

Linguistic and visual trends in the representation of two-mum and two-dad couples in children's picturebooks

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Abstract

The chapter draws on ideas from corpus linguistics, multimodality, and critical discourse studies to analyse and critically interpret representational trends in a corpus of 52 picturebooks published in English. Analysis focusses on how same-sex parents are linguistically represented through different naming strategies (and accounts for differences between mums and dads), but also examines quantitative co-occurrence between visual and linguistic elements of a multimodal text through what I refer to as collustration. Trends suggest that, rather than challenging heteronormativity, representations of gay and lesbian parents in picturebooks implicitly reaffirm some stereotypical constructions of gender and sexuality in order to represent gay and lesbian parents as being able to participate in 'normal' fields of action (e.g. marriage, childrearing) from which LGBTQ+ people have historically excluded.

Introduction

Where the study of gender and children's literature is well trodden ground in and across numerous academic fields including education (Crisp & Hiller, 2011), linguistics (Sunderland, 2011), literature (Simons, 2009), psychology (Kneeskern & Reeder, 2020; Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus, & Young, 2006) and sociology (Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada, & Ross, 1972); the study of **sexuality** and children's literature is less common. As with gender studies more broadly, although a primary focus remains on studying gendered representations (especially stereotypical ones), a growing body of work on children's literature has begun to concentrate on the mutually constitutive, intersectional relationships that exist between the social identities of gender and sexuality especially (although

intersectionality concerns those “complex interactions between markers of [social] difference such as gender, race, and class” (Darity, 2008)). This increased academic acknowledgement of – and attention on – *sexuality* in children’s literature is evident in a growing body of research examining the (under)representation of non-heterosexual LGBTQ+ sexualities and identities in children’s literature, the historical rarity and inaccessibility of which alone has been cause for study (Hedberg, Venzo, & Young, 2020). As such, increasing academic attention also undoubtedly reflects the growing number of children’s books with LGBTQ+ themes and characters (Crawley S. A., 2017), including books featuring ‘non-traditional’ families such as those with gay and lesbian parents (Chick, 2008; Hedberg, Venzo, & Young, 2020).

A large proportion of the academic research on children’s books featuring LGBTQ+ themes and characters has been concerned especially with their historical rarity and (in)accessibility in public institutions such as libraries (Chapman, 2013) and their place in public education (Crawley A. , 2018; Chick, 2008; Sunderland & McGlashan, 2015; Miller, 1999) particularly in addressing LGBTQ+ (in)visibility and erasure through diversity education (Swartz, 2003), interrogating heteronormativity and challenging homophobia (The No Outsiders Project Team, 2008). Some work has begun to explore how literature with non-normative families can provide children from families with heterosexual, gay or lesbian parents provide can provide children with resources and opportunities to discuss and learn about family diversity (Skrlac Lo, 2016). However, greater visibility of and access to books including positive representations of LGBTQ+ people and identities within settings such as public libraries and schools has been met with stark resistance. Since the earliest days of their publication, children’s books featuring LGBTQ+ characters and themes have been the target of the kinds of censure redolent of moral panic. One of the first picturebooks to feature gay parents, *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* (Bösche, 1983), is said to have influenced the introduction of

Section 28, a piece of legislation introduced in the UK in 1988 that prohibited any state-maintained children's service (including schools) from 'promoting homosexuality' or teaching 'the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship'. The legislation effectively banned the presence of books featuring LGBTQ+ representations in UK schools and children's libraries. Following this, since the 1990s, the American Library Association has reported a number of children's books featuring LGBTQ+ themes and characters as being some of America's most requested-to-be-banned books (American Library Association, 2021; American Library Association, 2021), including the picturebooks *And Tango Makes Three* (Richardson & Parnell, 2005) – a story about two male penguins who hatch an abandoned egg and rear the chick together – *King & King* (de Haan & Nijland, 2000) – a story about two princes marrying – *Uncle Bobby's Wedding* (Brannen, 2008) – in which two male gerbils marry – and *I am Jazz* (Herthel & Jennings, 2014) – a story about a transgender child based on the life of LGBT rights activist Jazz Jennings. A final recent example can be found in the 2019 protests held in the UK in response to government's 2020 introduction of compulsory LGBT-inclusive Relationships Education for primary school children, which states that:

Pupils should receive teaching on LGBT content during their school years. [...] Primary schools are strongly encouraged and enabled to cover LGBT content when teaching about different types of families.¹

These protests were particularly directed at Andrew Moffat and his *No Outsiders*² programme, which grew out of the work of The No Outsiders Project Team (2008) and draws heavily on the use of children's literature to promote socially inclusive education. Moffat has

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education-faqs>

² <https://no-outsiders.com/>

been variously accused of ‘indoctrinating’ and ‘sexualising’ primary aged children as a result of providing LGBT-inclusive education.

