Although these many reproductive practices continue, since the 2000s, queer family making has become deeply entangled with the multibillion-dollar fertility industry, expected to be worth US\$41 billion by 2026.¹⁴ For same-sex couples and solo intending mothers, sperm banks and fertility treatment have become easier to access within Australia and abroad. Thanks to a range of liberalizing state laws in Australia, including removing outright prohibitions on fertility treatment for same-sex couples and women without male partners, growing numbers of queer women are sourcing donor sperm and fertility treatment through clinics.¹⁵ Most of these women do not require medical treatment for infertility. Rather, they enter clinics to broaden their options of donors or because they perceive clinic conception as less socially

and legally risky, as clinic-recruited donors are de-identified and not involved in the conception process.¹⁶ As Laura Mamo argues in her important book *Queering Reproduction*, over the past four decades, lesbian family making has shifted from a low-tech, home-based do-it-yourself practice embedded in women's health movements and community networks, toward a complex choreography of medical actors and settings, technologies, and market exchange.¹⁷ Although home insemination is a relatively straightforward procedure, lesbian reproduction has become increasingly biomedicalized, treated as a health issue to be solved through medical intervention.

In parallel, gay and queer men's reproductive lives have shifted dramatically in recent decades. Driving their own more recent gayby boom as compared to lesbians, gay and queer men are having children through surrogacy in growing numbers. While in previous years, such men tended to adopt, coparent, or remain childless (many unwillingly), the increasing availability of surrogacy has changed this and has allowed many gay and queer men to imagine becoming fathers for the first time. Although home-based conception is possible for cisgender male couples in some configurations—namely, “traditional” surrogacy, where a surrogate conceives a child with their own egg and the sperm of one intending father—it is not common. More common is gestational surrogacy, where a surrogate gestates a fetus conceived with the sperm of an intending father and a donor egg from another person. This practice requires clinical intervention. Gay and queer men have engaged surrogacy in substantial numbers since around the mid-2000s and have driven a radical spike in transnational commercial surrogacy industries.

In this book, I consider the two assisted reproductive practices that are paramount to the gayby boom: donor conception and surrogacy. It is important to note that these are not the only assisted reproductive practices that are relevant to queer family building. One example of another relevant technology is trans “fertility preservation” through the cryopreservation of egg and sperm cells prior to medical transition using hormone replacement therapy. Fertility preservation is chief among the other reproductive technologies increasingly marketed to and taken up by queer people today. And, of course, not all queer couples require reproductive technologies to conceive children. A gay couple comprising a trans man and a cis man, for example, may conceive a child via coital reproduction, as might a cis woman and a nonbinary person who was assigned male at birth. Many bisexual parents also have children through coital reproduction, and they frequently raise their children in nonnuclear and multiparent kinship arrangements, though their distinct experiences have frequently been conflated in research with those of lesbians or gay men.¹⁸

With these broader contexts in mind, I spotlight donor conception and surrogacy in this book because of their integral cultural significance in propelling the gayby boom. These technologies are at the forefront of popular representations of queer family making, which tend to center same-sex couples who deliberately conceive a child with the help of donor sperm, donor eggs, and/or surrogates. Donor conception and surrogacy, sometimes grouped together as “third-party reproduction,” are also of conceptual significance because of the direct questions they pose to our understandings of racial inheritance, by introducing third-party reproductive actors and thus multiple racialized lineages into the family-making process.

Centering third-party reproduction excludes many other experiences of queer family creation from the horizon of analysis. As Laura Briggs cautions, cultural tropes of the journey to pregnancy and selective participant sampling in research have led feminist scholarship to overemphasize success stories, obscuring the fact that most IVF cycles end in failure.¹⁹ The experience of queer infertility is to date undertheorized in the academic literature. A focus on third-party reproduction also tends to center the most privileged among queer intending parents. As Mignon Moore reminds us, defining queer family building in terms of the conscious pursuit of pregnancy through reproductive technologies reproduces a scholarly understanding of queer family that centers white and middle-class social locations, because these groups have disproportionate access to such family-building methods. In this book, I resist this tacit production by explicitly attending to how such social locations shape the reproductive experiences of my interlocutors, who exemplify one culturally iconic route to queer family today, but by no means the only route, or even the most prevalent one.²⁰ Class and race privilege are integral to how many of the families I interviewed can mobilize a discourse of reproductive agency and citizenship when they pursue parenthood.

Although many queer families conceive children outside fertility clinics, the fertility industry plays an integral role in queer reproductive discourse. Queer family making as a whole takes place today with reference to the changing understandings of conception and kinship brought about by reproductive technologies. Many of the people I interviewed opted to conceive at home, some explicitly because of their misgivings about the costs and treatment on offer in fertility clinics; nonetheless, fertility industry representations of queer family building are central to a broader popular discourse of queer reproductive citizenship that all queers navigate.

The expansion of fertility services to queer people has made conception more accessible, especially to gay men and others who cannot conceive at

home. But it has also reshaped queers of all stripes into potential users of biomedical fertility services that are overwhelmingly run for commercial profit, even as many queer people do not need medical treatment for infertility. The reconstruction of queer reproduction as a medical problem is characteristic of the broader late twentieth-century cultural transformations associated with biomedicalization. Intensifying since the mid-1980s, “biomedicalization” refers to the process whereby more and more aspects of life come under the purview of biomedical frames and expert knowledges, with an increasing focus on health and normalcy, rather than illness or deviance.²¹ Discourses of risk, surveillance, and individual responsibility are central, with individuals incentivized to take personal responsibility for their own health, often preemptively.

Biomedicalization proliferates new biopolitical categories of disease and patient.²² Previously considered “dysfertile,” outside the realm of intelligible reproduction or socially sanctioned kinship, queer people are now among the ranks of the infertile to whom treatment can be administered.²³ This is made possible in part through the prism of “social infertility,” a diagnosis formally recognized by the International Committee for Monitoring Assisted Reproductive Technologies in 2016.²⁴ Social infertility, that “newly capacious ‘disease entity,’” is an alternative to “medical infertility,” and it expands treatment options and affords access to health insurance in many countries (though Australia is not among them).²⁵ At the same time, it redefines queer childlessness as a biomedical problem to which reproductive medicine has a solution, as long as you can afford the price tag.

