
Accession number: 1992-03

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society

San Francisco, California

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October 1996
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Descriptive Summary

Title: Ellen Lewin Papers,
Date (inclusive): 1977-1981
Accession number: 1992-03
Creator: Lewin, Ellen
Extent: 7.5 linear feet
San Francisco, California.
Language: English.

Acquisition
The Ellen Lewin Papers (1992-03) were donated by Lewin in 1992 to GLBTHS.

Access
Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights
Copyright to unpublished manuscript materials has been transferred to the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

Preferred Citation

Historical Note
The interviews included in this collection are part of a research project on lesbian mothers that Ellen Lewin first conceived for her doctoral dissertation in 1975. At this time Lewin felt that she must be somewhat secretive about her topic -- she deliberately excluded the word "lesbian" from an early grant proposal. She conducted interviews of single mothers, both lesbian and heterosexual, between 1977 and 1981. Her project reached maturity at a time of much greater acceptance of lesbian and gay studies: in 1993 her book, Lesbian Mothers: Accounts of Gender in American Culture, was published by Cornell University Press. She donated her interview transcripts to the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society in 1992.

Scope and Content
The collection is comprised of six boxes of interviews, each numbered according to which group in the sampling design a particular interview belongs. The sampling design uses the following categories: sexual orientation (self-identified as lesbian or heterosexual); relationship status (i.e., whether the mother lived with a partner or not); socioeconomic status (SES); and whether the mother had her child in a marital situation (formerly married or never married). Lewin speaks in detail about these independent variables in the appendix to her book. A copy of the appendix, as well as bibliographic information about the book, is included at the end of the finding aid.

The code numbers for the interviews were assigned as follows:

100's:
- Upper SES, formerly married
200's:
- Middle SES, formerly married
300's:
- Lower SES, formerly married
400's:
- Upper SES, never married
500's:
- Middle SES, never married
600's:
- Lower SES, never married

Within all groups, numbers 1-49 were lesbian; numbers 50-99 were heterosexual; odd numbers designated women without co-residential partners; even numbers designated women who lived with partners. For example, # 105 would indicate an upper SES formerly married lesbian who does not have a co-residential partner. The use of the term married refers only to heterosexual marriage.

Most interviews are approximately 100 pages long. Personal names in the transcripts are rendered with initials. The interviewer's name is indicated by her initials: EL means Ellen Lewin; TL means Terrie Lyons. At the end of each interview, the interviewer includes 5-15 pages of notes which describe her impressions of the respondent and the dynamics of the interview. Some of the interviews include a topic notation sheet, which indicates where in the interview certain topics are discussed. Topics covered in the interviews include general background about the respondent's childhood and relationships with her family members, stories of deciding to get divorced and/or coming out, reasons for having children, the child's relationship with his or her father and/or the respondent's lover, different experiences of discrimination and stigmatization, child care and financial concerns, as well as the pleasures of being a single mother.

**Title:** Del Martin/Phyllis Lyon Papers

**Identifier/Call Number:** #93-13
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