Academic work has to a lesser degree examined the contents of children’s literature featuring LGBTQ+ characters, including the ways in which LGBTQ+ characters are represented and portrayed in children’s literature (but cf. Casement, 2002; Wolf, 1989). Just like much of the work investigating gender in children’s literature and child directed media has sought to critically examine representations of gender and gendered stereotypes (Mackenzie, Coffey-Glover, Payne, & McGlashan, 2020; Davies, 2003; Hamilton, Anderson, Broadus, & Young, 2006), work has begun to critically examine the representation of LGBTQ+ identities and characters. Some of this work, like many studies of gender representation, has taken the form of content analysis (Lo, 2019) or of the critical examination of single texts (Rofes, 1998), but relatively little work has examined the textual representations of LGBTQ+ identities across multiple books from specifically linguistic and/or multimodal perspectives (but cf. Sunderland & McGlashan, 2012; Sunderland & McGlashan, 2013; McGlashan, 2016).

Acknowledging the claim of Hedberg, et al. (2020, p. 12) that “rainbow families picture books form a growing sub-genre within children’s literature. As this sub-genre grows, lines of inquiry deepen for scholars to further unpack how families are represented”, this chapter explores the representations of gay or lesbian same-sex parents families (SSPFs) in a sample of 52 picturebooks published in English between 1983 and 2012 featuring SSPFs. The chapter first outlines some descriptive statistics on publication frequency and comments on trends in publication practice, before moving on to suggest corpus-assisted multimodal discourse analysis – a method synthesising methods, theories and approaches from the fields of **corpus linguistics**, social semiotics and **Critical Discourse Analysis** – as one possible ‘line

of enquiry’ into exploring representations of LGBTQ+ characters and themes in children’s literature.

Same-sex parent family picturebooks: trends in publication

Although some research has surveyed children’s books that feature ‘rainbow families’ (Hedberg, Venzo, & Young, 2020) or ‘queer themes’ (Lester, 2014) and has considered their numbers, there is nothing in the literature quantifying the number of SSPF picturebooks published over time. I define SSPF picturebooks as books that are picturebooks aimed at young children which depict same-sex couples and/or gay/lesbian adults in a childcare role. Picturebooks matching these criteria have been in production since the 1979 publication of *Megan Went Away* and have steadily increased in number. Figure 1 gives a chart showing the cumulative total number of books published over time between 1979 and 2020; each bar indicates the total number of SSPF picturebooks published up to that point. Through my search for books matching the criteria above ongoing since 2009, I am aware of the existence of 109 SSPF picturebooks (in and out of print, and made available through self-publication or through a publishing house) that have been being published at an average rate of 2.6 books per year since 1979.

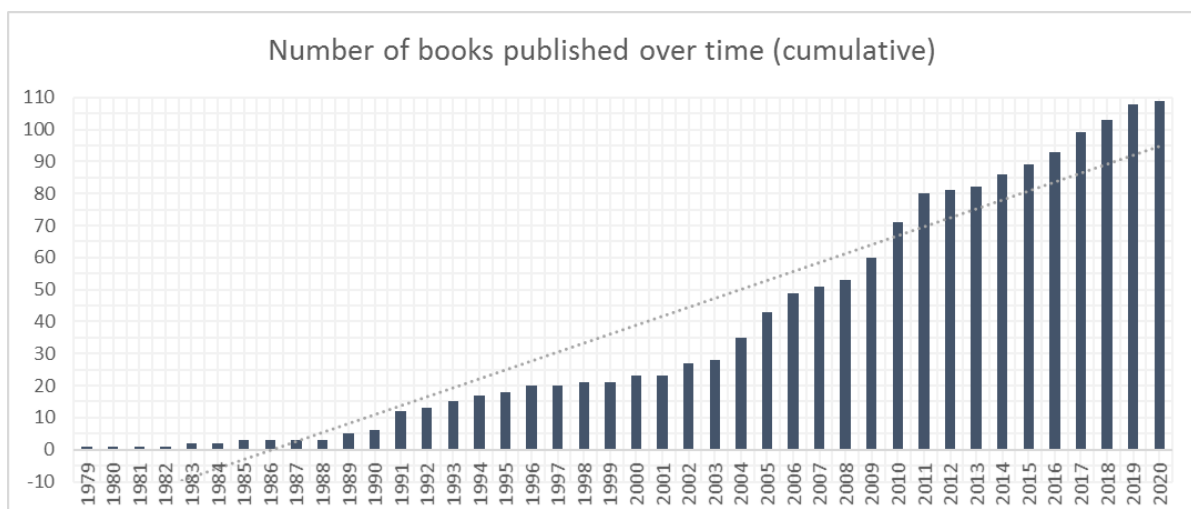


Figure 1

There are several possible explanations for this increase in publication. Whereas earlier texts were published by independent (and sometimes unimaginatively named) gay and lesbian presses like *Gay Men's Press*, *Women's Press*, and *Alyson Wonderland*, many modern publications are being self-published – often through ‘publishers’ established for the sole purpose of printing a single SSPF picturebook or short series by a single author. The widening global availability of the internet and the availability of large, international online marketplaces has made possible the production and distribution of SSPF picturebooks without the need for traditional publishing practices. Although (online) self-publication has led to a wider availability of SSPF picturebooks, it sidesteps independent publishers that provide important quality checks to which children’s picturebooks is usually subjected, and generally results in literature of poor quality (see, for example, Olly Pike’s derivative *Kenny lives with Eric and Martina*³) but also their important marketing channels. Lack of such channels may reinforce a perception of underrepresentation that initially stimulated early SSPF picturebook publications.

