"BUT WHAT STORY?"

A NARRATIVE-DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS OF "WHITE" AFRIKANERS' ACCOUNTS OF MALE INVOLVEMENT IN PARENTHOOD DECISION-MAKING

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
of
RHODES UNIVERSITY

By

TRACY MORISON
January 2011
Supervised by: Prof. Catriona Macleod

Abstract

Despite the increased focus on men in reproductive research, little is known about male involvement in the initial decision/s regarding parenthood (i.e., to become a parent or not) and the subsequent decision-making that may ensue (e.g., choices about timing or spacing of births). In particular, the parenthood decision-making of "White", heterosexual men from the middle class has been understudied, as indicated in the existing literature. In South Africa, this oversight has been exacerbated by the tendency for researchers to concentrate on "problematic" men, to the exclusion of the "boring, normal case". I argue that this silence in the literature is a result of the taken for granted nature of parenthood in the "normal" heterosexual life course. In this study, I have turned the spotlight onto the norm of "Whiteness" and heterosexuality by studying those who have previously been overlooked by researchers. I focus on "White" Afrikaans men's involvement in parenthood decision-making. My aim was to explore how constructions of gender inform male involvement in decision-making, especially within the South African context where social transformation has challenged traditional conceptions of male selfhood giving rise to new and contested masculine identities and new discourses of manhood and fatherhood. In an effort to ensure that women's voices are not marginalised in the research, as is often the case in studies of men and masculinity, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews about male involvement in decision-making with *both* "White" Afrikaans women and men. There were 23 participants in total, who all identified as heterosexual and middle-class. The participants were divided into two age cohorts (21 – 30 years and >40 years), which were then differentiated according to gender, reproductive status, and relationship status.

 Treating the interviews as jointly produced narratives, I analysed them by means of a performativity/performance lens. This dual analytic lens focuses on how particular narrative performances are simultaneously shaped by the interview setting and the broader discursive context. The lens was fashioned by synthesising Butler's theory of performativity with Taylor's narrative-discursive method. This synthesis (1) allows for Butler's notion of "performativity" to be supplemented with that of "performance"; (2) provides a

concrete analytical strategy in the form of positioning analysis; and (3) draws attention to both the micro politics of the interview conversation and the operation of power on the macro level, including the possibility of making "gender trouble". The findings of the study suggest that the participants experienced difficulty narrating about male involvement in parenthood decision-making, owing to the taken for granted nature of parenthood for heterosexual adults. This was evident in participants' sidelining of issues of "deciding" and "planning" and their alternate construal of childbearing as a non-choice, which, significantly served to bolster hetero-patriarchal norms. A central rhetorical tool for accomplishing these purposes was found in the construction of the "sacralised" child. In discursively manoeuvring around the central problematic, the participants ultimately produced a "silence" in the data that repeats the one in the research literature.

Table of contents

List of tables and figures

A note on terminology used in this thesis

Racial terminology

In this thesis "racial" descriptions are enclosed in inverted commas to indicate the artificiality of terms such as "Black" and "White". In so doing, I acknowledge that these concepts are not fixed, but are constructions linked to the apartheid system of racial classification, as outlined in the (now defunct) South African Population Registration Act (No. 30) of 1950, and therefore particularly problematic in South Africa. Under apartheid, all South Africans were officially categorised as "White", "Coloured" (mixed race), "Indian" (or "Asian") or "Black" (or "African") (Kaufman, 2007). My use of this apartheid-generated terminology does not reflect an endorsement of these classifications. Rather, I employ the terms pragmatically since they have been used throughout official South African statistics and research reports. Moreover, in reality persons were, and still are, treated in a particular social, legal, and economic manner based on their racial status (Kaufman, 2007). These terms continue to be used within the South African context (although with some discrepancy), and it is standard practice to continue to use these (or similar) to call attention to ongoing inequities and their effects.

Gender terminology

Just as with the racial terminology above, I acknowledge that descriptors of gender are based upon social classifications and do not reflect inherent characteristics. I do not similarly enclose such terms in inverted commas, however, simply to promote the legibility of this document, since such terms are frequently, and unavoidably, used throughout. Given the Butlerian theoretical framework that I adopt in this thesis, which denounces a dualistic or binary construction of gender, gendered grammar is problematic because it reflects such an understanding of gender. Nevertheless, the binary social categorisation of gender is a fundamental part of social life and remains persistently meaningful and durable as bodies are classified as either female or male producing significantly different lived realities for people.

"Childfree" vs. "childless"

The terms "childfree" and "childless" are variously employed by researchers in order to define the state of not giving birth to children, with some distinguishing between voluntary, chosen or deliberate and involuntary childlessness (the latter usually denoting infertility). The issue of language and definition is related to the ways that those who have not had children are positioned by the particular terminology (see Letherby (2003) for a detailed discussion). As Gillespie (2003) notes,

> Language used to define the state of not giving birth to children has previously existed only in terms of an absence or deficiency of motherhood [or fatherhood], as in "infertility" or "childlessness." More recently, the term *childfree* has been reclaimed by those who emphasize that childlessness can be an active and fulfilling choice (p. 123).

The term "childfree" was originally used in 1972 by the National Organization for Non-Parents to refer to those who have no desire or intention to procreate, although they are able to. It therefore stands in contradistinction to the term "childless", which is usually used to refer to those who desire to be parents but cannot for biological reasons (Agrillo & Nellini, 2008). The term "childless" has also been used to refer to people who have outlived or been estranged from their children (e.g., De Ollos & Kapinus, 2002). Hence, choice appears to be the crucial distinguishing factor in the selection of terminology. The emphasis on "choice" in feminist rhetoric especially, Letherby (2003) asserts, may have simplified women's experiences. The term childfree, for instance, might not capture the ambivalence experienced by many who choose not to procreate. Similarly, it does not account for those who become childless by default, through *not* choosing, due to passive decision-making or

postponing parenthood until it is "too late" biologically speaking. Bearing all these complicating factors in mind, I have chosen to use the terms "childfree" or "voluntary childlessness" to denote a conscious decision to refrain from becoming a parent, while I use "childless" to signify infertility or involuntary childlessness. Moreover, I also take into consideration that childlessness—voluntary or involuntary—occurs not only due to the lack of biological offspring, but also as a result of refusing or failing to consider social parenthood/adoption.

Glossary of South African terms used in this thesis

Word (and pronunciation)	Meaning
Boer (boo-**rrr***)	literally "farmer", refers to an African of Dutch origin (i.e., an Afrikaner). Although it has historically been used to refer to Afrikaners in general (as in "Anglo-Boer war"), in contemporary usage it usually refers to traditional Afrikaans speakers, sometimes in a derogatory sense.
Bakkie (b-uh-key)	light delivery vehicle (American: "pick-up truck") (informal)
boytije (boy-key)	little boy (informal)
Braai (Br-eye)	to grill; equivalent of "barbecue"; used across language groups (informal)
gatvol (**Gh***-uh-t-fol)	similar to "fed up" (expletive)
Gogo (Ghoh-ghoh)	Small creature, usually an insect (informal)
Ja (y-ah)	Yes; equivalent of U.K./U.S. "yeah"; Afrikaans but used ubiquitously in South Africa
Jis/jissie/jislaaik (yiss/yissy/yiss-like)	equivalent to "gee" or "gosh"; Afrikaans origin but used ubiquitously (Informal)
Kak (k-uh-k)	Shit (expletive)
laatlammetije (l-ah-t lam-a-key)	an expression used to refer to a last born child significantly younger than her/his siblings; literally translated as "late lamb" (i.e., a lamb born later in breeding season) (figurative)
Lekker (lack-e**rr**)	"nice" or "well" (adjective); also used informally to express enjoyment; used across the board in South Africa
Maid	A common term used to refer to a woman who is employed to do domestic labour (more formally called a "domestic worker"). Traditionally, this labour has usually been performed by "Black" and "Coloured" women and this still tends to be the case.
Moffie (Mof-fee)	A pejorative term for a homosexual person, usually a man (offensive)
Ouma (Oh-mah)	Grandmother
Rand	South African currency (roughly equivalent to seven U.S. dollars)
Tok-tokkie (Tok-tok-key)	Dung beetle (Informal)
Tsotsi (ts-o-ts-i)	An isiXhosa word which, according to Glaser (2000), in common usage refers to an urban "Black" South African (male) who commits criminal behaviour

*The 'g' is guttural and the 'r' is rolled, as in other Teutonic languages.

List of acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AGI	Alan Guttmacher Institute
BTM	*Bodies that Matter: On the discursive limits of sex* (Judith Butler)
GT	*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity* (Judith Butler)
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council (of South Africa)
ICPD	International Conference on Population Development
IVF	*in vitro* fertilisation
MAP	Men as partners
MYMTC	Mobilising Young Men to Care
RPREC	Research Projects Ethical Review Committee
SRH	sexual and reproductive health
STI	sexually transmitted infection

Preface

Certainly the way in which work with men has been taken up by development institutions has often been lacking in ambition and devoid of political intent, preoccupied with creating more equitable men, rather than galvanizing men's activism for a more equal world. [...]Challenging the stark separation of women and men into discrete and profoundly oppositional categories can help bring into sight the potential commonalities that, as human beings, we might well share the points of mutual offense, outrage or indignity which can offer such a powerful basis for connection and solidarity (Cornwall & Esplen, 2010).

If the home-front is the front line of the struggle for gender equity, as I believe it to be, then it is imperative that men in heterosexual partnerships support this struggle by engaging in the everyday battles and the small acts that collectively amount to big change. It is this conviction that prompted me to conduct this research. Much of my initial thinking around my research topic was generated by discussion with **Daygan Eagar**, my wonderfully supportive partner, to whom this work is dedicated. I am so grateful for his timely arrival in my life. Throughout the process of writing this thesis he has been an unwavering source of support and a patient sounding board. He is a constant source of encouragement, reminding me always that:

> Cautious, careful people always casting about to preserve their reputation or social standards never can bring about reform. Those who are really in earnest are willing to be anything or nothing in the world's estimation, and publicly and privately, in season and out, avow their sympathies with despised ideas and their advocates, and bear the consequences (Susan B. Anthony).

On that note, I must acknowledge my supervisor, **Catriona Macleod.** I am inspired by Catriona's drive and passion for the kind of research that will bring about a positive change in the world. It has been such a privilege to work with Catriona. She made the opportunity possible not only financially, but through her patient guidance and incisive feedback. I have grown as a researcher under her supervision.

I also thank all those who assisted me during my research, in particular **Ally Gibson** (a.k.a. Monkey #2) who acted as proof reader, "research buddy", and supportive friend. It was Ally who shared the delightful wisdom of the "The infinite monkey theorem" with me, which states that: "A monkey hitting keys at random on a typewriter keyboard for an infinite amount of time will almost surely type a given text, such as the complete works of William Shakespeare" (anonymous). I have gained much comfort from the thought that "If a monkey can produce something coherent, then so can I!" The fact that I am writing these words means that I finally have. So, to all those **near and dear** who put up with the long process of writing this thesis, including the postponements, delays, and declined invitations, my preoccupation and occasional petulance, I thank you for your patience, love, and support.

1
INTRODUCTION

Harry and Sally sitting in a tree: K-I-S-S-I-N-G.
First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes Sally with a baby carriage!
(Playground song)

The quote above is a well-known playground chant that reveals some of the taken for granted assumptions about parenthood and reproduction in our socio-cultural context. From this short song we are afforded a glimpse of the normative relationships, gender roles, and possibly even the relations of power that underpin parenthood. It is possible to infer that parenthood occurs as part of a logical progression in which both love and marriage are singled out as significant precursors. We can deduce too that care-giving of the infant falls chiefly to the woman in a heterosexual partnership. This little portrait of parenthood is thoroughly heteronormative.

The concept of heteronormativity refers, quite simply, to heterosexuality as the norm and ubiquitous expectation. This concept centres on the operation of the norm, chiefly the presumption of female-male desire, and works to privilege heterosexual relationships and identities (Chambers & Carver, 2008). According to Ryan-Flood (2005), this means that "heteronormative practices and assumptions are manifested in diverse ways according to the cultural context in which they occur" (p. 201). One widespread assumption is that the "normal" heterosexual life course includes childbearing as an inevitable end-point, so that having children is generally seen as a natural and obvious occurrence for heterosexual couples, which invariably happens after marriage (Donovan, 2000).

Based on this assumption, it does not always occur to people to question this norm or those who comply with it. For instance, Dyer et al. (2008) state that infertility "usually induces reflection on the desire for a child, thereby resulting in the manifestation of parenthood motives which often remain latent in the general population and thus difficult to study" (p. 352). This suggests that the wish to become a parent among heterosexuals is usually taken for granted, unless thwarted. This oversight has been perpetrated by "lay" people and researchers alike and, I argue, has shaped reproductive research, creating an oversight that this thesis aims to address.

1. MEN AND PARENTHOOD DECISION-MAKING: TURNING ATTENTION TO AN INVISIBLE NORM

Over the last twenty years men have increasingly been included in reproductive research, policy, and programmes—an area that was long dominated by a woman-focus. The focus on women and oversight of men has been attributed to various assumptions about reproduction and women's and men's relation to

reproduction. Men, in particular, were believed to be largely absent from or problematic with regard to reproduction, but these beliefs are being challenged as men have increasingly become the targets of programmes and incorporated into research on reproductive issues (Browner, 2005; Greene & Biddlecom, 2000). However, despite the increasing inclusion of men in reproductive research, we still lack knowledge about men in relation to certain reproductive issues, one of these being parenthood decision-making. The lack of knowledge about why people in general, and men specifically, want to become parents (or not) and how they go about making these decisions in the context of the heterosexual relationships is related to persistent heteronormative assumptions about reproduction, which I shall address in this chapter.

The central problematic of this thesis is "White" heterosexual men's involvement in parenthood decision-making. In other words, it looks at what Nentwich (2008) refers to as "the 'boring normal case'" (p. 213)[1]. The rationale for this focus is that men's experiences, perspectives, motivations, and desires for conception and fatherhood are generally poorly studied (Dudgeon & Inhorn, 2003). Little is known about men's own perspectives on the topic, or their involvement in the decision-making process in general. This is especially true of men who are heterosexual, fertile, and from the middle class (Dyer, Mokoena, Maritz, & van der Spuy, 2008; Meyers, 2001; Rijken & Knijn, 2009). There is, therefore, a need for men who are considered to epitomise the "norm" to be included in reproductive research. This is particularly important in South Africa, where the way that men have been approached in reproductive research has created a narrow focus as researchers tend to consider problematic men (i.e., those considered risky) and predominantly those who are "Black" and poor. Thus, the aim of this thesis is to turn the spotlight on those men who have been rendered invisible owing to the fact that they comprise the "boring 'normal' case".

For the purpose of this research, I consider parenthood decision-making related to the heterosexual couple's initial undertaking toward becoming parents. I define it as the process by which heterosexual couples become parents and the subsequent decision-making that flows from this (including timing, ideal conditions and family size and composition). In so doing, I recognise that these decisions have both an individual dimension, as well as a couple dimension to them. That is, individuals have ideals, preferences and, in particular, reasons for desiring to have children or not, but within the heterosexual couple context this must be negotiated upon. Consequently, "child-bearing decisions are collaborative decisions and ... bring into play the peculiar dynamics of particular couples [as well as] the power imbalances that shadow heterosexual relationships" (Meyers, 2001, 744). Sexual and reproductive decisions are also powerfully constrained by norms and by culture (Fennell, 2006).

---

[1] The phrase is used by one of Nentwich's (2008) participants in relation to parenting practices by married heterosexuals.

According to Rijken and Knijn (2009), the parenthood decision-making process has not yet received much attention in empirical research. Most research on the topic, they claim, "is quantitative and focuses on determinants of fertility outcomes such as number of children and timing of birth" (p. 766). They add, however, that qualitative research is more appropriate in order "[t]o study *how* people decide on having children – how much thought they gave it, if they consciously weighed costs and rewards, what dilemmas they have faced and how they deliberate to reach a decision" (p. 766). This oversight could be seen as reflecting the widespread taken for granted nature of parenthood and heteronormative assumptions about the normalcy and naturalness of childbearing in the heterosexual life course*.* This is the discursive context in which both research and people's everyday "decisions" occur (Meyers, 2001). As I shall discuss next, reproductive research has, in general, not questioned assumptions about the appropriate/usual life course for (married) heterosexuals and has tended to reiterate these heteronormative assumptions.

1.1. A heteronormative blind-spot in reproductive research

The taken-for-grantedness of heterosexual procreation has meant that research generally has not considered "normal" heterosexual people's reasons for becoming parents and the choices that are associated with this. The "normality" of parenthood and the desire to have children generally seems to go unreflected upon, both by researchers and their participants. For instance, research on the "transition to parenthood" often reiterates the dominant model of the normal heterosexual life course, treating parenthood as a phase in "the path to adulthood" (Strauber, 2009, p. 5). It is only those who do not fall within the heteronorm whose choices are subject to questioning. According to Reynolds and Taylor (2005), deviation from the norm gives others license to question non-conformists who are expected to account for their situation in a way that those who adhere to the norm are not; the "abnormal" forfeit their usual rights to privacy. When parenthood is not taken for granted (e.g., in cases of infertility) or when having children is rendered a conscious choice (e.g., in cases of adoption or in same-gender partnerships) people's motives to become parents are open to discussion. Therefore, those who fall outside the parameters of the norm are subject to questioning and are required to account for their choices. This most often includes those who are: young and/or unmarried; homosexual; choose non-normative routes to parenthood (e.g., new reproductive technologies, adoption); and those who remain childfree (Gillespie, 2000; Meyers, 2001).

This tendency is reiterated in reproductive research on parenthood decision-making where researchers have explored the decision-making motives of those who come from "abnormal" groups, including: those who have health issues (e.g., reproductive complications, infertility, congenital conditions and HIV positive individuals); individuals who utilise new reproductive technologies like *in vitro fertilisation* (IVF) treatment; homosexuals; and the childfree. In particular, Meyers (2001) maintains that researchers generally concentrate on "abnormal"

women's parenthood decisions, such as: women who opt out of motherhood, teen-aged mothers, women who experience fertility difficulties or pursue motherhood by technological means. There is also a growing body of research on lesbian women's experiences of choosing to become mothers (e.g., Almack, 2005; Ryan-Flood, 2005; Donovan, 2000). In contrast, studies of the decision-making experiences of heterosexual women who choose to have children and who become pregnant easily are rare. (See Sevón's (2005) study on the choice to become a mother as an exception.) Fertile heterosexuals, and especially men, seem to be the invisible norm in research on parenthood-decisions, as in research more generally.

As far as men's parenthood decision-making is concerned, there is a notable shortage of research that has been conducted with men themselves (Rijken & Knijn, 2009). Some literature, for example, considers gay men's experiences of deciding to become fathers (e.g., Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Mallon, 2004; Rabun & Oswald, 2009), but once again, this research looks at the "abnormal" case, where active choice or conscious intention is seen to be necessary (Fennell, 2006). There is little research on fertile, heterosexual men's reproductive decision-making prior to conception (Peterson & Jenni, 2005). Research on men's "transition to fatherhood" focuses on biological procreation within the heterosexual couple, but also often treats parenthood as a milestone in the adult life course or as a rite of passage (e.g., Draper, 2003). It does not really problematise normative expectations of parenthood within the "normal" life trajectory. This research tends to consider men who are *already* fathers and deals with the impact of this "transition" on men and their female partners (Marsiglio, Hutchinson, & Cohen, 2000; Peterson & Jenni, 2005). This is also true of much of the research in gender studies, especially (critical) masculinities studies research. As a result, "[t]he relationship between men's intentions and desires for conception, pregnancy, childbirth, and fatherhood have been relatively poorly studied and hence are little understood" (Dudgeon & Inhorn, 2003, p. 40) as is the process of decision-making, including the gender dynamics and politics that may accompany it (Browner, 2005; Rijken & Knijn, 2009).

Local literature also displays this blind spot. In South Africa, where "there is a paucity of formal research on parenthood motives" (Dyer *et al.*, 2008, p. 352), there has been little research on the process by which healthy heterosexual people decide to become parents and even fewer studies that have investigated why these people want to have children in the first place. According to Dyer et al. (2008), much of the existing knowledge about parenthood motivations has been gleaned, almost exclusively, from qualitative work on in/fertility with women. Dyer *et al.*'s (2008) own study is conducted with couples attending fertility clinics (it is discussed further in the literature review). Another one of the few studies that investigates people's desires to become parents, and reportedly one of the first of kind in South Africa to include men, was a qualitative investigation conducted with HIV positive women and men attending public sector healthcare centres for treatment (Cooper, Harries, Meyer, Orner, & Bracken, 2007). Research on those who constitute the norm—fertile

heterosexuals, and especially men—is certainly needed and perhaps even more so within the South African context where a problem perspective has tended to narrow the research focus so that certain men have not generally been included in reproductive research in general.

1.2. The problem perspective and the oversight of "White" middle class men

In a review of demographic literature undertaken a decade ago, Greene and Biddlecom (2000) assert that

> As a consequence of this growing interest in men's roles, one can no longer assert that men are missing from the demographic literature on reproduction. The number of articles on men has increased greatly in recent years and much of this growth consists of studies that examine both men and women (p. 90).

At the time of this review these researchers maintained that there had been an increase in research that included men, both man-only studies and those that incorporated both women and men. However, they point out that these studies have been dominated by a problem-oriented approach, that is, men were only included in research because they contributed to some or other crisis or social concern.

Browner (2005), commenting on reproductive research in general half a decade on, reiterates this observation, claiming that

> we still lack good understanding of men's reproductive behavior, and the nature and dynamics of the gendered politics of reproduction. To my mind, this is mainly because most work on the subject still stems from a narrow, "problem-oriented" approach (p. 1).

This problem focus is a legacy of demographic and traditional family planning research, the aim of which, for the most part, was to indicate ways in which female contraceptive use could be increased. Men were included in research because of the effects that they had on women's sexual and reproductive choices and were often seen as "impregnators" and barriers to women's contraceptive use (Greene & Biddlecom, 2000).

Currently, though researchers have rejected the traditional family planning view of men as problematic and have acknowledged that men may be constructively engaged in reproductive issues, "many studies of men's 'role' in massive social issues—such as the spread of HIV, rising rates of single motherhood, or pregnancy in adolescent women—reduce 'men's role' to a single or small number of discrete variables" (Browner, 2005, p. 1). Therefore, the consideration of men's roles is generally limited (Greene & Biddlecom, 2000). This is certainly the case in "developing" contexts where population control is emphasised. In this manner, the woman-focus is often implicitly retained. In addition, as the AIDS pandemic intensifies, ever-increasing attention is given to the prevention and reduction of HIV and other STIs in research (Greene, 2002). Accordingly researchers are concerned with the effects that men have on contraceptive use and negotiation or promoting certain health outcomes. A good deal of the research that includes men focuses on HIV and other STIs because it is considered an appropriate "male topic" (Greene, 2002).

Prominent in research of this kind is the reiteration of cultural stereotypes of men as "risky" and as significant contributors to pressing social concerns (Figueroa-Perea, 2003). Researchers often draw upon, and reiterate, certain stereotypical notions of masculinity and male sexuality, citing men's pronatalism, authoritarianism, and wilful risk-taking behaviour in the form of promiscuity and infidelity (Greene, 2002). For example, in order to argue for a man-focus in research, Varga (2001) states that men are "more likely than women to behave in ways that place both themselves and their partner at risk for sexual and reproductive health complications" (p. 176).Furthermore, unlike in traditional family planning research, which assumed spousal consensus, in this approach men and women are often assumed to be in opposition (Greene, 2002). The construction of certain men as especially "risky" has resulted in an overemphasis on men from problematic groups or settings. These men are seen as the main contributors to various social issues (e.g., HIV, teenage pregnancy). Hence, much of the research is carried out in "developing" contexts where cultural beliefs or practices are often singled out as an aggravating factor for various social problems (e.g., favouring large families and/or son preference). This is doubly problematic when men's practices of power are rendered as "merely" a cultural phenomenon so that only certain men are seen as "having" culture —usually those who are not "White" or from a "Western" context (Mazzei, 2004).

A common feature of South African reproductive research stemming from a problem-oriented approach is the narrow instrumentalist perspective. The topics that are covered in this research are frequently related to social problems these most commonly include teenage pregnancy, HIV prevention practices, and violence in the context of sex and reproduction. The focus on men from a problem perspective is also reflected in public policy where

> masculinities often become evident in law and policy when these instruments engage with the criminal, antisocial or destructive behaviors of men. Public policy is thus generally geared to limit, constrain or punish men's behavior. Much less often is policy framed as providing an opportunity to change constructions of masculinity in a positive way as part of a broader social project of building gender equity in society through constructive engagement with men and boys (Barker *et al.,* 2010, p. 54).

This means that men are generally considered in problematic situations, and especially associated with high-risk behaviours that contribute to spread of HIV. Research therefore tends to concentrate on certain groups of men. The focus is often on "risky", "problematic" or disadvantaged, predominantly "Black" men, while "White" economically-advantaged men appear to constitute an invisible norm(e.g., Dunkle, Jewkes, Brown, Gray, MacIntyre, & Harlow, 2004; Swartz & Bhana, 2009; Varga, 2001; Wood & Jewkes, 1997).

South African researchers are not necessarily blind to "Whiteness". Swartz and Bhana (2009), for instance, argue that their focus on "Black" men does not disregard the experiences of men from other groups as unimportant. Rather, they contend that impoverished young "Black" people represent the majority of the South African population and so "capturing their experience is most representative of South Africa's population

dynamic" (p. 11). Nevertheless, this means that the experiences and perception of the minority "White" middle class remains uninterrrogated and the consistent failure to address the minority experience in South Africa may inadvertently reiterate "Whiteness" as the invisible norm. In this regard, Mazzei (2003, 2004, 2008) discusses the invisibility of Whiteness and points to "the silence or absence (that which is not spoken) of this racial identity" (p. 1129). She argues that "White, and, particularly, White middle class, is the measure for normal" (Mazzei, 2004, p. 27) and because it is seen as normative (by "White" people especially) it is not named. Therefore, "whiteness as a descriptor for whites often goes unnamed, unnoticed, and unspoken" (Mazzei, 2008, p. 1129), while those who are not "White" are seen as raced and most often (by those who are "White") as the "Other". As such, "Whiteness" comes to function as what Mazzei (2008), operating within a Derridian theoretical framework, refers to as an absent presence. As a result "Whiteness" has often escaped the critical gaze of researchers, who have tended to focus on "the racial object, i.e., the non-white Other" (Mazzei, 2008, p. 1127). Thus, the invisible norm constituted by the minority "White" middle class has remained largely invisible in research. In South Africa, reproductive research is needed among those who have hitherto been taken for granted as the "norm" – "White", middle-class, healthy, heterosexuals and especially men. This is in relation to research on reproductive decision-making more generally and parenthood decision-making specifically.

1.3. "White" Afrikaners and male involvement in parenthood decisions in the South African context

In this research, I concentrate on male involvement in parenthood decision-making among "White" Afrikaners in order to investigate the complexities and changing, contradictory nature of men's involvement in parenthood decision-making. "White" Afrikaners comprise a minority group in South Africa[2]; historically they occupied privileged social status under the previous "White" minority government, which promoted Afrikaner nationalism. "White" Afrikaners as a group were the target of pronatalist propaganda as part of the government's racist population policies. This policy was heavily influenced by the apartheid agenda and preoccupation with controlling the "Black" population, in this case through regulating its size. The global concern with population size gave the government plausible justification for controlling population numbers according to race and a way of legitimising state control of people's reproductive practices as part of the its attempts to decrease "Black" fertility. A national family planning programme was launched in 1974, during World Population Year, and was officially claimed to be part of the government's acceptance of its "responsibility" (Prime minister BJ Vorster cited in Kaufman, 2007, p. 107) to support international population efforts (Kaufman, 2007).

---

[2]Although Afrikaans is the third most widely spoken language in the country, "Whites" comprise only 9.6 % of the population with just over half of them speaking Afrikaans (Statssa, 2010).

The implementation of the national family planning programme occurred at the height of minority group fears of being "swamped" by the majority and the prospect of "White race suicide" (Moultrie, 2001, p. 12). Driven by the fear of unsustainable "White" population growth, the Afrikaner-dominated National party government advanced separate population policies for the various population groups. Propaganda announced that "the black population was growing too quickly while the growth rate of the white population was stagnating, and that the black and coloured populations were becoming a burden on the country's resources" (Guttmacher, Kapadia, Naude, & de Pinho, 1998, p. 191). Hence, in the face of "*die swart gevaar*" (the "Black" threat/menace), South African fertility management policies comprised part of other racially-motivated legislation (such as the group areas act) and numerous other repressive strategies pursued by the apartheid government to control (so-called) "non-White" population groups.

Thus, the apartheid government adopted a double standard approach in their fertility management policies. This is, a strategy linked to pronatalism, as certain groups were persuaded to have more children than they might otherwise desire. While "Black" people were targeted for fertility control, sometimes forcibly, "White" people were urged to reproduce and even provided with incentives for doing so, such as tax relief for larger families (Corrêa & Reichmann, 1994). This is evidenced in the explicit pronatalist discourse of the time in which politicians unequivocally enjoined "White" South Africans to procreate. For example, The Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, M.C. Botha, is cited by Guttmacher *et al.,* (1998) as charging "White" people to "sacrifice" by producing "enough children to ensure [South Africa's] continued existence as a Christian and Western country on the continent of Africa" (p. 191). It was Botha who launched the campaign of tax incentives and other benefits in order to increase fertility amongst "White" people, who were encouraged to "have a Baby for Botha" (Moultrie, 2001). Thus, procreation amongst the "White" population was constructed as noble and altruistic.

Pronatalism is also evident in the rhetoric of Afrikaner Nationalism, which played on Afrikaners' fears in relation to their perceived vulnerability at being a both a racial and ethnic minority. The linkage of pronatalism and Afrikaner Nationalism is reflected by the positioning of Afrikaner women in the iconic role of the "*volksmoeder*" (mother of the nation) (Vincent, 2000).Such "[n]ationalist ideologies frequently fashion a distinct set of roles for their female subjects" (Vincent, 2000, p. 64) which circumscribe women's choices, but also imbue them with esteem, status and respectability. In this case, women's maternal role was foregrounded by Afrikaner nationalist ideology and served to further the government's pronatalist agenda (Vincent, 2000). This is an example of the construal of reproduction as a woman's issue so that propaganda was aimed at women and men were largely taken for granted.

In contrast, a man's role was that of household head and male authority was rooted in the father role. "White" Afrikaans men have, for the most part, enjoyed privileged social positions predicated on norms of unequal, authoritarian relationships with women, children, and "Black" people. However, within South Africa's broader context of change and transformation the power which was rooted in traditional conceptions of male selfhood has been challenged, giving rise to new and contested discourses of manhood and fatherhood (Morrell, 2006). The ways that these changing gender norms inform male involvement in parenthood decision-making is the aim of this research. Hence, its focus is on gendered constructions and gender power relations in the heterosexual couple context and among Afrikaans speakers. (I shall describe the participants in Chapter 6.) Of particular interest for this study, are men's own experiences and perspectives of processes and decisions related to parenthood, which have hitherto gone largely undocumented. This research, therefore, is part of an attempt to move beyond the problem-oriented approach and to turn to the "nature and dynamics of the gendered politics of reproduction" (Browner, 2005, p. 1). In the following section I shall outline some of the ways that researchers have gone about moving beyond the problem perspective in order to highlight some topical issues regarding the ways that men ought to be approached in reproductive research as well as to explicate my rationale for adopting the particular approach that I have.