Queers thus become not just a growing patient cohort for the fertility industry, but a key target market from which a fast-growing commercial sector can extract profits. Australian fertility clinics increasingly signal their rainbow allyship through explicit statements embracing lesbian, gay, queer, and trans people, and they include queer-specific conception information on their websites and promotional materials. Clinics are also increasingly entangled with the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, an annual festival and pride parade that attracts global tourism and more than AU\$130 million in revenue.²⁶ Clinic marketing that targets queers now abounds in the weeks leading up to the month-long festival—such as the 2016 advertisement for IVF Australia depicted in figure I.1, which appeared in a queer street press magazine. In 2014, IVF Australia, which is owned by one of Australia’s three largest fertility companies, was an official sponsor of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Another of the three largest companies, Monash IVF, followed on the heels of IVF Australia and sponsored the Queerscreen film

Figure I.1.
Advertisement
for IVF Australia
during the 2016
Sydney Gay and
Lesbian Mardi Gras.
Photograph by
author.



festival organized as part of the 2017 Mardi Gras, a festival that IVF Australia then sponsored in 2021.²⁷

Specialist Rainbow Fertility clinics are also cropping up all over the world, and several opened in key Australian states in 2016 under the ownership of the established IVF group City Fertility, which is part of the global health-care company CHA Group. Monash IVF regularly hosts “LGBTQ+ fertility retreats” to educate queer people about assisted conception. Overseas, many commercial surrogacy agencies in India and Thailand have also courted the pink dollar prior to the closure of these industries to foreigners, explicitly advertising their “gay-friendly” surrogacy and egg-donor services.²⁸



Figure I.2. Image from Rainbow Fertility’s Fertility Information Pack, 2021.

Queer people, provided they possess the requisite social and financial capital, are increasingly figured as parents-in-waiting. Today, young queer people come of age in an era where reproduction and child-rearing are within reach for many, and popular representations of queer parenthood are growing by the day. The sociologist Jacqui Gabb notes in her 2018 ethnography of young queers in the United Kingdom that reproductive aspirations are increasingly central to relationships between young queer people, among whom conception “facilitates entry into the symbolic realms of authentic reproductive citizenship.”²⁹ As depicted in the promotional material for Australia’s queer-specific Rainbow Fertility, pictured in figure I.2, queer access to clinic-assisted conception is now commonly framed in the liberal democratic language of deservingness and universal rights, with parenthood an unquestionable desire. Recent campaigns for same-sex marriage rights in Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom are also central to a new queer discourse premised on coupledness and parenting. Gaybies gained visibility and a public speaking position in these campaigns, as they were often called on as advocates.³⁰

Despite expanded access to reproductive pathways and the ascendancy of a liberal discourse of equality, queer family making remains a hotly contested cultural field. The campaign for marriage rights in Australia, for example, was spurred on by the introduction of a national postal survey that polled citizens on whether same-sex marriage should be legalized. This survey unleashed waves of vitriol and queerphobic violence, along with tired “think of the children” rhetoric from antimarriage campaigners. As Benjamin Hegarty and coauthors note, the discourse of sexual citizenship circulated during the

postal survey centered white heterosexual family authority, in line with the longer history of Australia's settler state.³¹ The postal survey period—which occurred after I had finished conducting interviews for this book—was a pertinent reminder that the intimate decisions and reproductive lives of queer people remain a battleground for racialized struggles over the meaning of the good life and national belonging, even as queer kinship practices have already radically reformulated the terrain of intimate citizenship.

The campaign for same-sex marriage in Australia was ultimately successful, with the postal survey returning a 61.6 percent support rate, along with a bill of AU\$80.5 million (US\$55 million) in government spending. But its memory resounds as a testament to ongoing hatred, governmental neglect, and the tenuous nature of civil rights protections as right-wing populism gathers power around the world. The legalization of marriage in Australia was followed by pushback against other queer movement goals, such as the fervent debates in 2021–2022 staged around a proposed Religious Discrimination Bill, which sought to protect communities of faith from discrimination on religious grounds. Among the most controversial and fiercely resisted inclusions were protections for religious institutions, such as schools, to make statements of belief immune from antidiscrimination prohibitions and to expel queer and trans students and staff on the basis that these identities are not compatible with certain religious beliefs.³²

Queer reproductive rights struggles in other countries have also recently been stalled or wound back amid the growth of conservative and populist ideologies that center the white heterosexual family. In 2019, for example, the United Kingdom's Equality and Human Rights Commission abandoned its campaign urging the National Health Service to instruct clinical providers to offer fertility services to trans patients in the process of transition—a critical time for fertility preservation.³³ That same year, Poland ruled that only married heterosexual couples could access their frozen embryos: same-sex couples' rights to access even embryos they had already created were revoked. In January 2021, in the dying breaths of an outgoing administration, the then President Trump finalized a rule rolling back nondiscrimination protections for queer people seeking to adopt via federally funded agencies.³⁴ And while the Biden government offers more solace, at the time of writing, the United States' conservative-dominated Supreme Court has overturned the landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision that guaranteed rights to abortion, on the grounds that it had no constitutional basis. This epochal shift in reproductive rights represents a cultural watershed that will undoubtedly flow on to erode queer reproductive justice. While a liberal discourse figures queer people as reproductive citizens,

then, this can feel deeply tenuous in the day-to-day experience of queer life, while queerphobia abounds on global, national, and intimate scales.

It is important to note that while the impacts of biomedicalization on queer reproduction are expansive, they are not entirely overdetermining. The queer people who feature in this book exercise critical awareness and agency when engaging with the sweep of the fertility industry and prevailing ways of understanding their families and reproductive journeys. A tension runs throughout this book between the technophilic embrace of assisted reproduction because of how it enables queer kinship outside heteropatriarchal forms, and a deep skepticism around the extent to which biomedical institutions can ever fully affirm queer lives. This tension echoes long-standing debates in the feminist literature on assisted reproduction over the extent to which reproductive technologies emancipate women by freeing us from the constraints of reproductive biology, versus extending the reach of white heteropatriarchal control into ever deeper recesses of the body via technoscience.³⁵

The Perils of Choice

A central theme of *Making Gaybies* is that the queer concept of “chosen family” is changing form to accommodate the gayby, often coalescing with a biomedical discourse of patient choice. As a preferred vernacular of queer kinship, “chosen family” has proved politically persuasive for queer movements. However, as I argue, an emphasis on choice can mask the ways queerness is reproduced through personal and collective genealogies of race.³⁶ As queer intending parents are interpellated by a technophilic discourse of patient choice and biomedical empowerment, deep patterns of gendered and racialized reproductive injustice are obscured, with race framed as one autonomous choice among many. An emphasis on patient choice and chosen love also produces iterations of queer family discourse that emphasize choice in opposition to biological ties. Such a binary plays readily into the hands of liberal hierarchies premised on whiteness and class privilege as social locations deemed further from the body. Here, I turn a critical eye to choice to uncover the lessons that queer reproduction can teach us about how race operates as an ever-innovating system of desire and repulsion that is not reducible to biological descent or category-bound preferences.

Choice has offered an alluring means of defining for us what is queer about queer kinship. In her canonical text *Families We Choose*, Kath Weston argues that queers make their families at the juncture of biology and chosen affinity,

reinventing the symbols of Euro-American kinship beyond heteronormative terms.³⁷ Family ties can be formed through blood or marriage, those touchstone figures of Euro-American genealogy, but they may also be made through social proximity, collective identities, and the daily work of intimate caregiving. In his collection of personal essays about family and the birth of his son, the trans Jewish writer and educator S. Bear Bergman captures these entangled channels of inheritance in the phrase that forms the book's title: "blood, marriage, wine, and glitter."³⁸ While the threads that weave together his expansive family are made through blood and marriage, they are also formed through solidarity, in communities of shared religious faith, and in queerness—"wine and glitter." Family as chosen, expressed through substances like intent, glitter, or deliberation, is a means for articulating that our ties to one another are no less sustaining or enduring for falling outside straight familial lines.