Another important publication trend worth consideration for SSPF picturebooks is whether the parents/caregivers represented are lesbian (two mum stories) or gay (two dad stories). Of the 109 books detailed in Figure 1, some were found to contain multiple different stories and so can contain stories about both gay dads and lesbian mums; 1 book was excluded as it contained 1 story containing both lesbian mums and gay dads. A content analysis of the gender of parents in the remaining 115 stories found that 69 (66.7%) of all SSPF picturebooks contained lesbian mums and 46 (33.3%) contained gay dads. Representations of two-mum families are more common than two-dad families at a ratio of 2:1 and, as such, picturebooks featuring lesbian mums are twice as frequent as picturebooks featuring gay dads. The results of this content analysis were compared with the cumulative publication

³ <https://www.popnolly.com/product-page/kenny-lives-with-erica-and-martina>

frequencies in Figure 1 to show how the representation of same-sex parents has varied over time in SSPF picturebooks (Figure 2).

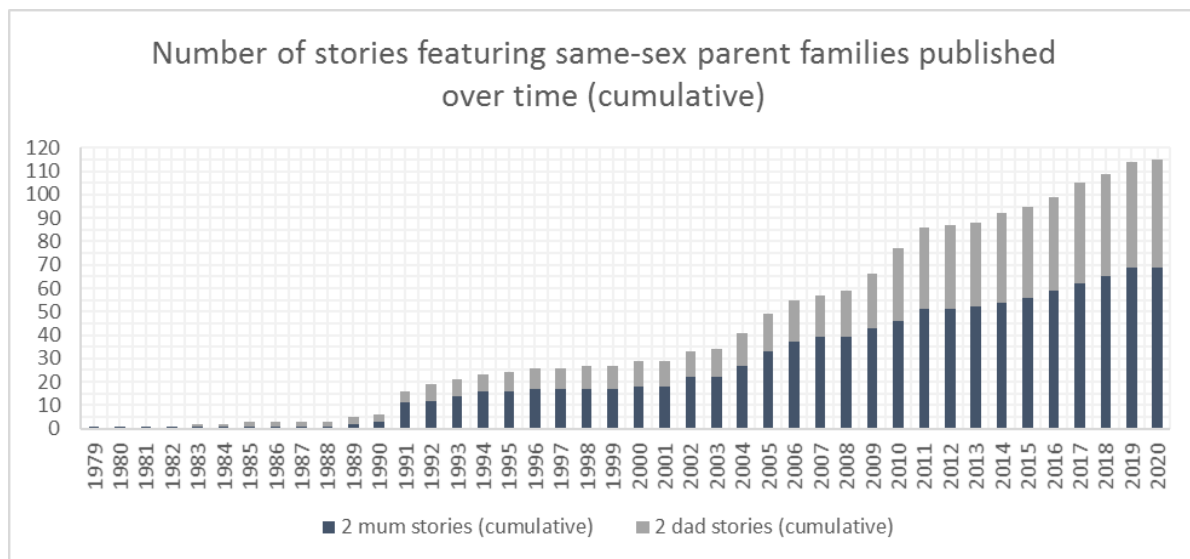


Figure 2

For the purposes of this chapter, a smaller sample consisting of around half of all known published SSPF picturebooks – and which reflects roughly the same proportional makeup of the two-mum/two-dad split found in the entire population (Table 1) – is studied.

	Two-mum	Two-dad	Excluded	Total
Full survey	69 (59.48%)	46 (39.66%)	1 (0.86%)	116 (100%)
Corpus sample	36 (62.07%)	21 (36.21%)	1 (1.72%)	58 (100%)

Table 1

This initial overview of some trends in the production and content of SSPF picturebooks provide a basis for deeper explorations of the linguistic and visual content of these books and how they may differ in terms of the gender of the parents they represent and/or the narrative strategies they adopt.

Analysing linguistic and visual trends in picturebooks

Meaning in picturebooks “hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words” (Bader, 1976, p. 1) and so the reading and research of the multimodal texts must attend to both visual and written modes of representation – often simultaneously – to understand the meaning(s) of the text as a whole. As such, a sizeable amount of academic research has attended to the production of a range of competing methods, approaches and taxonomies for interpreting and explaining the multimodal workings of texts like picturebooks. Simple taxonomies for interpreting word-image relationships such as that proposed by Barthes (1977) suggest that images and words in multimodal texts could be involved in relationships of *anchorage* (where words make more specific the contents of an image), *illustration* (where images support or provide more details about co-occurring text), and *relay* (symmetrical relationships wherein words and images work together equally). Similarly, Golden (1990) proposed a slightly extended taxonomy of five ways in which both visual and verbal modes may work together in picturebooks to create meaning:

1. Text and picture are symmetrical
2. Text depends on picture for clarification
3. Illustration enhances, elaborates text
4. Text carries primary narrative, illustration is selective
5. Illustration carries primary narrative, text is selective

Both of these taxonomies regard images and writing occurring within the same text as acting in largely complementary ways, which recognises that relationships between images and writing in picturebooks can meaningfully converge and elaborate the meanings present in the other modes and that, although either mode can be more or less prominent, or even independently important in telling a story, they work together to tell the same story.