2. MOVING AWAY FROM A PROBLEM PERSPECTIVE: APPROACHES TO INCLUDING MEN IN REPRODUCTIVE RESEARCH

According to Browner (2005), what is required as researchers move away from the problem-oriented approach is work that "casts new light on the broad dynamics that shape an entire range of social issues" (p. 1). Citing Gutmann (2001) she argues that "We need studies that concentrate on men and masculinities, on men as engendered and engendering beings . . . because we know too little about men-*as-men*. . . ." (p.1). More specifically, the issue is the inclusion of men in more nuanced ways that takes cognisance of power differentials rooted in gender as well as other social categorisations. As Barker *et al.* (2010) assert,

> Thoughtful gender analyses have always included men and masculinities [but] the problem arises when simplistic stereotypes of victimized and powerless women on one side and supposedly powerful and violent men on the other predominate. … Work to engage men in gender equality requires careful reflection and analysis to avoid undoing the fragile gains made in empowering women (p. 13).

How men ought to be included in research is a topical issue in reproductive research and an issue is of special concern because reproduction is considered to be a central site of women's dis/empowerment but it is also an area of study in which men have long been overlooked, owing to the woman-focus that dominated reproductive research for many years.

In the following section I give a brief historical overview of the turn to including men in reproductive research, which sheds some light on the origins of the problem perspective that Browner (2005) and others identify as

overshadowing the study of men and male roles in reproduction. I then turn to some contentions in the field of exactly how to include men in reproduction generally and, specifically, how reproductive researchers ought to approach the study of men. This leads to the issue of how gender as a concept is understood and dealt with by researchers and how this affects the ways that men are incorporated in research. I deal with this topic in the section that follows and outline various common approaches to "the man question" in reproductive research, namely the male equality perspective, the men as partners approach and, finally, the gendered and relational perspective.

2.1. The rise of the reproductive health paradigm and the emergence of the problem perspective: a brief look back

The move to include men in reproductive research occurred as a result of the situation of reproduction within the social and cultural context, including the sexual dimension of reproductive behaviour. This broadened focus was largely brought about by the HIV/AIDS pandemic which made it increasingly important to attend to the consequences of sexual activity other than pregnancy—hitherto the chief focus of family planning research—including sexual relations outside of marriage and young people's sexuality. This shift was also given impetus by the women's movement, which supported the agenda of providing women with reproductive health care (Greene & Biddlecom, 2000) and criticised "the over-emphasis on the control of female fertility—and by extension, their sexuality—to the exclusion of their other needs" (AbouZahr, 1999, p.2). Consequently, researchers began to take heed of the social and relational aspects of sexual behaviour, such as people's sexual/reproductive decision-making and negotiation previously obscured in family planning research.   As the focus of reproductive research broadened beyond married heterosexual women's fertility to the contexts in which sex and reproduction occurs, research findings began to point to men's powerful impact on reproductive decisions and, consequently, the need to address gender-based power in reproduction (Blanc, 2001) and to involve men in interventions for the promotion of gender equity.

This changing in focus was encompassed by the now-dominant reproductive health paradigm, which is considered to have officially been ushered into the mainstream by the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). This marked a shift away from family planning and demographic approaches to a rights-based approach. As such, the notion of "reproductive rights" is central to its conceptual framework and makes the socio-political dimension of reproduction explicit. With this shift came a turn to gender issues, particularly the goal of empowering women "to actively participate at all levels of social and economic activity" (Mundigo, 2000, p. 323). This was the main thrust of the 1994 ICPD which championed women's right to

gain greater control over their own bodies by recognizing and enforcing their right to decide if, when and with whom to become pregnant, and how many times to do so without fear of disease or injury, and to have access to safe motherhood and childbearing (Mundigo, 2000, pp. 323 – 324).

The common goal of women's ability to control their own fertility caused an "unexpected partnership" (Greene & Biddlecom, 2000, p. 18) to arise between the women's movement and demography. This goal was held to be both a necessary means of encouraging lower fertility and reducing unwanted/unintended births (Ratcliffe, Hill, Dibba, & Walraven, 2001) and crucial to the objective of women's empowerment (Greene, 2006). Moreover, both parties (the women's movement and demography) similarly identified men as obstacles, either to women's exercise of their fertility preferences or the exercise of their rights (Greene & Biddlecom, 2000) and therefore promoted the consideration of men be considered in research and programming. Thus, we see that initially the case made for the inclusion of men in research rested heavily upon the ways that men (negatively) affected *women's* sexual and reproductive choices. At the outset, male involvement was deemed necessary to meet women's reproductive needs and to promote women's empowerment.

"Male responsibilities and participation" in sexual and reproductive health and the need for increased attention to men was also driven home by the 1994 ICPD conference (Helzner, 1996). The inclusion of men in research, as well as their involvement in sexual and reproductive health, is now not only generally considered to be integral to the social justice goal of gender equity, but it is also considered to be necessary to meeting other reproductive health goals, such as decreasing population growth rates and lowering rates of sexually transmitted infection (especially HIV) (Helzner, 1996). For instance, the ICPD's 20-year Programme of Action enjoins leaders to

promote the full involvement of men in family life and the full integration of women in community life, to ensure equal female-male partnerships, and, in particular, to call attention to men's shared responsibility and to "promote their active involvement in responsible parenthood, sexual and reproductive behavior, including family planning; prenatal, maternal and child health; prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV; [and] prevention of unwanted and high-risk pregnancies (cited in Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2003a, p. 7).

In South Africa, with the appointment of a democratically elected government family planning policy shifted to align with changes in international policy, as adopted at the 1994 International Conference on Population Development (ICPD) held in Cairo. The government agenda is now to empower people to take informed decisions regarding pregnancy, sexual relations and childbearing, as evidenced by the roll out of free condoms and the passing of progressive legislation like the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1996. Remaining consistent with international policy, the current emphasis is on making adequate information available and, importantly, on gender equity. In line with the gender equity agenda, emphasis is laid on involving men in sexual and reproductive decision-making (Cooper *et al.*, 2004).

This development has not been without contention though. As interest in men and masculinities in relation to reproduction has flourished, so too has ambivalence amongst many feminists in the field about the "men agenda" (Cornwall & Esplen, 2010). The ever-growing focus on men, to the exclusion of women some argue, has left many feminist unsettled and "[m]any of those working in the field have remained hesitant, tentative, often hostile to the notion that men might be potential allies in the struggle for gender justice" (Cornwall & Esplen, 2010, p 1).

2.2. Debates about how to include men in reproductive research

The debate on incorporating men into reproductive research is informed by broader discussions on male involvement in reproduction. At the centre of the dispute lies a tension between women's empowerment as a significant outcome of research and the recognition of men's rights as an aim of research. The issue of how to incorporate men into research on reproduction is a thorny one, precisely because women's (reproductive) autonomy is potentially at stake (Berer, 1996; Ertürk, 2004). Originally, as I have outlined above, the spotlight was turned on men as part of the call to include them in working for and supporting women's empowerment. However, Berer (1996) maintains that an imperceptible and overlooked transformation of intention has occurred in reproductive research.

The notion of "reproductive rights", a notion ushered in by the now-dominant reproductive health paradigm and originally used in reference to women's empowerment, has also facilitated a growing emphasis on men's concerns and needs. According to the rights-based approach, reproductive rights are a basic human right and hence men are considered to be valid stakeholders. As a consequence, there has been a steady increase in the publication of research that focuses on exclusively on men (Browner, 2005). The growing focus on men *as men* in the reproductive arena parallels the increasing general interest in men as gendered beings, both within the academy and beyond. In the last two or more decades there has been an increase in research and writings on men as men internationally, that is, on men as gendered beings and not "generic man" (Hearn, 2006). The increased interest in men as gendered beings has been brought about in response to broader socio-political changes, largely driven by the women's movement, and gains made by women. This growing interest can be observed in a range of contexts from conservative Right wing men's movements to more or less critical gender scholarship in gender studies (Smart & Neil, 1999). Within gender studies, the increase in research on men as men has raised questions about how to address men in research, especially from a critical perspective that aims to challenge the current gender order and promote a more equitable society.

The increased attention to men and male roles in reproduction has contributed to concerns that the equity agenda—the original rationale for attending to men in reproductive research—has been marginalised and so

too potentially the actual women whose potential losses in relation to reproduction are often significantly greater than those of men (Berer, 1996; Ertürk, 2004). Many feminist researchers warn that as more attention is paid to men, women's interests are side-lined and gender equity is only a vague, superficial research rationale. A central issue in this regard is how we conceptualise "gender" (as I discuss more fully in chapter three). This is a significant issue because it affects the way that researchers approach men/masculinity in their investigations, as (problematic) variables, according to unquestioned stereotypes, as women's partners and so forth. Though work that claims to adopt a gender perspective is ubiquitous, the way that "gender" is conceptualised is far from uniform. In the following section I shall discuss this issue more fully and then turn to look at two common approaches that reproductive researchers have utilised when investigating men and male roles.

2.3. Conceptualising "gender" and approaches to including men

"Gender" has become a central issue in reproductive research and "an uncontested tool of analysis" (Ertürk, 2004, p.8) over the last decade. This has occurred due to the shift from conceptualising reproduction primarily in terms of "family planning", as a demographic or "women's issue", to viewing it as a gender issue. Consequently, most research, from many disciplines and camps, now incorporates gender as a significant factor (Ertürk, 2004). However, Ertürk (2006) maintains that the

> widespread usage of the concept has, at times, been at the expense of conceptual ambiguities. As a result, it is not always clear what is meant when referring to gender. While it is generally understood that gender refers to the social and cultural values attributed to masculinity and femininity, it is nonetheless, often used interchangeably with the term 'women' or at best to delineate the differences between women and men (p. 8)

The ubiquity of the term "gender" and the abundance of studies purporting to adopt a "gender perspective" often means that the conceptualisation of "gender", and consequently its treatment in research, may vary greatly; ranging for instance from considering it simply as a variable through to seeing it as implicated in power differentials. Some researchers argue that as "gender" has been taken up in the mainstream, it has become depoliticised. According to Ertürk (2004), conceptualisations of "gender" that do not adequately consider the political either tend to over-value women's difference from men or adopt a "sameness of treatment" model. Hence, the way that gender is treated by researcher may deviate from, or even undermine, the aim of empowering women in relation to reproduction. Thus, a concern for feminist researchers is that the marginalisation of women's interests may be compounded by the widespread and uncritical use of "gender perspectives" (Baden & Goetz, 1997; Berer, 1996; 2004). The concern is that women's empowerment has fallen by the wayside because of the depoliticising effect of mainstreaming the gender approach. This has been further complicated by the growing focus on men in reproductive research.

As research on men-as-men has become *de rigueur*, the ways that men have been dealt with by researchers has changed (Ertürk, 2004). Many have turned from a view of men as problems and attempt to acknowledge the potentially positive role that they may play as partners or agents of positive change. The developments in the way that men have been viewed have translated into broad approaches to the study of men in reproductive research (which are not necessarily mutually exclusive). Browner (2005) highlights two recent endeavours to find meaningful ways to conceptualise gender in the context of reproductive health interventions and male roles, namely: (1) the so-called "male equity" approach, which aims to redress the oversight on men and to take a broader view of men's roles than a problem-oriented approach allows; and (2) the "men as partners" framework, which focuses on involving men as instruments of positive change and aims to inform interventions (Browner, 2005; Dudgeon & 2003; Greene, 2002). I shall discuss each of these in turn.

2.3.1. The male equality approach

The male equality approach can be seen as a response to the treatment of men in the problem-perspective. In this approach researchers attempt to address the deficit of male views in research on reproductive matters and to adopt a broader view of men's roles than the problem perspective does, considering men "beyond their roles as women's partners" (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2003a, p.4) and, frequently, "in their own right" (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2003 a & b). Hence, men are considered to have their own reproductive health concerns and, owing to their "marginalisation" in the reproductive health arena in general, their own unmet needs. As I touched upon earlier, such a view is supported by a rights-based approach in which reproductive health is conceptualised as a basic *human* right. Hence, men are seen as entitled to the same rights as women and as equally deserving of reproductive healthcare and any other benefits which women receive in relation to reproduction (Greene, 2002; Greene *et al.*, 2006).

This sameness of treatment ethos is seen in "programmes that have been designed to serve men as reproductive health clients in much the same fashion as women have been served" (Greene, 2001, p. 161). Thus, proponents of this perspective envision men as (potential) reproductive health clients. Some male equality proponents maintain that men's unmet reproductive health needs ought to be addressed *to the same degree* as what women's needs have been. They argue for the extension of current female-centred services to incorporate male clients and the employment of male health workers in these settings (Greene, 2002). This is most evident in research that focuses on men 'in their own right', notably the *Alan Guttmacher Institute's* (AGI) cross-national studies. Researchers of this series of studies aim to ascertain the reproductive health needs of men on a global scale with a view of drawing attention to men as clients. Advocates of this approach also claim that they seek to restore the balance in research, usually by focusing on men. The man-focus is rationalised firstly by the claim that there is a need to rectify the oversight of male roles within the previously woman-

focused reproductive research. Secondly, researchers justify the man-focus by claiming that men's own perspectives and experiences are largely ignored by this research (and research in general). Accordingly, men are frequently constructed as having been forgotten, marginalised, or 'left out of the equation' with regard to reproductive health (Helzner, 1996). For instance Varga (2001) considers men to be the *'The forgotten 50 per cent'* (as the title of this article) while Ratcliffe *et al.,* (2001) speak of men as being "ignored". Some even argue that women's greater control of their fertility, largely due to modern female-controlled methods, has resulted in men's marginalisation from the reproductive arena in which they were previously involved (Edwards, 1994).

Those who utilise this approach envisage a "win-win" (AGI, 2003, p. 4) outcome from focusing on men, maintaining that "the focus on men is absolutely vital in ensuring the sexual and reproductive health of both partners" (Varga, 2001, p. 176). Varga (2001) argues that men's sexual and reproductive health is important "in and of itself, as well as a means toward improving women's wellbeing" (p. 177). This is further justified by the assertion that certain reproductive health issues (e.g., STIs, HIV and unplanned pregnancies) affect men as well as women and, by implication, more or less equally so. Therefore, incorporating men in reproductive research, with a view of including them in the broader reproductive health arena, is seen as beneficial to men themselves, their female partners, their children, and the larger community (Varga, 2001). Hence, though this approach recognises that including men is necessary to assist women, owing to their relative vulnerability in terms of gender-based power, men are also considered to be negatively affected by patriarchal arrangements. This logic appears to follow the current trend in gender studies, specifically critical masculinities studies, which seeks to incorporate men's disadvantage *vis-á-vis* other men into the theorisation of patriarchy (see discussion in Chapter 3).

Thus, while it is recognised that collaboration with men is necessary for women's empowerment (Mundigo, 2000), male involvement in reproduction, research and interventions is frequently seen as an end in itself, that is, as part of the agenda of remedying prior oversight of men. According to Berer (1996), the call for gender equity has increasingly been turned into a call for male involvement and participation in reproductive health, in some cases with little or no reference to women and/or little recognition of the fundamental power difference between women and men. Greene (2002) concurs, stating that

> Cairo's call for gender equity has been misinterpreted by some as advocating a remedial focus on men who have been "excluded" from traditional family planning programmes. The *male equality framework* reflects this reaction in programmes that have been designed to serve men as reproductive health clients in much the same fashion as women have been served (p. 161).

These concerns have arisen in the face of increasing tendency to consider men "in their own right" (See Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2003a & b) and to consider men's reproductive health needs and concerns, often in isolation from, or instead of, women's. This often means that investigations focus on men/masculinity without

considering women/femininity and the relationality of these concepts. Moreover, the achievement of equitable gender relations is simply a by-product or dividend of including men in research. This raises questions of whom reproductive research should ultimately benefit. The following perspective represents the other side of the coin in that it attempts to retain the ICPD ideal of female empowerment by addressing and engaging men as partners, both in the sense of being women's partners as well as in partnering with women to achieve this end goal.

2.3.2. The gender equity approach/Men as partners approach

Researchers who operate within the gender equity approach adopt a gender perspective with the explicit aim of empowering women and attaining gender equity (Rottach, Schuler, & Hardee, 2009). According to Greene (2002) this approach "is the only one that closely reflects the spirit of the ICPD [because] [i]t acknowledges the fundamental role men play in supporting women's reproductive health and in transforming the social roles that constrain reproductive health and rights" (p. 4). The primary task of such research is to inform programmes that aim to include men in this goal in various capacities, such as community leaders and partners. These programmes seek to address gender dynamics and many also concentrate of assisting men to question their gender roles in terms of the advantages and disadvantages that these bring them (see Rottach *et al.* (2009) for a review of such interventions).

Most notable within this approach, and prominent in South Africa, is the "men as partners" framework, which acknowledges the ways that men contribute to women's sexual and reproductive health as well as men's own needs (Brown, 2005). Research in this area is aimed at informing ways to engage men constructively in various reproductive health issues, such as maternal and child health (e.g., Mullick, Kunene, & Wanjiru, 2005), including the prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV and other forms of HIV transmission, as well as other gendered issues that impact on it, such as gender based violence (e.g., Greig, Peacock, & Jewkes, 2008; Jewkes, Sikweyiya, Morrell, & Dunkle , 2009; Peacock & Levack, 2004; Stern, Peacock, & Alexander, 2009). However, the advocacy of "positive masculinity" by some who adopt this approach (e.g., Stern *et al.,* 2009) could be seen as accommodating gender differences, albeit in a disguised form (Rottach *et al.*, 2009).

This work is largely focused on informing policies and programmes, such as the Men as Partners (MAP) programme (see Peacock & Levack, 2004), the Mobilising Young Men To Care (MYMTC) project (see Greene, White, & Murphy, 2006) and the Men in Maternity Care Study (see Mullick *et al.,* 2005), all South African interventions. (See Rottach *et al.,* 2009 for an assessment of these and other similar programmes; see also Green, White, & Murphy, 2006.) Consequently, research concentrates less on male involvement and mostly comprises of reports concerning the evaluation of family planning services and recommendations of ways to

expand these to incorporate men (Sturnberg & Hubely, 2004). Though this approach attempts to find meaningful ways to conceptualise gender in the reproductive health context, it is limited and many of the interventions remain man-focused. As Figueroa-Perea (2003) states, "It is not sufficient to consider the participation of men within the health of women; rather, men should be thought of as actors with sexuality, health, reproductive, and concrete needs that should be considered, in their interaction with women and in their own specific right" (p. 114). Instead he maintains that we must adopt a gendered approach that "seeks to explain processes of exclusion (both of men and women) in the study of reproduction and related experiences" (p. 114) and takes into consideration "the relational, social, and potentially conflictive nature of sexualized reproduction" (p. 113). This is the aim of the gendered and relational approach, advocated by Figueroa-Perea (2003), which I discuss next.

2.3.3. A gendered and relational approach

According to Figueroa-Perea (2003) a gendered and relational approach

> recognizes that tensions, conflicts, and disagreements between men and women exist within an environment where multiple actors playing different roles influence reproduction. A more accurate analysis of men's presence in reproductive health would situate them in specific heterogeneous contexts, so as to avoid single and simplistic readings of a process as complex as reproduction. This alternative means of analyzing reproduction as a gender relational process and not as isolated events for men and women, simultaneously recovers the specific sexual and reproductive characteristics of men and women (Figueroa-Perea, 2003, p. 114).

Central to this approach is the awareness of gender as a relational concept, often lacking in the other two approaches that I have already outlined above. In this view, as Barker *et al.* (2010) state, "Gender as a concept refers to masculinities *and* femininities, women *and* men, the relations between them, and the structural context that reinforces and creates these power relations" (p. 10). This speaks to a key concern in this thesis of striking a balance between ensuring that women, and the goals of women's empowerment and gender equity, are not side-lined and including men in a more nuanced way not only as women's partners but also as stakeholders in their own right (Figueroa-Perea, 2003)—albeit who generally enjoy greater power and freedom in reproductive decision-making and in general. This means researching men as gendered beings, in such a way as to guard against (re)excluding women and finding meaningful ways of researching male involvement in reproductive processes and decisions that are not politically reductive. According to Barker *et al.* (2010), it is possible to draw attention to the vulnerabilities and needs faced by men, especially as a result of gender, without equating these with women's challenges or undermining the global, aggregate power imbalance between women and men. These researchers maintain that

> It is possible to acknowledge all of these issues simultaneously without reinforcing a hydraulic view of gender relations in which giving attention to men is seen as taking away from women and vice versa. … The problem arises when simplistic stereotypes of victimized and powerless women on one side and supposedly powerful and violent men on the other predominate (Barker *et al*., 2010, p. 13).

Thoughtful gender analysis is important in light of the ubiquity of so-called gender perspectives and concerns that have been raised about retaining an awareness of gender equity. Since the gendered and relational approach utilises a power-based framework that takes cognisance of the reciprocal and interdependent nature of sexual and reproductive partnerships (Figueroa-Perea, 2003), it is useful in avoiding undertaking an analysis of men and masculinity which excludes women and femininity. In this view, masculinity and femininity are formed and maintained in couples' negotiations around parenthood decisions and power differences are also constructed interactionally (Brandth & Kavande, 1998). In this research I attempt to work from a gendered and relational perspective in order to ensure that women are not marginalised from the account. In the ensuing text, I shall outline how I set about achieving this.

3. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

In the next chapter (Chapter 2) I review relevant literature, which considers work that might shed some light on the under-researched area of male involvement in parenthood-decision-making, showing how this perspective is certainly needed to address some of the gaps in the research. I then go on to discuss how such a perspective might be forged, looking at theoretical frameworks that could support such a view. In Chapter 3, I critically discuss the popular (critical) masculinities studies framework and introduce an alternative theoretical framework in the form of Butler's (1990) performativity theory that I argue may be more successful in promoting a gendered and relational perspective. In Chapter 4, I deal with some of the critiques of Butlerian theory and suggest a way of extending it that addresses the problems that have been pointed out. This extension involves extending the notion of "performance" in order to supplement it with Butler's (1990a) notion of "performativity". In Chapters 5, I show how performance-oriented work in narrative inquiry is useful in this regard, in particular the narrative-discursive method. Chapter 6 deals with the application of this method. I explicate the data collection and analysis procedures and other practical aspects of the research. Chapters 7 to 10 present the analysis and discussion, which begins by situating the findings within the immediate discursive context of the project. I then go on to show how it shaped the participant's narratives especially with regard to how the topic was framed by the research questions and how this created a silence in relation to the central problematic, which I reflect on in the final chapter (Chapter 11) of this thesis.

2
Review of Literature

1. INTRODUCTION

Little is known about why, and especially how, men become parents, as I discussed in the preceding chapter and research specific to men's parenthood decision-making is limited. However, there are studies that contain elements that are relevant to this topic (Peterson & Jenni, 2005). In this chapter I review available literature that is pertinent to men's involvement in parenthood decisions, that is, the initial decision(s) to become a parent (or lack thereof) and decisions that flow from this (e.g., timing of parenthood). I begin by addressing research that in some way addresses men's reasons for wanting to be a parent or to have children. This may include men's perspectives, motivations and desires for conception and fatherhood. I then go on to examine literature that considers how people go about deciding to become parents and men's involvement in this in the second part of this chapter. Since the parenthood decision-making process has not been well-researched research empirically (Rijken & Knijn, 2009), especially not by qualitative methods, I consider more general research on reproductive decision-making within the heterosexual couple context. I give priority to research that adopts a gender perspective in order to consider the ways in which researchers have addressed gender power imbalances that are a result of patriarchal norms. In so doing, I take into account how researchers have identified contextual differences in woman/man power relationships. In the third and final part of this chapter I go on to look at studies that have been conducted on couple communication and decision-making. Communication is a concern with regard to the research problematic, since decision-making, certainly within the couple context, requires some sort of communication, whether active, verbal, and direct or passive, non-verbal, and indirect (Fennell, 2006).

2. REASONS FOR WANTING TO BECOME A PARENT/TO HAVE A CHILD

Despite global reductions in fertility rates, parenthood remains a significant life goal in most societies though the underlying motives for parenthood may vary between individuals and societies (Nauk, 2007; Nauk & Klaus, 2007). Peterson and Jenni(2005) maintain that"[s]everal authors have attempted to identify and categorise motivational factors for procreative behaviour" (p. 353). These include, social expectation, own childhood experiences, conceptualisations of children, and so on. In this respect, there is a body of work, mostly of European origin, that concentrates on the costs and rewards attached to parenthood, which was introduced by Hoffmann and Hoffman's (1973) study on the value of children. According to Hoffman and Hoffman (1973, cited in Nauk & Klaus, 2009), "The value of children refers to the functions [children] serve or the needs they fulfil for parents" (p. 488). Studies on the perceived costs and rewards usually measure people's perceptions with standardised questionnaires, and connect these either to childbearing desires and intentions or actual

childbearing behaviour (Rijken & Knijn, 2009). (See Liefbroer (2005) for an overview of the value-of-children literature.)

However, according to Dyer *et al.*'s (2008) speculation on the apparent differences in motivations for parenthood between different settings (especially with regard to the social meanings of parenthood) is limited by the scarcity of African research on the subject. Given the scarcity of formal (qualitative) research on "parenthood motives", as discussed in Chapter 1, it is necessary to look at research that addresses the topic to some degree, or indirectly. In the following section I turn to:(1) research that considers pronatalism, which as I shall show is interlinked with child value in fundamental ways;(2) a body of research that focuses on the "transition to fatherhood" (or parenthood more generally);(3) research that shows the normative assumptions about parenthood; and, finally, (4) studies that explore the linkage of gender constructions with paternity.

2.1. Pronatalism and the value of children

Meyers (2001) attributes the taken-for-grantedness of parenthood, discussed above, to pervasive pronatalist discourse, which renders parenthood as something incontrovertibly valued and desired. She—and several others (e.g., Park, 2002; Sevón, 2005)—maintains that the discursive setting in which decisions about having children are made is profoundly pronatalist. Pronatalism may consequently affect parenthood decisions on many levels, as Heitlinger (1991, cited in Park, 2002) asserts in the following:

> [Pronatalism] implies encouragement of all births as conducive to individual, family and social well-being. Pronatalism can then be seen as operating on several levels: culturally, when childbearing and motherhood are perceived as "natural" and central to a woman's identity; ideologically, when the motherhood mandate becomes a patriotic, ethnic or eugenic obligation; psychologically, when childbearing is identified with the micro level of personal aspirations, emotions and rational (or irrational) decision-making (by women or couples)[;] . . . and on the level of population policy, when the state intervenes, directly or indirectly, in an attempt to regulate the dynamics of fertility and to influence its causes and consequences. (p. 22)

It is possible to see therefore that pronatalism works at the socio-cultural as well as the (inter)personal levels, but whatever level it operates on, it is characterised by the valorisation of children and reproduction. In general, pronatalist discourse dictates that having children is natural, personally fulfilling, and desirable (Meyers, 2001; Park, 2002). Such a construction of procreation is often bolstered by religious discourses. Nationalistic value may also be ascribed to children in certain contexts, as in apartheid South Africa where "White" Afrikaans women were cast as the mothers of the nation (*volksmoeders)* and encouraged to procreate (Corrêa, 1994; Vincent, 2000). Pronatalism may then be defined "as a political, ideological, or religious project to encourage childbearing" (Brown & Feree, 2005, p. 8). This project proceeds not only by valorising reproduction, but also by marginalising those who do not reproduce and assigning lower status to such individuals, thereby discrediting experiences that seek to redefine the norm (Gillespie, 2000). Therefore, as Park (2002) asserts, "The persistence of pronatalist beliefs is evident in the negative evaluations of the

voluntarily childless" (p. 23). This is documented in a number of studies, especially those that report on the stigma experienced by both involuntarily and voluntarily "childless" women (e.g., Agrillo & Nellini, 2008; Byrne, 2000; Carmichael & Whittaker, 2007; Gillespie, 2000; Letherby, 1999, Letherby, 2002; Mollen, 2006; Morell, 2000; Remennick, 2000; Riessman 2000; Riessman, 2002b; Rowlands & Lee, 2006; Wager, 2000).

Since a major feature of pronatalism is the positive meaning that is ascribed to children themselves, research on the value of children is relevant. Cross-cultural research of this kind indicates that the worth assigned to children may be culturally variable and that prospective parents are seen to modify their decisions about family size and composition according to their perceptions of children's worth and utility, which includes psychological, social, and economic value (Nauk, 2007; Nauk & Klaus, 2007). In poorer or "developing" settings people may desire children to contribute to the household, especially economically (Hussain, 2003). African research suggests that successful human reproduction plays a considerable role in the social context where fertility is frequently associated with social status and wealth. "Childlessness" therefore bears with it negative social repercussions (Dyer *et al.,* 2008). In contrast, in wealthier, westernised and industrialised settings research suggests that children are mostly be desired for the positive emotional rewards that they bring (Nauk & Klaus, 2007). There is some suggestion that in such contexts "the most important rewards of having a child are psychological in nature and the major costs are financial and career related . . . [therefore] emotional-affective motivations are of overriding importance" (Rijken & Knijn, 2009, p. 771). Hence, the value placed on children and on procreative heterosexuality is articulated according to the particular situated socio-cultural norms and values of specific contexts.

In relation to fertility intentions and motivations, much of the literature (particularly Anthropological and Demographic) in developing countries considers the effects of pronatalism (e.g., Greene & Biddlecom, 2000; Hoga, Alcântara, & de Lima 2001; Dudgeon& Inhorn, 2003) and sub-Saharan Africa (e.g., Greene *et al.*, 2006), where larger families are desired. Most of these studies compare women's and men's fertility preferences and, as Greene and Biddlecom (2000) state, work on the "longstanding assumption . . . that men want more children than women do" (p. 107). These researchers maintain that the stereotype of men as (more) pronatalistic can be seen in the kinds of questions that researchers ask. For instance, they state that research questions are hardly ever posed to investigate whether women may thwart men's use of contraception or, even more rarely, that men might obstruct *women* who want to have more children (Greene & Biddlecom, 2000).

Following this assumption, relatively more work has been done on pronatalism among men with regard to fertility preferences, mostly because of stereotypes about men that promote the belief that pronatalist desires greatly affect men's intentions and desires for childbearing (Greene, 2002). Much of this research considers

pronatalism as a factor that influences men's reproductive goals and fertility preferences—usually in relation to family size and composition. Findings show that men are inclined to want bigger families and to desire sons, but that this varies across contexts (Greene & Biddlecom, 2000). However, for the most part, Greene and Biddlecom (2000) maintain that the fertility preferences of men as a group are quite similar to those of women. As far as differences or disagreement goes at the couple level, they maintain that this may be owing to the fact that women and men may have "critically different vested interests in childbearing decisions" (p. 108).

If undertaken critically, research on pronatalism not only potentially highlights men's motivations and desires for paternity, but also demonstrates how choices about childbearing are bound up with sexuality and gender identity (Meyers, 2001).The assumption that men ordinarily desire more children than women do is linked to constructions of appropriate masculinity as associated with virility and potency (Dixon-Mueller, 1993) and traditional meanings of fatherhood, which entail the fathering of children until the desired number of sons/children is achieved (Chapagain, 2006). For example, Dyer *et al.,* (2004) report some of their male respondents' claims in this respect: "`You feel like you are half a man' one patient said. And another one explained: `You see, you are a man because you have children. But if you don't have children some other guys say you are a woman'" (p. 963).