While the remit of "chosen family" has always far exceeded biological reproduction or child-rearing, these practices have become increasingly central to the meaning of the term in the context of recent gayby booms. As an index of queer kinship, choice has morphed with both the increasing legitimacy of gaybies and queer coupledness and the expansion of reproductive technologies to queer people of many kinds. Chosen-family discourse now coalesces with a terrain of biomedicalization in which market-based management of one's health and reproductive choices is central to empowered citizenship, what Mamo calls the ascendancy of "Fertility Inc."³⁹ This biomedical articulation sees a more expansive understanding of queer chosen family translated into practices of consumer choice-making in a reproductive market. Here, queer choices to form kinship beyond the dictates of blood and marriage collide with technologies and fertility markets that propel queer family making into reproductive shapes defined by at least partial biogenetic ties between parent/s and child.

The biomedicalized notion of choice centered in fertility markets also constructs race in certain terms—as a selectable commodity located in sperm and eggs, and as a site of harmonious diversity, in which each racialized option is equivalent. In fertility clinics, donor sperm and eggs are categorized by racialized traits, and intending parents' choices are authorized as apolitical preferences. But these preferences and racial categories are not neutral or self-evident. They are materialized through specific clinical infrastructures, practices, transnational flows, and reproductive genealogies that render only certain choices available and acceptable, and construct only some racialized and classed subjects as choice-making subjects. These structures and genealogies are directly obscured by the postracial protocols of the fertility industry

and state-sponsored multiculturalism, which together insist that race is a matter of depoliticized diversity.

In contrast to present-day iterations, “chosen family” initially functioned as a queer critique of how biological substances become laden with dominant cultural ideas of kinship. Such inscribed meanings are not set in stone; biology can be resignified. While sperm and eggs may be integral to conceiving a child, queer families have attested that these substances do not transmit motherhood or fatherhood, those rigid binary roles that culturally organize kinship. Bodies are the means by which we encounter and embrace one another as kin, but they do not hold static meanings about human types or relative value. This queer critique of kinship pushes us to consider how ideas of racial types and of race as traveling in biological substances, too, are the product of cultural meanings and can be creatively resignified. To retain the expansive original function of “chosen family” as the queer capacity to collectivize kinship beyond binary and nuclear forms requires us to attend to how this discourse can today become a limiting, punitive strategy when assembled too closely with biomedicalized and postracial notions of choice.

In the scholarly landscape, queer family making has been the subject of two main approaches, both of which engage choice as an axis of queerness. The first is a social sciences literature that asks how queer family making and reproductive practices coevolve, reshaping the landscape of modern family creation and gendered and sexual identities.⁴⁰ Often ethnographic and site-specific, this work is foundational for the analysis in this book. This work documents how queer family life is being reformulated through technologies and reproductive markets, shifting legal and civil rights struggles, and subcultural practices of affiliation and care. It also explores the extent to which the reproductive decisions of queer people challenge traditional family structures and prevailing notions of biological and social inheritance. This approach is part of the broader corpus of feminist literature on reproduction, which has explored how, since the advent of IVF in the 1970s, reproductive technologies have indelibly rearranged the relationship between reproductive biology, gender, and kinship.⁴¹

Within this feminist scholarship of reproduction, *Making Gaybies* adds to a recently flourishing literature on racialized reproduction in fertility markets and to a handful of recent efforts to explore the queer family beyond the primary frames of heteronormativity and gender by bringing race to the center.⁴² I extend these conversations by conceptualizing race as a field of desire, an argument derived directly from the centrality of multiracial attachments in my empirical material. A popular site of analysis among theorists of

donor conception is the frequency with which intending parents in a range of contexts attempt to match their sperm and egg donors to their own racial and ethnic backgrounds, thus reinforcing biogenetic constructions of race and narrow understandings of racialized relatedness.⁴³ But the malleability with which my interlocutors approached racial categories confounds the very idea of matching, dramatizing that the lifeblood of race as a system is not biological substance, appearance, or rational intent, but affective attachment. I discuss this approach to race in more detail later in this introduction.

The second scholarly approach to queer reproduction, predominantly from queer theory, takes reproduction along with its faithful counterpart of marriage as prevailing heteronorms.⁴⁴ Capturing the workings of reproductive futurity, the terrain of child-rearing in this literature exemplifies how the life course is structured around heteronormative generational rhythms that render other courses and channels of affinity unthinkable.⁴⁵ Queer movements premised on reproductive family narrowly defined often coalesce into a homonormative and homonationalist impulse to privatize intimacy. Here, greater access to civil freedoms for certain privileged queer people rests on capitalist property logics, racialized privilege, and an affirmation of the state's authority to bestow recognition.⁴⁶ As David Eng argues in *The Feeling of Kinship*, the American discourse of "queer liberalism" further entrenches the white liberal right to privacy and reinscribes racial hierarchies precisely by refuting their relevance to the intimate domain on which queer rights struggles are focused.⁴⁷

While the upper-case figure of the Child has been central to this queer theory literature as a disciplinary formation, the everyday life of children—their creation, their vitality, and the work of their care—has been less frequently considered.⁴⁸ These daily practices of care are, by contrast, at the heart of this book, a focus that confounds clear-cut assessments of subjects as either homonormative or radical. Insofar as it encourages assessments of queer subjects as "for" or "against" normative ideologies of intimacy, and attunes to the scale of state authority, the analytic of homonationalism is a limited tool for understanding the everyday texture of queer lives.⁴⁹ I engage the insights of this scholarship in making sense of how some queer people are able to achieve their reproductive goals because they are "capacitated" by finance capitalism and whiteness in a transnational reproductive marketplace.⁵⁰ Importantly, the Australian form of homonationalism considered in this book works differently from those described in canonical US texts, because queer movement goals are staged in the language of multiculturalism, and mixedness is a form of queer cultural capital at times more valuable than whiteness. However, for the most part, this book departs from homonationalist optics and binaries

of radicality and normativity to zoom in on everyday practices of racialized intimacy.

While queer reproductive choices are readily assessed in both scholarly and popular culture for their antinormativity in what Emily Owens calls a “feminist and queer morality play,” in practice, queer families are generally adept at straddling both sides of this rigid conceptual binary.⁵¹ In our interview, Timothy at first positioned his family as reinventing the straight terms of kinship. “You’re doing something that is traditionally outside the norm, and challenges a lot of people’s perceptions of masculinity, about the role of the father,” he explained. He celebrated his family for inventing a new queer model of reproduction, wherein “it’s not where your genes go, it’s where your love goes.” And yet, in the next breath, he responded to public criticism of gay fatherhood by couching his family as inherently normative, and he lauded reproductive technologies for bringing gay men into the revered realm of child-rearing. These technologies, he wagered, encourage gay people to “actually try to make stable, long-term relationships that will then support movement onto a family, which is exactly what heterosexual couples do.”