However, such taxonomies do not capture the potential for representations across modes to meaningfully diverge or contradict another. As such, Nikolajeva and Scott expanded on these

relationships and proposed their own ‘dynamics of word/image interaction’ (Nikolajeva & Scott 2000). Their proposal is that word-image relationships in picturebooks can potentially be *complementary* as well as *counterpointing*. *Complementary* relationships include those in which words and images can give the same information (*symmetrical interaction*) or one mode elaborates, expands on, or amplifies meanings in the another (*enhancing interaction*). *Counterpointing* relationships are when “words and images provide alternative information or contradict each other in some way” (ibid. 232). Although I do not have space to exhaustively compare taxonomies here, the range of approaches available suggests a growing preponderance of how to interpret and analyse the meaningful combination of different semiotic potentials and affordances of language and image – language being governed by the logics of time and sequence, and image by the logics of space and simultaneity (Kress, 2003, pp. 1-2) – in multimodal or ‘intersemiotic’ texts.

For linguists, the analysis of multimodal texts has become increasingly important given that almost all modern texts are multimodal in some way. And, although linguistic approaches are useful in the analysis of multimodal texts in which language is the dominant mode, for example in newspapers where the majority of content is written and not all articles will include images (Bednarek & Caple, 2012), some include images which may be revealing of an article’s overall meaning. Likewise, in texts like picturebooks where language tends to be less complex, detailed, or abundant than the accompanying images, interpreting multimodal and non-linguistic phenomena in those texts is crucial to interpreting their meanings.

The work of Kress & van Leeuwen (2006), which extends Halliday’s Systemic Functional approach to Linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) to the study of images has had a profound influence on the work in linguistics studying multimodal texts, including picturebooks (Moya Guijarro, 2014; Sunderland & McGlashan, 2012). However, as is true of much work done thus far on picturebooks, most work is highly qualitative in nature and there

exists a gap in the literature for examining linguistic, visual, and multimodal trends in picturebooks. I seek to address in the present chapter by adopting a method that combines methods and approaches from the fields of corpus linguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and multimodality. I refer to this approach as Corpus-assisted Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis.

As with all work grounded in CDA, the present approach concerns itself with the identification of *discourses* – abstract social knowledges and practices – through which *ideologies* and social relations of *power* are repeated and rearticulated, for the purposes of *critique* (Wodak & Meyer, 2016); repeated, relatively stable patterns of representation may provide stronger evidence of the existence of a discourse than a single isolated instance. The idea is that *discourses* become observable in concrete, semiotically instantiated representations of social practices in *texts* and that texts provide avenues into the observation and analysis of discourse. This chapter takes a particular multimodal approach to CDA (Multimodal CDA; MCDA) informed by van Leeuwen’s (2008, p. viii) suggestion that “discourses [...] can be realized [sic], not only linguistically, but also by means of other semiotic modes”.

The notion of *ideology* – taken here to be “shared, fundamental and axiomatic beliefs of specific social groups [that] organise and control the social representations of groups and their members” (van Dijk, 2009) – is of particular importance to CDA as, not only do texts give access to discourse but also, via discourse, lead to the observation of ideology; as van Dijk (ibid.: 79) argues, “ideologies are reproduced by discourse”. Different texts may represent the same thing or action in different ways, as Burr (1995, p. 48) suggests, “surrounding any one object, event, person etc., there may be a variety of different discourses, each with a different story to tell about the world, a different way of representing it to the world”. And these different representational choices about, for example, *how*

something should be represented or *what* to include/exclude can be ideologically revealing. Just as discourses are understood as reproducing ideology, they are also understood to “play an important role [...] in conveying and implementing power and domination in society” (Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 11). For example, *how* something is represented might reveal what is considered ‘normal’, social practices or groups that are excluded from representation might be so a result of social exclusion. Furthermore, when considering *what* is represented, we may also consider what *is not* represented (or, at least what alternatives for representation are possible), whether these choices be consciously or unconsciously made. Representational choices are exactly that, *choices*, made within a spectrum of possible ways of representing. As well as considering *what* is represented (i.e. the propositional content of the representation; what the representation is intended to represent and *mean*), it is also important to consider *how* something/someone is represented, including the forms (or *modes*) and manner of representation(s). Esposito’s (2009, p. 65) argument that “picture books [...] are not innocent of ideology” but “are a site where issues of race, sexuality, values, among other things, are both reflected and created” are particularly relevant to the present chapter given that gay and lesbian people have historically been unrepresented (at least explicitly) in children’s literature, which may relate to the influence of dominant/hegemonic ideologies on what is *possible* in children’s literature. Finally, *critique* in CDA is concerned with producing and conveying “critical knowledge that enables human beings to emancipate themselves from forms of domination through self-reflection” (Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 7).