Constructions of "real manhood" and "true fatherhood", which are related to notions of potency and virility, may certainly play a role in men's decisions related to parenthood as men also often face the competing need to reduce the burden of masculine responsibility in the form of financial provision (Chapagain, 2006; Hussain 2003). For example, Chapagain (2006) claims that in her study "some men were trapped between the traditional meaning of fatherhood and perceived gender roles and responsibilities" (p. 185), meaning that men felt torn between producing many children (especially sons) and meeting their families' needs, especially financially. This conundrum may influence decisions around the number of births, timing and spacing in that men feel compelled to limit the number of children in order to provide for them or to space them out so that the burden is eased somewhat. I some settings people may try to postpone childbearing until they are financially established, but this might also curb family size (Klaus, 2007).

Some research has challenged the stereotype of men as more pronatalist than women, as studies, particularly of a qualitative variety, indicate that there are not profound differences between women's and men's reproductive preferences (Agadjanian, 2002). Greene & Biddlecom (2000), for instance, argue that most studies conducted in developing contexts that compare women and men at the aggregate level (i.e., as a group) generally indicate little disparity between women's and men's preferences. Though this does not rule out couple level disputes, they state, it also does not mean that it is necessarily the male partner who is more

pronatalist. Rather, researchers argue that pronatalism is widespread and has different effects in various settings (Agadjanian, 2002; Greene & Biddlecom, 1997).

In this respect, Agadjanian (2005) reports that in his study, conducted in the peri-urban areas of Maputo (Mozambique), women and men attached different meanings to reproduction and contraception. According to Agadjanian (2005), men's expressions of pronatalist sentiments were not necessarily related to the desire for more children, but instead pronatalist rhetoric functioned as a strategy for asserting dominance over women, particularly when faced with challenges to their economic authority in the home. Agadjanian (2005) maintains that while gender differences in the expression of reproductive intentions tended to be relatively subtle, contraceptive use often functioned as an openly gender-contested terrain. He reports that men's frequent opposition to their partners' contraceptive use often directly contradicted their approval of family planning in principle. This can be attributed to men's preoccupation with retaining their exclusive decision-making privileges. Moreover, he adds, negative gender stereotypes may be exacerbated by "culturally constrained distances and miscommunication between partners" (Agadjanian, 2005, p. 640). Hence, the assumption of men as pronatalist barriers in decision-making and reproductive behaviours is generally unsubstantiated and "spousal disagreement may be more related to the lack of communication between spouses rather than being a meaningfully articulated opposition of one spouse to the other's desires" (Greene & Biddlecom, 2000, p. 109). (I shall address this matter at a later point.)

In addition, women may even express more pronatalistic sentiments than men, as other qualitative studies have shown (e.g., Chapagain, 2006; Gipson & Hindin, 2007; Hussain, 2003). These studies underscore the fact that female and male partners may "have critically different vested interests in childbearing decisions" (Greene & Biddlecom, 1992). Moreover, this may also be related to gender preference. For example, some studies in India, a highly gender segregated context where women's economic activity is severely limited, women may express pronatalist attitudes because of a need for a male child who will provide old-age security and social status, as well as to please their husbands for whom a son represents the perpetuation of family lineage or assistance with work (Hussain, 2003). Hence, Agadjanian (2002) cautions against simplistic consideration of the effects of pronatalist discourse, maintaining that

> much like women's, men's reproductive attitudes and preferences are a complex and often contradictory mixture of dominant gender stereotypes, traditional pronatalist views, new antinatalist aspirations, and perceptions of health and other costs of fertility regulation (p. 212).

Thus, research that adopts a critical gender perspective shows how reproductive choices are regulated by the broader socio-cultural gender scripts (Meyers, 2001). For instance, Meyers (2001) considers the effect of pronatalist discourse on women's choices about childbearing and motherhood, considering how these are

bound up with sexuality and gender identity. (See also Agrillo & Nellini (2008); Haelyon (2006); Park (2002); Remennick (2000) on motherhood choices in pronatalist contexts.)

Meyers (2001) reviews a number of qualitative studies and identifies "patterns in women's comments that show up across [these] studies" (p. 746). She argues that though "motherhood decisions are now surrounded by a highly voluntaristic rhetoric … women's decisions about childbearing and motherhood are seldom as autonomous as they could be" (Meyers, 2001, p. 736). This she attributes to the effects of pronatalist discourses, which highlight the attractions of motherhood while obscuring its costs. As a consequence, motherhood appears to be the only real choice for (heterosexual, middle-class, able-bodied, financially secure, "White") women. "Where there is only one real option and no genuine choice," Meyers (2001) states, "there is no autonomy" (p. 753). In general, Meyers (2001) contends that when it comes to parenthood decisions, "nonchalance seems to be the rule. Most people presume that children are necessary to personal fulfilment and never consider not having children" (p. 746). Of course, a study that includes men's perspectives and experiences might shed light on any significant gendered differences. Nevertheless, the connection Meyers (2001) makes between pronatalism and cultural expectations around the appropriate adult (heterosexual) life path appears to be substantiated by other findings, which I address in the following section.

2.2. Normative assumptions of parenthood

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, the taken for granted nature of heterosexual procreation has meant that "normal" heterosexual people's reasons for becoming parents and the choices that are associated with this has generally not been considered in research. However, in some studies of healthy heterosexuals' reproductive intentions (also referred to as preferences or desires; e.g., Agadjanian, 2005), respondents' replies indicate the centrality, and taken-for-grantedness, of childbearing as a part of mature adulthood. For example, in Gipson and Hindin's (2007) qualitative study in south-western Bangladesh, one female participant attempted to explain the lack of communication on contraceptive issues between her and her partner by citing the inevitability of childbearing within the marital partnership. She said, "Marriage means having children and forming your family, so what is the need of discussion?" (p. 196). Gipson and Hindin (2007) use this as illustration of how "the idea of not communicating with one's spouse about these issues seemed more normative" (p. 196). However, the participant's reasoning—that childbearing was expected upon marriage and therefore not really a choice—also highlights unquestioned heteronormative expectations of the acceptable and expected life course, as discussed in the preceding chapter.

Parenthood may therefore be viewed as a prescribed stage of the heterosexual life course and even an essential characteristic of mature adulthood, as some research indicates. In *The Status of the Youth Report*

based on the survey conducted in South Africa by Emmett *et al.* (2004), for example, parenthood was considered to be a defining feature of adulthood by more than 70 *per cent* of young women and men[3]. The researchers report "a high level of consensus among men and women on the characteristics necessary to adulthood" (p. 37), but also note that

> young women tended to place slightly more emphasis than young men on such characteristics as supporting and running households, caring for and bearing children . . . [while] [y]oung men, on the other hand, tended to place greater emphasis on keeping one's family safe . . . and having at least one child (p. 37).

Though these differences were slight, they suggest the influence of traditional gender norms. Morrell and Richter (2006) comment on this study, stating that these results could also be seen as an expression by both women *and* men of a desire to be good parents. Nevertheless, they also indicate the centrality of parenthood in the progression to adulthood and its association with gendered normality. In other words, having children might signal adult status but this has different meanings for women and men. For instance, Glaser's (1992/2000 cited in Denis & Ntsimane, 2006) investigations of *tsotsi* subculture in Johannesburg, South Africa, showed that fathering many children granted *tsotsis* the prestige and status accorded to adult men. These young men could then consider themselves to be "real men". (I shall return to this issue when I discuss the impact of gender constructions on men's desire for parenthood.)

The importance of appearing to be a "normal" adult woman or man by becoming a parent is corroborated by Throsby and Gill's (2004) findings. Their study links the desire to become a parent with discourses of gendered normality. It was conducted with heterosexual couples who were undergoing fertility treatment. Hence, these participants could be said to fall into an "abnormal" group in which people's motives to become parents are salient. Contrary to Dyer's *et al.'s* (2008) claim that fertility problems may produce reflection on the desire to become a parent, the researchers note the lack of expression of an active desire for a child and claim that "neither male nor female participants were able to articulate clearly why they wanted children, arguing that is was simply a natural and obvious progression" (p. 335). These participants were unable to articulate their motivations for parenthood beyond expressing the desire to appear "normal" and reported feeling distressed when people made the assumption that their childlessness was voluntary. The researchers state, "a theme that runs through the interviews is not the desire to parent but the construction of themselves as normal, in spite of their childlessness, where normality is always normatively determined according to conventional understandings of masculinity and femininity" (p. 335). Throsby and Gill's (2004) participants' motives therefore seemed to be linked more to the potential stigma associated with those who fail to reproduce,

---

[3]Respondents were asked about their "perceptions of the characteristics that have to be achieved before an individual can be considered an adult" (p. 35). The top-ranked items were those that included various aspects of parenthood, including being capable of: supporting one's family (72.7%); keeping one's family safe (72.2%); running a household (71.8%); and caring for children (70.1%). Hence, In contrast, "being married" and "having sexual intercourse" were ranked 15th and 16th respectively with only 40% of the sample considering these as important for determining adult status.

particularly in relation to their gender identity. Male participants in this study reported being ridiculed and having their potency questioned due to the inability to impregnate their partners.

As Meyers (2001) asserts, because childlessness is generally viewed negatively, as implying defect and ensuring dissatisfaction, parenthood choices may therefore also be motivated by fears of the consequences of *not* having children, rather than (or as well as) the perceived benefits of having them. Likewise, Dyer *et al.* (2008) state that in African contexts "parenthood motives" tend to be linked to the role that reproduction plays in the social context (e.g., social status), while childlessness entails negative social consequences. Cooper *et al.* (2007) maintain that childlessness was seen as an undesirable option that often carries negative social consequences for both women and men, though these researchers also report gender differences as impacting people's reproductive intentions. Both women and men perceived their adult status to be enhanced through childbearing, but women were more pressured than men by "partner and family expectations or societal norms regarding fertility and family formation" (p. 281) and that these "counterbalance[ed] HIV as a factor discouraging reproduction" (p. 274). Therefore, though there is little research on people's motivations to become parents, some findings of studies that explore reproductive intentions, preferences or desires suggest that notions of gendered normality play a role. In the following sub-section I turn to research that explicitly pays attention to the role of gender constructions and men's experiences and ideas about what fatherhood entails as an influence upon their desire to have children.

2.3. The "transition to fatherhood"

In the last two decades there has been a steadily growing body of research around issues related to men's "transition to fatherhood" (Peterson & Jenni, 2005). Working within this tradition, some have attempted to consider men's perspectives of parenthood decisions and the process of becoming parents. This represents the underdeveloped branch of research on fatherhood *qua* fathers. In sociological and psychological literature on fathering this often entails an attempt to understand how the "transition to fatherhood" is lived and understood by men (Throsby & Gill, 2004). Many of these studies concentrate on men's lived experiences and understandings of fatherhood as a major life event (Throsby & Gill, 2004) and focus on pregnancy and childbirth processes (Marsiglio, 2003). As I touched on in Chapter 1, much of this work does not problematise normative expectations of parenthood within the "normal" life trajectory. It centres on biological procreation, often regarding parenthood as a milestone within the "normal" heterosexual life trajectory or as a rite of passage (Draper, 2003). Furthermore, this work usually deals with the impact of this "transition" on men and their female partners and often only considers men who are already parents.

Some of this research also considers teenaged and younger men, and men who are about to or have just become parents (e.g., Strauber, 2009; Johnson & Williams, 2005).There is less research on how (young) men who are not (yet) fathers envision fatherhood and children (Marsiglio, 2003). This gap is addressed by Marsiglio, who writes prolifically on gender, fatherhood, and sexuality from a social psychological perspective (see for e.g., Marsiglio 1993, 1995, 1998, 2003). He and several colleagues, conduct qualitative research on men's ideas, expectations, perspectives about anticipated fatherhood and fathering in general (e.g., Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000; Marsiglio, Hutchinson, & Cohan, 2000; Marsiglio, Hutchinson, & Cohan, 2001). For example, Marsiglio, Hutchinson, and Cohan, (2000) investigated young men's sense of their "procreative consciousness" and "procreative responsibility" (p. 136 - 137). These researchers interviewed "childfree" men (aged 16 – 30 years) about how they "envision aspects of fatherhood [looking specifically at]: sense of readiness for becoming fathers *(fatherhood readiness);* and views about the ideal fathering experience, images of the good or ideal father, and visions of future fathering experiences *(fathering visions)"* (p 133). Work such as this is useful in that it shows that men are more invested in fatherhood than is commonly believed. It also helpfully debunks the cultural stereotype of men as emotionally disengaged from parenthood decisions—a belief which has long served to justify and perpetuate men's lack of active involvement in decision-making (Greene & Biddlecom, 2000).

However, this work often appears to be influenced by adult developmental theory. The strong developmental perspective in this work means that these researchers frequently treat parenthood decisions as part of a phase of the normal (heterosexual) life course as a "transition from an adolescent to an adult identity" (Marsiglio, Hutchinson, & Cohen, 2001, p. 129) and do not consider their participants' desire to become parents in the first place (e.g., Marsiglio *et al,* 2000). Furthermore, the heterocentricity of this work is revealed by the fact that sexual orientation is only overtly referred to when participants are homosexual, as in Berkowitz and Marsiglio's (2008) study on gay men and fatherhood.

Barclay and Lupton (Barclay & Lupton, 1997; Lupton & Barclay, 1999) maintain that many researchers tend to represent culture as an external influence on fathers rather than seeing fatherhood itself as a socio-cultural construction. Research that attends to social construction of maternity and paternity potentially allows us to question the deeply entrenched presumptions about women's and men's relationship to reproduction (e.g. Daniels, 2001). One such study is Lupton and Barclay's (1997) widely-cited sociological investigation. This work explores the socio-cultural and symbolic meanings of fatherhood in contemporary Western societies. It forms part of a body of discursive work that explores men's accounts of anticipated fatherhood and their early fatherhood experiences in relation to the broader context of socially and culturally constructed meanings, not simply as discrete sets of individual beliefs. The researchers conducted a broad-ranging exploration of

Australian men's discourses and experiences of fatherhood. The researchers report that the representation of fatherhood as "natural" was a dominant discourse among men who were interviewed about their anticipation of fatherhood. They maintain that fatherhood

> was rarely represented as a 'choice'. Rather, the participants described it as an inevitable and logical step for them in their relationships with their partners and part of their own development as an adult man . . . Having children was 'a normal thing to do' according to Simon, or as Ewan commented, 'it's just a natural progression'" (Lupton & Barclay, 1997, p. 119).

The participants also claimed that they had always imagined that they would one day become a father, and that the only question was of *when* this would occur, rather than *if* it would. Furthermore, they state that "non-fatherhood was not described as an option by any of our participants" (Lupton & Barclay, 1997, p. 119).

Some other similar critical investigations have been conducted within discursive psychology. These studies analyse men's "imaginary positions" (Edley & Wetherell, 1999, p. 181) or "identificatory imaginings" (Finn & Henwood, 2009, p. 547) of first-time fatherhood. (See also Henwood & Proctor, 2003). They explicitly situate younger British men's accounts within "contemporary sociocultural transformations in masculinity and fatherhood" (Henwood & Proctor, 2003, p. 337). In Edley and Wetherell's (1999) study, for instance, 17 to 18-year-old British male students "were invited to look forward to their future romantic and domestic lives" (p. 181). The researchers report that although a wide variety of stories emerged, there were a number of clear patterns, including the fact that almost all of the participants envisioned themselves as getting married and having children. The researchers do not report whether these young men stated their motives for fatherhood; rather they report that fatherhood was spoken of as an inevitable life-stage rather than a choice. In addition, these enquiries highlight how men's reports of their expectations of first-time fatherhood were mediated by "their relationship to the gender order" (Henwood & Procter, 2003, p. 341). These discursive studies resonate with a growing body of research that explicitly considers the relationship of fatherhood to manhood, including the effect that constructions of gender may have on men's parenthood decisions. I shall discuss this work next.

2.4. Gender constructions and meanings assigned to paternity

Some researchers have identified the socially constructed meanings assigned to parenthood as significant with regard to parenthood decision-making (Peterson & Jenni, 2005). This research explores the connection between masculinity and fatherhood and is often conducted within a masculinities studies framework. Hence, fatherhood is seen as socially constructed and integral to the construction of masculinity. This research does not, however, directly explore male roles in reproductive decision-making, especially with regard to the initial undertaking of deciding to become a father. Research that considers the interconnection between fatherhood and manhood often overlooks decision-making prior to conception (Peterson & Jenni, 2005). There are some findings that may be relevant to the topic of parenthood decision-making, however.

In South Africa, advocacy work by Richter, Morrell and colleagues stands out. It represents an attempt to address the deficit of research on fathers and fatherhood and the tendency for researchers to overlook the socially constructed nature of fatherhood. This was the rationale for the formation of *The Fatherhood Project,* which was initiated in 2003 by the *Human Sciences Research Council's* (*HSRC*) Child, Youth and Family Development programme (see Richter (2004) for more information). A noteworthy output of this project is the pioneer text published in 2006, *Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa*, edited by Linda Richter and Robert Morrell*.* This edited volume takes an overall gender perspective (most notably displayed in Morrell's contributions in which he utilises Masculinities Studies theoretical framework). It assembles both empirical and interpretive research and analysis on aspects of social life, gender, families, children and men, including a range of chapters on theoretical, ideological, policy, and programmatic issues around fatherhood. This text has recently been followed up by the monograph, *Teenage Tata: Voices of young fathers in South Africa,* which aims to build on the previous work and to document the experiences of teenaged fathers living in the context of chronic and pervasive poverty (Swartz & Bhana, 2009). These works are significant not only because they attempt to address the dearth of literature on fatherhood in South Africa (Richter, 2009), especially from a gendered perspective, but also because they incorporate men's own experiences, hitherto largely undocumented (Swartz & Bhana, 2009).

The work of masculinities scholar Robert Morrell is prominent in this corpus. Morrell's work explicitly connects fatherhood and masculinity, considering how fatherhood is based on understandings of what it means to be a man within a particular context (Eagar, 2006). Though he does not explore male roles in reproductive decision-making, his work on fatherhood usefully sheds some light on men's fatherhood choices and thereby illuminates potential avenues for future research. In investigating the link between fatherhood and manhood, Morrell (2006) also highlights the potentially deleterious consequences of the view of fatherhood as a means of attaining the status and privileges of full manhood. He questions the importance of biological fatherhood/parenthood, which is privileged over social parenthood, so that people often feel pressured to produce their "own" children (Morrell, 2005 & 2006; see also Mkhize(2004) on this).

Richter (2009) maintains that a common thread in the research in *Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa* is the frequent association of ideal fatherhood with the traditional construction of father as provider. She claims that this demonstrates that a father's ability to provide materially for his children is central to constructions of fatherhood for many South Africans. This particular gender construction may impact on the decisions that men make in relation to parenthood. For example, Morrell (2006) cites poverty as a major reason that many men fail to take up the father role. He claims that, "Fathers who are unable to meet what they consider to be the father's responsibility to provide for their family, are more likely to deny or flee the father role" (p. 20). Hence,

the ability to be a "good" father in these terms may not necessarily influence men's initial choice to become a father but only impacts their fathering practices, as other research has also suggested. For instance, Datta (2007) asserts that

> Hegemonic constructions of masculinities are intimately related to sexual prowess such that the biological fathering of children is a vital marker of male virility and masculinity as is the ability to provide for the economic needs of children, and families at large. Indeed, the performance of these functions is critical to the construction of successful masculinities such that a failure to fulfil these roles may cause men to retreat from such responsibilities (p. 98).

This suggests the strong influence of gender norms where the expectations of men and women affect the options available to them. Thus, the failure to comply with traditional gender norms that render the good father as one who provides may not dissuade men from having children in the first place, but it may affect whether they choose to enact the role of father once children are born.

While this dominant construction (father as provider) may not influence the initial parenthood decision (whether to become a father), it may impact on associated decisions. As I mentioned in the discussion of pronatalism above, some research suggests that expectations related to constructions of manhood and the fatherhood role may affect decisions associated with fatherhood, such as timing or family size and composition (Roy, 2006; Morrell, 2006). Men may be caught between competing constructions of manhood. Some men report experiencing a conflict between traditional definitions of masculinity, which define manhood according to the ability to produce (many) children, and perceived gender roles and responsibilities, including provision for one's family (Morrell, 2006). Accordingly, in settings where large families are valued, the male role of provider is challenged if men are unable to provide for their family. For example, for some Nepalese men limiting the number of children facilitates the fulfilment of their perceived responsibilities, most significantly providing economically, but producing more children in order to have at least one son proves "true" fatherhood and full manhood (Chapagain, 2006).

Other than the fact that this work fails to investigate male roles in relation to parenthood decision-making, it may also be limited in other respects. Richter (2009) asserts that the South African research on fatherhood discussed above represents a starting point for future research and, indeed, this work may be limited to some degree by the adoption of a problem-oriented approach (as discussed in the previous chapter). The general focus in these works is on impoverished "Black" men, especially within the context of HIV. Father absenteeism is a major theme throughout Morrell and Richter's (2006) volume, especially in "Black" households (Swartz & Bhana, 2009). As I have argued, although it may be contended that such research is representative of the general population (*cf.* Swartz & Bhana. 2009), the invisible norm constituted by the "White" middle class remains uninterrrogated (see Chapter 1).

Furthermore, the agenda of much of the work that concentrates on fatherhood and "masculinities" (which I shall discuss in the following chapter) is "to reshape fatherhood" (Datta, 2007, p. 97) and to produce more positive renditions of masculinity (Morell, 2005). According to Datta (2007), "the re-negotiation of gender roles, relations and responsibilities in the reproductive sphere relies upon changing masculinities and the meaningful integration of men as husbands/partners and fathers into the household and family" (p. 97). Similarly, Morrell (2005) states that "when fatherhood is woven as a desirable feature into the fabric of masculinity, everybody benefits" (Morrell, 2005, p. 86). Morrell (2006) cautions against assumptions related to "the absent father argument" (p. 18), pointing to the difficulty of ascertaining the supposed negative effects of a biological father's physical absence on children, the fact that a father's presence can be detrimental, and the potentially negative ways that the argument has been mobilised by anti-feminist men. He also argues that fathers may be physically present but emotionally absent. Therefore, Morrell (2006) appears to advocate a particular model of active, nurturing fathering and he, and many of the other contributors to the *HSRC* volume, tends to valorise fatherhood. This is most likely due to the advocacy-oriented thrust of this work, which promotes "the constructive involvement of men in the care and protection of children" (Richter & Morrell, 2006, p. vi). Morrell (2006) does acknowledge the political nature of fatherhood, but he ultimately underplays the centrality of traditional fatherhood in unequal and oppressive patriarchal relations.

Moreover, while it is certainly beneficial to consider men's first-hand accounts in order to explore constructions of masculinity, there is the danger that women and femininity are overlooked (Brandth & Kvande, 1998; Hearn, 1996, 2004). Indeed this is a worrying feature of work by Morrell and colleagues that looks at the relationship between manhood and fatherhood. This "exclusionary tendency" (Hearn, 1996, p. 203) is a feature of the particular theoretical school of thought from which Morrell hails, namely (critical) masculinities studies. (I shall discuss these potential pitfalls evidenced in much of the current research on men and masculinity in greater detail the following chapter.) In light of this, Lupton and Barclay (1997) acknowledge the importance of attending to the female partner's perspective in the analysis of discourses and experiences in relation to fatherhood and highlight this as an avenue for future research. Accordingly, my own study incorporates data from women as well as men and attempts to guard against this "phallocentric" (Macleod, 2007, p. 7) or "exclusionary tendency" (Hearn, 1996, p. 203).

This is particularly relevant with regard to parenthood decision-making. Parenthood decisions may have an individual dimension to them, as I have discussed, since people have their own unique ideals, preferences and, in particular, reasons for desiring to have children or not in the first place. Nonetheless, within the heterosexual couple context, individual preferences and so on must be negotiated upon. As Fennell (2006) points out, "fertility decision-making *never happens alone*" (p. 10). There are always at least two people who

must engage in a series of decisions, including those related to sex and contraception. For that reason, Greene and Biddlecom (1997) assert that research on decision-making requires data from both women and men in order to answer questions about couple communication, negotiation, and men's role in the decision-making process.

Additionally, within the couple context, factors such as norms about sexuality and gender and material constraints also factor into decision-making. Sexual and contraceptive decisions are therefore powerfully constrained by norms and by culture (Fennell, 2006). As collaborative choices, child-bearing decisions "bring into play the peculiar dynamics of particular couples [as well as] the power imbalances that shadow heterosexual relationships" (Meyers, 2001, p. 744). In the following section I review literature that focuses on decision-making within the heterosexual couple context and explicitly takes gender and gendered power dynamics into consideration.

3. GENDER-BASED POWER AND REPRODUCTIVE DECISION-MAKING IN THE HETEROSEXUAL COUPLE CONTEXT

The parenthood decision-making process—that is, how people go about deciding to have children—has not received much attention in empirical research (Rijken & Knijn, 2009), as discussed in the previous chapter. According to Rijken and Knijn (2009), most of the research on the topic is quantitative. Qualitative research is necessary to investigate "*how* people decide on having children" (p. 766), that is, the decision-making process. Hence, in this section I consider more general research on reproductive decision-making. I concentrate on research that adopts a gender perspective and considers how decision-making more generally is influenced by gender norms and how this affects partners' participation in this process, giving emphasis to qualitative work.

Research that adopts a gender perspective has shown that the particular gendered context in which reproductive decisions are made strongly impacts people's actual choices as well as the way in which they reach these decisions. In particular, research that is cognisant of power has shown that gender-based power differentials within the sexual and/or reproductive partnerships have a significant effect on decision-making (Blanc, 2001).   Such research situates reproductive decision-making that occurs in heterosexual partnerships within the global "patchwork of patriarchies" (Macleod, 2006, p. 383). In the next section I discuss the various ways that men can be involved in decision-making with women, dominating the process, deferring to women, or collaborating with them.

3.1. Male dominated decision-making

According to Blanc (2001), gender-based power frequently operates disproportionately in men's favour so that they have greater sexual freedom and rights than women do. Reproductive choices have been shown to be socio-culturally defined and mediated through patriarchy, so that a woman's ability to exercise her own choices, and even to express her preferences or opinions, is severely curtailed (Hussain, 2003). In developing countries where male dominance is most palpable, women's freedom to participate in family planning may be circumscribed to varying degrees and women's interests are frequently disregarded or marginal in the process of fertility decisions. As a result of long-held beliefs regarding male supremacy, men hold ultimate decision-making authority so that women may be side-lined in, and even excluded from, decision-making about matters that greatly affect them.

This is shown by a number of studies that have been conducted in developing contexts. In India, Hussain (2003) maintains that decisions about reproduction are usually made by men and senior members of the family and women are often compelled to continue childbearing despite poor health. The majority of Indian wives in her study "could not make a choice or a decision, express their desires or make their voices heard" (p. 61). "In other words," Hussain (2003) comments, "the whole family was entitled to participate in the decision-making process except the woman herself!" (pp. 61 – 62). Chapagain (2006) reports similar findings from her study on conjugal power relations and couple's participation in reproductive decision-making in Nepal where males and senior family members also make reproductive decisions without the woman's input. According to Chapagain (2006),

> husbands' domination is evident in directing wives to use contraceptives, choose their types and to terminate their application and in making decisions about seeking ANC service. Gender difference in RH decision-making is strongly attributable to unequal gender power relations, traditional gender roles and the financial cost associated with such a service [Therefore], women's low status and the existing hierarchical system are among the major factors that maintain unequal conjugal relations (p. 159).

As a consequence, women are often placed at risk for pregnancy or disease when men veto particular contraceptive methods (such as prophylactics) which hamper their sexual enjoyment. Likewise, in Brazil, Hoga *et al.*, (2001) report that in cases of unplanned pregnancy the male partner decides about the future of the relationship and the pregnancy outcome.

In the South African context, much of the research on gender-based power has been conducted in relation to HIV/AIDS and condom usage. Such research has indicated that gender norms have an effect on female/male power dynamics often producing inequity in intimate relationships; these gender norms also limit women's agency to negotiate sex and contraceptive use with their partners (Ndinda, Uzodike, Chimbwete, Pool, & the Microbicide Development Programme, 2007). This is particularly true in groups with limited educational and economic opportunities (Rottach, Schuler, & Hardee, 2009). In this vein, there is a substantial body of South

African research that considers gender dynamics in relation to violent or coercive sexual relationships, and the negative impact that this has on women's sexual and reproductive choices (e.g., Dunkle, Jewkes, Brown, Gray, MacIntyre, & Harlow, 2004; Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002; Wood & Jewkes, 1997). With regard to parenthood decisions specifically, Cooper *et al.*'s (2007) study with HIV positive women and men—which I discussed earlier—showed that gender norms and power imbalances significantly affect parenthood decision-making, especially women's. This study, one of the first of its kind that includes men, calls attention to "the gender power imbalances in intimate sexual relationships between women and men as well as the relatively less powerful position women occupy in society" (Cooper *et al.*, 2007, p. 281).

This contrasts with an earlier study conducted by Maharaj and Cleland (2005). These researchers examined the relative influence of partners on contraceptive practice among women and men in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa by means of a cross-sectional survey. They discovered that

> The wife's desire to stop childbearing was the most powerful predictor of contraceptive use among couples, after adjustment for possible confounders [so that] the wife's fertility preference was found to be a key determinant of use. This conclusion challenges conventional wisdom that men are the dominant decision-makers in fertility and family planning decisions (p. 31).

Of course, as Agadjanian (2005) notes, surveys do not always adequately or wholly capture the influence of gender on interactions and relations between partners, but "[w]henever qualitative inquiry is woven into the analysis the centrality of this influence becomes apparent" (pp. 630 – 631).

Nevertheless, there is qualitative research that does indicate that men in developing contexts do not dominate all decision-making all the time and that there are circumstances men believe justify their partners taking action without their consent or independently from them (Greene & Biddlecom, 1997). For instance, in a recent qualitative study conducted by Mbweza, Norr, and McElmurray (2008) in Malawi, the researchers concluded that "[a]lthough cultural norms emphasize husband dominance in couple decisionmaking, individual interviews with husbands and wives identified a mix of husband dominated; wife dominated, and shared decisionmaking approaches in various areas of decisionmaking" (p. 12). The couples in this study utilised what the researchers refer to as "gender-based cultural scripts" (p. 16) (e.g., husband dominant) as well as "nongender-based cultural scripts" (p. 16) (e.g., open communication, children's welfare) in order to rationalise particular decision-making approaches. In the following section, I consider decision-making in which women make decisions independently from their partners or have a greater say in the choices that are made.

3.2. Male passivity and deference in relation to "women's matters": A double bind for women

According to Markens, Browner, and Preloran (2003), the degree of autonomy granted to women as a result of male deference to women in reproductive decisions may vary according to how this is understood and

justified. Men's deference occurs in relation to the belief that reproductive issues are in some way, shape, or form more appropriately left to women. However, before pronouncements can be made as to whether men's relative passivity is beneficial (to women, men, and the couple) or not, this tendency must be viewed within the gendered context of women's lives (Gipson & Hindin, 2007). For instance, Markens *et al.* (2003), who studied Latino/a couple's prenatal decision-making, maintain that male passivity and female responsibility for reproductive matters can grant women independence and produce egalitarian relations when justified by reference to contemporary beliefs related to women's reproductive rights and bodily autonomy. It can also limit women's autonomy and allow men to retain dominance in the relationship when justified by a traditional gender discourse in which reproduction is depicted as a "women's issue". This belief that reproductive matters are a "woman's issue" and belong to the domain of women is pervasive, as shown by a number of studies (e.g., Dyer, *et al.*, 2004; Hoga *et al.*, 2001; Mankayi, 2009; Nyanzi, Nyanzi, & Kalina, 2005). This belief results in men adopting a passive role in relation to reproduction. For example, Barker and Olukuya (2007) state that globally women continue to bear the responsibility for family planning (over 74 *percent* of all contraceptive use) in spite of the progress made in encouraging men to use male contraceptive methods.