Timothy’s understanding of his family is both deftly inventive and deeply traditional, depending on the moment and your point of view. As the queer American writer Maggie Nelson distills in her autotheoretical work *The Argonauts*, such assessments operate as constantly shifting lenses shot through with affect. Writing of her own pregnancy and family life with nonbinary trans artist Harry Dodge, and drawing on Judith Butler, Nelson asks, “When or how do *new kinship systems mime older nuclear-family arrangements* and when or how do they *radically recontextualize them in a way that constitutes a rethinking of kinship*? How can you tell; or, rather, who’s to tell?”⁵² Resistance and normativity function as two poles of a discourse in which the queer family is articulated through choice, shifting axes of articulation rather than a question to be solved. This discourse is deeply gendered, a lineament traced throughout this book. At the juncture of a discourse of woman *as* body, and stereotypes of lesbians as homely and dowdy, lesbians and queer women are more at risk than gay men and other queers of perceived capitulation, of “losing” queerness at the hands of unthinking reproductive urges.⁵³ *Making Gaybies* thus does not dwell on the question of assessing subversion among queer families but, rather, approaches the *incitement* to choice as a vector through which queer people are constituted at the conjuncture of minority gendered and sexual identities, subcultural vernaculars, and biomedicalized reproductive cultures.

To decenter choice and its analytical pitfalls, I instead approach the queer family stories in this book as practices of care. This notion grasps the way that

families come to be through specific racialized material and social arrangements: through the reproductive actors, technologies, substances, settings, and relationships that intending parents carefully assemble, guided by their attachments and delimited by financial and social means. While intending parents make many choices along the way, such journeys do not look in practice like a choice to create one family form over the other—to conform to nuclear family models or to enact a radical mode—but, rather, are driven by flickering compulsions, deep desires, and material constraints. This does not cast their decisions or family structures beyond rebuke—far from it. But it demands of the critic a close analytical gaze, a pose of imbrication and intimate attunement to the specificities of individual queer lives. In their texture and their multiplicity, intending parents' journeys embody what Heather Love calls the “queer ordinary,” wherein ordinarieness, as opposed to normalcy, is not a final state but a daily practice of living.⁵⁴

In this book, I engage the term “queer” in two senses. The first is as a broad descriptor for LGBTIQ+ people and our social movements. As described in more detail below, my interlocutors have a range of gendered and sexual identities, and “queer” references how they are interpellated as a collective by a changing discourse of reproductive citizenship. The second valence of “queer” in this book captures the way that LGBTIQ+ reproductive practices torque prevailing structures of racial transmission, revealing how these structures are threaded with models of affinity premised on heterosexuality. “Queer” in this second sense refers to sites at which cultural meanings of kinship and inheritance do not line up—to glitches, which can be escape hatches, in the prevailing notions of how we emerge from and belong to one another.⁵⁵ This meaning of queer is not exclusive to queer-identified people. I am not implying that all queer-identified people have a radical approach to life by virtue of their sexuality; rather, I seek to decenter the very question of individual radicality versus normativity by engaging queer to mean a generative fold in cultural meanings of sex, gender, race, and inheritance. This approach to queer retains a deep taproot in the critique of heteronormativity—understood here as a racializing institution of intimacy.

A Technology of Intimacy

Race is a primary technology through which queer people forge intimate attachments in their families. Drawing on critical theories of race from feminist science studies and queer theory, I approach race in this book as a biosocial entity produced in our relations with other people and things.⁵⁶ Cultural

meanings and material substances come together to create race—there is an embodied materiality to race in any given context, even as races are not fixed types or essences but, rather, always-shifting constructions. Racialization is embodied in the soma—the erotic pull to certain racialized bodies over others as you flick through Grindr. The jumpy sensation that pushes you to leave the store as you feel the white attendant’s eyes on you like a hawk. The collective churn and frenetic buzz in the air in the moments before a racist remark. The prickling skin and tightness in your chest as you anticipate yet another question about your skin, hair, or country of birth.

Race operates as an embodied system of attraction and repulsion, a terrain of desire that Sharon Holland terms “erotic.”⁵⁷ For Holland, racism is a “project of belonging” comprising two sets of relations: the first is the idea of a supposed biological relation given in ancestry, and the second is those relations crafted in the work of identifying with others.⁵⁸ Race is thus at once a concept both of biological transmission and of affective attachment. Neither of these relations is static—both the biological “reality” of race and our racialized identifications are continually constructed in an open-ended process of articulation.⁵⁹ Race has a foundational, but underdetermining, relationship to reproductive kinship.

In this book, I am less interested in settling the question of what race “is” than in attending to what different enactments of race do in the world. What does race produce in a given encounter? How is race composed and enacted differently in different contexts and infrastructures? How does it seem at some moments to be stabilized in certain substances or physical sites—sperm, genes, wombs, blood, breast milk—only to slip away from them in new contexts? To ask these questions is to approach race as a technology. It is to shift our analysis, as Wendy Chun does, “from the *what* of race to the *how* of race, from *knowing* race to *doing* race.”⁶⁰ It is to follow the diverse choreographies of reproductive substances, desires, clinical settings and tools, and legal infrastructures through which queer people enact race as a technology of intimate attachment in their families.

Collecting Origin Stories

Making Gaybies is among the first books to center race in a portrait of queer reproduction. At the heart of this book is a series of twenty-seven interviews with queer people who live in the large cosmopolitan cities of Sydney and Melbourne.⁶¹ Predominantly, I spoke with individual parents, though some couples were interviewed together. Some had children at the time we spoke,

and others were trying to conceive or hoped to have children one day. Interviews are a particularly rich method for studying emerging phenomena. They allow a researcher to trace multiple narratives of lived experience in dialogue with broader discourses. And they can elevate the narratives of marginalized groups, at least in the case of interlocutors who share a language with the researcher, and originate from cultural contexts where storytelling is a comfortable and valued practice.⁶² As I describe below, my approach to interviewing differs from a disembodied social scientific method, in attending to my embodied entanglements with participants both during and after the interview exchange. Taken together, the interviews in this book have a layering effect that highlights both accretion and contestation in the queer reproductive discourse currently taking shape. Interviews also facilitate the creation of an archive, recording accounts that do not yet have a settled popular cultural position, in a context where queer intimate forms have been systematically erased from public memory.

The individuals depicted in this book have a diverse range of gendered, sexual, racial, and ethnic identities. Scholarly work on queer family making has overwhelmingly cleaved into a focus on either lesbians or gay men, because of the distinct practices, histories, and subcultures involved. However, in this book I draw these groups together alongside some queer, bisexual, and nonbinary interlocutors, collecting them all under the umbrella of “queer” in order to get at a shared family-making discourse. These groups are conjoined in calls for “rainbow fertility” in the reproductive industry; the many community events, playgroups, and lobbying activities organized around the moniker “rainbow families”; and campaigns for and against equal marriage rights. And lesbians, gay men, and other queers often have rich friendships and familial ties with one another, supporting each other and comparing notes on their family-making journeys.