The typically qualitative approaches to text analysis used in CDA have increasingly been combined with methods from corpus linguistics, which enables the identification and analysis of discourse in a large number of texts. Benefits include reducing researcher bias as corpus methods make it “less easy to be selective about a single [text] when we are looking at hundreds of [texts]”, the potential to reveal multiple discourses around a single topic from

multiple texts, and the ability to quickly and effectively triangulate and check hypotheses generated from small-scale text analysis (Baker, 2006, pp. 10-17). Of particular benefit is that corpus methods are able to quickly highlight repetitive linguistic patterns enabling investigation of the incremental effect of discourse. To wit, Baker (ibid.: 13) suggests that, “a single word, phrase or grammatical construction on its own may suggest the existence of a discourse”, however, information about the number of like examples of linguistic constructions enable the examination of a discourse’s incremental or cumulative effect. And, as semiotic behaviour provides a route into the observance of discourses, repeated linguistic patterns and trends may reveal things about the relationships between a specific context of discursive behaviour and the conventionalised (re)constructions and (re)articulations of ideologies. As with Butler’s observations on gender as something that is repetitively done, “gender ought not be construed as a stable identity locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (1999: 179). As such, repeated associations between language and social practices can tell us about the kind of ideologies and perspectives that underpin these practices. As such, corpus methods are used here to facilitate MCDA, which considers how discourses become evident in both the linguistic and visual content of SSPF picturebooks by first identifying linguistic patterns evident across the corpus before considering multimodal relationships between those patterns and accompanying images.

Trends in picturebooks featuring two-mum and two-dad families

Having briefly introduced SSPF picturebooks and Corpus-assisted MCDA, the remainder of this chapter explores some common linguistic and multimodal trends in the representations of same-sex parents in the SSPF corpus.

Rank	Top frequent words		Top frequent lexical words		Top lexical keywords (ranked by keyness)		
	Frequency	Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency	Keyness	Word
1	2585	the	210	mama	210	1120.735	mama
2	2068	and	163	just	96	566.731	mommy
3	1435	to	154	can	104	513.796	jenny
4	1410	a	153	will	481	458.524	said
5	1123	i	150	go	82	452.156	dads
6	656	of	146	day	84	396.209	daddy
7	584	you	142	would	85	363.054	peter
8	580	in	134	got	106	344.531	mom
9	530	they	133	could	62	317.119	nicholas
10	521	he	127	time	63	310.885	dragon
11	502	was	123	family	62	277.052	eric
12	496	it	115	get	84	249.641	dad
13	481	said	114	other	80	248.024	king
14	475	we	112	says	67	244.412	uncle
15	455	my	110	big	41	242.041	jaz
16	450	she	106	mom	59	235.721	prince
17	445	that	104	jenny	45	225.319	josh
18	393	is	104	little	40	220.271	felicia
19	391	with	98	see	40	220.271	mummy
20	389	but	96	mommy	134	215.301	got
21	366	her	94	asked	39	208.942	jacob
22	358	for	94	right	150	208.354	go
23	358	on	94	think	79	206.577	baby
24	333	his	93	home	39	204.049	mum
25	319	me	92	love	35	197.589	patty
26	310	all	91	want	33	194.814	ledogg
27	307	have	90	know	36	191.693	mommies
28	276	at	89	looked	110	189.942	big
29	274	had	87	people	38	189.924	sue
30	271	up	85	come	37	184.317	moms

Table 2: 30 most frequent/key words in the SSPF corpus

The first step in exploring representational trends in the SSPF corpus was to produce a word frequency list of the entire corpus. The top 30 most frequent words are presented in the ‘top frequent words’ column in Table 2. This list mainly contains closed class grammatical/function words such as conjunctions (*and, but*), copula verbs (*be, is, was*), determiners (*a, the*), prepositions (*of, in, to, for*), and personal pronouns (*I, you, me, we*). These words reveal little if anything about the content of SSPF picturebooks and so closed

class words were excluded to concentrate on grammatically open class/lexical words. A resultant list of the 30 most frequent open class words in the SSPF corpus is presented in the ‘top frequent lexical words’ column in Table 2, with the words in this list falling into four broad grammatical categories – verbs, nouns, modal auxiliary verbs, and adjectives – with the largest categories being nouns and verbs. The nouns category contains a number of words related to **social actors** (van Leeuwen, 2008) as either individuals or as groups (e.g. *mama, jenny, family*) and reference to time (*day, time*). The verbs category contains words denoting attitude (*think, want, know, love*), possession (*get, got*), sight (*see, looked*), speech (*says, asked*), and movement (*go, come*). The three different modal verb types are possible in English and all are found in this list: dynamic modality (*can*), epistemic modality (*would, could, can, will*), and deontic modality (*will*). Finally, words associated semantically with size (*big, little*) can be grouped as adjectives.

These frequent features and semantic groupings begin to reveal some interesting lexical features of the SSPF corpus. A further step was in this initial linguistic analysis of the SSPF corpus to identify keywords, i.e. words that are found to be used “with an unusual frequency” (Scott, 2010, p. 149) in a corpus when it is compared against another ‘reference’ corpus. Given that many of the books that make up the SSPF corpus were published in North America, the AmE06 corpus – a one million word general corpus consisting of 500 files of 2000 word samples taken from 15 genres of American written English, the majority of which were published in 2006 – was chosen as reference corpus. Keywords are given in the ‘top lexical keywords’ column in Table 2; closed class words were again removed. Some words were found to be shared between the top 30 lexical words and keyword lists (e.g. *mama, big, go*) and some of the word groupings found during frequency analysis (e.g. social actors, size) could also be applied to the keywords found.