Often, male deference means that, on the one hand, women are granted the responsibility for reproductive outcomes, especially through contraceptive usage, but, on the other, they are also held responsible for whatever consequences result. This is shown in Ndinda *et al.*'s (2007) exploration of gender relations in the context of HIV/AIDS in rural South Africa. According to these researchers, their "findings suggest that both men and women feel that the final decision about child-bearing and the use of contraceptives rests with women since they are the ones who bear the burden of child care" (p. 844). Although there may be variation within groups, this tendency has been reported in studies from a range of contexts. Similarly, in Nepal, for instance, Chapagain (2006) states that, many participants "believed that all reproductive responsibilities, including contraceptive use fall in the women's domain. They thought that "'women are the ones who get pregnant so they are responsible for practicing family planning' (FGD: men's group)" (p. 181). Researching unintended pregnancy in the United States, Johnson and Williams (2005) found that American men also deferred contraceptive decisions to female partners, with similar reasons as those given by men elsewhere. Some men reported that they were "passive" because this was a "women's realm" (p. 229). The authors conclude that the men's tendencies toward deference of responsibility for contraception and pregnancy outcome decisions to their partners appeared to be primary contributors to unintended pregnancies. In this vein, Greene and Biddlecom (2000) point out that rather than actively thwarting women's decision-making, men's influence is indirect and passive.

There is also some indication that the justification of male passivity and female responsibility as a "woman's issue" often allows men to retain ultimate authority in fertility-related decisions, without taking responsibility for them. In such instances women are rendered *de facto* decision-makers, as Harvey, Beckman, Browner, and Sherman (2002) note in their study of power dynamics in the heterosexual Mexican couples' relationships. According to these researchers,

> men often spoke of women's decision making as "letting" women make decisions or "giving" authority to the woman that she makes decisions." Such statements raise the issue that decision-making authority may be delegated by men to women. The exercise of power and the feelings of power may differ. Such delegated decision-making authority can lead to the illusion of power for women, suggesting that women may feel powerful even though they do not have the final decisionmaking authority (Beckman, Browner, & Sherman, 2002, p.287).

This finding draws attention to the fact that often men's passivity is self-chosen and that men confer authority to women to make decisions. They may still override women's choices, have the final word, or withdraw their support at any time. So, although men are passive, they may still exert a powerful influence on women's decisions. Men may still play a critical, though passive, part in decision-making, leaving their female partner with the burden of responsibility for reproductive decisions, as well as any undesirable outcomes.

As a result, the woman is often caught in the double bind of fearing her partner's disapproval (which could result in violence or abandonment) and the ability to control her own fertility. For instance, in their ethnographic study in rural Bangladesh, Schuler, Hashemi, and Jenkins (1995) show how women found themselves in such a quandary as their partners tacitly permitted them to use contraception without actually making the choice themselves and so avoided taking responsibility for any negative repercussions. The researchers point out that women's decision-making power was circumscribed by their financial dependence on their partners who were able to place the blame on their partners for negative outcomes (e.g., side effects from hormonal contraceptives) and even refuse to pay for medical (or other) costs.

In contrast, men may defer to their partner's wishes and grant them greater say in matters related to reproduction in recognition of women's reproductive rights. Some research highlights men's educational level and knowledge of reproductive rights as significant in this regard. Hussain (2003), for example, reports that some Indian men claimed that women should have equal (if not more) say and that this should occur in the context of open discussion. Their rationale was that women were more greatly affected than men by these decisions, owing to the fact that women bear the children and are usually responsible for their care. These men tended to have had a better education, had knowledge of legal rights and expressed support of women's reproductive rights. However, this was only a very small proportion of the entire sample.[4]

---

[4] Twenty-three percent of men claimed that both wives and husbands ought to be able to make decisions related to the family and their children's welfare and only 14.3 per cent felt that women alone should decide on the timing of parenthood and the spacing of subsequent births.

Similarly, Markens *et al.,* (2003) report in their study there were instances where women were given the final say in decision-making. On one hand, men stereotypically considered decisions about prenatal care to be part of the women's domain and drew on discourses that legitimated the traditional gendered division of labour, so that women were constructed as "more qualified" to make decisions. On the other hand, men in more egalitarian relationships who supported equal responsibility and shared parenting drew on contemporary discourses of reproductive rights and bodily autonomy in order to account for who had more say in decision-making in general. So that whilst these men's opinions were solicited by their partners, women ultimately had the final say in the matter. Nevertheless, Markens *et al.,* (2003) found that the women's agency to make decisions was circumscribed by the need for "male approval" and women's insistence on men's accountability. Although choices were left to them, many women insisted on their partner's presence at medical consultations and seemed to relinquish the ultimate decision to their partner's wishes. These women sought male approval so as to avoid being blamed for potential negative outcomes. Therefore, Markens *et al.* (2003) assert that even when women *do* participate in decision-making or make their own reproductive decisions, they do not do so outside of the gendered context of their lives or under circumstances of their choice.

So, although women are sometimes seen as agents of their choices, as Markens *et al.* (2003) assert, these choices are clearly constrained by their individual circumstances and broader gender power dynamics. Moreover, gender power differences often determine whose preferences are actualised (Fennell, 2006). "The relevance of the partner's reproductive intentions has been well recognised in the literature" (Rosina & Testa, 2009, p. 487) and a good deal of research has shown that men play a significant, if passive, role in women's decision-making. For example, research on pregnancy termination has shown that some women choose to terminate a pregnancy because they believe they would not receive support from their partner if they continued the pregnancy or that he would deny paternity, even if they had not yet discussed the pregnancy with him (Ipas, 2009). Lasee and Becker's (1997) quantitative study found that Kenyan women were 4.5 times more likely to use contraception if they believed that their partners approved of family planning than if the women thought that their partners did not. Hence, they conclude that a woman's perception of her partner's attitude is an important predictor of contraception practice. In India, Riessman (2000) reports, the female partner usually publicly carries the stigma of infertility, acting as the man's "scapegoat". (See also Throsby & Gill, 2004; Dyer *et al.*, 2004; Dudgeon & Inhorn, 2003; Morrell, 2001). Other researchers (e.g., Daniels, 2001; Hoga *et al*., 2001) have also shown how other undesirable or negative outcomes, like foetal abnormality or unwanted pregnancy, are viewed as "women's problems" and women are often blamed for these. Thus, women in heterosexual partnerships are often left to make decisions and may experience enormous pressure to avoid male disapproval or blame for reproductive outcomes. This affects their ability to make autonomous

choices that are in their best interests (Markens *et al.*, 2003; Schuler *et al.*, 1995). In the following section I turn to research that discusses joint decision-making between women and men.

3.3. Joint decision-making

In researching power relations within heterosexual partnerships, researchers have noted that some participants report a preference for joint decision-making and/or claim that their reproductive decisions are arrived at by mutual consensus. The possibility of co-operative or collective decision-making within the couple context is governed by social norms and taboos. These often prevent partners from open communication about their fertility and contraceptive preferences (Fennell, 2006). This has been observed in a range of contexts, but most especially among groups where effective communication is impaired by traditional gender norms. In such settings joint decision-making has been found to be less common.

Moreover, though joint decision-making may be said to be the ideal, this is not to say whether people actually practice it. Hussain (2003) comments on this in relation to her own research:

> One might conclude that while some men showed an enlightened concern for women's participation in decision-making with regard to the reproductive process and felt that these responsibilities have to be jointly shared by husband and wife, in actual practice the majority of wives (of the majority of men) could not make a choice or decision, express their desires or have their voices heard (p. 61).

Men might then be seen to be paying lip service to an ideal. This has raised questions regarding the trustworthiness of self-report data on this issue. Biddlecom and Fapohunda (1998) maintain that men's positive responses could indicate "a social desirability bias often found with interviewer-administered questions—in order to show supportive and congenial, not controversial, views about family planning to the interviewer" (p. 24). They maintain that some qualitative research has shown that when separate interviews are conducted with both partners, there are disparities between women's and men's claims regarding joint decision-making (Biddlecom & Fapohunda, 1998). This has alerted researchers to the importance of attending to both women's and men's views when investigating couple's motivations and preferences for childbearing and related decisions (Blanc, 2001; Gipson & Hindin, 2006; Yadav, Singh, & Goswami, 2010).

To complicate matters further, however, DeRose, Dodoo, and Patel (2002) assert that power differentials rooted in gender inequality may cause women to adjust their own preferences or defer to their partners' wishes and that this may actually mask disagreement between partners, at times creating the impression that there is no conflict. Hence, even if no differences *are* reported in men's and women's reproductive goals and preferences, this does not mean that there is no conflict between partners or that they have jointly reached a particular decision through egalitarian decision-making. This is supported by a recent Italian study in which the researchers found that couples were more likely to disagree on whether to have their first child in relationships

where the woman's role was less traditional. Cohabitant, highly educated and working women were more likely to express their own preferences, and were in a position to do so, rather than to adjust their wishes to suit their partner (Rosina & Testa, 2009).

Regardless of whether men who profess to prefer joint decision-making do in fact act on this preference or not, their claim in itself may be telling and must be considered contextually. Some qualitative research findings seem to suggest that men's preference for joint decision-making may actually be related to a wish to retain overall control of decision-making. In Mantell *et al*.'s (2006) investigation of the acceptability of female controlled methods of contraception, they report on men's assertions that if decisions regarding women's use of these methods could not be made by the men alone, then they should be made jointly with their partners. In other words, joint decision-making was seen as preferable to women making decisions alone. Mantell *et al.* (2006) report that

> Some men believe that women's use of these methods will transgress the boundaries of decision making in the household. . . in some societies, women's methods may be seen as fostering unacceptable changes in women's and men's decision-making roles. Where cultural norms and laws put forth the idea of men as ''in control'' or gatekeepers of women's bodies and sexuality, female methods introduced fear that male sexuality will be regulated by women. Other men fear that female-initiated methods use will unleash women's sexuality, promoting female ''promiscuity'', infidelity, or relationship disruption (p. 2003).

Hence, a preference for joint decision-making does not always indicate a wish for a more egalitarian or co-operative manner of decision-making. Moreover, it cannot be assumed that joint decision-making translates into egalitarian decision-making or that both parties will have equal say. Broader gender inequity may mean that it is in women's best interests to defer to the male partner. For instance Mantell *et al.,* (2006) maintain that African women may wish for men to retain control of contraception as they are "unwilling to give up the benefits of protectionism that men provide" (p. 2003). Hence, as Meyers (2001) asserts, it has been reported that even when women do have a say, they may defer to men in conflict situations or adjust their own preferences in anticipation of conflict or to please their partners.

In this vein, DeRose *et al.* (2002) point out that though certain factors like female education and economic autonomy contribute to a norm of joint fertility decision-making, it may not increase the relative power of wives in certain contexts. They highlight the role of gender constructions showing that it is, in particular, the gender identity of "wife" that restricts women's reproductive autonomy. According to their findings, marriage functioned as a site of male dominance and was an important intervening factor in women's reproductive autonomy, since gender identity as a "wife" had different implications than broader gender identity. DeRose *et al.*'s (2002) research shows that such culturally prescribed hierarchical positions often determine women's social status and limit their ability to participate in the decision-making process or to make autonomous decisions. As a result, DeRose *et al.* (2002) conclude that the married women had less autonomy than their

unmarried counterparts. Thus, according to the researchers, gender norms play an important role in determining whether certain factors actually increase women's authority and relative power.

Furthermore, investigations of women's covert use of contraception have revealed that "some women do not wish to have their husbands involved in [reproductive] decisions" (Biddlecom & Fapohunda, 1998, p. 361). For instance, Biddlecom and Fapohunda (1998) report that roughly one in every ten contraceptive users did not want her husband involved and wished to keep her contraceptive use hidden from him. Joint decision-making is therefore not desirable to these women. The authors conclude that although involving men in communication and reproductive decision-making has been shown to increase contraceptive use (*cf.* Ogunjuyigbe, Ojofeitimi, & Liasu, 2009), this goal must be weighed against women's rights to privacy and confidentiality. Thus, joint decision-making cannot always be presumed to be in women's best interests and nor can it be presumed to be the ideal, unless women's autonomy is taken into account. Joint decision-making is not always tantamount to egalitarian decision-making and the numerous factors that place women in a relatively less powerful position than their partners may mean that they do not have the bargaining power to participate on an equal footing. The subject of joint decision-making overlaps to some degree with the issue of couple communication, since in order to make decisions jointly, a degree of communication between partners is necessary. In the following section I review literature that deals with couple communication around reproductive decisions.

4. HETEROSEXUAL COUPLE COMMUNICATION ON REPRODUCTIVE ISSUES

Research on couple communication indicates that norms about appropriate gendered behaviour influences communication between partners (e.g., Blanc, 2001; Oladedji, 2008; Wolff, Blanc, & Ssekamatte-Ssebuliba, 2000).In particular, qualitative accounts suggest that many social norms work against people's ability to actively engage in contraceptive negotiations with their partners, including ideas of "decency", which can be violated by discussions of sex, contraception, and fertility preferences, as well as expectations of romance and physical and emotional pleasure (Fennell, 2006). This raises some serious problems in cultures and contexts where discretion in sexual matters is valued, particularly in highly gender segregated societies where expectations of the appropriate gendered behaviour are especially influential (as in many developing countries).

Hussain's (2003) study (discussed above) is a good illustration of how spousal communication is limited by socio-cultural norms, despite both partners' contraceptive knowledge and their general endorsement of family planning. According to Hussain (2003), male participants in her study "admitted that due to the verbal taboos on topics related to sex and reproduction, hardly any communication takes place between spouses on this

topic [of contraception]" (p. 54). These included taboos related to sexual intercourse and gender norms that prescribe appropriate female behaviour to be that of shyness, submission, and obedience. Almost 79 per cent of men in the sample claimed that they had never sought their wives' consent before sexual intercourse or discussed various reproductive issues (*viz.,* contraception, abortion, the spacing of births, or wives' reproductive health problems) with them. Women were deterred from initiating discussions about family planning by the view that women's ignorance of sexual matters is a sign of purity (especially if they are younger). Interestingly, Hussain (2003) also reports that levels of communication varied. Some degree of communication occurred among a minority of couples (21.7%) in relation to topics that were not directly related to sex, but rather had more to do with the children (e.g., timing and spacing of births).

 In developing countries in particular direct, open discussion of matters related to sex and reproduction is not the norm and open disagreement between partners is rare in such contexts (Hussain, 2003). For instance, Greene and Biddlecom (2000) report the following:

> In West Africa nearly three-quarters of men reported that they had never discussed family planning with their wives; in East Africa less than 40 percent of men said they had never discussed it; and in North Africa the percentage was even lower (p. 109).

Moreover, disagreement may carry high social costs for women in particular (Hussain, 2003; see also Biddlecom & Fapohunda, 1998; Blanc, 2001; Bawah, Akweongo, Simmons, & Phillips, 1999). In this respect, research shows that unequal power relations between partners are maintained by the various incarnations of the existing gender hierarchy in which women are generally assigned low status (Chapagain, 2006). Although gender inequities intersect with other types of power differentials (e.g., those based on race, wealth, age) (Blanc, 2001), gender, as an institutionalised social category, remains a significant factor in limiting women's roles in reproductive negotiations— regardless of level of education, personal income or the particular socio-economic, cultural, or geographical context (DeRose *et al.,* 2002). For example, Ezeh's (1993) oft-cited Ghanaian study investigated the extent that spouses in Ghana affected one another's reproductive goals. Ezeh (1993) reports that both women and men claim that the male partner has the final say in family planning, this was reported as an exclusive right exercised only by the husband.

Hence, Blanc (2001) asserts that in such contexts, much of the communication about these matters tends to be indirect or nonverbal. Rijken and Knijn (2009) point out that deliberation and dialogue is regulated by norms and values so that "traditional couples make decisions more automatically than modern couples" (p. 770). They argue that "traditionalism" renders crucial life events, like parenthood, obvious. These events are governed by precise norms and values which relieve people of decision-making. In this vein, they distinguish between implicit and explicit decision-making.

Implicit decision-making is an indirect, non-reflective style of decision-making. Explicit decisions are made by partners who plan proactively and are aware that they are in a process of decision-making. They deliberate explicitly on the issue, and if needed they negotiate. Partners might already agree on the wish to become parents, but even then they might have discussions or negotiate, for instance on the timing of the birth or how to live their lives as parents (p. 769).

Likewise, Fennell (2006) maintains that the lack of communication on the part of one or both partners can result in what she terms "passive decision-making" (p.9). According to Fennell (2006), "rather than representing the decision-making style of only a few individuals, this type of decision-making is actually quite common" (p. 9). Rijken and Knijn (2009) corroborate this statement asserting that though they expected to find more explicit communication among their Dutch participants—owing to their assumption that childbearing is currently seen as a choice in the Netherlands–their qualitative analysis shows that "decision-making preceding both early *and* postponed first childbirth is often implicit" (p. 765).

Most often, Fennell (2006)maintains, passive decision-making results in conception, because "pregnancy is the default outcome for intercourse, childbirth is the default outcome of a pregnancy, [and] so *passive decision-making results in a birth*" (pp. 19 – 20). So, in order for both partners to clearly prevent a conception occurring, some kind of negotiation, whether verbal or non-verbal, must take place. It can therefore be difficult to characterise what exactly "communication" in relation to sex and reproduction means since communication may be non-verbal as well as verbal. For instance, pushing someone away may be more communicative than simply saying "no" (Fennell, 2006). Wolff *et al.*, (2000), define communication broadly as "encompassing both direct and indirect forms ranging from verbal discussion to nonverbal gestures" (p. 125). "Indirect" communication, they state, may include overheard conversation, suggestive remarks, or information gathered by a partner from a third party. For example, in one Kenyan study participants reported that they adopted nonverbal strategies to initiate or reject sex with their partner (e.g., women putting children to bed early or men bringing a gifts home) (Balmer, Gikundi, Kanyotu, Waithaka, 1995).

In the couple context, a lack of direct verbal communication also makes the other party's wishes in relation to sex and reproduction ambiguous and open to assumption (Lasee & Becker, 1997). For example, some Malian women reported that they made inferences about their partner's attitudes about family planning by their reactions to advertisements of family planning campaigns on television (Castle, Konaté, Ulin, & Martin, 1999). Several participants in Wolff et al.'s, (2000), study who had not had discussions with their partners explained their ability to report on their partners' intentions as a result of some sort of indirect communication. The majority of men (84%) were particularly confident about doing this. Additionally, a significant number of participants made assumptions about their partners' fertility desires based on generalised characteristics of "all" women and men.

Other studies have highlighted how men's ability to effectively communicate with women or to include them in decision-making is often hampered by traditional articulations of masculinity, which involve dominating women and pressures to preserve their pride (Dixon-Mueller, 1993). In Throsby and Gill's (2004) study, for instance, the effects of beliefs about masculinity were found to be notable not only in terms of the ridicule that men experienced in cases of male-factor infertility (which their partners usually tried to protect them from), but also in their participation in decision-making about fertility treatment. Female partners reported silences in men's talk around emotional, relational, and reproductive issues, referring to them as "not being talkers" (p. 342). Men explained their silence as "being strong" or emotionally supportive of their partners. Ironically, women were frustrated by these silences and interpreted them as lack of support. Therefore, the gender narrative that requires men to protect women and to be "strong"—interpreted by them as unemotional stoicism in times of crisis—prevented men from being emotionally supportive and from communicating their own fears and anxieties. In this study, the men's emotional containment often prevented effective communication about choices related to fertility treatment. Notions of the appropriate "normal" gender behaviour therefore affected the degree and quality of discussions regarding the parenthood decision.

5. TURNING TO A GENDERED AND RELATIONAL VIEW

The emphasis on couple's negotiation and decision-making in the studies I have just discussed affirms the centrality of couples in the process of fertility decision-making and has drawn attention to the effects of gender-based power in reproductive decisions and for this they have served an important function (Blanc, 2001). As I have shown above, reproductive decision-making in general is greatly affected by the gendered and largely male-dominated roles and ideologies. This appears to be particularly true in societies where the form patriarchy manifests itself in a more rigid and traditional demarcation of gender roles and/or where there has been less challenge to the gender order (Hussain, 2003). In such contexts, traditional gender roles define the part that each partner plays in decision-making, creating power disparities that are exacerbated by factors such as women's lack of education and financial dependence on men. Hence, the more traditional and gender-segregated the context, and the more uneven the power relations between women and men, the less autonomy women have (Chapagain, 2006). This research has left little doubt that women are disadvantaged *vis-à-vis* men and vulnerable in relation to male authority.

Some researchers argue that reproductive research has concentrated on men's relative power and the subsequent effect that this has on female partners in relation to reproductive decision-making. This is evidenced in much of the research conducted in the heterosexual couple context that I reviewed above. Following theoretical shifts in gender studies, particularly feminist theory, many researchers now aim to show that women are not merely passive victims or pawns and attempt to move away from the common theme of

women's vulnerability that has been present in research that takes a gender perspective and to consider women's agency (e.g., Gipson & Hindin; 2007; Markens *et al.*, 2003).

Along with the move away from the theme of female vulnerability, criticisms have arisen in response to the tendency in work that adopts a gender perspective to consider men in relation to the effect that they have on women's sexual and reproductive choices (often arising when men are considered as women's partners), especially feminist-inspired analyses, or research that has women's empowerment as its goal. The tendency to focus on the negative effects that men have on women's sexual and reproductive choices and, perhaps inadvertently, to cast men in a negative light, as power hungry or as simply heartless or unfeeling   is politically reductive (Throsby & Gill, 2004). According to Throsby and Gill (2004), this does not capture the full picture of gender relations, including the potentially deleterious ways that men are affected by gender norms. In this respect, Figeuroa-Perea (2003) argues that it is not sufficient to consider the participation of men within the health of women; rather, men should be thought of as actors with sexuality, health, reproductive, and concrete needs that should be considered, in their interaction with women and in their own specific right (p. 114).

Hence, as I touched upon in Chapter 1, Figueroa-Perea (2003) argues for a gendered and relational approach, which offers another possibility for analysing men's involvement in reproductive decision-making that explores "the relational, social, and potentially conflictive nature of sexualized reproduction [considering it] a gender relational process" (p. 114).Such an approach to research with men is useful because it allows one to consider men not only as women's partners who affect women's sexual and reproductive choices, but as actors themselves, with their own experiences and needs. This approach considers the ways that each partner affects, and is affected by, the decision-making process. This perspective is evident in a few of the studies that I have reviewed. For example, Throsby and Gill (2003) explore men's involvement is decision-making related to IVF treatment and maintain that although men had the final say in stopping treatment, this exercise of power was not simply the employment of authoritarian male power, but that the men perceived it as an act of care by relieving women of the responsibility of making a decision that they found particularly difficult. Furthermore, they point out how traditional gender scripts that position the man as the emotional stalwart left no "space for either rational female agency or male emotionality" (p. 343). They note deleterious effects of gender norms have on men as well, that left them feeling pressure to perform and isolated without any sources of support. Such research attempts to include men's perspectives and experiences of reproductive decision-making, showing that men are not as unaffected by the process as they are commonly depicted to be in the literature.

Thus, a gender relational approach is useful in ensuring that women and femininity are not excluded by an exclusive focus on men and masculinity. This approach not only retains an awareness of gender as a relational

concept, but as it has a power-based framework it allows the analyst to take cognisance of the reciprocal and interdependent nature of sexual and reproductive partnerships (Figueroa-Perea, 2003). In this approach, therefore, masculinity and femininity are formed and maintained in couples' negotiations around parenthood decisions and power differences are also constructed interactionally (Brandth & Kvande, 1998).

6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have reviewed available literature relevant to parenthood decision-making and male involvement in this process. I considered research that pertains to men's perspectives, motivations and desires for conception and fatherhood, including: (1) work on pronatalism and the value of children—which I showed to be interrelated; (2) normative assumptions of parenthood;(3) the "transition to fatherhood"; and (4) constructions of paternity. After considering research that in some way deals with the (generally unasked) question of why men might want to be parents, I then turned literature related to decision-making. This discussion centred on how men, in conjunction with female partners (or not), go about the process of "choosing" parenthood and decision-making that ensues. As I mentioned, the fact that there is little empirical and qualitative research on the parenthood decision-making process necessitated the consideration more general research on reproductive decision-making within the heterosexual couple context. In this section, more weight was given to research from a gender perspective, especially that which addresses gender-based power in heterosexual reproductive partnerships. In relation to this, I went on to explore couple communication and decision-making. The distinction between decision-making and communication in this chapter is somewhat artificial since the two are integrally interlinked as decision-making within the couple context requires some sort of communication, whether active, verbal, and direct or passive, non-verbal, and indirect (Fennell, 2006).

It is evident that gender norms appear to be influential in the providing incentive for people to procreate and shaping the way that heterosexual partners negotiate—or fail to negotiate—the process of becoming parents with one another. However, there is still much that is unknown about why and how people go about becoming parents, especially with regard to male involvement. In the South African context, there is dearth of research on "parenthood motivations" in general and reproductive research tends to focus on problematic issues like contraceptive negotiation in the context of HIV and gender-based violence. Research that explicitly connects gender constructions and parenthood continue this problem-oriented approach and tends to concentrate on men who are already fathers, especially economically disadvantaged "Black" men. In addition, much of this work is conducted within, or influenced by, men and masculinities studies and hence men form the focal point of research and women and their perspectives are often side-lined.

In my own research, I attempt to adopt a gendered and relational perspective on male involvement in parenthood decisions. I include both women and men in the study in order to incorporate women's points of view and issues and to generate rich data. However, I reverse the usual consideration of men as women's partners by including women as men's partners. So, the investigation's focal point is on men, but enriched with women's accounts as partners. In the next two chapters, I discuss what theoretical frameworks critical researchers might adopt in order to facilitate the adoption of a gendered and relational perspective in the study of men and masculinity. In the next chapter, I shall assess the utility of the approach that currently dominates in critical gender work of which men and masculinities is the focus, namely, critical masculinities studies. I shall then introduce an alternative theoretical framework, informed by Judith Butler's theory of performativity, which allows for a gendered and relational view of men's involvement in parenthood decision-making.

3

Uncovering the illusion of authenticity:
Gendering men and "masculinities" in critical research

…studying men is not anything special; it is not new; and it is not necessarily, in itself, linked to any radical project of social or societal change and transformation. Academia, libraries, disciplines and canons are full of books by men, on men, for men! (Hearn, 2006, p. 38)

---

1. INTRODUCTION

As Hearn (2004) states, "studying men is in itself neither new nor necessarily radical. It all depends on how this is done" (p. 49). Clearly much of the information produced within the social sciences was by, on and for men. Or, perhaps, it is more accurate to say the focus was "man" as the generic, prototypical, "normal" human being (Hearn, 2006). For the last twenty years or so, however, this implicit assumption has been called into question by feminist, gay, queer, pro-feminist, and postcolonial critiques. As a result, several literatures that theorise men outside of the malestream and problematise men/masculinity now exist. This kind of focused scholarship on men and "masculinities" is a burgeoning area of enquiry within the social sciences (Hearn, 2004) as evinced by the proliferation of writings that have men/masculinities as their central problematic.

> Monographs on men and masculinities now regularly appear in every social science discipline and every field of the humanities. There are now several specific scholarly journals, for example, *Men and Masculinities*, and several publishers' book series. One of the first, and perhaps the most successful, series was the Sage Series on *Men and Masculinities*, which published 15 edited thematic volumes from 1992-2002. There are web-based and extensive bibliographic resources, including *The Men's Bibliography* constructed by Flood (2003), now in its 11th edition (Hearn, 1997, p. 59).

This work, distinguished from other, more androcentric work by its explicit focus on men and on power, has been commended by some feminists for its role in the gendering of men and for problematising men/masculinity (Macleod, 2007). However, as critical theoretical attention is increasingly focused on men and masculinity the pressing question for feminist scholars is how this topic might be most fruitfully addressed without reinforcing male privilege or disadvantaging women (Macleod, 2007; Wiegman, 2001). Certainly, many studies of men and masculinity are not conceived with women's interests in mind. Some are blatantly anti-feminist while others (inadvertently) reiterate "malestream" accounts (Hearn, 2006).

Although there are variations in the way that men have been studied, the strand of critical work on men and masculinities that Morrell (1998) describes as a "pro-feminist" approach to the study of men has been strongly influenced by post-structural feminist theory. As a result, this work stands out from much of the work on masculinity due to the centrality of *power* in analyses of masculinity, most notably an intersectional view of power and oppression (Hearn, 1996). This broad approach to the *critical* study of men and masculinities that has developed in recent years can, according to Hearn (2006), be characterised by:

1. a specific, rather than an implicit or incidental, focus on the topic of men and masculinities;
2. taking account of feminist, gay, and other critical gender scholarship;
3. recognising men and masculinities as explicitly gendered rather than nongendered;
4. understanding men and masculinities as socially constructed, produced, and reproduced rather than as somehow just 'naturally' one way or another;
5. seeing men and masculinities as variable and changing across time (history) and space (culture), within societies, and through life courses and biographies;
6. emphasising men's relations, albeit differentially, to gendered power;
7. spanning both the material and the discursive in analysis;
8. interrogating the intersections of gender with other social divisions in the construction of men and masculinities (p. 39).

This critical or pro-feminist work on men and masculinities includes many scholars who write under the banner of "masculinities studies"—such as R.W. Connell, Jeff Hearn and Robert Morrell. Connell, in particular, remains one of the most influential theorists on men and masculinity and under Connell's strong influence many adopt a poststructuralist framework. As a result, for the most part, these men and masculinities scholars theorise gender as plural, fluid and performed, following poststructuralist thinking (Peterson, 2003). While (critical) masculinities studies has made significant contributions to the study of men as gendered beings, there are several shortcomings that become apparent and undermine analyses conducted within this framework. I shall discuss these in this chapter.

I propose that Butler's theory of performativity offers an alternative to this prevailing approach toward theorising men and masculinities. Butler's theoretical notion of performativity is a useful framework for exploring the processes of gender construction (Bordo, 1992). Its particular strength is in demonstrating how illusions of authenticity are normalised, that is, how gender comes to be seen as real and natural. As I shall show when I explicate Butler's gender-as-performative thesis—which entails the on-going, interactive, and imitative processes by which the "reality" of gender is constructed—later on in this chapter. Moreover, the notion of performativity is significant because it highlights the importance of heterosexuality in dominant renditions of manhood. Many theorists highlight how, for men, normative gender narratives or "scripts" are focused on the reiteration of masculine norms that deny effeminacy and homosexuality (Nystrom, 2002). Maleness is affirmed through the differentiation from the feminine and the homosexual (Ramazanoglu, 1992). The policing of gender construction by heteronormative ideals is therefore particularly salient for men (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Consequently, I argue that rather than the more popular masculinities approach, Butlerian theory is particularly useful in examining gender construction. While masculinities scholars who adopt a post-structuralist lens are, for the most part, aware of heterosexual norms that shape constructions of manhood, I suggest that the endeavour is based on the very norms it sets out to critique (Hearn, 1996), as I shall explicate in later in this chapter. A further advantage of Butler's work is that it renders visible the process whereby men become gendered. This is not always apparent in theorising on men and masculinity.