Drawing subjects with different queer identities together here is thus a deliberate attempt to reflect a growing queer reproductive consciousness, as it is constituted with discourses of choice, race, and national belonging. That said, while some solo parents and trans and nonbinary people do appear, this book is dominated by stories of cis, same-gender couples. This reflects the status of this family structure as the most visible in the popular discourse of queer family, and perhaps thus also the most comfortable being interviewed. Gender and sexuality shape each of my participants’ narratives indelibly, at times creating deep fissures between different experiences. Throughout the book, I attend to how gender and sexuality cross-cut experiences of queer

family making and access to reproductive rights, positioning us differently within discourses of chosen family and healthcare provision.

While comprising considerable sexual and gendered diversity, the parents and intending parents depicted in this book largely inhabit class privilege and tend to be young. The oldest person I interviewed was fifty-two at the time we spoke, and the youngest twenty-five. All their children were under ten when we spoke, and the vast majority were under five, reflecting the recent expansion of fertility treatment and surrogacy to queer people. All my interview participants lived in urban metropolises, with many clustered around the affluent and queer-friendly inner suburbs. Most earned upward of the median annual household income in Australia, earning between AU\$87,000 and \$180,000 for a two-parent household, or US\$58,000–\$121,000.⁶³ All my interlocutors had completed secondary school, and the overwhelming majority had bachelor's or postgraduate degrees.

In many ways, the class privilege of the parents I interviewed is unsurprising given both the financial capital required to pursue clinic-based fertility treatment and the exorbitant costs of cross-border reproductive treatment. It also reflects the fact that key queer community groups in Sydney and Melbourne, through which I recruited several participants, focus on the affluent, gentrified, queer-friendly neighborhoods of the inner suburbs. The social class of my participants also reflects my own middle-class and highly educated background, given that I also recruited participants through personal networks. The substantial financial and cultural capital of most of the people I interviewed is critical to their experiences of reproduction as a space of agency and choice. It is the bedrock of their mobility in navigating medical systems, precarious legal situations, and transnational borders. And it shapes their vocabularies of race, which, especially for white parents, often followed a colorblind, multicultural vernacular associated with urban, middle-class cosmopolitanism.

The people interviewed for this book have a range of racial and ethnic identities, which, along with other identities, they described during our discussion and in a demographics form I provided at the end of our interview. When asked to nominate their racial, ethnic, and/or cultural backgrounds on this form, responses varied widely. They included “American (Irish/Scottish/English/Apache/Cherokee),” “Born in Lebanon, grew up in Australia,” “Australian,” “White (Scottish and Indigenous),” “Caucasian,” “Chinese Australian,” and “Indigenous/Indian/Chinese/English/Irish/Scottish (mixed race).” Captured in an open-text box, these responses reflect the slipperiness of what constitutes

race, ethnicity, and culture and how these sites converge and shape one another in individual biographies. They also capture the particular slipperiness between such terms that attends Australian race discourse, characterized by a tacit notion of the nation as a white space, and a generalized discomfort about naming “race” at all. I discuss these formations of race and nation in more detail in chapter 2.

Rather than attempting to tidy up my participants’ answers or restrict responses to standardized options, I approach their diverse descriptions as part of the collaging that always attends identity, a practice of endless composition that is partial, in motion, and contingent on context. As Stuart Hall wrote in 1996, “Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies.”⁶⁴ In this vein, I position interviews as one snapshot in time of identity making, providing a window into histories, cultures, and material conditions that attend queer family formation today.

To study racialization and queer family making, *Making Gaybies* positions interviews with queer parents within a far broader terrain of scholarly relating through storytelling. In contrast to anthropological methods characteristic of much feminist work on assisted reproduction, which emphasize a period of ethnographic fieldwork in situ, I draw on a methodological tradition from cultural studies and feminist science studies that counts personal anecdote and the embodied experience of the author among its primary texts.⁶⁵ Although the interviews collected for this book are discrete texts, they form one part of a queer social world in which I am intimately embedded. Their collection depended on the work of social connection, both before and after the commencement of the project. My investments in this material, and hence my analysis, are not easily contained within the boundaries of an interview conceived as an empirical text. Rather, these interviews are best conceived as situated moments of collaborative storying, the tendrils of which snaked their way into my body, drew on prior connections and shared histories, and reverberated after the close of interviews.

The twenty-seven interviews at the heart of the book were collected over a period of nine months, from 2016 to 2017. I recruited participants through my personal social networks and with the help of several gay and queer family groups. This entailed attending community group events, picnics, and playgroups to speak with potential participants, experiences that deeply shaped my sense of the social world captured in this book. I mostly interviewed people in their homes, sitting on their couches or at their dining tables, often

with their children in the room. A few interviews took place at my workplace or theirs, over Skype, or in public locations like cafés, parks, and beaches. Some of the people interviewed were friends or friends of friends, and I have since run into others in our shared neighborhood, at friends' events, or on the dance floors of queer parties. One couple had their child around a year after our interview, and I now play an auntie role in her life.

In other words, I remain threaded with the narratives contained in this book in deeply personal and quotidian ways. My position as cultural critic is partial and invested, as knowledge making always is, refracting what and how I come to see. Here, I explicitly conceive of this partiality as a resource. My identities, community ties, and social locations provided access to the stories considered in this book, creating the basis for rapport. My gender, sexuality, and racial identity are also the conditions for embodied ways of knowing about queerness and race that are critical to the arguments of this book. In this sense, the interview space dramatizes, albeit within specific confines, the intersubjectivity of all writing, in which entanglement offers object and sustenance.

Discussing the design of her project on the research practices of Native American scientists, the feminist science studies scholar Kim TallBear emphasizes her own investment as a generative asset.⁶⁶ Tweaking Laura Nader's field-defining concept from anthropology in the 1970s, "studying up," TallBear describes her own method as "studying across." This is the practice of studying a group with whom she shares a Native American identity, and it also refers to a research goal of bridging bioscientific frames and Native American epistemologies. For TallBear, studying across is an ethical relation, a way to generate productive critique precisely because the researcher is implicated—in the lives and cultural forms being studied and in their futures. "I needed to care for my subjects," she writes.⁶⁷

In the same vein, entanglements course through my attraction to queer reproduction as a research object, which centers a community of which I am part, and as a practice in which I might one day participate. My investments also course at the murkier register of my queer and mixed-race identities, which shaped research design and analysis at every level as they resonated with the queer and multiracial conjunctures in my participants' lives. Shared queerness undoubtedly forged rapport with those I interviewed, and it aided recruitment. My racial identity forged rapport with women of color in particular, but in conversations with white parents, it often opened me to harm. Several white parents commented on my appearance and inquired about my racial background. Many uncritically narrated their children's experiences of

racism, which were often similar to my own. Others asked me to account for the reality of racism in Australia. At different times, discussions of race were simply met with awkward silence.