Feature/category	Frequent words	Keywords	Both frequent and key
Social actors	family, people, will	baby, dad, daddy, dads, dragon, eric, felicia, jacob, jaz, josh, king, ledogg, mommies, moms, mum, mummy, nicholas, patty, peter, prince, sue, uncle nicholas	jenny, mama, mom, mommy
Verbs	asked, come, get, know, looked, love, says, see, think, want	said	go, got
Adjectives	just, little, other, right		big
Modal auxiliary verbs	can, could, will, would		
Nouns	day, time, home		

Table 3: comparison of the top 30 most frequent lexical words and keywords in the SSPF corpus

Table 3 gives a comparison of the top 30 most frequent lexical words and keywords in the SSPF corpus and shows that the ‘social actors’ category contains the most words overall, the majority of those words found during keyword analysis, has the most words shared between the frequency and keyword lists, and features multiple references to mothers (*mommies, moms, mum, mummy*) and fathers (*dad, daddy, dads*). As these findings suggest that parents are of significant linguistic importance in SSPF picturebooks, a wider search was conducted to find all references to mothers and fathers in the SSPF corpus, which are categorised using van Leeuwen’s (2008) social actor network.

Quantitative categorisation of naming strategies for mothers (Table 4) found that mothers are most frequently represented using names that include some form of RELATIONAL IDENTIFICATION (RI) wherein social actors are represented using a closed set of nouns denoting personal, kinship, or work relations (ibid.: 43). These include formulations such as *Mum* or *Mom*, as well as RI + INFORMALIZATION such as *Mama Kate* where kinship terms are combined with a given name. Combined, these naming strategies account for 72.16% of all instances of lesbian mothers being named.

	Names of mothers	Freq	% of mothers' total Social Actor Representations
Relational identification	go-ma, mama, marmee, meema, mom, momma, mommy, mother, mum	305	45.66%
Informalization	alice, allie, daniela, fran, jeanne, judith, linda, marian, patty, sandy, sara, sarita, sue, vanessa	185	27.69%
Relational identification + informalization	mother sarita, mum alice, mama nessa, mama linda, mama grace, mama rose, mama jane, mama kate, mummy sue, mummy fran, mama lu, mama kathy, mama lee, mummy loula, mummy neenee, mother marian, mother barbara, mother josie	177	26.5%
Semiformalization	jeanne martineau	1	0.15%
Total		668	100%

Table 4: naming strategies for mothers

On the other hand, quantification of naming strategies used for fathers (Table 5) finds that the most common naming strategy for fathers is INFORMALIZATION only (65.04%) with strategies involving RI accounting for 32.41% of all fathers' names.

	Names of fathers	freq.	% of fathers' total Social Actor Representations
informalization	ace, bertie, bobby, brendan, eric, frank, jack, jamie, joe, john, karl, lee, martin, ned, pete, phil, roy, sam, silo, steve	307	65.04%
Relational identification	dad, daddy, father, papa	87	18.43%
Relational identification + informalization	dad david, baba chris, uncle ned, uncle phil, uncle mike, dad joe, dad pete, father sam, uncle bobby, uncle Jamie	66	13.98%
formalization/classification	king lee, king bertie, mr jones, prince lee	12	2.54%
total		472	100%

Table 5: Quantitative categorisation of naming strategies for fathers

These trends in the naming of same-sex parents across the SSPF begin to suggest overall differences in how authors choose to represent gay and lesbian caregivers. Gay caregivers are proportionately less likely than lesbian caregivers to be referred to using a name identifying them as a parent. Read alongside the fact that two-mum stories are simply more common in

SSPF picturebooks (Table 1), these findings may begin to suggest the presence of gendered and heteronormative discourses of parenting. Practices of childcare in the nuclear family are traditionally gendered, whereby the woman/mother fulfils childcare and the domestic roles and the man/father fulfils economic and subsistence roles; women are construed through “‘private’ activities of bearing and raising children” and men through “‘public’ activities of political involvement and paid labour” (Lupton & Barclay 1997: 38). These gendered constructs, which have influence through dominant *mother as main parent* and *part-time father* discourses (cf. Sunderland 2006a), appear to have influence on the gendered construction of same-sex parents in SSPF picturebooks.

As well as being given individual identities, gay and lesbian caregivers are discussed in relation to one another which enables authors to reference parents’ relationships with each other and with their child(ren) but also to distinguish parents from one another.

Linguistically, this is achieved through the construction ‘PARENT’S NAME and PARENT’S NAME’ (e.g. *daddy* and *papa*), which is common throughout the SSPF corpus. It could be argued that these different naming strategies emulate heteronormative discursive practices whereby heterosexual parents are named and distinguished binarily (e.g. “mum and dad”, “papa and mama”). Constructions such as “Mommy and Mama” act as parallelisms of these heteronormative naming strategies. They could therefore be seen as either/both **homonormative** (whereby homosexuals accept heteronormative ideals and practices) constructions in which the heteronormative ideological expectations of the nuclear family go unchallenged and are assumed within SSPFs, or/and that they challenge these heteronormative expectations by integrating discourse on non-heterosexual parental relationships into common heteronormative linguistic constructions of parents. As such, I undertook another quantitative investigation of naming strategies to assess patterns of co-occurrence of different naming strategies in the ‘PARENT’S NAME and PARENT’S NAME’

formulation for both mothers (Table 6) and fathers (Table 7) to examine how (or whether) parental identities are shared and/or distinguished. These matrices give the relationships naming strategy of the first parent of a pair in the columns and the naming strategy used for the second parent of the pair shown in the rows.