I begin this chapter with an overview of critical masculinities studies, as outlined in this introduction, including criticisms levelled at this theoretical camp. I then broadly outline Butler's theory of performativity, drawing out several key elements for discussion, and the implications that it might have for exploring the construction of gender, specifically for men, and concomitant power relationships in connection to the specific problematic (i.e., the context of reproductive decision-making). I start with a backdrop that situates Butler's work within post-structural feminism and the study of men. I then go on to discuss the some weaknesses in Butler's theory.

2. CRITICAL MASCULINITIES STUDIES

A complex conceptualisation of masculinity and view of gender-based power is central to most critical masculinities studies analyses. This critical stance is evident in the focus on a multidimensional subject, as well as the interaction and intersection within and between different sets of social relations (Mac an Ghaill, 1996). Consequently, one of the chief arguments of masculinities studies is that gendered power disparities are not only limited to male-female interactions, but inherent in all human interactions (Hearn, 1997). This insight has frequently (but not exclusively) been applied to understanding power relationships among men. The recognition of the manifold fractures and power relations that occur between men is evidenced in the understanding of plural masculinities (Macleod, 2007). The fundamental feature of the masculinities studies is the combination of the plurality of masculinit*ies* within a hierarchy of masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Following on from the view of plural, hierarchical masculinities, is key theoretical concept of "hegemonic masculinity" (Mac an Ghaill, 1996) with which Connell (1983) is most prominently associated. In *Gender and power,* the most often cited source for explication of this term, Connell (1987) defines the term as the "culturally idealized form of masculine character" (p. 83). Briefly, this concept encapsulates the idea that a gender hierarchy exists in particular "forms" of masculinity, with some privileged over others. Hegemonic masculinity represents the pinnacle of this hierarchy, embodying "the currently most honored way of being a man, it require[s] all other men to position themselves in relation to it" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). It is constructed in opposition to homosexuality and also prevents other subordinate masculinities from gaining cultural meaning. Moreover, Connell's definition of hegemonic masculinity emphasises that it is a *current* configuration of masculine gender practices. Thus, it is consequently subject to struggle and change related to historical and socio-cultural variations in constructions of manhood and their intersection with other social categorisations (Hearn, 2004).

The introduction of this concept led early masculinities scholars to interrogate various constructions of "masculinities"—the term explicitly pluralised "masculinities" which denotes the multiple and diverse of

constructions of manhood—in relation to hegemonic masculinity (e.g., complicit, subordinated, marginalised, and protest masculinities) (Hearn, 2006). This work is attuned to the regulation of manhood by dominant norms of masculinity that are constantly reworked in order to reconsolidate male privilege (Peterson, 2003). Power, as I have mentioned, is therefore central to most analyses (Hearn, 2004), but the focus of work in this field has been, for most part, on male-male power relationships (Macleod, 2007). In fact, ever-increasing attention has been devoted, in this field, and more generally, to the consideration of the struggle for power amongst men (Peterson, 2003).

It is important to note that this work has been explicitly framed in relation to theorising of patriarchy and patriarchal relations (Hearn, 2006). The notion of hegemonic masculinity not only concerned men's relationships to power, but it was also seen as that which "ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 49). Connell (1995) made this explicit later, defining the concept of hegemonic masculinity as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (p.77). Therefore, according to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), "Hegemonic masculinity was understood as the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue" (p. 832). However, generally speaking, it appears that this part of the concept—the pervasive domination of women by men—has received a shorter shrift within masculinities studies. I shall pick up on this shortly when I deal with criticisms of masculinities studies.

While the concept of hegemonic masculinity is not without problems, as I shall show shortly, it is a popular and quite widely accepted part of the general conceptual apparatus for studying men (Hearn, 2006). For instance, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) report that, at the time of writing their article, "database searches reveal[ed] more than 200 papers that use the exact term 'hegemonic masculinity' in their titles or abstracts. Papers that use[d] a variant, or [referred] to 'hegemonic masculinity' in the text, [ran] to many hundreds" (p. 830). This can most likely be attributed to the success of this theoretical concept in identifying forms of domination by men, both of women and of other men, as well as its usefulness in facilitating much-needed theorising about men and power (Hearn, 2006).

More generally speaking, the field of masculinities studies has contributed to the explicit "gendering of men" (Hearn, 2004), as I have I discussed earlier. It has helped to identify maleness as a gender that needs to be studied. Macleod (2007) deems the work as potentially valuable, because it highlights the socially constructed

nature of masculinity and the power relations contingent on this construction, thereby making the "normalised absent trace" (the "White", heterosexual, middle-class man) curious. She asserts that

> Masculinities studies thus have the potential to undo the invisibility of gender to men, and, in doing so, assist in the questioning of the characteristics of the white, heterosexual, middle-class man as the golden standard toward which women, and other men, should aspire (p. 7).

Thus, much of this work has opened up "men and masculinities as an explicit and gendered topic for inquiry" (Hearn, 1996, p. 202) and, ultimately "focused the spotlight on a dominant group" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

3. CRITIQUES OF CRITICAL MASCULINITIES STUDIES

Although the shifting of the analytical gaze onto men as gendered beings was much-needed, especially in order to address widespread male domination, concerns have been raised from a number of camps that all this attention on *men* will once more divert attention from women, relegating them to the wings yet again (Macleod, 2007; Hearn, 1997; Wiegman, 2001), or, in relation to this concern, that excessive focus on *masculinity*, and the neglect of social relations between women and men could divert attention away from men's actual practices (Hearn, 1997). In this section I shall examine some of the critiques levelled at critical masculinities studies.

3.1. The exclusionary tendency

Concern has been expressed by feminist scholars about the possibility of re-excluding women (e.g., Macleod, 2007; Wiegman, 2001). They fear that the excessive focus on men/masculinity diverts attention from women/femininity and that, as a result, women are often rendered invisible and excluded from being participants in the discourse (Hearn, 2004, Hearn, 1996). This concern has been raised in relation to masculinities scholars' tendency to neglect specific, equivalent historical and social constructions of femininity (Peterson, 2003). The tendency to overlook women and constructions of femininity has been so common that it has been referred to as the "exclusionary" (Hearn, 1996, p. 203) or "phallocentric tendency" (Macleod, 2007, p**.** 7) of masculinities studies. The focus on men and their problems has been criticised by various feminists (*e.g.,* Bryson, 1999; Macleod, 2007; V. Robinson, 2003; and Wiegman, 2001).

Theoretically speaking, the focus on men or over-emphasis on masculinity serves to obscure the female signifier and indicates inadequate theorising of gender as a relational concept (Macleod, 2007; Peterson,2003). It is theoretically unsound to theorise men's subjectivities entirely within the parameters of masculinity alone, since gender is a relational concept. Constructions of "masculinity" only make sense and are understandable in relation to what is defined as their opposite, their absent trace, "femininity" (Macleod, 2007). As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) state when discussing this "regrettable" oversight,

[g]ender is always relational, and patterns of masculinity are socially defined in contradistinction from some model (whether real or imaginary) of femininity. Perhaps more important, focusing only on the activities of men occludes the practices of women in the construction of gender among men (p. 848).

"So while the 'feminine' may appear to be dispatched in the insouciant bravado of masculine endeavor . . . it will always return to haunt the tough guys most desperately in search of manhood" (Segal, 1993, p. 635). Therefore, masculinities should not only be seen as constructed in relation to one another and it is not tenable to focus on masculinities alone and so dissociate specific constructions of masculinity from those of femininity (Macleod, 2007; Peterson, 2003).

3.2. Neglect of patriarchal arrangements

Many male-focused analyses also do not adequately acknowledge men's power in relation to women. That is, they fail to acknowledge that despite differentiated forms of oppression men still generally enjoy power over women (Macleod, 2007). "While masculinity might be the focus of attention, it is necessary to retain in any analyses an understanding of the relation of men to women" (Hearn, 1996, p. 203). Thus, critical masculinities scholars have been condemned for side-lining the broader macro-political context of patriarchy. According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005),

[t]he concept of hegemonic masculinity was originally formulated in tandem with a concept of hegemonic femininity— soon renamed 'emphasized femininity' to acknowledge the asymmetrical position of masculinities and femininities in a patriarchal gender order. In the development of research on men and masculinities, this relationship has dropped out of focus (p. 848).

This has potentially deleterious effects for women (Macleod, 2007). For instance, claims that men have also been marginalised by patriarchal arrangements—say, in the reproductive arena (e.g. Varga, 2001)—may lead to the conclusion that women and men have been *equally* disadvantaged by patriarchy, or that men are even possibly the "real" victims (Hearn, 1996; Nystrom, 2002).

Some masculinities scholars have taken cognisance of the fact that gendered power relationships, both male-male and male-female, are also influenced by new constructions of femininity and women's practices and that research needs to attend to the practices of women and to the historical interplay of femininities and masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Connell & Messerschmidt (2005) assert that dominance in gender relations involves the interplay of costs and benefits, that "hegemonic masculinity" may be challenged by marginalised groups, and that "bourgeois" women may appropriate aspects of hegemonic masculinity in order to succeed. While this may be true, analysts must always bear in mind that women and men behave in such a way to fit into a gender order that is essentially characterised by male dominance. While this tendency may be addressed, by applying care and caution in the way that we approach studies of men, a more fundamental area of concern seems to be related to the very concept of "masculinity" upon which masculinities studies is premised. I turn to this critique next.

3.3. Problems with the concepts of "masculinity" and "hegemonic masculinity"

As I have discussed, the foundational concept of "masculinity", and now more recently the concept of "masculinities", has been favoured in the study of men as men (Hearn, 1996). However, there has been a growing debate and critique from various methodological positions of this underlying concept ("masculinity") and its offshoot "hegemonic masculinity". These concepts have come under fire for being unclear, imprecise and inconsistently employed, especially that of "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Hearn, 2006). This notion, in particular, though subject to various refinements, has been described as a difficult and slippery notion (Speer, 2001). As Peterson (2003) contends,

> Definitions of *masculinity* often entail little more than the compilation of lists of what are seen to be characteristic masculine qualities or attributes such as aggressivity, competitiveness, and emotional detachment, which, it is implied, distinguish it from its counterpart, femininity (passivity, cooperativeness, emotionality, etc.). That is, despite scholars' rejection of essentialism, masculinity is often referred to as though it had a definable, distinctive essence (p. 58).

So, rather than an explication of the concept, frequently it is simply a list of traits that is offered and these are then spoken of as components of masculinity—as reflected in the statement that "'masculinity' is abstract, fragile, insecure, unemotional, independent, non-nurturant and so on" (McMahon, 1993, p. 690).

Hearn (1996) argues that the concept retains the influence of social psychological research on sex-roles and identity upon which it is based. He points out that the simplest formulations of masculinity have been developed in conjunction with psychological and individualist approaches. In these views "masculinity" is individually possessed and judged according to socially desirable, gendered traits. Although many scholars recognise the socially constructed nature of "masculinity" and no longer see it as an individual possession, but rather as institutional practices located in power structures, the concept itself is universalised.

In spite of Connell's original formulation of hegemonic masculinity as a "configuration of gender practice" (Connell & Messerschmidt, p. 49) rather than a *type* of masculinity, the term is often used as if it is a type. This is part of a tendency to consider masculinities merely as "cultural styles or identities which men can adopt or reject" as Ramazagolu (1992, p.343) argues. Connell and Messerchmidt (2005) concede to this criticism, maintaining that

> early statements about hegemonic masculinity, when they attempted to characterize the actual content of different configurations of masculinity, often fell back on trait terminology—or at best failed to offer an alternative to it. The notion of masculinity as an assemblage of traits opened the path to that treatment of hegemonic masculinity as a fixed character type that has given so much trouble and is rightly criticized in recent psychological writing. Not only the essentialist concept of masculinity but also, more generally, the trait approach to gender need to be thoroughly transcended (p. 847).

It is in light of this critique that Hearn (1996) questions the usefulness of the concept of "masculinity/ies" for critically studying men. Different cultural variations of masculinity, sometimes even called "expressions" of

masculinity, are emphasised by the notion of "masculinities", but, as McMahon (1993) points out, "masculinity seems to hold sway over men, just as sex roles did in earlier formulations" (p. 691).

Hearn (1996) maintains that most versions of "masculinity" fail to address how it relates to the male sex/gender at all or to men's material practices. In fact, he argues that theoretical attention tends to be displaced from men's practices of power. This occurs when "masculinity" is reified and attributed causal power (e.g. *masculinity* is seen as causing violence) instead of viewed as the result of various social processes. As a result, blame may be deflected from men's practices and onto "masculinities".   So, although men's *practices* may be criticised these practices are a result or expression of masculinity and so it is ultimately "masculinity" that is rendered as the problem (Hearn, 1996).

As Macleod (2007) points out, the recognition of the multiplicity of masculinities is also problematic in that politics may be reduced to the adoption of new "kinds" of masculinities. She cites Robert Morrell's work as example of the extensive listing of the various masculinities and suggests that the problem with such a "taxonomic (or even descriptive) exercise is the possibility for further and further refinements to an infinite regress" (p. 9). Macleod (2007) argues that these various forms of masculinities are then simply pitted against one another so that "resistance to hegemonic masculinity is cast within the same signifying boundaries—masculinity. There is no escape. There is no undoing or unsaying masculinity merely a shift from one form to another" (p. 10). Consequently, "change" may simply entail men's adjustment to new ways of being that amount to a "loosening up of masculinities while leaving older privileges and power relations intact" (Segal, 1993, p. 634). Similarly, McMahon (1993) maintains,

> Calls for masculinity to be 're-defined', 'reconstructed', 'dismantled', or 'transformed' become common. Instead of wondering whether they should change their behavior, men 'wrestle with the meaning of masculinity'. Domination is an aspect of masculinity, rather than something men simply do (p. 690).

This is not to deny that gendered subjectivities are multiple and in flux. But, as Segal (1993) points out, it is possible for men to "change in some respects, without apparently undermining the power relations of gender" (p. 626). To overemphasise the plurality of masculinities is to risk losing sight of the goal of interrogating gender construction and possibly to lapse into a "version of relativism" (Ramazanoglu, 1992, p. 343) in which one loses sight of male power (based on gender) as well as the sources and mechanisms of men's power over each other (Ramazanoglu, 1992).

3.4. Maintaining the gender binary

The problem is not simply that the concept on "masculinity" (or "masculinities") is unclear, but more fundamentally, that it is used as the *a priori* starting point for research on men. This, I believe, is the chief shortcoming of masculinities studies from which other weaknesses appear to flow. As Hearn (1996) asserts, "to

begin the analysis of men with masculinity/masculinities, or to search for the existence of masculinities is to miss the point. It cannot be assumed *a priori* that masculinity/masculinities exist" (p. 214). The only way that one can make this assumption is if one invokes "a binary gender system which implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it" (Butler, 1990a, p. 10). This belief is based on biological foundationalism (i.e., the idea that gender more or less corresponds with one's sex) (Nicholson, 1994).

The *a priori* assumption that "masculinity", or "masculinities", exist/s essentially reifies the construction of the sex/gender dichotomy and so naturalises the typical dimorphic construction of sex or gender. Femininity and masculinity are assumed to complement other dimorphic structures, namely, women/men or male/female (Hearn, 1996). The concept of masculinity therefore rests "logically on a dichotomization of sex (biological) versus gender (cultural) and thus marginalizes or naturalizes the body" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p 836). It therefore assumes heterosexual dimorphism and reproduces the heteronormativity of social arrangements (Hearn, 1996) and it is consequently "criticized for being framed within a heteronormative conception of gender that essentializes male-female difference" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p 836).

However, if the constructed status of gender is considered to be radically independent of sex, then gender becomes a free-floating construction. Consequently, "*man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body just as easily as a female one" (Butler, 1990a, p. 10). Hence, the *a priori* assumption that "masculinity", or "masculinities", exist/s not only reiterates the gender binary, but also forecloses the possibility of exploring how men, or women, may do gender in other ways.

Furthermore, the notion of plural masculinities, which stems from a recognition of the interplay of power and various social positions, is simply a fragmentation of the masculine subject position rather than a deconstruction of masculinity (Hearn, 1996; Macleod, 2007). According to Macleod (2007), this very fragmentation allows for the continued dominance of the male signifier and the reassertion of the femininity/masculinity binary in a disguised form. Not only does this suppress the female signifier—since resistance is theorised as a "battle of masculinities against masculinities" (p**.** 10), which I discussed earlier—but "the possibility of deconstructing the [feminine/masculine] binary recedes" (p. 10).

Therefore, to *begin* a study on men using the lens of "masculinities" assumes and maintains the inevitable linkage of men with masculinity as well as eliminating the possibility of deconstructing the binary gender system. This is a problem that cannot be easily remedied without abandoning the "masculinities studies" approach altogether—as Hearn (2004, 2006) recommends. For this reason, I propose that work of Judith Butler

represents a deconstructive movement beyond the heterosexual matrix. As such, it is an attempt to be specific about gendered arrangements rather than to assume the pre-existence of any masculinity (Hearn, 1996). The deconstruction of masculinity opens up new possibilities for thinking about how masculinity is practised and what it means to different men. Men are not simply masculine, but instead they 'do', or do not 'do', masculinity (Ramazanoglu, 1992). As Macleod (2007) suggests, in studying men and their practices our aim ought to be to draw attention to the artificial "reality" of masculinity. We ought to acknowledge the effects that discourses and effects of masculinity have in men's lives while at the same time disturbing or disrupting their inevitability. She, therefore, advocates an analysis of men that acknowledges the fissures between men *in relation to* femininity. She adds that resistance should then entail the deconstruction of masculinity, rather than shifting forms. Such deconstruction is a necessary part of the materialist deconstruction of "sex". In order to do this, I turn to the work of Judith Butler.

Butler's ideas have been applied to the study of masculinity, as Brickell (2005) points out. (See Gardiner's (2002) edited volume for commentary on engagement with feminist theory, including the work of Judith Butler, within masculinities studies.) However, as he also notes, the ways that Butlerian theory have been taken up in writings on masculinities is sometimes problematic owing to misunderstandings around the notion of performativity. I shall deal with these difficulties in Chapter 4, after providing an overview of Butler's work, and explicating several core theoretical concepts, in the remainder of this chapter.

4. AN OVERVIEW OF JUDITH BUTLER'S WORK

Judith Butler's Foucauldian infused analysis of gender construction offers a new theory of subjectivity (Hey, 2006). Butler's (1990) theory of performativity has been especially influential. This theoretical concept provides "a uniquely rich recasting of the founding feminist application of the socialisation thesis; namely that gender is culture worked over on sex as biology" (Hey, 2006, p. 446). Butler objects to the demarcation of sex and gender and the attendant female/male dualism that it enforces. Her chief concern is with the power mechanisms of the heterosexual norm attached to this dualism (Van Lenning, 2004). According to Butler (1999), these bipolar categories support both the gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality. In other words, for Butler, heteronormativity is central to gendered subjectification. She therefore seeks to highlight the heteronormative basis of dualistic gender categories (Peterson, 2003).

Central to Butler's thesis is the theorisation of gender as performative. This theory-in-progress has been refined in numerous works (Hey, 2003), most notably the influential *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity* (*GT*) and its "sequel" *Bodies That Matter: On the discursive limits of "sex"* (*BTM*) in which Butler seeks to build on her theory of performativity and to answer some of the questions and critiques raised by *GT* (Hey, 2006; Salih, 2007). I focus my attention on these two foundational works, as this is where the bulk

of Butler's theoretical labour has occurred around the concept of performativity. This initial work on performativity has two components. The first is a deconstructive aspect, which entails a genealogical critique of gender. The second aspect of Butler's work is constructive and concerns her theory of gender, that is, her gender-as-performative thesis, as well as her theory of resistance (Bordo, 1992). This work has a strong Foucauldian foundation, although Butler does depart from Foucault on a few key issues. Other influences are those of Austin and Derrida whose influence is made explicit in *BTM*, as Butler explicates how their linguistic theories underpin her theory of performativity and formulation of gender identity.

4.1. Undoing gender: A genealogical critique of gender (The deconstructive component)

This portion of Butler's thesis is strongly social constructionist as she adopts an anti-essentialist, discursive understanding of gender (Boucher, 2005). Butler argues for a radical deconstruction of received ideas of the social construction of gender (i.e., as socialisation or internalisation) in such a way that identity categories become fundamentally unstable (Hood-Williams & Cealy Harrison, 1998). Butler's aim is to demonstrate "the grammar of gender through deconstruction" (Hey, 2006, p. 444). She pursues a deconstructionist form of knowledge production that is called "troubling" and her critique focuses on examining the role of discourse in asserting forms of identity. Butler (1990a) considers discourses to be "historically specific organizations of language" that define "the limits of acceptable speech" (p. 184) or possible truth. She considers discourse to be productive in the Foucauldian sense, that is, as systematically producing that which is spoken (Foucault, 1976). Following Foucault, Butler understands the subject as produced by discourse. Butler focuses on the discursive formation of gendered subjects and the process by which the individual comes to assume various subject positions (Salih, 2002).

In *GT,* Butler (1990a) adopts Foucault's genealogical method, embarking on a "feminist genealogy of the category of woman" as well as a "genealogy of gender ontology" (p. 5). For Butler, this genealogy translates as "an exploration of gender categories as the effect of discourse rather than the 'natural' ground of identity" (Bordo, 1992, p. 168). In other words, sex and gender are seen as the *effects* of discourse, rather than the *causes* of discourses, practices, institutions and subjects (Butler, 1990a). She, therefore, questions the facticity of the categories of "sex" or "gender" or "woman" and investigates the ways in which the truth of these becomes established. Butler sees the assertion of various identities, even those that are the subject of good political intentions (e.g., "woman" in feminisms) as essentialising (Hey, 2006). She focuses on the discursive formation of gendered subjects and the process by which the individual comes to assume various subject positions (Salih, 2002).

4.1.1. Dismantling the sex/gender binary: Sex was gender all along

Butler's account of gender begins with an anti-essentialist unravelling of the taken-for-granted categories of both "sex" and "gender" in order to disrupt the neat demarcation between them. In so doing, at the time of its emergence in the early 1990s, Butler's work significantly contributed to the debates on sexuality and gender, offering an alternative to the polarisation of sex and gender, which was then widely held (Campbell & Harbord, 1999). Butler refuses the position that gender is a substantial difference that expresses a fundamental "natural" sexual division and therefore questions the separation of sex/gender based on assumption that sex, as a biological given, is "real" or pre-discursive and gender is a social construct (Boucher, 2005; Salih, 2002). For Butler (1990a) both of these sex and gender are historically and culturally variable constructs, rather than biologically determined. Sex is no less of a discursive construction than gender.

Butler (1990a) questions whether sex is actually "natural" or whether the apparently natural "facts" are produced by various discourses. Salih (2007) explicates:

> Butler has collapsed the sex/gender distinction in order to argue that there is no sex that is not always already gender. All bodies are gendered from the beginning of their social existence (and there is no existence that is not social), which means that there is no "natural body" that pre-exists its cultural inscription (p. 55).

Because "there is no reference to a pure body which is not at the same time a further [socio-cultural] formation of that body" (Butler, 1998, p. 10), gender cannot be thought of as additional to biological *sex*, but as essential to its construction. According to this position, gender is the knowledge that establishes meanings for bodily differences (Nicholson, 1994). Dimorphic categorisations of sex (based on anatomical or chromosomal differences) that render the subject as *either* male *or* female are infused by gender discourse (Delphy, 1993). Consequently, sex, or the sexed body, is not simply the baseline out of which gender emerges through socialisation (or some other means of cultural "overlaying" the veneer of gender). Gender is not just a social construction superimposed upon that "natural" body; but rather, gender *produces* anatomical sex. In other words, gender is not merely an effect of sex, but instead it is the cause.

Therefore, "gender [actually] precedes sex" (Delphy, 1993, p. 1); however, this does not represent a mere reversal of the binary. What Butler is doing in this theoretical manoeuvre, is dismantling the distinction altogether, showing the separation to be false.

> She holds that sex is also a construction: it has been gender all along. The sex–gender distinction is, therefore, a sham. She argues that we should not understand gender as a cultural inscription upon a sex that is given in advance... Sex, rather, is itself constructed: we neither have nor are a sex, but we create it by means of norms that are already in place (Van Lenning, 2004, p. 29).

Consequently, in adopting a Butlerian view to study men and their practices, one would not make the assumption of a "real" morphological man who "does" gender. Rather, one would consider how particular subjects are constantly in the process of becoming men as they behave in certain expected "normal" ways. Therefore, men do not behave in particular ways (e.g., aggressively, competitively, unemotionally,

promiscuously) *because* they are men and wish to maintain powerful positions, but rather because they need to be seen *as men* in order to enjoy the privileges of patriarchal society (Butler, 1990a). In the same way women can perform masculinity (by being rational, competitive, or ambitious for instance) in order to enjoy similar rewards, such as career advancement or entry into men-only spaces. However, as I shall discuss, this does not exclude the fact that people are constrained to some degree by the material reality of their bodies which are classified according to the female/male binary. As Ramazanoglu (1992) maintains, understanding how men become men requires a sense of the tension between how they are constrained by social, economic, political, and ideological factors and men's individual agency.

In Butler's reformulation, gender *replaces* or subsumes sexual biology, it "emerges, not as a term in a continued relationship of opposition to sex, but as the term which absorbs and displaces 'sex'" (Butler, 1993a, p. 5). In this manner, Butler deconstructs gender identity, as well as sexual identity and foundational ideas about the sexed body, and her work contributes significantly to unprising *sex* and *gender* (and sexuality) from what many would assume to be their secure and unavoidable link to one another (Salih, 2002). Thus, adopting this deconstructive logic, Butler breaks away from theories that consider the body to be prior to discourse (Hey, 2006) and her work troubles "the law of two sexes", that is, the assumption that "natural" sexual dichotomy is the stable bedrock of gender and that as a consequence there are two (and only two) "real" sexes/genders. This is a crucial element in Butler's theory.

4.1.2. Heterosexual complementarity: The heterosexist underpinnings of gender

By denaturalising the sex/gender binary, Butler also intends to show up its heterosexist underpinnings and to undermine the notion of two *complementary* sexes/genders (Peterson, 2003). Following "the law of two sexes", femininity and masculinity are not only seen as polar opposites, but also as complementary. Each is defined in terms of what the other lacks so that genders are thought of as counterparts to one another. This extends to sexual desire so that the "natural" object of desire for a "woman" is masculine and for a "man", feminine.   The notion of bipolar, complementary gender categories functions as a heterosexual ideal and this forms the basis of "compulsory heterosexuality".   According to Butler, it is the apparent stability and oppositionality of heterosexuality that functions as a precondition of the internal coherence of gender categories (Brickell, 2005). This establishes a necessary relationship between one's gender and one's body (or *sex*) that in turn invokes various gendered norms and expectations that are associated with designated bodies.

As Butler (1990a) explains it, gender "congeals" or solidifies into a form that has the *appearance* of a stable and enduring "core" that coheres with *sex*. This gender 'core' then requires a series of gendered coherences, in a similar manner to which a noun is fitted with attendant adjectives. So this would be represented, for example,

as: woman = feminine. That is, if one is seen to be "biologically female", then one is expected to display the traits of femininity and to sexually desire men. Therefore, sex = gender = desire. Definitions of "woman" or "man" are therefore premised upon difference; opposite and distinct traits that point back to the sexed body. Masculinity is associated with one set of connotations (e.g. aggressive, rational and sexually active) and primarily with the public sphere of paid employment. Femininity is associated with an opposing set of connotations (e.g. nurturing, relational, emotional, and sexually passive) and primarily with the private sphere of domesticity and care work. For instance, as Donovan (2000) asserts that

> the traditional heterosexual nuclear family is built by transposing the central parenting relationships on to a central sexual relationship so that parenting is gendered – 'mother' and 'father' come to reflect traditional characteristics of heterosexual femininity and masculinity which are found in a wife and husband respectively (p. 152).

Butler argues that the equation in which sex is seen to cause gender, expressed as *female = feminine/male = masculine*, and in turn causes desire (towards the "opposite" gender) is false. Therefore, in studying men, one could not begin with "masculinity" as a starting point, as I mentioned earlier.

Furthermore, Butler maintains "that a supposed link between pre-discursive natural sex and the heteronormative opposition between masculinity and femininity, is only essentialist metaphysics in the service of heteronormative power" (Boucher, 2006, p. 115). For example, the developmental discourse of "role models" is underpinned by the understanding of gender as a fundamental and complementary difference between "woman" and "man". This leads to the assumption that children's "healthy psycho-social development depends on the parents' complementary gender roles" (Folgerø, 2009, p. 125) and is in turn reinforced the notion that children need two heterosexual parents.

Butler considers this heteronormative binary to be a severe limitation on our capacity for thinking gender/sexuality/desire in other ways (Hey, 2006). Dismantling this opposition, for Butler, is a step toward the possibility of, at the least, imagining other ways of having sex or organising life which construct gender differently (Peterson, 2003).   In deconstructing the *sex = gender* equation, Butler restores the link between gender and sexuality that is divorced by the sex/gender problematic (Hood Williams & Cealy Harrison, 1998). This allows us to see that "[g]ender itself is already hetero-sexualised and sexuality is only made intelligible if it is (hetero)gendered" (Hey, 2006, p. 446). In this process Butler lays bare and undermines "the normalising role of the already hetero/'sexed' propositional knowledge that ceded gender as knowledge" (Hey, 2006, p. 445). Her aim is not only to destabilise the sex/gender binary, by showing that *sex* and *gender* are not 'naturally' or inevitably connected to one another, but also to render visible the operation of heteronormative power in the construction of gender.

4.1.3. The Heterosexual matrix

Butler argues that binary gender distinctions come "to exist only though the invocation of heterosexuality, with the 'heterosexual matrix'" (Butler, 1990a, pp. viii, 18) and that these are critical to the distinction itself. She contends that there is a "heterosexual hegemony" that is discursively maintained by "a rigid distinction between the categories of masculinity and femininity and an opposition between identification and desire" (Anonymous, 1995, p. 1976). She therefore focuses on the power mechanisms of the heterosexual norm, with the intention of interrogating how this law of two sexes operates and what it excludes (Van Lenning, 2004).

According to Butler (1990a), the sexed body is regulated by the cultural circulation of norms that comprise the "heterosexual matrix". These include ideal dimorphism; heterosexual complementarity; and im/proper femininity and masculinity. Any differences among women or among men that may disrupt the binaristic view/the law of two sexes, referred to as troubling moments, must be suppressed or assimilated into the norm. For example, lesbians "challenge the gender binary when they must find new names for the roles of the 'co-parent'" (Nentwich, 2008, p. 211), but this subversive arrangement may be assimilated into the norm and reiterate or naturalise the dominant heteronormative discourses about parenthood if one parent is seen as the "butch" father-figure, or biological discourses of motherhood are drawn on to justify intensive, full-time parenting (Nentwich, 2008). Subjects are therefore "'compelled' by the regulatory practices of gender and thus directed into the already determined sequential ordering that emanates from our gender cores" (Butler, 1990a, p. 24).