Such dialogic experiences and the many feelings they evoked in me—eyes rolling, skin crawling, chest tightening, floods of tears—are rich resources for making sense of racism as a field of desire. In multicultural contexts, where racism is routinely effaced and race converted into a happy object, the reality of racism lives on in the bodies of people of color. My own affective responses in interviews thus act as a barometer in an Australian context where effacement and denial routinely accompany discussions of race. I documented such feelings at the time, attempting to capture what Jennifer Mason and Katherine Davies call the multiple “vocabularies” at play in an interview, often intercorporeal, gestural, and tonal.⁶⁸ My interview transcripts thus include notes on my own bodily responses and tone of voice, as well as notes about space and context, such as when I paused the tape at the direction of a parent, when I took over holding a child, or when a child’s interjections sent both a parent and me into fits of laughter. I also attempt to capture silences, as another crucial terrain of racialized and gendered meaning-making. Throughout the book, the following characters designate a protracted silence: “[. . .]” This is distinct from the standard ellipses that I use to designate an outtake from the interview being quoted. The characters “[. . .]” tend to indicate a feeling of discomfort, hesitation, or guilt. Tuning in to silences and my own embodied knowledge is a feminist method for studying colorblind racial formations, where harmoniousness, joy, and an absence of certain topics often reign in the “text” of discussions.

My embodied partiality is thus a vital tool for studying how queerness, reproductive storytelling, and postracial multicultural discourses converge. Tweaking TallBear’s “studying across” for a queer tradition, I conceptualize my own research practice as “studying athwart.” “Athwart” names the queer theorist Eve Sedgwick’s approach to analysis, which, against the debunking mode of much queer scholarship, emphasizes intimate, sideways movement, the aside of intimate complicity. It attends to openings, lines of intensity, and the affective potential of “allo-identification”: identification with the Other, which reveals how identifying *as* always already entails identifying *with*.⁶⁹ Race and queerness are not at end simply qualities of bodies, or identity categories that hold still, but, rather, sparking intercorporeal fields through which embodiment, attachment, and subjectivity are plotted. To do justice to these formations as critics requires skin in the game.

The Chapters to Come

This book is organized into five chapters, which follow sequentially the journey of queer family making through assisted reproduction. Chapter 1 takes the reader into the world of choice and constraint that queer people navigate when they seek to conceive via gamete donation and/or surrogacy. From decisions about inseminating at home or the clinic, and using a known or de-identified donor, to anxieties about legal parentage, and traveling overseas to access desired procedures, reproductive journeys are shaped by local biomedical infrastructures and policy histories. In Australia, gamete donation and surrogacy are tightly regulated and restricted, reflecting successive attempts to reckon with the reproductive violence endemic to Australian settler colonialism. This chapter maps out the unique landscape of access to assisted reproduction in Australia, reckoning with how local genealogies of heteronormativity, colonialism, and racism are integral to the way queer reproduction can be materially assembled in the present.

While the global fertility industry often tells a tale of empowering queer people with expansive reproductive choice, my Australian interlocutors tell a different story, of constrained options and informed compromises. Chapter 2 explores more closely how Australia's regulatory landscape shapes the reproductive journeys of queer prospective parents, with attention to racialized kinship formations. In this chapter, I theorize queer reproduction in Australia as a practice of "making do"—a distinctly settler colonial experience of globalized reproduction.⁷⁰ Here, limited access to fertility procedures and donors collides with state multiculturalism to propel many prospective parents into multiracial reproductive arrangements.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 each attend to a prominent reproductive substance or relation considered paramount to inheritance, which plays a key role in cultural understandings of race. These are sperm and eggs, understood as agents of heredity as they transmit genomic makeup; the womb, with its life-giving gestational capacities; and love, as an expression of care and reproductive intent. Far from holding race in any stable way, each of these sites becomes racialized in the thick of everyday reproductive practices and cultural assumptions about bodies and belonging. By focusing on these substances, I trace how race and reproduction are inseparable—race is imagined and perpetuated through reproductive substances and their meanings.

Focusing on the first substance of gametes, chapter 3 takes us inside intimate conversations about cryobanks, donor catalogues, online platforms, and social networks between queers seeking a sperm or egg donor. Opening

with the twinned stories of two lesbian mothers, Beth and Mira, this chapter explores what a donor's racial or ethnic identity means to prospective queer parents. It attends closely to how race is materialized in sperm and eggs through clinical infrastructures of donor categorization and everyday understandings of genetics premised on bilateral models of kinship. Rather than holding race, sperm and eggs are key sites for the production of racialized meaning at the junction of bodies and affective attachments. Tracing how my interlocutors constructed sperm and eggs as sites for racialized inheritance, I argue that queer people strive to craft "likeness" with their future children through donor selection. Not strictly biological or social, likeness is a biosocial idiom for making sense of the affective work of race in the family, where donors are selected because of the intimacies and kinship futures their sperm or eggs might produce.

Chapter 4 explores how prospective queer parents understand the work of the womb, arguing that centering gestational labor allows us to foster a more collective and transformative model of reproduction. Gestation is a culturally loaded site where queers come head-to-head with ideas of reproduction and parenthood rooted in binary gender. As a form of embodiment mired in the feminine, gestation is also routinely evacuated as a site of labor in both the discourses of the fertility industry and queer reproductive narratives, aided by a construction of the womb as nonracializing. Yet many interviews nonetheless contained passing mentions of gestational legacies and of gestation as entangled with racial inheritance. Braiding these empirical threads, this chapter theorizes a gestational model of inheritance, which locates racialized kinship not as a discrete property of bodies but as an intercorporeal and affective field. Reproduction is revealed here to be a collective project and a site of potential transformation.

Chapter 5 turns to a final reproductive substance critical to queer family making: love. Queer families are today often represented through a public discourse of "love makes a family," in which love symbolizes intent and durable care. This chapter argues that love is so salient in queer family discourse today that it functions as a third figure of racialized reproduction, akin to the gamete and the womb. Love typically thematizes the reproductive intent of queer parents, without which there would be no child. But it also emerged among those I interviewed as an explanatory framework for navigating racial differences between parents and children on colorblind terms. Many parents insisted that love is all it takes for queer multiracial families to stay the course. This chapter traces the transmutation of a decades-long vernacular of "families of choice" into a discourse premised on love as an index of reproduc-

tive intent and colorblind harmony. Against this increasingly popular notion of love, I argue that queer love must not be used to deny racism but can be employed as a powerful resource for cultivating antiracist solidarity.