	Relational identification	Relational identification + informalization	Informalization
Relational identification	22	1	3
Relational identification + informalization	0	17	0
Informalization	0	0	6

Table 6: matrix of co-occurrence in 'MOTHER'S NAME and MOTHER'S NAME' formulation

	Relational identification	Relational identification + informalization	Informalization
Relational identification	4	0	12
Relational identification + informalization	0	5	6
Informalization	0	0	53

Table 7: matrix of co-occurrence in 'FATHER'S NAME and FATHER'S NAME' formulation

The results in Table 6 show that the most common strategies for mothers is to adopt the same naming strategy for both parents, with the most frequent forms including references to parental identities in the constructions 'RI and RI' (e.g. *Mommy* and *Mama*) and 'RI + informalisation and RI + informalisation' (e.g. *Mama Kate* and *Mama Lu*). As such, representations of lesbian parents in the SSPF corpus appear to stress parental equality between lesbian co-parents wherein their maternal parental identity is a shared one. Trends in the representations of gay caregivers, however, feature a much different method of indexing coupling that is practically the inverse of those strategies adopted for lesbian caregivers. Both fathers are most likely to be informalized when referred to as a pair, further suggesting consistent trend for gay caregivers not to be attributed a familial identity in relation to a child.

Where the first parent is represented through RI and the second through informalization, the former is the biological parent.

These trends in representational choice across the SSPF corpus suggest the presence and influence some pervasive gendered discourses of parenting. SSPFs involving mothers are more likely than those involving fathers to be represented in the corpus overall and the naming of mothers and fathers appears to index distinctly gendered parenting roles. Whereas the representation of mothers most frequently involves reference to their parental identity in some way, fathers are mostly represented solely through their unique identities.

Representations of men are of particular interest here as they could reinforce discourses and stereotypes about men being uninvolved in childcare but also about gay men's relationships as being primarily sexual and non-committal (Baker, *Public Discourses of Gay Men*, 2005).

One possible reading might be that the effect of longstanding negative stereotypes associating gay men with predatory promiscuity, including the sexualisation and proselytising of children (ibid.), has influenced the way writers choose to represent gay caregivers.

Collustration

The analysis thus far has explored some linguistic trends. I now introduce *collustration* – a portmanteau of 'collocation' and 'illustration' – as a possible approach to corpus-based MCDA. Collustration adapts the corpus linguistic notion of collocation – “a co-occurrence relationship between two words” (McEnery & Hardie, 2012, p. 240) – for multimodal purposes by considering repeated co-occurrences between representations in linguistic and visual semiotic resources across numerous texts, thus concentrating on how meaningful multimodal relationships may hold across numerous like texts. This section takes a case study of the item *wedding* in the SSPF corpus because, as same-sex marriage was not legal before 2013 in the UK and 2015 in the US, stories representing same-sex weddings could be regarded as ideological propositions of what could (or *should*) be possible for same-sex

couples and, thus, suggest a wider, symbolic importance to authors of SSPF picturebooks of representing the possibility of same-sex marriage.

Rank	Freq	MI	Word
1	4	7.629	married
2	3	5.378	day
3	3	6.321	daddy
4	3	7.498	chloe
5	3	7.699	cake
6	3	10.021	bridesmaid
7	3	5.755	big
8	2	6.629	turned
9	2	9.852	simple
10	2	8.629	pop

Table 8: Open-class collocates of 'wedding'

Initial linguistic exploration of *wedding* finds that its most frequent open-class collocates (Table 8) include typical features of a wedding (i.e. people getting *married*, a *bridesmaid*) as well as a discourse prosody of ‘celebration’ or ‘special event’ (e.g. *day*, *cake*, *big*). *Big day* is used to reference weddings in the corpus but *big* also collocates with *wedding* in evaluations such as “this isn’t going to be a *big splashy wedding*, just a simple one”, “We’re going to have a *big wedding* ceremony”, or “After the *wedding*, we had a *big* party”. *Day*, on the other hand, occurs as a form of circumstantiation, marking the occurrence of the wedding as a special event, e.g. “On the *day* of the *wedding*, Chloe put on her new dress” or “The *day* after the *wedding*, Daddy and Frank went to San Francisco for their honeymoon”.

As well as collocating linguistically with *cake*, *wedding* also appears to collustrate with visual representations of (typically multitiered) cakes (Table 9, Table 10) and visual depictions of

cake are always present at some point in stories about marriage. Although subtle and rather uncontroversial, the consistency of representations – and multimodal associations between these representations – suggest that such associations are commonplace and indicative of ‘normal’ weddings