In Butler's view, this dualistic view of gender is "a form of teleological (heteronormative) thinking that oppresses; in particular, all those who fail to conform within this orthodoxy" (Hey, 2006, p. 446). This can be seen in debates concerning access to medically controlled self-insemination which offers the possibility of conception without heterosexual sex, and therefore is seen as posing a threat to society. Those women who would make use of the procedure are denounced as selfish and as dangerously denying children their need for a father and male role model (Donovan, 2000).

Butler maintains that the illusion of gender protects the institution of reproductive heterosexuality from scrutiny and critique and so regulates our sexuality (Bordo, 1992). Gender therefore exists in the service of heterosexism (McIlvenny, 2002) and Butler's work allows us to see how gendered subjectivity is built around heterosexual reproductive relations in which women and men perform their "natural roles" within families. Therefore, rejecting naturalistic notions of an intrinsic gendered essence (the gender core), Butler contends that differentiation between female and male or homosexuality and heterosexuality are symbolic constructions that create an illusion of their own stability (Brickell, 2005).

As I have shown, Butler has collapsed the sex/gender distinction in order to argue that there is no sex that is not always already gender. Therefore, in the Butlerian view, all bodies are gendered from the beginning of their social existence (and there is no existence that is not social) (Salih, 2007). In this formulation, gender precedes sex (Butler, 1990a). In deconstructing the sex/gender binary, Butler unmoors gender from its biological anchor. In Butler's view,

> Gender has no essence, no ontological foundation, and only a fabricated interiority. It is a production, a manufacture, an effect: precisely a significatory effect. As such what is commonly taken as 'an abiding substance' (man/woman) can now be seen as a constructed fiction (Hood-Williams & Cealy Harrison, 1998, p. 77).

Hence, the end-point of the deconstructive component of her work is the declaration that "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; … [but rather it is] constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler, 1990, p. 25). Accordingly, Butler claims that "it is the *performance* of gender that constitutes the core identity (man or woman) [...]. Therefore, if anything can be said to be causal, it is the performance of gender and *not* its core" (Lisle, 2002, p. 82). This leads us to Butler's (1990a) final verdict: that gender cannot be something one *is*, but rather something one *does*, a verb rather than a noun. Gender is consequently an act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts that comply with the norms of masculinity or femininity as constructed within and reinforced by various discursive practices.

In the next (constructive) component of her work, which I address in the following section, Butler lays out her theory of gender. This includes her gender-as-performative thesis, in which she utilises the notion of performativity "as a framework for exploring the ongoing, interactive, imitative processes by means of which the self, gender […] and their illusions of authenticity are constructed" (Bordo, 1992, p. 168), as well as her theory of resistance.

4.2. Butler's theories of performativity and subversion (The constructive component)

4.2.1. Gender-as-Performative thesis

Gender construction in Butlerian theory entails the recurring discursive imitation and repetition of gender (called "citations" in later works). Butler (1990a) therefore expands upon a common feminist view, as expressed by de Beauvoir, that "one is not born a woman, one becomes a woman". It is obvious then that since gender identity is a becoming, and therefore constantly in flux, one cannot 'achieve' one's gender. It is not the subject who constructs gender, but the other way around. Hence, it is not as simple as claiming that gender is a process, or a becoming, it is a *particular* kind of process (Salih, 2007). Gender is "doing" but one that relies on repetition, as Butler (1990a) explains

> "the action of gender requires a performance that is repeated. This repetition is at once a reenactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation. Although there are individual bodies that enact these significations by becoming stylized into gendered modes, this 'action' is a public action. There are temporal and collective dimensions to these actions, and their public

character is not inconsequential; indeed, the performance is effected with the strategic aim of maintaining gender within its binary frame – an aim that cannot be attributed to a subject, but, rather, must be understood to found and consolidate the subject (p. 140).

Butler (1990a) argues that the seemingly natural coherence of the categories of sex, gender, and sexuality (i.e., feminine/masculine gender and heterosexual desire in female/male bodies) is culturally constructed through the repeated enactment of expected gendered behaviours and the adoption of the appropriate corporeal style. It is the ongoing repetition of acts and gestures that establishes that the appearance of an essential, ontological "core" gender/pre-discursive gender core that Butler refutes (Lisle, 2003).Salih (2007) explicates this quite clearly, stating that "[g]ender does not happen once and for all when we are born, but is a sequence of repeated acts that harden into the appearance of something that's been there all along" (p. 58). These enactments consequently assist in maintaining the appearance of a stable gender ontology (supposedly deriving from one's *sex*) (Butler, 1990a) and "effectively protects the institution of reproductive heterosexuality from scrutiny and critique as an institution, continually regulating rather than merely 'reflecting' our sexuality" (Bordo, 1992, p. 168).

The key to understanding Butler's theory of performative gender, therefore, is the pivotal poststructuralist notion that the subject is an *effect* of discourse rather than a *cause* (Hey, 2006). The crux of her argument is that sexed bodies and gender identities are constructed and constituted wholly by discourse. Gender is *produced* as "the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity" and the gendered body "has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality" (Butler, 1990a, p. 136). She therefore conceives of gender as constructed through social practices supported by institutional power (Boucher, 2006).So, rather than naturally emanating from within, gender is a highly regulated practice. Accordingly, there is no gender preceding language, instead it is a discursive effect that occurs

through ritualized repetitions of an aggregate of existing norms. These may be conveyed by gestures, attitudes, written and oral texts and so on. People cite all the time and through ongoing citation they become what they believe they are" (Van Lenning, 2004, p. 38).

It is in this sense that Butler claims that gender is "performative". She proposes that it is an act that brings into being that which it names (Salih, 2007). As she states: "gender proves to be performative, that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be" (Butler, 1990a, pp. 24–25). In order to explicate this ongoing process, Butler (1990a) draws on linguistic notions of performativity, namely, J. L. Austin's speech act theory as well as Derrida's deconstruction of Austin's argument. Austin argued that linguistic statements perform actions, including calling into being the objects that they name (Brickell, 2005). Such statements "are characterised by the fact that, 'in saying what I do, I actually perform the action'" (Austin, cited in Hood-Williams & Cealy Harrison, 1998, p. 77). In other words, the statement is not only an utterance of "fact" but also performs the very act that it describes. For instance, the utterance "I bet you ten rand" creates a wager rather than simply describing one (Pilgrim, 2001). Austin expressly stated that the term "performative" is derived from the word

"perform" in the sense of performing an *action* rather than performing as in *acting* a part. Butler retains the linguistic understanding in favour of the dramaturgical one (Pilgrim, 2001). Extending Austin's formulation of performativity, Butler investigates how linguistic constructions more generally produce reality through the speech acts in which subjects participate (Felluga, 2008). She defines performativity as "the vehicle through which ontological effects are established . . . the discursive mode by which ontological effects are installed" (unpaginated). According to her, it is reified "corporeal styles" that "appear as the natural configuration of bodies into sexes existing in binary relation to one another" (Butler, 1993b, unpaginated). In this vein, she proposes that

> gender identities are cultural performances that retroactively construct the "originary materiality" of sexuality. The implication is that gender is not the expression of an "abiding substance," but a naturalised social ritual of heterosexuality, masquerading as an expression of natural sex… Butler claims that the body is not a natural, material entity, but a discursively regulated, cultural construction, while gender is a performative that *produces* constative sex (Boucher, 2006, p. 115).

In other words, by incessantly re-citing social conventions and ideologies, the subject's bodily enactment of that "reality" serves to "incorporate" the body. That "reality", nonetheless, remains a social construction, though the embodiment of those fictions in our actions allows artificial conventions to appear natural and necessary (Felluga, 2008).Butler therefore sees gender as constitutive, that is, as literally fashioning the material of the embodied subject. So, gender is not fashioned by the subject, but rather shapes the subject (Hey, 2006). This is not to say that flesh-and-blood, feeling bodies do not exist or are unimportant (as Butler clarifies in *BTM*), but rather that there is nothing outside of discourse and therefore there is no such identity preceding language (Butler, 1993a). So, instead of the subject "doing" discourse, discourse "does" gender. Put another way, subjects are the effects rather than the causes of discourses. Furthermore, since the workings of these discourses are concealed, it appears to be the subject who is "doing" (Salih, 2002).

In asserting that there is no identity outside language, Butler discards the commonly accepted Cartesian subject and its attendant binaries (*viz.,* body/soul, interior/exterior, and surface/depth) (Salih, 2007). Following Foucault, she rejects the doctrine of internalisation and notions of socialisation that are usually deployed within feminisms. Instead she adopts Foucault's "model of inscription" (Hey, 2006; Salih, 2007). Inscription entails the "writing" upon the body by various forms of social discipline (Braun, 2000a). The body is an inscriptive surface on which a text may be engraved through the operation of social relations. It is through the process of social inscription upon the body that the embodied subject is constituted. It is produced, shaped and transformed as the body is variously marked (Grosz, 1994). It is through the operation of power that the body is marked and constituted as inappropriate or appropriate for its cultural requirements (Braun, 2000a). Hence, these inscriptions are part of "culturally specific grids of power regulation and force that condition and provide techniques for the formation of particular bodies" (Grosz, 1994, p. 118). Inscriptions may occur forcibly or,

more usually, through subtle coercive means whereby subjects willingly submit to or engage in normative bodily "stylisation" (Butler, 1993a).

For Butler (1993a), because there is no interior where ""the law of two sexes" can be "internalised", it is signified on and through the body. Gender then represents the socio-cultural forces that come to sculpt femininity and masculinity as norms on the body and the psyche (Hey, 2006). It is, according to Butler, a fantasy that is inscribed upon the body through various demonstrations, or "stylisations", of gender (not an interior organising core) (Bordo, 1992). Normative inscriptions act as visible markers signalling appropriate gender norms. Accordingly, the body is constituted as appropriately feminine or masculine through a constant repetitive sequence of appropriate "stylisations" that correspond with the performance of cultural narratives of femininity/ masculinity (Butler, 1990a). Hence, "Butler is *not* suggesting that the subject is free to choose which gender she or he is going to enact" (Salih, 2002, p. 56).

Butler (1990a) maintains that "doing gender" entails "the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a *highly rigid regulatory frame* that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (p 43; my emphasis). The "regulatory frame" that Butler (1990a) speaks of here is the heterosexual matrix. It comprises of the interconnection of regulatory mechanisms, which produce gender as a mould, structure or a grid in/by which the subject is cast (and by which the matrix itself is re/produced) (Salih, 2002). Thus, gender construction proceeds according to the cultural "script" which is "always already determined within this regulatory frame" (Salih, 2007, p. 56). Thus, the adoption of various gender stylisations is highly constrained and regulated; it is *not* a voluntary choice (Butler, 1990a).

4.2.2. Regulative discourses
The process of doing gender occurs within the constraints of what is discursively available, that is culturally recognisable and permissible. Gender, therefore, is a process of becoming that is discursively regulated and constrained by a pre-existing "script"; it is discourse that decides what is possible and, importantly, acceptable. Salih (2002, 2007) uses the analogy of a wardrobe of clothes to illustrate that although there may be various styles of clothing that one can choose from; one is still constrained by what is available. According to Butler's Foucauldian infused view, all discourse precedes the subject and must be used to constitute a gendered identity. So,

> one's gender is performatively constituted in the same way that one's choice of clothes is curtailed, perhaps even predetermined, by the society, context, economy, etc. within which one is situated . . . the subject has a limited number of "costumes" from which to make a constrained choice of gender style (Salih, 2007, p. 56).

Even if one alters or tears the existing garments in order to have a different style, one is still utilising what already exists (Salih, 2002). To extend the analogy even further, one could maintain that even the cloth and

patterns from which clothes are cut act as a constraint. So just as the garment choice is also determined by the availability of clothing, so too is the "choice" over gender style. In addition, discourse does not only constrain what stylisations are possible, but also which are culturally recognisable and acceptable.

Butler (1990a) locates the construction of the gendered subject within "regulative discourses", also referred to as "frameworks of intelligibility" or "disciplinary regimes", which delimit the socially permissible possibilities of sex, gender, and sexuality in order to appear as coherent or "natural". Regulative discourse is a dominant discourse that creates the rules of social order and includes within it disciplinary techniques (e.g., methods for distributing bodies in space, examination, surveillance, and so on) that *produce* new subjects by establishing bodily norms and regulating bodies in such a way that the appearance of the gender "core" is maintained. Hence, as I have mentioned, Butler follows Foucault's understanding of discourse as "systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs and practices that *systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak*" (Lessa, 2006, p. 285) and points to the "productive capacity of power— that is, the way in which regulative strategies produce the subjects they come to subjugate" (Butler, 1990a, p. 126). There is, therefore, an unavoidable linkage between regulation and resistance (Warner, 1996).

For example, the "natural parent" is partly produced by legal discourses, which in turn re-cite and reinforce discourses about the (supposedly) "natural roles" of men and women in the family. In this way, gendered roles of female and male parents are entrenched in the family by law. "For decades it has been accepted [by the South African courts] that the quality of a parental role is determined by gender and further that mothering was a component of a woman's being only" (J.A. Robinson, 2003, p. 35). However, in colonial times, fathers were considered to be the "natural parent" and almost always given custody of their children. Colonial mothers, in contrast, were considered to be inferior parents, owing to their inability to control their emotions, the very thing that now qualifies women to be primary caregivers (LaRossa, 1997; Lupton & Barclay, 1997). Hence, social roles are entrenched by existing regimes of power and regulative discourses, which cause these to appear as rooted in innate, natural differences. This is a process whereby regulatory discourses materialize "sex" and achieve this materialization through a forcible reiteration of norms.

The fantasy or illusion of the stability and endurance of gender must consequently be maintained through continuous and effective imitations of gender norms (e.g., women and men must continue to act out their appropriate roles *within* the family, so women must care for children and men must provide for them). For instance, parenthood may be seen as a correct gender performance since gender scripts of heterosexual relationships include parenthood as a significant and important feature of coupledom and childbearing is cast

as a natural milestone in the course of the heterosexual lifespan (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). Hence, people who procreate adhere to the expectations around the discourses of gendered normality.

Furthermore, included within these regulative discourses are disciplinary techniques which entail the coercion of subjects to perform specific stylized actions and to reiterate particular norms in order to maintain the illusion of the "core". For instance, Butler (1993b) discusses how social stigma, including connotations of failure, loss, or impoverishment, is associated with the "childless" and serve as powerful incentives to reproduce. She notes, therefore, that the inability to conceive (for biological reasons) and especially the desire to remain childfree for people in their late twenties or early thirties entails a struggle against a dominant, regulatory norm. Similarly, "the broken family" signifies the rupture of the heterosexual marital alliance and the nuclear family and is therefore cast as a threat to the welfare of children and greater society. Thus, where possible, one must regulate one's own gender performance in accordance with norms or social discipline will come to bear as those who perform their gender "incorrectly" are punished by society (Lisle, 2003).

In this manner, the illusion of the stability and endurance of gender, which in turn sustains the man/woman ontology, is able to ensure its survival and reproduction due to the policing of gender behaviour. This entails the "disseminating norms and rules of the 'do' and 'do not' kind, and bolstering those rules with various disciplining mechanisms" (Lisle, 2003, p. 80). Hence, Butler maintains that, "gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences" (Butler, 1999, p. 420). Since it is impossible to exist as a social agent outside of the terms of gender, this process occurs continually (and tacitly) (Lisle, 2003) and, consequently, amounts to what Butler (1993a) calls a cultural survival strategy within compulsory systems.   Butler deliberately uses the word "strategy", because she maintains, it "better suggests the situation of duress under which gender performance always and variously occurs" (Butler, 1993b, p. 420). Subjects are compelled to recite the norm in order to maintain their viability as a subject. Gender is "thus not the product of a choice, but the forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment" (Butler, 1993a, p. 232). As Butler (1990a) states, "the task is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat" (p. 148). I shall return to the problem of agency, which critics often raise at this point in Butler's argument, as well as the implications that this has for subjectivity.

4.2.3. Citationality

A key development in Butler's theory is her rethinking of performativity through the Derridean concept of "citationality" in *BTM* (Salih, 2007). Citationality does not replace the concept of performativity, but assists in

67

arguing that both sex and gender "can be performatively re-inscribed in ways that accentuate its factitiousness (i.e., its constructedness) rather than its facticity (i.e. the fact of its existence)" (Salih, 2007, p. 55). Butler (1993a) employs Derrida's re-reading of Austin's Speech Act theory in which he deconstructs Austin's claim that a performative has to be seriously intended in order to have performative force (i.e., to enact what it names). Austin claims that the speaker's intention has to be taken into account to determine whether an utterance is performative. In his view, a joke or a play would not have performative force, since the joker or the actor would not seriously intend her or his utterances.

According to Derrida, Austin's attempt to differentiate between statements according to the speaker's intentionality is based in the awareness that statements are prone to be taken out of context and used in ways that were not originally intended. However, Derrida does not consider the vulnerability of linguistic signs to appropriation, reiteration and *re-citation* as a potential downfall of language. For him this is rather an essential feature, which he terms its "essential iterability", and the very necessary condition of its existence. He points out that in order to be intelligible language needs to be "iterable", that is, moveable between contexts and so utterances cannot be entirely contained or circumscribed by any context, convention or authorial intention (Hood-Williams & Cealy Harrison, 1998; Salih, 2007). Similarly, Butler (1993a) maintains that performative statements succeed only because they are part of a greater "iterable model" (p. 13) and are thus recognisable as a citation of the original. She states that "in such a typology, the category of intention will not disappear, but from that place it will no longer be able to govern the entire scene and system of utterance" (Butler, 1993a, p. 13).

Austin also excludes utterances that are quotational, non-serious and parodic because of the uncertainty they evoke, but Derrida claims that this "undecidability" is inherent in all language (Hood-Williams & Cealy Harrison, 1998). Undecidability refers to

> the moment in the text that seems to transgress its own system of values ... which harbors the unbalancing of the equation, the sleight of hand at the limit of the text which cannot be dismissed simply as a contradiction ... a moment that genuinely threatens to collapse that system (Spivak (1976),cited in Macleod, 2002, p. 26).

It is precisely this aspect of the re-citations of gender norms that Butler (1993a) hopes to exploit when postulating her theory of subversion, which I deal with in the following section. This aspect is central to Butler's (1993a) theory. It is the surface and depth that are "undecidable" in gender.

In elaborating on gender as performative, Butler uses the concept of citation in order to clarify that gender is not a singular act or set of acts, but a re-iterative practice through which discourse creates the effects it names (Hood-Williams & Cealy Harrison, 1998). Gender is the consequence of recurrent "citations" of gender, thought of as discursive actions. The concept of "citation" brings to the fore the notions of imitation, mimicry and

repetition that performative gender entails (Van Lenning, 2004). Since subjects are compelled to re-cite the norms, laws, and conventions in order to remain a viable subject, gender is always a reiteration, a copy of these norms, or in Butlerian terms, a parody (Butler, 1993a). However, it is not a copy of an original, since no such original exists rather "it is the very notion of an original that is being parodied" (Salih, 2007, p. 58).

Accordingly, if gender is a copy of a copy, a parody behind which there is no original, then there are no "true" or "false" genders, only the norms and expectations that are associated with designated bodies (Butler, 1990a; Butler, 1993a). Since all gender is a citation of the counterfeit, Butler describes it as the politics of surface (Hood-Williams & Cealy Harrison, 1998). However, she points out that some citations are privileged as authentic. These "authentic" citations are those that most closely maintain the naturalised, heterocentric correspondence between sex, gender and sexuality. They have the appearance of corresponding with an original, natural gender. These gender performatives conceal their genealogy by appearing to be original and uncontrived. Such performatives are successful because they echo prior actions and accumulate "*the force of authority through repetition or citation of a prior, authoritative set of practices*"(Butler, 1993a, p. 227).

Butler's strategy of subversion, therefore, is to "trouble" gender by "denaturalising" the binary categorisation of gender and of the "natural" itself. For Butler, it is the cultural necessity of reiterating these symbolic norms that shows them to be unoriginal and imitative in nature (i.e., copies or parodies) and therefore potentially changeable (McNay, 1999). Re-citations (or re-inscriptions in her earlier work) constitute the subject's agency within the law, in other words, the possibilities of subverting the law against itself (Salih, 2007). Derrida's notion of citationality is therefore obviously useful for Butler's theory of resistance, specifically what she terms "a queer strategy" or "citational politics".

4.2.4. Butler's theory of subversion: Citational politics
Butler claims that it is the essential iterability of the signifier that allows for the marginal subversion of existing gender norms. The "citational," or repetitive and de-contextualisable character of performative utterances makes them vulnerable to appropriation, reiteration and *re-citation* allowing for "resignification" in other contexts (Boucher, 2006; Salih, 2007). This strategy involves the potential for the citational grafting of gender performatives, that is, the re-citation of gender performatives onto other contexts, in such a way that they reveal "the citationality and the intrinsic—but necessary and *useful*—failure of all gender performatives" (Salih, 2007, p 63). Overtly parodic, or "queer", deployments of gender highlight the disjunction between the sexed body and the performance, thereby revealing the imitative nature of all gender identities and undermining their presumed metaphysical reality.

Thus, Butler suggests that homosexuality may trouble the coherence of the gender distinction, a strategy termed "queering", as it disrupts the position of heterosexuality as original, revealing and potentially undoing its role in structuring gender relations (Brickell, 2005). For instance, she uses gay and lesbian parenting as an example of the destabilising power of sexual practice, asking "when and why, for instance, do some butch lesbians who become parents become 'dads' and others become 'moms'?" (Butler, 1999, *xi*). Likewise, Donovan (2000) states that most of the studies of lesbian mothers, as well as work with single heterosexual mothers, challenge the validity of gendered assumptions about what men as fathers exclusively do. The subjectivity of "lesbian father" disconnects parenting from assumptions about gender and can destabilise the inevitable linkage of the subject position of father with men (Nentwich, 2008; Donovan, 2000).

She also points to transgressive gender stylisations and paradoxical or ambiguous sexual identities as offering potential for change. For her, it is through the utilisation of obvious artifice—such as "quotation marks", irony, and parody—that established conventions are subverted (Bordo, 1992). For instance, Butler (1990a)explores how drag performances subvert the inner/outer distinction and "mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity" (p. 174) as it reveals itself to be a copy for which there is no original. Similar subversive possibilities present themselves in other practices such as "gender-bending", cross-dressing and transvestism (Van Lenning, 2004). Such destabilisation, effected by parodic re-citation and marginalised gender practices, ultimately upsets "the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence" (Butler, 1990, p.175). Thus, Butler locates the subject's room for manoeuvre in anomalies, whether they are unintentional or deliberate, specifically, in the imperfections of each gender performance (Van Lenning, 2004).

According to Butler, the very need for regulation shows any original gender ontology to be false (Anonymous, 1995); "the existence of anomalies illustrates that the ontology is unable to confine the attributes it generates in an orderly fashion" (Lisle, 1999, p. 80). Therefore, the normalisation of the material depends largely on reiteration but also exclusion (Butler, 1993a). Butler's politics of citation reveals subjectification as "the precarious assertion of identity through an always-ambiguous demarcation of mainstream subjectivity from marginalised alternatives" (Boucher, 2006, p. 113) and hence as essentially impermanent and unstable.

4.2.5. The constitutive outside

In Butler's view, alternatives to heteronormative power are constituted in peripheral practices and identities that take advantage of the paradoxical "constitutive outside" of the hegemonic norm (Boucher, 2006). According to Butler (1993a), resistance is a process that occurs in the domains of the excluded and

delegitimated identities. These identities may be called "the abject", which Butler (1991) explains, are "unviable (un)subjects … who are neither named nor prohibited within the economy of the law" (Butler, 1991, p. 20, emphasis in original).

Her argument is based on deconstructive logic, which offers a view of "identity" as difference rather than as self-presence. Identity is therefore always bought at the price of exclusion of the "Other" (in this case the Homosexual "Other") and the denial or repudiation of non-identity. To the extent that the "Other" (the spectre of non-identity) remains, the subject is always divided (Butler, 1993a). What Butler proposes, therefore, is that "homosexuality and bisexuality operate as the 'constitutive outside' of heterosexual norms…they assist in its constitution and are therefore everywhere implied as an *absence* supporting its presence" (Boucher, 2005, p. 116). Therefore, the "signification of heterosexual identity on the body, as a necessarily divided and recited statement of the norm and its constitutive exclusions, 'effects a false stabilisation of gender'" (Boucher, 2006, p. 117).

In this view, the heterosexual economy is potentially vulnerable to subversion since it is the very presence of this "Other" that allows its existence. "The 'unthinkable' is thus fully within, but also fully excluded from, the *dominant* culture (Boucher, 2006). It is these excluded identities, or (un)subjects, that "haunt signification as its abject borders or as that which is strictly foreclosed: the unliveable, the nonnarrativizable, the traumatic" (Butler, 1993a, p. 188). These trouble normative identities owing to the impossibility of fully establishing an identity contingent on both reiteration and exclusion (Butler, 1993a). They "permanently threaten the hegemonic norm: permanently, because they assist in its constitution and are therefore everywhere implied as an absence supporting its presence; threaten, because they expose its arbitrariness as a diacritical construction and social identity" (Boucher, 2006, p. 117).

As a result, those who potentially threaten the heteronorm must be continually excluded and positioned as "Other" outside of the norm in order to maintain the boundaries of (hetero)normality. These dissidents are therefore subject to stigma and social sanctions. This repudiation, or "Othering", creates a "threatening spectre [*sic*]" (Butler, 1993a, p. 3) of failed or unrecognisable gender. For instance, those who choose to remain childfree may trouble dominant constructions of procreative heterosexuality, since heterosexual procreation represents adherence to the expected heteronormative life-course or gendered scripts and the end-point of the heterosexual matrix. The conscious decision to remain childfree may disrupt the taken for granted assumption that being a mother or father is a natural consequence of being a heterosexual woman or man (Meyers, 2001). As a consequence such a choice may be seen as selfish, aberrant, or pitiful so that it is not a

truly viable alternative for those in a stable, committed heterosexual partnership (Mollen, 2006; Rowlands & Lee, 2006).

5. CONCLUSION

Butler's theory of performativity "questions how conventional meanings about the identity of gender are secured" (Hey, 2006, p. 444) and sets out to interrogate the terms by which our "identities" are described, constituted and circumscribed and how power is implicated in this process (Salih, 2002). Her work provides a way of analysing the process of gendered subjectification, that is, how gendered subjects come into being. Her theory of performativity provides a particularly useful tool for theorising the processes of gendered subjectification among men in such a way that avoids the potential pitfalls of the critical masculinities studies approach that I outlined in this chapter. Significantly, she repudiates the foundation of sex/biology, which seems to creep in the back door in critical masculinities studies. In this respect, Butler's theory offers a means of moving beyond the presumption that the study of masculinity should begin with men. This, in turn, counters the "exclusionary tendency" and also the ubiquitous "trait approach" in masculinities research. Instead, Butler focuses attention on the compulsory re/citation of gender norms within the heterosexual matrix and makes explicit the ways in which the regulative discourses around gender are infused with heterosexual norms (Hey, 2006). Power is therefore central to her thesis, in such a way that recognises gender as a hierarchical system as well as the intersectional nature of power.

Furthermore, for Butler, identity is always bought at the price of the exclusion of the "Other". This view of identity as difference allows for an understanding of gender as thoroughly relational. This, as I have argued, is a crucial aspect that is for the most part neglected by many critical masculinities scholars. (See, however, Ellis and Meyer (2009) for an engagement with feminist theory and a Butlerian understanding of "Othering".) Importantly, Butler also makes central the ways that heteronormativity is fundamental to the construction of gender. As I have discussed, for Butler, heterosexuality relies on the exclusion of its Homosexual "Other" for its existence, so that homosexuality operates as the 'constitutive outside' of the heterosexual norm assisting in its constitution and is therefore the *absence* supporting its presence (Boucher, 2005, p. 116). According to Butler, "gender difference is the product of a series of normative regulatory practices that work to secure a binary sexual model and to marginalise other forms of desire or object-choice" (McIlvenny, 2002, p. 124). Hence, the view of gender as relational includes sexuality, as Butler restores the link between gender and sexuality that is divorced by the sex/gender problematic.

In the following chapter I shall address some of the critiques of Butler's work, focusing on the problem of agency that her performativity thesis presents, since this is the aspect which has received much criticism. I then consider a possible "remedy" to the problems that have been identified in her work. I suggest, along with

Brickell (2005) and others, that some of these problems identified in Butler's theory might be addressed by reworking performativity as a theoretical tool to include relational specificities and the mechanisms through which gender occur.

4

Performing authenticity: Supplementing performativity with performance

[P]erformance and performativity are braided together by virtue of iteration; the copy renders
performance authentic and allows the spectator to find in the performer 'presence' . . . [or]
authenticity (Phelan, cited in Denzin, 2001, p. 27).

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of "performativity", as I have shown thus far, is crucial to Butler's interrogation of the ways in which prevailing meanings about gender are secured (Hey, 2006). As discussed in the previous chapter, this concept captures the paradoxical notion of gender as constitutive, that is, as appearing to be fixed but actually requiring continual maintenance and therefore inherently unstable. Gender is interpreted as neither essence nor socialisation, but rather as the result of the performative (i.e., recurring) "citations" of gender. Therefore, the concepts of performativity and "citationality" are interrelated (Hey, 2006).

Moreover, according to Butler's constitutive view of gender, it is the symbolic power of language that governs "the formation of a corporeally enacted femininity that never fully approximates the norm" (Butler, 1993a, p. 232). The *enactment* of gender literally fashions the material of the embodied self; "it signifies the social and cultural forces that come to sculpt femininity and masculinity as norms on the body and the psyche" (Hey, 2006, p. 439). So, instead of gender being a product of biology (one's "sex"), gender proves to be a discursive formation that precedes and fundamentally shapes, or produces, the sexed body (Butler, 1990a), that is, gender (and other) norms actually "materialise" the body (Butler, 1993b).

Importantly, for Butler (1990a) these constructs are not only historically and culturally changeable, but they are undergirded by heterosexual norms which dictate that there are two, and only two opposite and *complementary* genders that serve to bolster the heterosexual matrix. Ultimately, in Butler's (1990a) view, the locus of the gendered subjectification is within "regulative discourses" or "disciplinary regimes". These constrain the socially permissible possibilities of sex, gender and sexuality in order to appear as coherent or "natural". Butler's thesis therefore provides us with a rich theoretical language for thinking about gender (Bordo, 1992), which I draw on in order to explore the effects of changing gender constructions on the ways that heterosexual partners are involved in parenthood decision-making.

However, as helpful as this theory is, it also has its limitations (Bordo, 1992). Most significantly, as Hey (2006) suggests, Butler's theory of performativity, as with all deconstructive endeavours, has fallen prey to the problem of agency. On one hand, concerns have been raised by feminist theorists regarding how Butler's formulation of the gendered subject affects agency, particularly with regard to resistance. These theorists have

questioned whether her theory in fact sounds the death knell of the subject (Salih, 2007). These concerns often stem from more general reservations regarding the logical trajectory that the post-structural critique of the originary subject (and the categories of "woman" or "man") seems to imply (e.g., Benhabib, 1995). Inasmuch as many feminists have received these ideas, there have also been reservations with regard to the potential for political or emancipatory action (McNay, 1999). On the other hand, Butler's statement that "gender proves to be performative" has been widely taken up and frequently (mis)interpreted as "gender proves to be performed"—including by those masculinities scholars who, like many others, utilise the notion of "doing gender". Hence, in theorising gender as a "doing", many envisage an intentional, dramatic performance of gender in the theatrical or dramaturgical sense; one of the most common misreadings of performativity (Boucher, 2006; Moloney & Fenstermaker, 2002; Pilgrim, 2001).

