The ‘display’ (or otherwise) of families, and the related issue of facilitating recognition of families, is central to the lives of people in the families of lesbian women, as a burgeoning related body of research and concerted activism around the world attest. The legal, public policy, social and discursive contexts in which lesbian women have families vary across time and place (e.g., see Ryan-Flood 2005; Short 2007a; 2007b). The terrain which lesbian couples who have created families have navigated and negotiated, however, has predominantly been one in which the family-related laws, public policies and discourses have been built on and have promoted a family hierarchy and blue-print of the ‘real’ or ‘ideal’ family as having one partnered heterosexual mother and father. As lesbian women ‘navigate a landscape’ in which lesbian-parented families are often not recognised, understood and/or valued (with associated legal, financial, practical, interpersonal and emotional negative consequences), lesbian mothers “show”, “signpost”, “mark-out”, and give cues about how to relate to them as a family (Short 2007a; 2007b). Thus, ‘displaying’ who the family is, and that the family is a family (particularly to those outside what might be regarded as the immediate family), are part of the resources and strategies used to ‘navigate’ a terrain in which lack of recognition, discrimination and denigration are features.

There are many things lesbian mothers do that ‘display’ family, such as: calling both mothers mum; having no or infrequent interactions with known donors; organising work so that both mothers spend significant time looking after children; emphasising similarities with other, mostly heterosexual, couples who have conceived
with assisted reproduction; and undertaking ceremonies and whatever (often limited) official means of recognition of family relationship and responsibilities are available. However, sometimes family ‘display’ is not a central reason underpinning these actions and instead they are clearly related to gendered notions of (intensive female) parenting and economic imperatives, or are everyday things done in many families. Further, there are many things that lesbian mothers do to ‘navigate’ the terrain that are not (much or centrally) about ‘display’ or aspects of simply ‘doing family’, but that have to do with ‘resistance’ and maintaining resilience (for example, interpreting negative interactions politically rather than personally; intentionally associating with other lesbian-parented families and keeping in mind that families created by lesbian parents have particular potential strengths). Whilst ‘displaying’ the family is often, at least in part, intended to aid recognition of the lesbian-parented family, in a heterosexist context ‘display’ can lead to problems, and is therefore sometimes intentionally not done. Thus, ‘display’ is done (or not) in a context and for reasons, and has varying consequences, and is one activity or strategy that people can use to shape their interactions, identities, well-being and lives.

Thus, in using the concept of ‘display’ to illuminate empirical work, researchers need to use and recognise ‘display’ in contextualised ways – both alongside other useful sociological concepts and foci in relation to families, and in terms of keeping in mind the legal, policy and discursive contexts in and about which ‘display’ is employed (both by researchers and research contributors). In relation to this, Almack suggests (Chapter 6) that legal and policy developments may impact on processes of recognising and validating families, including ‘display’. Research is indicating that this is indeed the case. For example, the Australian *Conceiving the Family* project compared the experiences and narratives of lesbian women who lived in Victoria (where women without male partners have been prevented, by legislation, from using fertility services and where non-birth mothers have not been legal parents) with those in parts of Australia where lesbian women are able to access fertility services and where two mothers are both legally recognised as parents. Australia has been a world leader in amending family-related laws to remove gender-based discrimination and to recognise both women in families created by female couples as legal parents and, therefore,