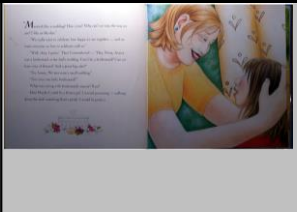


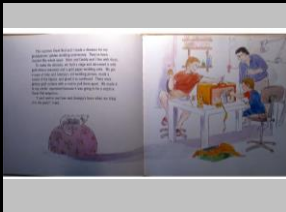
	Concordance L	KWIC	Concordance R
1	Mum and I are getting married!" "Married, like a	wedding	? How come? Why can't we stay the way
2	"Hey, Mom, Jessica was a bridesmaid at her dad's	wedding	. Can I be a bridesmaid? Can we have tons
3	big cake?" "No, honey. We just want a small	wedding	." "Not even one little bridesmaid?" What
4	. Bobby and Jamie got married. "That was the best	wedding	ever," said Chloe. "I planned it all from
5	right," said Steve. "We're going to have a big	wedding	ceremony and lots of people will come to
6	Mike. "Would you like to help us plan our	wedding	?" "Yes!" I shouted. "I love parties!" We
7	and I made a diorama for my grandparents' golden	wedding	anniversary. They've been married fifty
8	it with gold ribbon streamers and a gold paper	wedding	cake. We got a copy of Gran and Grampy's
9	. We got a copy of Gran and Grampy's old	wedding	picture, made a cutout of the figures, and
	1, 2, 3	4	5, 6
			
			7, 8, 9
			

Table 9: collustration between 'wedding' and images of cake



Table 10: images of cake in Table 9 isolated

Potentially more ideologically revealing in collustrations of *wedding* are some of those consistent choices made in the visual representation of social actors involved in the wedding ceremony. Gendered discourses appear specifically to influence visual representations of gay and lesbian couples and bridesmaids. All of the visually represented groom pairs collustrating with *wedding* across the corpus (Table 11) are depicted wearing matching suits (a representational choice not evidenced in the accompanying language) which suggests

simultaneously an adoption and homogenisation of gay grooms in terms of a normative gender identity. Whereas differentiation between men and women is intrinsic to attire adopted in ‘traditional’ heterosexual marriages, the consistent homogenisation of men in terms of their gendered identities in SSPF picturebooks appears to accept those gendered discourses that underpin heteronormativity, thus, reinforcing hegemonic social constructs of gender as binary.



Table 11: wedding collustration: grooms

Images of bridesmaids collustrating with *wedding* also appear to evidence normative gendered discourses compatible with heteronormativity as indexed by visual representations of femininity through a predominant use of soft pinks, ribbons, and dresses across stories (Table 12).



Table 12: wedding collustrations: bridesmaids

That both of these forms of collustration reference and apparently accept dominant gendered norms may suggest subtle responses to historical social exclusions of LGBTQ+ people. Representing bridesmaids actively involved in a same-sex wedding as innocent, ‘normal’ girls – their presentations uninterrupted by considerations of sexuality – could be read as one way to dispel or challenge prevalent homophobic assumptions about gay men having a negatively sexualising effect on children.

Conclusions

The work presented in this chapter outlines some general trends in the publication and content of picturebooks featuring gay and lesbian caregivers (such as books with gay men are less frequent than those with lesbian mothers) as well as some linguistic and visual trends identified using methods from corpus linguistics.

Findings from linguistic analysis of the naming of gay and lesbian characters presented as caregivers suggest that lesbian mothers are more likely to be linguistically identified as parents (both as individuals and as couples) than gay fathers are and that fathers' names predominantly identify them as individuals rather than fathers (again as both individuals and couples). Analysis combining linguistic methods with visual analysis (here, in the form of *collustration*) finds that visual representations of characters involved in same-sex weddings contain conventional and subtle and 'uncontroversial' forms of dress associated with (western) weddings index ideologically homonormative version of same-sex relationships, including an affirmation of hegemonic constructions of gender.

The homonormative representations identified here reaffirm suggestions in the literature that LGBT children's books "reinforce heteronormativity through the nearly exclusive celebration of homonormative, nonthreatening LGBT characters that conform to expected gender roles, have a vested interest [in] parenting, and are White and upper middle class" (Lester, 2014). As Youdell (2009, p. 43) argues, books like *And Tango Makes Three* – a story about two male penguins who hatch an abandoned egg and rear the chick together – can be read as,

a relatively conservative inscription of enduring unitary subjects and the normative heterosexual family, even as it asserts the legitimacy of a homosexual emulation of it. While these might be gay penguin daddies living the dream, this representation of gay life as 'just like' straight life risks, [...] being implicated in disavowing lives that do not look like an ideal (and idealised) hetero-monogamous nuclear family and contributing to this idealisation.

By not challenging many assumptions about, for example, gender identity, SSPF picturebooks do not constitute the most radical literature and they may serve to reinforce “those structures, institutions, relations, and actions that promote and produce heterosexuality as natural, self-evident, desirable, privileged and necessary” (Cameron and Kulick 2003: 55). However, by having gay and lesbian characters participate in society through what are at once familiar and socially pervasive (although heteronormative) fields of action that LGBTQ+ people have historically excluded from (e.g. marriage, childrearing), authors are able to represent and take for granted the ‘normality’ of SSPFs and LGBTQ+ people in children’s literature and society more widely.

Reynolds (2009, p. 193) notes that, “families [...] have been a constant presence in children’s literature, but the way they have been represented has changed considerably over time in line with shifts in cultural needs and expectations about both families and children”. The very presence of LGBTQ+ identities and SSPFs in picturebooks is evidence of discursive shifts with regards to the family but also in contemporary society more widely. Responding to the theme of the present collection, these picturebooks therefore seem to challenge traditional configurations of the family (in that they include gay or lesbian parents) but tend not to challenge – and even seem to accept – dominant (western) social norms concerning gender identity, family and parenting.

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