This contention and confusion regarding the issue of agency essentially revolves around the extent to which subjectivity is determined by the discursive formations in which a speaker is positioned (Taylor, 2005a). A central point of disagreement and difficulty is that of intentionality and in this regard, the extent to which gender performativity might entail performance, that is, "whether we might consider subjects as doers of some of it" (pp. 27 – 28). Butler herself refers to gender as "both intentional and performative" (Butler, (1999), p. 190) and it is her use of the word "performance" that has created confusion, as she acknowledges. Therefore, Butler (1993b) has stated that, "It is important to distinguish performance from performativity [because] the former presumes a subject, but the latter contests the very notion of the subject" (unpaginated).For this reason, several authors have pointed out that the relationship between the two concepts requires clarification (Hey, 2006). Although Butler herself has overtly rejected "performance" as an aspect of the notion of performativity, I argue, along with Brickell (2005) and others, that this concept can and should be developed. It is necessary to develop this aspect of the work in light of the confusion that has persisted and in order to assist with the application of Butler's theory, which has proved difficult, as I pointed out in the previous chapter. My argument is that these two concepts (performativity and performance) suggest different dimensions of the process of "doing" gender.

In this chapter I shall discuss how this problem of agency in Butler's work can be addressed, suggesting that this might entail an extension of the concept of "performativity" to include the notion of "performance". The latter bears connotations of reflexivity and active imagination that remain unclear and underdeveloped in Butler's work. It is envisioned as the repetition or reiteration that masks the performative aspect and is therefore intimately related to performativity. In order to do so, I turn to recent work in discursive psychology, specifically that which draws on narrative methodology, and adopts a performance oriented approach. This work not only has a sound theoretical basis, but also provides a clear analytical strategy for applying and

extending the concept of performativity in analytical work (Speer, 2005).(In the chapter that follows this one I shall outline the analytical strategy for my own work.)

2. THE ISSUE OF AGENCY

Though widely received, Butler's work is notoriously difficult and labour-intensive for the reader (Salih, 2003). It is theoretically sophisticated and "wrought from dense difficult theory" (Hey, 2006, p. 441), particularly her theorisation around agency. McIlvenny (2002) speculates that this may be the cause for many of the misunderstandings of Butler's theory of performativity, which, he claims, "are rather superficial and tend to produce a restricted (even corrupted) set of readings" (p. 115). In spite of this theoretical sophistication, which may well complicate matters, McIlvenny (2002) maintains that, in the first place, the area of agency remains ambiguous in Butler's work. It is this "fuzziness" in the area of the agency/autonomy of the subject (especially the earlier works that I focus on in this thesis), that has caused Butler's theory to have been variously interpreted (Brickell, 2005).

This confusion and lack of clarity "has resulted in Butler being read as advocating both [political] voluntarism and determinism" (Brickell, 2005, p. 28). Some scholars have collapsed the notion of performativity into that of "performance" envisioning the process of gender subjectification as a wholly intentional project. It is therefore important to maintain a theoretical distinction between these concepts (Brickell, 2005). Others accuse Butler of discourse determinism and maintain that this undermines her political project (Benhabib, 1994; 1995). This critique is rooted in Butler's Foucauldian-inspired rendition of subjectivity, which has been argued to give us a pejorative and patronising model of the subject as a victim of "false consciousness", a governed "docile subject" or "cultural dope" (Gill, 2008). These critics claim that Butler's disavowal of a pre-discursive performer precludes political action on the part of the subject. Hence, confusion around agency also raises questions for Butler's thesis of subversion. I shall deal with the mis/readings of Butler that I have mentioned before I turn the issue of subversion.

2.1. "The doer behind the deed": A source of contention and misunderstanding

Following on from the idea that it is the *performance* of gender that constitutes the core gender identity that the subject is supposedly expressing, Butler (1990a) maintains that our "gender core" is created and maintained by a series of "regulatory fictions". As I have stated, her theory therefore presents a reversal: it is the performance of gender that is causal and not its "core" (Lisle, 2003). This leads her to the assertion that "gender is always a doing" and also the crucial caveat, "though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed" (Butler, 1990a, p. 33). Butler is opposed to the idea of an underlying substantial identity ("subject") or natural entity ("body").

For Butler, any conception of the "natural" is a dangerous "illusion" which must be "recast" within a "more encompassing framework" that sees discourse as foundational and the body as entirely "text". She therefore sets out to reject the notion of the individual or person as a "substantive thing" (Bordo, 1992, p. 169).

She critiques notions of the subject as an originator of action, instead advocating a focus on the performative power of discourse (Brickell, 2005).For Butler, the notion of "the subject" is problematic because it invokes an actor behind the "performance"—which presupposes an already existing performer and often leads to a humanist understanding of the autonomous, sovereign subject (Brickell, 2005). She takes up the poststructuralist question of the production of selfhood and meaning, "troubling" established categories of identities. Her theory de-centres the subject and requires us to think differently about the process of subjectification (Hey, 2006).

The issue of intentionality is at the heart of mis/readings and contentions on this matter. In *GT* Butler (1990a) deploys Nietzsche's claim that "there is no 'being' behind doing, acting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction imposed on the doing—the doing itself is everything" (p. 25). In her formulation, the "doer" (i.e., the subject) is created and held in place by a series of performed deeds (Lisle, 2003). Hence, "the 'being' of the subject is no more self-identical than the 'being' of any gender; in fact, coherent gender, achieved through an apparent repetition of the same, produces as an *effect* the illusion of a prior and volitional subject" (Butler 1991, p. 24). This is what Butler calls the "subject effect" of discourse. She maintains that subjects are not simply "there" (e.g., from birth) but "effected" in various ways as they are instituted into specific contexts at specific times (Salih, 2002). In other words, discourses create individuals by determining their *sex*, sexuality and *gender*.

The statement that "there is no doer behind the deed" has caused confusion for some, who question how there can be a performance without a performer, an act without an actor. But, in fact, Butler is not claiming that gender *is* a performance. As I have stated, she emphatically distinguishes between "performativity" and "performance" (Salih, 2007)—these two concepts imply different notions of the gendered subject (Brickell, 2005). "Performance" connotes an act and an actor. "Performativity" suggests action; that is, "the constitution of regulatory notions and their effects"(Brickell, 2005, p. 28), of which the gendered subject is one. The significance of this distinction for this thesis will become clearer through the course of this chapter as I deal with Butler's response to the widespread misunderstanding of her conceptualisation of performativity/performance as well as subsequent work on these concepts.

Some have attributed this confusion to Butler's inconsistent theory construction (Brickell, 2005; Boucher, 2006; Hey, 2006). Indeed, in the preface to a new edition of *GT*, Butler (1999b) concedes that the source of the confusion may relate to her lack of clarity in this work*,* where at times the concepts seem to blur into one another. In particular, she claims that use of the word "perform" has caused confusion, and she maintains that

she "waffles between an understanding of performativity as linguistic and casting it as theatrical" (Butler, 1999, xxvi), sometimes describing gender in terms of linguistic performativity and at others characterising it as straightforward theatre (Salih, 2007).

The metaphor of *acting,* which she deployed in *Gender Trouble,* has certainly been decisive in inducing such misunderstandings (Hey, 2006). This invocation of "performance" is intended in the linguistic sense, with reference to speech act theory, as I have mentioned (Moloney & Fenstermaker, 2002). Hence, performativity was not meant to refer to the *intentional* performance or enactment of gender on the part of a pre-discursive subject. In *BTM* she aligns herself firmly with the linguistic conceptualisation of performance; although it could be argued that she is still on slippery ground, especially when reading the part of her work that investigates drag as a subversive strategy, but I shall deal with this more fully later in this chapter. It is this conceptual slippage in Butler's theorising of subject formulation that produces "a lack of clarity [regarding] the capacity for action held by subjects relative to the power that enables their existence in the first place" (Brickell, 2005, p. 28) and has resulted in Butler being read in two contrasting ways, one that interprets her work as deterministic and the other that interprets it as voluntarism.

2.1.1. The subject as a cultural dupe

Several theorists have pointed to implicit determinism in Butler's formulation of subjectivity (Speer, 2005). They argue that in Butler's formulation the subject's agency, along with the possibility of subverting norms, is radically conditioned, if not determined, by inescapable discourses (Salih, 2007). These critics claim that her position is a nihilistic one and that her subject, like many post-structural subjects, is "negatively characterized by lack, loss and its enthrallment [sic] to a pervasive and unavoidable law" (Salih, 2007, p. 60). For them, Butler's rendition of the subject forcibly reciting heterosexual norms appears to be totalitarian, trapping the subject within the inescapable Law.

Such a formulation also does not appear to be optimistic regarding the potential for resistance to heteronormative power. Since gender is apparently omnipresent, there is no position from which to resist heteronormative discourses. Moreover, Butler points to the impossibility of direct resistance springing from the desire to transgress gender norms (Boucher, 2006). She takes a Foucauldian position in which desire and its repression are considered to be an occasion for the consolidation of juridical structures. Thus, it is "merely a ruse by which power extends its grip on the subject [because] the psychic interiority of the desiring subject is merely a result of the operation of power" (Boucher, 2006, p.116).

Most familiar among Butler's critics is Seyla Benhabib (1995) whose concerns with Butler's work stem from a more general scepticism toward feminist alliances with "post-modernism". In a written exchange with Butler, Benhabib (1995) questions Butler's assertion that "there is no doer behind the deed". Benhabib contends that "the 'death of the subject' thesis" inherent in Butler's appropriation of Nietzsche can only lead to self-incoherence. She maintains that the subject is a necessary fiction, as she states,

> Given how fragile and tenuous women's sense of selfhood is in many cases, how much of a hit and miss affair their struggles for autonomy are, this reduction of female agency to "a doing without the doer" at best appears to me to be making a virtue out of necessity (Benhabib, 1995, p. 22).

According to Benhabib (1995), Butler altogether eliminates subjectivity, essentially through discursive reductionism, or, as she puts it, "the dissolution of the subject into yet 'another position in language'" (p. 20). She claims that "the concepts of intentionality, accountability, self-reflexivity, and autonomy" (p. 20) disappear along with the subject. These concepts, Benhabib argues, "are necessary to the idea of historical change" (Nicholson, 1995, p. 3) and so her concern, therefore, is related to the (im)possibility of feminist politics and emancipation that Butler's thesis provides. In her opinion, Butler's theory has debilitating implications for both individual women and feminism in general (Benhabib, 1994). Benhabib regards Butler's understanding of the subject as produced through discourse as defeating the feminist objective of empowering women to determine their own lives (Dow Magnus, 2006). It is for this reason that Benhabib (1995) opposes Butler's deconstruction of the subject. She questions whether the project of female emancipation would even be thinkable without a regulative principle on agency, autonomy, and selfhood, which Butler would rather leave "permanently open, permanently contested, [and] permanently contingent" (Benhabib, 1995, pp. 40–41).

However, as Butler (1995) herself points out, Benhabib's criticisms rest on a misreading of performativity. In her response to Benhabib, entitled *For a Careful Reading,* Butler (1995) avers that Benhabib misinterprets her theory (as well as literally misreads her text). For instance, in her critique Benhabib (1995) asks,

> If this view of the self is adopted, is there any possibility of changing those "expressions" which constitute us? If we are no more than the sum total of the gendered expressions we perform, is there ever any chance to stop the performance for a while, to pull the curtain down, and let it rise only if one can have a say in the production of the play itself? (Benhabib, 1995, p. 21).

Benhabib takes performativity to imply that gender is "performed", with the implication that "there is a subjective entity lurking behind 'the curtain'" (Salih, 2007, p. 60). For Benhabib (1995) then there must be a subject prior to discourse who is able to speak the discourse and actively negotiate between various subject positions. For instance, she maintains that the subject "dissolves into the chain of significations of which it was supposed to be *the initiator*" (Benhabib, 1995, p. 20; emphasis mine). Accordingly, Benhabib (1995) cannot foresee the possibility of political action without such a subject. She considers Butler's subject to be completely determined by discourse and therefore no longer able to "master and create that distance between itself and

the chain of significations in which it is immersed such that it can reflect upon them and creatively alter them" (Benhabib, 1995, p. 20).

As I have already explained, Butler (1990a) repeatedly rejects the notion of the pre-linguistic, essential self, which Benhabib (1995) and others imply. Butler's subject is entirely produced by discourse. It is therefore *the effect* of discourse, rather than its cause (Salih, 2007). However, in spite of this, Butler, following Foucault, maintains that the subject is not *determined* by discourse (Benhabib, 1994). Quite to the contrary, as her response to Benhabib reveals:

> …the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency. For what is it that enables a purposive and significant reconfiguration of cultural and political relations, if not a relation that can be turned against itself, reworked and resisted? (Butler, 1995, p. 45 - 46).

Such responses to her critics make it clear that her understanding of the subject as produced through discourse does not eliminate the possibility of agency, but simply *reconceives* it (Dow Magnus, 2006). Butler supplements Foucault's account of subjectification—particularly with regard to the subject's capacity for resistance—by elaborating on how exactly the subject is constituted through practices of subjection.

In Foucauldian theory, subject positions can be read as being *given* by pre-existing social forms of communication; that is, determined by discourse. Those subjectivities that are available are prior and already constituted. This implies a semi-agentive subject forced to choose from among available subject positions. Furthermore, choice is construed in terms of lack. Subjectification occurs in response to social influences/as reaction to dominant, powerful discourses (Bamberg, 2004a; Wetherell, 1998). Therefore, this conception of identity formation is critiqued as "negative subjectification".

In Butler's reading, however, the subject is not reducible to its submission, as negative characterisations of subjectivity that often emerge in some deployments of Foucauldian theory. Instead, Butler integrates the simultaneity of submission and autonomy into the process subjectification so that at the same time as the subject is constrained, resistance is also enabled (McNay, 1999). This is because unlike the traditional humanist subject, Butler's subject does not exist as a locus of agency. She maintains instead that

> [t]he question of locating "agency" is usually associated with the viability of the "subject," where the "subject" is understood to have some stable existence prior to the cultural field that it negotiates. Or, if the subject is culturally constructed, it is nevertheless vested with an agency, usually figured as the capacity for reflexive mediation, that remains intact regardless of its cultural imbeddedness. On such a model, "culture" and "discourse *mire* the subject, but do not constitute that subject (Butler, 1990a, p. 182)

She goes on to argue that a position such as Benhabib's falsely presumes that, firstly, "agency can only be established through recourse to a prediscursive 'I'" (p. 182) and, secondly, "that to be *constituted* through discourse is to be *determined* by it where determination forecloses the possibility of agency" (p. 182). Butler

therefore defends a stronger position than Benhabib's, namely that the subject is discursively constituted although not determined by discourse, since discourse also enables other possibilities for action. Therefore, in her theory of performativity "the subversion of power emerges within a dialectical relation between constraint and agency" (Boucher, 2005, p. 113).

Hence, unlike Benhabib, Butler does not consider the deconstruction of identity to be the deconstruction of politics. Rather she asserts that "it establishes as political the very terms through which identity is articulated" (Butler, 1990a, p. 148). In other words, the very practices that produce gendered subjects are also sites where agency is possible (Lloyd, 1999). Therefore, "Butler's notion of the performative represents an attempt to go beyond an understanding of gender identity as a one-sided process of imposition or determination, without lapsing into a voluntarist model of the subject" (McNay, 1999, p. 176). Consequently, Hey (2006) maintains that "Butler has not so much eliminated the subject but 'put her under erasure'" (p. 452)—s/he both has and does not have agency.

A theory of agency therefore forms around the notion that "constraint is constitutive but not fully determining of gender subjectivity" (McNay, 1999, p. 177). According to Butler (1990a), "construction is not opposed to agency; it is the *necessary scene* of agency" (p. 147). In her view, it is precisely the subject's forcible compulsion to recite gender that constitutes her/his agency within the law (i.e., grants her/him the possibility of subverting the law against itself) (Salih, 2007). "The performative construction of gender is simultaneously constitutive of agency, in that the identificatory processes through which norms are materialized enable the formation of a subject who is capable of resisting those norms" (McNay, 1999, p. 177). Gender is, therefore, simultaneously a mechanism of constraint (in that it entails norms that delimit ab/normality) and a point of convergence for productive activity (Lloyd, 1999). Agency is a central concern for Butler because it signifies "the opportunities for subverting the law against itself to radical, political ends" (Salih, 2007, p. 55), which is the ultimate point of her deconstructive endeavour.

It is important to remember also that performative agency is not a series of discrete, isolated moments but a *process* of materialisation in which the constraints of social structures are reproduced and partially transcended in agents' practices (McNay, 1999). As Butler states in a more recent interview, "The first point to remember about performativity is what it is not: identities are *not* made in a single moment in time. They are made again and again" (Reddy, 2004, p. 117). Therefore, she maintains that

   [C]onstruction is neither a single act nor a causal process initiated by a subject and culminating in a set of fixed effects. Construction not only takes place *in* time, but is itself a temporal process which operates through the reiteration of norms; sex is both produced and destabilized in the course of reiteration. As a sedimented effect of a reiterative or ritual practice, sex acquires its naturalized effect, and, yet, it is also by virtue of this reiteration that gaps and fissures

81

are opened up as the constitutive instabilities in such constructions, as that which escapes or exceeds the norm…
(Butler, 1993a, 10, original emphasis).

Identities are instituted "through a stylised repetition of acts" (Butler, 1999, p. 179) which are socially temporal but also reiterated. The chief characteristic of gender as a fabricated performance is that this performance is repeated (Hood-Williams & Cealy Harrison, 1998). Butler (1993a) therefore conceives of gender as a constituted social temporality rather than a stable identity or locus of agency. It is "an identity tenuously constituted in time" (Butler, 2003, p. 415). Therefore, change arises as norms are reiterated. Gender is both produced and destabilised in the course of this reiteration and the inevitable imperfections, interstices and overlaps of each recitation (Butler, 1993a). Therein lies Butler's theory of agency, as well as the possibility for resistance.

2.1.2. The volitional subject

The idea of "doing gender" has been widely taken up so that, as I have already alluded, many have read Butler's statement that "gender proves to be performative" as "gender proves to be performed" (Pilgrim, 2001). There is a tendency for Butler's notion of performativity to be interpreted simply as the "performance" of gender and have so envisaged the intentional, dramatic enactment of gender identity (Boucher, 2006). This reading of "performativity" exclusively in theatrical or dramaturgical terms is, as I have mentioned, one of the most common misinterpretations of Butler's thesis (Moloney & Fenstermaker, 2002). Despite Butler's efforts to reclaim her original intentions, the idea that identities/subjectivities might be some kind of performance has persistently held a fatal attraction to scholars (Pilgrim, 2001).

Benhabib's (1995) reading, cited earlier, is an example of this misunderstanding, but she is by no means alone in her (mis)take on performativity. This has become quite a popular approach to the study of gender. We find an example of this potential pitfall in Riessman's (2003) work. Before I discuss these examples, I must point out that, despite my criticism, Riessman (2003) has made useful theoretical contributions and this critique simply illustrates the importance of distinguishing between "performance" and "performativity". Riessman (2003) claims to adopt a "performative analysis" of men's illness narratives, but she uses the term "performative" in such a way that it could be seen as synonymous with that of "performance". In her attempt to attend to the narrator's reflexivity she deliberately attaches "intentionality" to the notion of performativity. In this manner she proceeds down the slippery slope toward voluntarism. Riessman (2003) maintains that her "performative approach emphasizes narrative as action, [as] an intentional project" (p. 8). It is on this point that she purposefully deviates from a Butlerian understanding of performativity (and performance), as she points out in the following note:

> One difference between Butler's view and mine concerns *intentionality*. I believe personal narratives are intentional products and strategic – produced for particular purposes and audiences. Dynamically oriented psychologists might add that a narrator's 'intentions' are not always conscious (Riessman, 2003, p. 26, emphasis mine).

Significantly, for Riessman (2003) *intentionality* is a prerequisite for an active, agentive subject who is able to reflexively negotiate various discourses and to accept or reject certain positions. This leads her to questions of the subject's inner motivations or intentions and conscious awareness of these. So, contrary to Butler (1990a), there is something outside of or beyond the discourse for Riessman (2003).

Riessman's (2003) addition of intentionality to the concept of performativity means that it reads simply as "performance". In fact she uses the concepts interchangeably, as I have stated. For instance, she maintains that "narratives serve non-performative purposes as well – the world is not *all* a stage" (p. 7). For Riessman (2003) the "performative element" amounts to persuasive shows for a particular audience. In this so-called "performative approach" Riessman (2003), like Benhabib (1995), envisions a subject behind the performance, one that exists prior to discourse and *represents* itself *via* discourse. Narrative is therefore a tool that can be used in order to "persuade" and through this process the extra-discursive "self" becomes part of the social world.

In this sort of voluntaristic rendition of performativity, "doing" gender amounts to the performance of gender in an intentional, premeditated, and deliberate sense and theorists are inclined to collapse "performativity" into "performance" (Salih, 2007). Yet, as we know, this is a position that Butler resolutely refutes. She emphatically distinguishes between performance and performativity, correcting the misreading of performativity as "mere" theatrical performance in her response to Benhabib (Butler, 1995). It is reasonably clear from her work that this is not the reading that she intends. "Performativity itself does not refer to subjects 'doing gender'" (Brickell, 2005, p. 28). Instead it is principally a constitutive process. Therefore, gender cannot amount to a "*performance* that a prior subject elects to do" (Butler, 2007, p. 341) since the performance itself constitutes the subject. Therefore, unlike *performance,* which implies enactment, *performativity* refers to the constitution of regulatory notions and their effects (Brickell, 2005) and "*the reduction of performativity to performance would be a mistake*" Butler (1993a, p. 234) asserts. The repetition that creates the illusion of gendered authenticity is not a subjective action so much as a linguistic reiteration. Thus, gendered subjectivities appear within language and society as the effects of norms and relations of power rather than pre-social or pre-discursive essences (Moloney & Fenstermaker, 2002).

2.2. The possibility of resistance and subversion

As I have discussed, the locus of agency is not the subject, since the subject is wholly constituted within discourse. Consequently, any form of subversion must take place within existing discourse (Salih, 2007). This

may recall Salih's (2002, 2007) clothing analogy, which I drew on earlier to explain the constraints of discourse on gendered subject formation. This analogy illustrates that as far as subversion is concerned, we have only the "clothes" (or discursive resources) available to us to resist. We may alter these, but that is all we have, because, in Butler's (1990a) view, there is nothing outside of the discourse, "[t]here is only a taking up of the tools where they lie, where the very 'taking up' is enabled by the tool lying there" (p. 145). Thus, in Butler's theory, construction and deconstruction are the *only* settings of agency and resistance (Butler, 1990a).

In her account "material structures are sedimented through ritualised repetitions of conduct by embodied agents, but these agents, rather than being mere cultural dupes, possess a divided subjectivity that implies a standing potential for deviation from regulatory norms" (Boucher, 2006, p. 112). Therefore, the constraint of heteronormativity is not inexorable and change commences from the inherent "instability of the symbolic and discursive structures which invest the body with meaning" (McNay, 1999, p. 177). The failure of all gender performatives is rooted in the essential fallibility of the signifier.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, it is therefore "the contentious practices of 'queerness'" by the excluded Other—that is, the subversive use of symbolic norms to articulate the evidence of homosexual identities—that represent a destabilising force that converts the abjection and exclusion of non-sanctioned sexed and gendered identities into political agency (McNay, 1999; Salih, 2007). The "natural" or "essential" nature of gender is challenged (and thus the system destabilized) from "within" the resources of the system itself (Bordo, 1992). This, Butler (1993a) suggests, exemplifies the political enactment of performativity as citationality. She proposes that such a strategy "opens the signifier to new meanings and new possibilities for political resignification" (p. 191). For example, a word that originally has a negative meaning, such as "queer", can be re-appropriated in a positive manner and repeated over time in such a way that attains a positive meaning, as in "queer theory". As a consequence new discursive realities are constructed in the process of resistance (Dow Magnus, 2006).

Others are less certain of the radical possibilities of Butler's citational politics, however (e.g., Van Lenning, 2004; Hird, 2000). They question whether Butler's theory of subversion could in fact serve to subvert the Law of Two Sexes or merely provide more possibilities with regard to gendered embodiment. Van Lenning (2004) criticises Butler's lack of consideration of more generalised power differentials between men and women. In this regard, picking up on Butler's example of drag, she points out that there are "enormous structural and fundamental differences between women dressing up as men and men dressing up as women" (p. 42). For this reason she maintains that "'transforming citation' can indeed be liberating – for the marginalized. But I also believe that the practices I described [i.e., cross-dressing, gender-bending, or transgenderism] do not create much scope for femininity" (p. 42).

On a similar note, both Bordo (1992) and Van Lenning (2004) remark on how extraordinarily durable and persistent the female/male division remains. It is so persistent, in fact, that, as Hird (2000) remarks, although feminist scholars may have recognised that the sex/gender binary is *theoretically* "a sham" (as Van Lenning (2004) describes it),we tend to fall back on it in various everyday life practices. Bordo (1992) points out that "highly dualist gender ontologies" (p. 173) often prevail in ordinary life, both in the worldviews of those who execute these subversive gender performatives and more generally. "[M]ost people," she laments "apparently, have no problem accommodating data which should subvert their assumptions to fit their prevailing organization of reality" (p. 173). Therefore she determines that

> it is a mistake […] to theorize such resistance as if it were on equal footing with historically dominant forms of power. I am certain that Foucault himself would agree that even as we rightfully insist on recognition of the creative responses that are open within even the most oppressive regimes, we neither overromanticize the degree of actual cultural disruption and change that these responses represent nor allow emphasis on individual choice and creativity to obscure continued patterns of systemic subordination (Bordo, 1992, p. 172).

Thus, Bordo (1992) questions the subversive potential of drag and other practices that Butler celebrates as subversive in *Gender Trouble*. She cites instances when these practices seem to reinforce a binary view of gender. For instance, many female impersonators and cross-dressers consider masculinity and femininity as the polar modes of existence and lesbian "butch/femme" identities are often interpreted by heterosexuals as evidence of the "naturalness" of heterosexuality. "How culturally subversive can these forms be," she asks, "if so readily interpreted as 'proof' of the foundational nature of gender, the essential reality of the 'binary frame'?" (Bordo, 1992, p. 172). Similarly, Hird (2000) calls attention to the fact that *all* modern expressions of sex and gender identity depend on the current two-sex system for their expression. The trouble in accepting male lesbians is precisely that lesbianism, homosexuality, and heterosexuality are defined by a particular morphological base (p. 359). For this reason, Van Lenning (2004) maintains that "the relations of governance manifest in the [gender] hierarchy still remain in full force" (p. 42). As Salih (2007) sums up,

> if subversion itself is conditioned and constrained by discourse, then how can we tell that it is subversion at all? What is the difference between subversive parody and the sort of "ordinary" parody that Butler claims everyone is unwittingly engaged in anyway? (p. 58).

Lloyd (1999) also grapples with this issue. For her the answer lies in Butler's (1993) reworking of her original theory. She contends that many have not paid adequate attention to this reworking. Many continue in Butler's original optimistic vein in which "the disruption of naturalised assumptions concerning sex/gender will be effected by the proliferation or 'unexpected permutations' of gendered identities" (p. 205) that confound binary categories and expose their essential unnaturalness. However, she points out, Butler's reworking is more circumspect. Butler (1993a) states that,

> The critical promise of drag does not have to do with the proliferation of genders, as if a sheer increase in numbers would do the job, but rather with the exposure or the failure of heterosexual regimes ever fully to legislate or contain their ideals. Hence, it is not that drag *opposes* heterosexuality, or that the proliferation of drag will bring down heterosexuality; on the contrary, drag tends to be the allegorisation of heterosexuality (p. 237).

Consequently, subversion becomes exploiting the weaknesses in norms. Thus, any practices which show up the constructedness of heterosexual social arrangements can be said to subvert heterosexual norms. Heterosexual parents may be considered gender troublemakers when they deviate from heteronormative gender scripts, for instance those who diverge from traditional, normative, hetero-relational practice, such as divorced or (young) unmarried parents (Lubbe, 2007). Men who fail to fulfil their "natural roles" within families also trouble gender norms, for example by adopting roles that are not traditionally male roles, such as that of primary caregiver (Brandth & Kvande, 1998). Married heterosexual couples who choose not to reproduce could also be considered gender troublemakers (Meyers, 2001).

However, Lloyd (1999) questions then how an act of parodic political activity may then be read as such, particularly when one considers that all gender performances bear the vestiges of the heteronormative script and can then potentially reinforce the heterosexual matrix, even if the author's intention is not to do so. For instance, the situation of a homosexual couple with children may be read as a parody of the patriarchal, nuclear family, but it may also be considered as reinforcement of the recognisable family form that continues to legitimate kinship bonds (Butler, 2002). Such a couple may also inadvertently reiterate heteronormative assumptions regarding parenthood and gender norms (Folgerø, 2008), for instance lesbian parents who claim that a child needs a male role model in her/his life (Ryan-Flood, 2007).

Lloyd (1999) concludes that although the potential for signs to be read in numerous ways is unavoidable, and so the possible consequences of political interventions can never be contained, it is a mistake to abandon any attention to the context in which they occur, as Butler eventually does. Signs make sense in their historical present, she maintains, "only some performances in some contexts can impel categorical thinking" (p. 210) and so it "is not just about what parodic intervention signifies but also where, when and to whom it signifies in the ways that it does" (p. 208).

Likewise, Bordo (1992) maintains that Butler fails to adequately contextualise subversion. She maintains that Butler's analysis of gender construction and subversion considers the body as a "text" that can be "read" in "abstraction from experience, history, material practice, and context" (p. 170). She contrasts this with Foucault's understanding of the body as produced through *specific* historical practices, in which discourse is one of many interrelated modes by which power is manifest. Bordo (1992) argues that

> subversion is contextual, historical, and above all social. No matter how exciting the 'destabilizing' potential of texts, bodily or otherwise, whether those texts are subversive or recuperative or both or neither cannot be determined in abstraction from actual social practice (p. 172).

McNay (1999) agrees that Butler's notion of agency requires social and historical specificity. She suggests that Butler's account of structural conditions that give rise to agency is abstract and lacks a description of how the

performative aspects of gender identities are lived by individuals in relation to their enmeshment in social practices.

Speer (2005) makes a similar point. Butler's theory of performativity, she claims, exists in isolation from the "real" gendered practices she purports to illuminate. Although she claims that gender is a local production that is shaped momentarily through the details of discourse, her theory of discourse and the constitution of gender is vague and de-contextualised. She does not ground her claims in people's *actual* practices and her discussions of context sensitivity and the re/inscription of meaning are not translated into an actual analysis of language use. Since she does not examine any concrete empirical materials, her theorisation of the processes underpinning the performance of gender and its subversion remains largely abstract.

Hence, Speer (2005) maintains that although Butler acknowledges both the constitutive power of discourse and the potential agency and creativity of speakers, her account of discourse "is a vague, decontextualised and *reified* one" (p. 78). She maintains that in Butler's take discourse becomes a causal agent that is invested with the power to constitute gender, but exactly how this is done or how it occurs is unclear. Butler's interest is in the construction of gender through a performative re-iteration of acts, but it is produced in isolation from the actual behaviours that it describes and is meant to explicate (Speer & Potter, 2002). As such she provides no means of translating her theory into an analytical strategy for empirical analyses. As a result, many contemporary feminists and other theorists who have turned to performativity have missed the opportunity to ground their theorising in an empirical account of discursive practice and action (Speer, 2005). Thus, contextualising *specific* performances is crucial. For this reason, I attend to the localised performances of personal narratives about parenthood (non)decision-making within an interview context. In so doing, it is possible to examine how people may reiterate certain gender norms and discourses as they discuss this particular topic with me, a female researcher, so that certain gendered subjectivities are constructed and reinforced in this particular performance.