The concluding chapter turns on the questions of choice, biology, and inheritance that are central to this book. Beneath the veneer of choice through which queer reproduction is constructed today lurk other forces—compulsion, desire, longing, need, contentment, grief. Rather than looking to novel technologies and biomedical horizons to “solve” the problems of queer reproduction, this book ends with a manifesto. Gathering up the central threads of *Making Gaybies*, this closing chapter surmises a vision of queer reproduction premised on antiracist nurture.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Weinbaum, *Wayward Reproductions*, 5.
- 2 Weinbaum, *Wayward Reproductions*, 4; Hage, *Is Racism an Environmental Threat?*, 11–12; Wade, “Race, Ethnicity and Nation,” 8.
- 3 Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 93.
- 4 See, in particular, E. Roberts, *God’s Laboratory*, 18–20.
- 5 In 1973, Australian scientists reported a world-first pregnancy from an embryo fertilized in vitro (although this ended in miscarriage). In 1980, the first Australian IVF baby (and the third in the world), Candice Reed, was born at the Royal Women’s Hospital in Melbourne. In 1984, an Australian team at Monash reported both the first birth using a donor egg and one of the first births using a frozen embryo. For more detail on the history and geography of IVF in Australia, see Marks, Mackie, and Ferber, “Modes of Mobility.”
- 6 Australian Bureau of Statistics, “Same-Sex Couples Living Together in Australia”; Australian Bureau of Statistics, “Same-Sex Couples in Australia, 2016.”
- 7 Australian Bureau of Statistics, “Same-Sex Couples Living Together in Australia.”
- 8 Smietana, Thompson, and Twine, “Making and Breaking Families,” 113; Gabb, “Unsettling Lesbian Motherhood.”
- 9 Smietana, Thompson, and Twine, “Making and Breaking Families,” 113; Mamo, *Queering Reproduction*, 48–51; Klein, *Surrogacy*, 49. For an account of debates and critiques of reproductive technologies among feminists in this era, see Franklin, “Transbiology.”
- 10 Smietana, Thompson, and Twine, “Making and Breaking Families,” 113.
- 11 Dempsey, “Lesbians’ Right-to-Choose”; McNair et al., “Lesbian Parenthood”
- 12 Dempsey, “Surrogacy”; Dempsey, “Gay Male Couples’ Paternal Involvement”; Dempsey, “Conceiving and Negotiating Reproductive Relationships.”
- 13 Riggs, “LGBTQ Foster Parents”; Riggs, “Non-Indigenous Lesbians”; Riggs, “Race Privilege.”
- 14 “Fertility Business Is Booming.”
- 15 For a discussion of these legislative changes, see chapter 1.
- 16 Dempsey, Power, and Kelly, “Perfect Storm of Intervention?,” 206–207.

- 17 Mamo, *Queering Reproduction*, 195. See also Agigian, *Baby Steps*, 3–8.
- 18 Delvoye and Tasker, “Narrating Self-Identity in Bisexual Motherhood”; Power et al., “Bisexual Parents and Family Diversity”; Ross et al., “I Don’t Want to Turn Totally Invisible.”
- 19 Briggs, “Reproductive Technology,” 370.
- 20 Moore, *Invisible Families*, 12, 114.
- 21 Clarke et al., “Biomedicalization,” 162.
- 22 Foucault, *History of Sexuality*.
- 23 Ikemoto, “The In/fertile, the Too Fertile, and the Dysfertile,” 1033.
- 24 Ferber, Marks, and Mackie, *IVF and Assisted Reproduction*, 201–202.
- 25 Ferber, Marks, and Mackie, *IVF and Assisted Reproduction*, 202.
- 26 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, “Mardi Gras Bid for WorldPride 2023.”
- 27 IVF Australia, “IVF Australia Official Supporter”; IVF Australia, “IVF Australia Are Proud Sponsors.”
- 28 Whittaker, “Circumvention, Crisis, and Confusion,” 124.
- 29 Gabb, “Unsettling Lesbian Motherhood,” 1013.
- 30 Hosking, Mulholland, and Baird, “We Are Doing Just Fine.”
- 31 Hegarty et al., “Heterosexuality and Race.”
- 32 Elphick and Taylor, “Schools Can Still Expel LGBTQ+ Kids”; Saxby, “Religious Discrimination Bill Is Not Just Words.”
- 33 Doward, “Transgender Fertility Rules.”
- 34 Lacy, “How the Trump Era Encouraged Publicly Funded Discrimination.”
- 35 Thompson, “Fertile Ground,” 53–61; Briggs, “Reproductive Technology,” 361–366.
- 36 My book joins a range of other important texts that have traced the racial genealogies of queer subjectivity and explored the historical and contemporary entanglement of queer politics with racism, imperialism, and whiteness. See, for example, Eng, *Feeling of Kinship*; Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*; Marhoefer, *Racism and the Making of Gay Rights*; Somerville, *Queering the Color Line*; Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*; Cohen, “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens”; Byrd, “What’s Normative Got to Do with It?”
- 37 Weston, *Families We Choose*.
- 38 Bergman, *Blood, Marriage, Wine and Glitter*.
- 39 Mamo, *Queering Reproduction*, 13. For a discussion of how lesbian artificial insemination both challenges and recuperates traditional discourses of family, law, and medicine in the era of biomedicalization, see also Agigian, *Baby Steps*.
- 40 Mamo, *Queering Reproduction*; Weston, *Families We Choose*; Patton-Imani, *Queering Family Trees*; Murphy, *Gay Men Pursuing Parenthood*; Pralat, “Parenthood as Intended”; Luce, *Beyond Expectation*; Lewin, *Lesbian Mothers*; Stacey, *In the Name of the Family*.
- 41 See, in particular, Franklin, *Biological Relatives*; Thompson, *Making Parents*; Ragoné, *Surrogate Motherhood*; Ginsburg and Rapp, *Conceiving the New World Order*; Franklin and McKinnon, *Relative Values*; Franklin and Ragoné, *Repro-*

ducing Reproduction; Ginsburg, *Contested Lives*; Inhorn, *Cosmopolitan Conceptions*. For a genealogical review of this literature, see Thompson, "Fertile Ground," 52–78; and Briggs, "Reproductive Technology."

- 42 Deomampo, *Transnational Reproduction*; Rudrappa, *Discounted Life*; Cromer, "Making the Ethnic Embryo"; Harrison, *Brown Bodies, White Babies*; Russell, *Assisted Reproduction of Race*; Cromer, "Racial Politics of Frozen Embryo Personhood"; Deomampo, "Racialized Commodities"; Newman, "Mixing and Matching"; Schurr, "Multiple Mobilities"; Pande, "Mix or Match?"; Moll, "Making a Match"; Smietana and Twine, "Racial Contours of Queer Reproduction"; Patton-Imani, *Queering Family Trees*; Dahl, "Precarious Labourers of Love," 72; Smietana, Thompson, and Twine, "Making and Breaking Families"; Smietana and Thompson, "Symposium: Making Families"; Petersen, Kroløkke, and Myong, "Dad and Daddy Assemblage."
- 43 Nordqvist, "I Don't Want Us to Stand Out," 648; Indekeu, "Parent's Expectations and Experiences of Resemblance"; Mamo, "Biomedicalizing Kinship," 251; Nordqvist, "Out of Sight, Out of Mind"; Schurr, "From Biopolitics to Bioeconomies"; Homanen, "Reproducing Whiteness and Enacting Kin."
- 44 In this respect, queer reproductive choices are woven into a broader terrain in which queerness is defined by its resistance to norms of all kinds—what the queer cultural critics Robyn Wiegman and Elizabeth Wilson call the "allegiance to antinormativity" that has defined queer theory for over three decades. See Wiegman and Wilson, "Introduction," 1.
- 45 Eng, *Feeling of Kinship*; Edelman, *No Future*; Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*; Warner, *Trouble with Normal*.
- 46 In her touchstone book on homonationalism and biopolitics, Jasbir Puar argues that the queer subject is increasingly folded into life in opposition to the figure of the terrorist, who embodies a contrasting racialized and gendered perversity. As she argues, whiteness, imperialism, and neoliberal capitalism are critical fulcrums in the process whereby privileged gay and lesbian subjects are folded into life, increasingly signified by a turn to reproductive family. See Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*.
- 47 Eng, *Feeling of Kinship*, 10.
- 48 This is in part the product of methodological differences: the canonical texts of homonationalism and homonormativity are based in textual analysis, many rooted in disciplinary traditions from literature or philosophy. By contrast, my methodological approach is empirical and ethnographic, presenting different scales and sites of analysis.
- 49 In his critique of homonationalism, Scott Morgensen makes the important argument that the analytic ultimately centers the settler state, reproducing queer settler subjectivities in the debate over whether queer subjects are "for" or "against" state authority. See Morgensen, *Spaces between Us*.
- 50 Puar, *Right to Maim*.

- 51 Owens, "Reproducing Racial Fictions," 860. See, for example, queer family memoirs that grapple with this question, including M. Nelson, *Argonauts*; Summers, *Pregnant Butch*; and Moraga, *Waiting in the Wings*.
- 52 M. Nelson, *Argonauts*, 14. Nelson uses italics to denote quotes from Butler.
- 53 See, for example, Emily Owens's astute essay on lesbian family making and on the particular gendered discourse of choice and subversion versus normativity that lesbians navigate when having children. Owens, "Reproducing Racial Fictions," 860.
- 54 Love, "Doing Being Deviant," 91–93.
- 55 See, in particular, Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, 8; Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*; and Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 11–12.
- 56 The theories of race most influential to this book are from Sharon Holland, Wendy Chun, José Esteban Muñoz, Amade M'charek, Sara Ahmed, and Charis Thompson. See, in particular, Holland, *Erotic Life of Racism*; Chun, "Introduction," 8; M'charek, "Beyond Fact or Fiction," 435; Muñoz, "Feeling Brown, Feeling Down"; Thompson, "Strategic Naturalizing," in *Making Parents*, 145–178; Ahmed, "Phenomenology of Whiteness."
- 57 Holland, *Erotic Life of Racism*.
- 58 Holland, *Erotic Life of Racism*, 3–4.
- 59 See also Hall, "Introduction."
- 60 Chun, "Introduction," 8. See also Coleman, "Race as Technology."
- 61 Throughout this book, I refer to all participants using pseudonyms. Many of the fertility clinics mentioned are referred to by their real names, except in cases where interview participants did not disclose this information, or where I have judged that doing so risks compromising the anonymity of a research participant. Using the real names of clinics where possible is important to my analysis. It allows me to trace among my sample the predominance of Australia's three main fertility providers, who by far dominate the sector, and to highlight how the commercial imperatives of different clinics directly shape fertility access and differential experiences of care.
- 62 I thank Professor Sharmila Rudrappa for this insight regarding the disparities and specificities that attend interviews as a method for research with marginalized groups.
- 63 Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Household Income and Wealth, Australia, 2015–16." The conversions between Australian dollars and US dollars in this book are based on an average exchange rate over the past decade of US\$0.77 to AU\$1.
- 64 Hall, "Introduction," 4.
- 65 Michal Nahman situates the flourishing work on reproductive tourism firmly within anthropology, arguing that it presents a microcosm of the discipline's broader investments. See Nahman, "Reproductive Tourism." For cultural studies and feminist science studies exemplars, see, in particular, Probyn, *Eating the Ocean*, 14; Haraway, *Modest_Witness*, 191; Morris, *Pirate's Fiancée*, 15; and Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*.

- 66 TallBear, "Indigenous Bioscientists Constitute Knowledge," 179.
- 67 TallBear, "Indigenous Bioscientists Constitute Knowledge."
- 68 Mason and Davies, "Experimenting with Qualitative Methods." See also Mason, "Tangible Affinities."
- 69 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 59.
- 70 I employ the term "settler colonial" rather than "postcolonial" as it better captures the nature of colonization in Australia as an ongoing settler project, wherein no formal decolonization has taken place. For key examples of this critique in the Australian context, see Wolfe, "Race and the Trace of History," 272; and Carey and Silverstein, "Thinking with and beyond Settler Colonial Studies." In other contexts, see Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 7–8; McClintock, "Angel of Progress," 84–96; and Shohat, "Notes on the 'Post-colonial,'" 102–103.

CHAPTER ONE. ASSEMBLING QUEER FERTILITY

- 1 The mechanisms for turning lesbians and single women away varied from state to state. In South Australia, for example, this is because there was no formal legislation that offered protection and safeguarded rights of access. See Human Rights Law Centre, "Same Sex Couples in South Australia."
- 2 Reproductive Technology Accreditation Committee, *Annual Report 2019–2020*, 8–28.
- 3 Mayes et al., "On the Fragility of Medical Virtue," 101.
- 4 Mayes et al., "On the Fragility of Medical Virtue," 102.
- 5 Gorton, "Helping Victorians Create Families," 12.
- 6 Some clinics are owned through public-private partnerships, such as the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Fertility Unit in Sydney, jointly owned by Genea and the state health service, New South Wales Health. For a discussion of neoliberalization in the Australian fertility industry, see Mayes et al., "On the Fragility of Medical Virtue."
- 7 In Australia, see, for example, National Health and Medical Research Council, *Ethical Guidelines*.
- 8 Dempsey, Power, and Kelly, "Perfect Storm of Intervention?," 208.
- 9 Mayes et al., "On the Fragility of Medical Virtue," 101.
- 10 Rainbow Fertility, "Medicare Rebate." The one exception to the unavailability of rebates for surrogacy is for the costs of ICSI associated with male factor infertility for the intending biological father, which may attract a small rebate. See Services Australia, "Education Guide."
- 11 The costs of Australian fertility procedures documented here and elsewhere in this book reflect the average treatment costs across the three major fertility providers in Australia: IVF Australia (owned by Virtus Health), Monash IVF, and Genea. Estimated treatment costs are available on their websites. See IVF Australia, "IVF Treatment Costs"; Monash IVF, "IVF Treatment Costs"; and Genea, "Fertility and IVF Costs."