Recall also that temporality is central to Butler's performative agency. Gender is therefore not a quasi-permanent structure, but

> should be thought of as the *temporalized regulation* of socio-symbolic norms and practices where the idea of the performative expresses both the cultural arbitrariness or 'performed' nature of identity and also its deep inculcation in that every performance serves to reinscribe it upon the body (McNay, 1999, p. 176).

Accordingly, gender identities are not stable and enduring. Rather shifts in gender discourses or "scripts" occur over time and allow different subjectivities to operate. Resistance, or citational politics, therefore entails "slowly bending citations" (van Lenning, 2004, p. 30). It is the troubling moments that disrupt gender. These manifest as imperfections or *momentary* discontinuities in *specific* performances of gender, or, as Lloyd (1999)

puts it, "in the interstices between the impossibility of identical recitation and necessary reiteration" (p.201).Therefore, we could say that the cumulative effect of individual "failed" gender performances (and remember every gender performance, according to Butler (1999) is imperfect) creates disjuncture in (hetero)normative gender scripts.

For this reason theorists have suggested that more attention be paid to the ways that the notion of performance relates to that of performativity. Incorporating the notion of performance allows for the possibility of considering *specific* re/enactments of gender in particular contexts, including those that may cause ruptures in the sanctioned gender scripts and, over time, serve to change these. Although Butler herself carefully distinguishes between performance and performativity, she also considers the links between the two concepts. For example, in *Gender Trouble* she relates linguistic and theatrical performativity, affirming that theatre may provide crucial opportunities for queer politics (this is also called "theatrical politics") (Salih, 2007).

Hood-Williams and Cealy Harrison (1998) point out how Butler's use of drag (and other transgressive performances) as an illustration links discourses of performance to performativity. Butler claims that drag is like gender in that they share structures of imitation—both are parodies and each is a parody of a parody, "both are impersonations, productions without an essence behind the appearance" (Hood-Williams & Cealy Harrison, 1998, p. 88). For Butler (1990a) "the task is not whether to repeat, but *how to* repeat" (p. 148; emphasis mine). Following on from this idea, Brickell (2005) advocates an extension of performativity to include "performance". This is not a suggestion that we eschew the anti-essentialism of performativity or that we reinstate a pre-discursive performer who is "behind" the performance. Instead, as Brickell (2005) argues, more attention should be paid to the ways that gender is "both (inter)active and performed" (p. 25). Pilgrim (2001) concurs, maintaining that "it is clearly the case that at least part of people's identity *is* performed" (p. 88). These theorists maintain that an active, reflexive subject is not precluded in Butler's work. Moreover, notwithstanding the definite ruling out of the volitional subject, they maintain that there is a strand that entails an active, acting subject who imitates, recites, styles and enacts which the concept of performance might usefully bring to the fore (Brickell, 2005). This, they assert, might offer a means of fruitfully applying Butlerian theory to "real life" situations within specific contexts. In the case of my own research, this would be the context of "White", heterosexual coupledom and the ways that the process of becoming a parent and related decisions are negotiated by partners.

3. SUPPLEMENTING PERFORMATIVITY WITH PERFORMANCE

In light of the confusion that has been generated by the notion of "doing gender", more theorising is required around the idea of performance and how it relates to performativity (Pilgrim, 2001). As I discussed in the

preceding section, Butler (1999) herself points to the lack of clarity between the concepts of performativity and performance in her work although she does say, "I have come to think that the two are invariably related" (p. xxvi). However, confusion remains with regard to exactly how the concept of performance relates to that of performativity. As a result, her work has often suffered misinterpretations that have wandered away from the original anti-foundationalist principle that makes it so radical. Butler's main concern in clearly distinguishing performativity from "performance" is to avoid slippage into either essentialist or voluntarist models of subjectivity. She wishes to retain the conception of the subject as wholly constituted in and through discourse and therefore in no way prior to gender performatives. This is an integral part of her theory in that it represents a critical challenge to thinking that remains rooted in the sex/gender problematic (Hood-Williams & Cealy Harrison, 1998). Thus, in order to utilise Butler's theory in a way that remains true to her original intentions, it is important that analyses are based on a clear understanding of the relationship of these concepts to one another.

As I have stated, Butler (1993a) is careful to distinguish dramaturgical connotations of performativity, what she calls "theatricality", from sociological or linguistic connotations. For her, performativity is not analogous to self-display in that it is not fully intentional, voluntary, or deliberate (Moloney & Fenstermaker, 2002). Therefore, Butler has distanced herself from the possibility that performativity might contain an element of performance (in the dramaturgical sense). Others, however, have pursued this idea. For instance, Brickell (2005) questions whether the descriptions of repeated acts and actions, stylisations and so forth in Butler's definitions of gender "do not beg the question of whether we might consider subjects as doers of some of it?" (pp. 27 – 28). Indeed Butler (1990b) herself has stated that "Gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is *performed*" (p. 128; emphasis mine). Furthermore, in considering gender as an "act", she states that it is "both intentional and performative, where '*performative*' suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning" (Butler, 1990a, p. 177). Thus, the question remains that although the subject is constituted by discourse does this rule out her/his capacity to perform within its constraints?

This suggests a way of resolving some of the problems and confusion around agency that have been pointed out in this regard. According to McNay (1999) "It is […] important for a conception of agency to include an account of the creative dimensions of action where actors *actively* appropriate conflicting socio-cultural values to institute new collective forms of identity" (p. 316; emphasis mine). Butler's formulation of agency, as Dow Magnus (2006) and others point out, appears, for the most part, to be quite negative in that it consists of acts of performative resistance in which the subject can do nothing *but* resist. However, this conceptualisation of agency, despite appearances, does contain politically liberating potential in that it requires a certain degree of creativity (Dow Magnus, 2006). It fails, however, to express the full range of possibilities for subjective agency.

For this reason, the notion of performance should be developed in Butler's work, rather than abandoned, as Butler ultimately does. This concept allows for an active meaning-maker who cites and recites as well as performs and transforms available discourses (Peterson & Langellier, 2006). Pilgrim (2001) maintains that there may be some utility in distinguishing the two concepts from one another. The subjective processes contributing to gender formation, she suggests, can be described as "performed"— this refers to the agentic part that negotiates stylisations. Those that we have no control over—those related to the discourses that enable/constrain and our interpellation—might be called "performative" or "imperative" (Langellier, 1999).

Langellier (1999) argues that "performativity relies upon performance to show itself" (p. 136). In other words, performance is the way that culture exhibits itself to itself and to others. She maintains that as soon as performativity comes to rest on *a* performance it becomes discussible. Therefore, it provides the context in which to investigate questions of embodiment, social power relations, political effects and so forth. It makes "cultural conflict concrete and accessible" (Langellier, 1999, p. 129). Butler does not analyse actual accounts or attend to specific, empirical data (ultimately failing to provide any analytic programme for studying discourse practices and the context sensitivity of discourse). Therefore, although her account of gender construction is intensely relational—not only is the performativity of gender identity simultaneously asserted and "under threat" in relation to its "Others" but also in relation to an audience (Hey, 2006) — Butler does not adequately attend to this. She ignores the audience and the reception of the gendered performance and tends to marginalise the inter-subjective and interactive realm (Speer, 2005). In fact, Speer (2005) alleges that there is no sense in Butler's work of a "peopled world in which participants interact with one another" (p. 82).

Therefore, more attention needs to be given to subjectivities as achievements that result from interactive, public performances (Brickell, 2005).As Langellier (1999) argues, that which is personal belongs also to the space of the cultural—marked not by/as individual experience, but as a socio-political production. Therefore, she suggests (citing Diamond, 1996) that performativity must be grounded "in the materiality and historical density of performance" (p. 136). Consequently, Hey (2006) argues, it is necessary for us to conceptualise performativity by paying more attention

> to the audience of the 'we' of our 'others' [which] offers a powerful theoretical understanding of discourse as a social practice of identity…[and] creates conceptual–empirical space for elaborating how, and under what sort of conditions, subjects can come to cite themselves in recognised as well as unpredictable ways (p. 452).

She concludes that analyses need to connect "the social processes of subjective re/formation" to particular contexts in order to ascertain "how individual agency is paradoxically only im/possible within the various forms of the collective social" (p. 453). This suggests a performative struggle for agency, rather than the expression of agency by an autonomous, pre-existing, unified self.

3.1. A "new" narrative turn: The turn to performance and narrative-in-interaction in narrative theory

Following Brickell (2005), I argue that it is possible to preserve the anti-essentialism of performativity and the ways that it problematises the order of sex, gender, and sexuality while developing an account of gender construction as both inter/active and performed. In order to achieve this, I turn to current developments in discursive psychology and narrative theory around the notion of performance. Many discursive theorists have turned to performance, or narrative-in-interaction, in recognition of the need to acknowledge the reflexivity and agency of the subject in (*inter alia)* the process of gender construction. This is part of a broader shift in critical scholarship that amounts to a re-conceptualisation of the way in which the subject is conceived. Moving away from so-called "totalising" constructions of subjectivity given by some renditions of Foucauldian theory, a newer corpus of work emerges that grants considerably greater autonomy and agency to subjects (Gill, 2008).

This move within narrative theory, which Bamberg (2006c) terms "the 'new' narrative turn" (p. 142), is characterised by the attendance to narrative performance or narrative-in-interaction. Theorists who form part of this turn include: Michael Bamberg (e.g., Bamberg 2006c); Mary Gergen (e.g., Gergen, 2001); Kirstin Langellier (e.g., Langellier, 1999; 2001; 2004); Eric Peterson (e.g., Langellier & Peterson, 2006, 2004; Peterson & Langellier, 2006); Catherine Kohler Riessman (e.g., Riessman, 2003); and Stephanie Taylor (e.g., Taylor & Littleton, 2006), amongst others. (See Smith and Sparkes (2008, p. 25) for a discussion of various theorists' work.)These theorists "[place] the performance, the activity of narrating, the interactional activities that take place between people and/or social relationships at centre [of their] work" (Smith & Sparkes, 2008, p. 25). This work is influenced by discursive psychology and is shaped variously by post-structuralism, positioning theory, philosophy and other critical, language-oriented theories (Gergen & Gergen, 2006; Speer, 2005). Performative theory has also generally been well-received within this orientation, thanks to the strong social constructionist influence and the anti-essentialist view of subjectivity espoused within this perspective (Gergen, 2001; Smith and Sparkes, 2008). As a consequence, theorists who work within this orientation to narrative consider language be constitutive and personal narratives, individual consciousness and self-understanding are seen as "created in the matrix of language" (Gergen, 2001, p. 53). Hence, narrative is not thought of simply as a communicative medium or a means of conveying experience, but as a discursive mode that brings into being the object/s to which it refers, including (gendered) selves, social structures and relations (Speer, 2005).

At the same time, however, theorists who attend to narrative performance move away from "top-down", discourse analytic approaches that focus on discourse and ideology to the exclusion of actual social interaction and the subject's involvement in narration (Bamberg, 2004a; 2004b; Watson, 2007; Wetherell, 1998). Discourse analytic approaches have been criticised by narrative scholars within the performance turn who maintain that the subject is seen as "always already" positioned and subjected to pre-existing discourses

(Bamberg, 2004b) and, as a result, they have been critiqued for their linguistic, social or discourse determinism and "anti-humanism" (Freeman, 2003). Concerns centre on the degree to which the subject is determined by the discursive formations in which she or he is positioned (Taylor, 2005). Some critics (e.g., Day Sclater, 2003; Crossley, 2003; Frosh, 1999; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000) express the concern that the "post-modern self" is nothing more than a discursive/linguistic effect. Others raise concerns over and the way in which this perspective obscures or minimises the subject's reflexivity. Freeman (1999), for instance, argues that narrative analyses that privilege the social over the individual, especially those tied to social constructionism, "do not capture the active engagement of the individual person in the process of self-construction, and such accounts too quickly dismiss the reality or truth of the self" (p. 99).

The "new" narrative turn is part of an attempt to address criticisms of social and discursive determinism. By attending to narratives-in-interaction or the performance of narrative, the discursive approach intendeds to draw attention to "the *activity* of narrating [and] the interactional activities that take place between people and/or social relationships" (Smith & Sparkes, 2008, p. 25, my emphasis). The emphasis is therefore on how individuals "do narrative" (Reynolds, Wetherell, & Taylor, 2007), not simply in the sense of the actual words that are uttered, but in the sense of what is discursively achieved by that particular utterance in a particular interaction. Hence, as Bamberg (2006a) states, this kind of narrative analysis

> is less interested in a narrator who is self-reflecting or searching who s/he (really) is [than] in narrators who are engaging in the activity of narrating, that is, the activity of giving an account; for instance, when we engage in making past actions accountable from a particular (moral) perspective for particular situated purposes (p. 144).

Therefore, narratives are seen as spaces where interlocutors fashion interactively useful self-portrayals, manage confrontations or contradictions and negotiate meaning in a particular moment and context (Bamberg, 2006a).

Consequently, analysts are interested in the activity of narrators as they engage in negotiation and confrontation and are typically concerned with identifying the rhetorical and argumentative organisation of talk. Analysts closely track the interactive subtleties and/or rhetorical footwork in daily narratives and attend to the discursive constraints imposed on narrators in this process. Accordingly, a discursive approach to narrative is interested in how narrators mitigate or deal with the contradictions or inconsistency that may arise for a speaker within the interactive struggle over meaning (Bamberg, 2004d; Reynolds, Wetherell, & Taylor, 2007). This action orientation is the hallmark of the discursive approach to narrative.

Thus, this turn in the field of narrative inquiry, represents the recognition of the lack of attention to inter-subjective, local and contextualised character of people's accounts (Peterson & Langellier, 2006). This work, which owes a great debt to the preceding discursive psychological works, provides a solid theoretical and

methodological framework from which to proceed (Smith & Sparkes, 2008). Positioning theory has been key to this development. Teaming the notion of "performance" with that of "positioning" renders it analytically useful for narrative work (Riessman, 2002a&b; 2003). Positioning signifies performance within a particular account (Riessman, 2002a&b, 2003). In particular, the notion of "narrative positioning" serves as a significant means of "operationalising" (so to speak) the theoretical notion of performance.

3.2. Narrative positioning

The concept of "narrative positioning" (credited to Bamberg, 1997), according to McIlvenny (2002), is a post-structuralist version of positioning, rooted in a Foucauldian conception of discourse. This concept acknowledges both the constitutive force of discourse as well as the capacity of individuals to actively engage with, negotiate and potentially transform existing discourses. Therefore, remaining consonant with Butler's (1990) performative view, the subject is considered to be wholly constituted by the performance itself. Narration occurs within the constraints of "social structures and the roles that are recognisably allocated to people within those structures" (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 52). And so the subject is still bound to the accepted discourses or scripts, but also considered to be active and able to negotiate positioning by means of the discursive resources available to them (Reynolds *et al.,* 2007). Influenced by Davies and Harré's (1990) positioning theory, narrative positioning as a concept is intended to reconcile the tension between being positioned and positioning oneself. (See also Korobov (2001) on this.)

It represents a break away from the poststructuralist notion of "subject position" (Watson, 2007) which, it is argued, precludes a truly dynamic, creative conception of agency (Kiguwa, 2006). Since speakers are "always already" positioned, agency tends to be cast in negative terms (i.e., speakers either adopt or resist certain pre-given positions) (Wetherell, 1998). Recent work in feminist discursive psychology has been influential in this development, notably the work of Margaret Wetherell. In her paper, *Positioning and interpretative repertoires: Conversation analysis and post-structuralism in dialogue*, Wetherell (1998) asserts that some of the problems with the concept of subject positioning stem from its Foucauldian underpinnings. She argues for a more "technical" analysis that reveals how the positioning is negotiated by speakers and shows that they are more active in their identity work than implied by Foucauldian theory. She attempts this with her own "synthetic approach", strongly influenced by conversation analysis, which aims to synthesise micro- and macro-level analyses.

Like Wetherell (1998), theorists who adopt this version of positioning therefore envision an active and reflexive subject who interacts, negotiates, thinks back and plans forward across multiple instances of talk (Taylor, 2006) thereby exercising agency and imagination (Riessman, 2002a). As Davies and Harré (1990) state, "self-reflection

should make it obvious that [the subject] is not inevitably caught in the subject position that the particular narrative and the related discursive practices might seem to dictate" (p. 37). In narrative positioning, the emphasis is on how "discursive practices constitute the speakers and the hearers in certain ways and yet at the same time, they are a resource through which speakers and hearers can negotiate new positions" (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999, p. 52). Thus, the narrative subject is able to negotiate those narrative forms with which she or he is familiar and bring to these her or his own subjective lived reality (Davies & Harré, 1990).

Following Davies and Harré (1990), positioning may be imperative and/or unconscious, that is, conferred upon one. For example, being "White" is such a position. In this case one could recite already existing scripts around race (e.g., "White" superiority) that consolidate one's position or one could alter these scripts and thereby create new alternatives. A position may also be reflexive. The latter refers to actively positioning one's self (e.g., being racist is an undesirable position that one can negotiate). This involves imaginative positioning and actively and reflexively claiming certain subjectivities over others. This also indicates that positioning may occur interactively as subjects are positioned by others, as a result of their talk, or refuse such positioning and negotiate other positions (Davies & Harré, 1990). Hence, there are not necessarily predefined roles and already written lines in any one narrative performance, but rather one that the narrator negotiates according to the discursive resources that are available and the particular socio-cultural context.

Accordingly, one of the central tenets is that positioning can be contested and negotiated within interactions (Bamberg, 2004a). Moreover, a "person positions herself [or himself], positions others and is positioned by others in relation to available discourses and within a struggle for power" (Bergnéhr, 2007, par. [12]). Power is therefore at stake as interlocutors negotiate meaning amongst one another and constantly reorient and adapt their positioning strategy to what is created in the moment (Bamberg, 2004d). This process entails various self-presentations, that is, the performance of socially desirable identities. Narrating subjects may want to perform a desirable "self" and so construct events in various ways selecting and assembling experiences according to a specific discursive purpose, that is, the reason for giving an account in a particular way at that specific time and location (Riessman, 2002a).

Thus, according to this version of positioning, subjects are "complex composites of, on the one hand, who they create themselves as and present to the world, as a way of "acting upon" it" and on the other hand, "who that world makes them and constrains them to be" (Taylor & Littleton, 2006, p. 23). Hence, narrative positioning potentially allows the analyst to acknowledge the narrator's reflexive awareness and creative action within narrative performances, while bearing in mind that it is not a performance enacted by a pre-discursive, intentional actor since she or he can only utilise existing discursive resources which constrain any performance.

In this manner, the notion of narrative positioning balances voluntarism and determinism, being positioned and positioning oneself by proposing an active meaning-maker who cites and recites as well as performs and transforms available discourses (Peterson & Langellier, 2006). This may be thought of as the tactical and situational improvisation of existing discursive resources so that they are adapted to the current context and according to particular ends. This strategic or tactical modification of authoritative scripts occurs in response to (anticipated) audience reception and so narrators do not simply re-cite received discourses or scripts. This is also what makes resistance possible.

Recall that Butler (1999) views gender construction as "a strategy of survival within compulsory systems, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences" (pp. 190 – 191). Butler's work highlights the performative nature of gender performances, not only in the sense of discursive constraint, but also in light of the fact that the subject is compelled to re/cite norms (in whatever way) and, moreover, this is done with a view to the consequences of incorrect or failed gender performances. As she maintains, the issue is not *whether* to re-cite, but *how* to do so, that is, if one wants to be received as a culturally intelligible subject. Hence, narrators are constrained by the availability of discursive resources (as in the clothing analogy), they can "talk against" established scripts, but this must always be done from within the existing discourses—since they are not the cause of discourse, but its effect. Hence, narrators cannot manufacture an entirely new rendition, but that can alter or transform existing scripts, performing these in slightly different ways (and thereby potentially bending norms). In line with this view, narrative positioning captures speakers' in-the-moment response to the discursive setting as they re-iterate scripts in different ways according to the demands of that discursive context (both local and global), including its power dynamics. It also offers the analyst a concrete means of investigating the complexities and subtleties of social performances and how people inter/actively utilise discursive resources to produce gender. Thus, despite the restriction imposed by the discursive context, the subject's agency is not denied or foreclosed.

The particular narrative method that I employ is the narrative discursive-method (Taylor, 2005a; 2005b; 2006; Taylor & Littleton, 2006), which I shall explicate more fully in the following chapter. Like other discursive perspectives on narrative, this method makes performance central to the analysis; that is, the activity of narrating, the interactional activities that take place between people and/or social relationships. However, its aim is to "expand the focus of a discursive approach" (Taylor, 2006, p. 97) since "the ways people are already positioned at the outset of any occasion of talk" (p. 25) are often ignored in the discursive perspective. The narrative-discursive method deliberately attempts to address this oversight and, Taylor (2005a) maintains, represents a fuller understanding of positioning and the constraints upon speakers' talk than other discursive approaches. Hence, this method is concerned with the inter-subjective dimension of specific narrative

performances, but its analytic lens shifts beyond a study of the immediate turn-by-turn interaction usually maintained in discursive approaches to narrative.

The broader analytic focus of the narrative-discursive method explicitly includes attention to the wider discursive environment. It does not attend only to the mobilisation of discursive resources and interactive operations within a particular narrative space, but also to prior tellings, prior positionings, and certain socio-cultural factors that resource and restrict personal narrative. One advantage of this expanded analytic focus is that it steers us clear of the need to incorporate intentionality or psychodynamic theorising into analyses; as Butler herself does in order to counter the implicit determinism of her theory and to create space for subjects' agency and creativity. In this respect, Butler is criticised for adopting a cognitivist stance that ultimately reduces explanations to "the world 'under the skull'" (Speer, 2005, p. 80) and is extremely contrary to Butler's own anti-essentialist position, in that it comes down to private, unitary selves (Speer, 2005). The narrative-discursive method shows instead how the investment in certain subject positions is a consequence of repetition and rehearsal (Taylor, 2005a).

My primary reason for employing this particular method is that it clearly promotes the use the "dual lens" which prevents an analyst from getting lost in the interactional intricacies and losing sight of the ways that talk is resourced and constrained by socio-cultural factors (Taylor, 2005a; Smith & Sparkes, 2008). That is, it potentially guards against the overemphasise on performance or "doing" gender at the expense of a performative view of the ways that the activity of narration is resourced and restricted by the broader discursive environment as well as constitutive of it. It therefore counters the tendency to elide the theoretical concepts of performance and performativity so that they are used interchangeably to denote only the conscious and reflexive aspect of narrative performance, a potential pitfall that I discussed in earlier in this chapter.

4. CONCLUSION

I have argued in this chapter that the concept of performativity ought to be extended by supplementing it with the theoretical notion of "performance". I maintained that the notion of performance can address the somewhat unclear and underdeveloped notions of reflexivity and active imagination in Butler's (1990) theory. However, I also stressed the importance of clearly distinguishing the notion of "performance" from that of "performativity". As I pointed out, there is a danger of over-emphasising the performance dimension in order to capture the activity and autonomy of the subject and some work erroneously conflates performativity with performance so that performativity translates as the intentional, dramatic performance of gender (e.g., Riessman, 2003). Moreover, the familiarity of performing narrative may mask it as a stylised act of repetition,

as a doing and a reciting of norms and forms and so conceal that experiences and identities are constituted in discourse (Langellier & Peterson, 2006).

In the following chapter, I explicate the narrative-discursive method—which is situated within the "new narrative turn"—is a "synthetic" method that allows the analyst to pay attention to the activity of narration within the local and broader discursive settings, as well as the active subject who is reflexively involved in the process of narration, while balancing this with a performative view of talk as constitutive (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). Hence, in the next chapter I outline how this method may be used as a "dual lens". This lens sensitises the analyst to the performative and performance dimensions of narration and offers a means of synthesising the two opposing views of subjectivity discussed in this chapter, one in which the subject is seen as discursively determined and the other in which the subject is the active in narration (Bamberg, 2004d). This method, as I shall show, also provides an analytic programme for studying discourse practices and the context sensitivity of discourse, in the form of positioning analysis, which Butler herself neglects to do. One of the particular strengths of this method is that it takes into consideration how meanings are interactively negotiated between speakers and their audiences, thus incorporating the audience dimension that Butlerian theory overlooks.

5

A performativity/performance approach: The adoption of a dual analytical lens

1. INTRODUCTION

As its name suggests, Taylor's narrative-discursive method is a discursive approach to narrative that hails from the same theoretical trajectory as discursive psychology (Taylor, 2006). It "builds on previous work in social psychology in the areas of social constructionism, discourse analysis, discursive psychology and narrative analysis" (Taylor, 2006, p. 94) and is concerned with how participants "do" narrative within a specific communication setting and in relation to the larger socio-cultural backdrop (see Reynolds, Wetherell & Taylor, 2007; Taylor, 2005 & 2006; Taylor & Littleton, 2006). As I discussed in the previous chapter, discursive approaches to narrative pay heed to the contextual, interactive dimension of narration as it focuses on the person-in-situation and what people *do* with their talk. The focus is on the action orientation of narrative. That is, narrators' engagement in the activity of narrating. This entails giving an account from a particular (moral) perspective for particular situated purposes (Bamberg, 2004d). This analytic focus is expanded upon by the narrative-discursive method. This method takes into consideration both how the wider discursive environment is implicated in personal narratives and how available meanings are taken up or resisted and re/negotiated, thereby attending to both the macro- and micro-levels of analysis. In this chapter I explicate this particular method first of all showing how it may be utilised as a dual lens and thereafter outlining several key analytical concepts. Finally, I discuss the employment of this method, including the advantages that it holds over other discursive approaches to narrative. In this discussion I also highlight how utilising this method within a Butlerian framework helps to make the underdeveloped aspect of macro-power explicit.

2. A DUAL LENS

The narrative-discursive method, Taylor (2006) explicates, "is 'synthetic' in the sense proposed by Wetherell (1998), in that it understands identity work as partly but not wholly determined by larger social meanings; a speaker is active, for example, in taking up and contesting these" (p. 95). This approach expands upon Wetherell's synthetic discursive psychological approach (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). It attends to larger social meanings, scripts or discursive resources, as well as the speaker's own constructions and the immediate context of the narration. In line with a performance perspective, subjects are not entirely determined by the available discourses and narrative forms. Rather, in certain places and times, specific narrative forms are available for individuals to use and adapt (Taylor, 2006). This is in line with Butler's take on agency, discussed in the previous chapter, in which power is envisioned as a dialectical tension between constraint and agency. In this view, narrative is considered to be a doing, both in the performative sense, in which discourse is seen as

productive, and in the performance sense, in that it can be actively re/cited according to particular situated discursive purposes. I shall discuss each of these dimensions in turn, and then go on to explain key analytical concepts.

2.1. The performative dimension: Narrative as a discursive action

The narrative-discursive approach is part of one of a number of discursive approaches encompassed by the social constructionist/discursive orientation that draws on insights from social constructionism, discursive psychology and other critical, qualitative, language-orientated approaches (Smith & Sparkes, 2008; Taylor & Littleton, 2006). Approaches in this orientation are generally concerned with the critical analysis of talk, text, and other signifying practices. They highlight the constructive function of language, maintaining that human meaning, subjectivity and experiences are fundamentally constituted in language and that language itself should be the object of study (Smith & Sparkes, 2008). Accordingly, Taylor and Littleton (2006) assert that a basic assumption of the narrative-discursive method is that "talk is constitutive" (p. 24). Narrative is therefore understood as a discursive action or a *doing* in the performative sense, that is, that words "do" or "achieve things" (Peterson & Langellier, 2006; Speer & Potter, 2002). For instance, as Peterson & Langellier (2006) illustrate, the utterance "let me tell you what happened" constitutes both possible subject positions (i.e., "me" and "you") and discourse subjects (i.e., "what happened") (p. 174).

The narrative-discursive approach therefore incorporates the discourse analytic view that all talk, including narrative, is irreducibly social and comprised of "meanings which prevail in a wider social and cultural context of a society and culture (Taylor, 2006, p. 96). Narration is therefore situated "within the forces of discourse, the institutionalised networks of power relations, such as medicine, the law, the media and the family, which constitute subject positions and order contexts" (Langellier, 1999, p. 129). Speakers draw upon the "accumulated ideas, images, associations and so on which make up the wider social and cultural contexts of our lives" (Taylor, 2006, p. 94), or discursive resources, that are available within particular contexts in order to construct their narratives (Taylor, 2006). (I shall explain the analytic concept of "discursive resource" more fully shortly.) The subject is not completely free to construct her or his narrative at will, but limited to what is discursively available. Hence, narrative "is performative in that it produces that to which it refers ... narrative is a way to "make do" with what is available" (Peterson & Langellier, 2006, p. 174). As Gergen (2001) maintains, our cultures do not only determine what is "sayable", but they also provide the forms or models for what we say and, accordingly, how we interpret our lives. For example, she shows how particular cultural understandings of gender may (de)limit the construction of autobiographical narratives. While analysing autobiographical narratives of famous women and men, Gergen (2001) found patterns emerging in the form and structure that produced definite "womanstories" and "manstories".

Thus, discursive resources act as a constraint on narration (Taylor, 2006). However, as in a Butlerian rendition of agency, constraint is envisaged as both restrictive and productive. Therefore, the available discursive resources *both* enable and restrict the construction of particular narratives and, correspondingly, particular realities and selves (Taylor, 2006). This method acknowledges the possibility for the narrator not only to cite or perform already existing cultural representations, communication relations and conventions—or discursive resources— but also to re-work, re-cite, and transform these (Peterson & Langellier, 2006). This "implies the transgressive desire of agency and action" (Langellier, 1999, p. 129) of the performance dimension.

2.2. The Performance dimension: narrative as a construction and resource

Performance refers to the theatricality that conceals the citational aspect of narrative (Langellier & Peterson, 2006). As Langellier and Peterson (2006) explain, "The everydayness of performing narrative may mask it as a stylised act of repetition, as a re-doing and a reciting of norms and forms" (p. 156). In other words, it conceals the discursive constitution of experiences and identities. Recognition of the citationality of performance helps us correct the misreading of performativity as theatrical performance (which I discussed in chapter four) and to understand it instead as a series of repeated acts or performances (Langellier & Peterson, 2006).

The performance dimension points to narrative as a *making*, that is, narrative as a performance which is "imagined, fashioned, and formed" (Peterson & Langellier, 2006, p. 174) and on display for others. According to Taylor (2006), in a discursive analysis, narrative can be seen as both a construction and a resource. Narratives are constructions in that they re-cite the wider social meanings that are available within particular contexts (Taylor, 2006, p. 94). As Hole (2007) puts it, "cultural representations and language are tools with which we construct meanings of lived experience" (p. 699). This recalls Butler's (1990a) reference to discourses as "tools" and resistance as the "taking up of the tools where they lie" (p. 145). Individuals construct their narratives by drawing on the available discursive resources to produce a particular conception of an event, person, or experience (Hole, 2007).The narrator uses what already is, communication relations and conventions, in order to create a localised, contextual narrative (Taylor, 2006). Narratives can be considered as resources in that they can be employed by speakers in order to perform social actions (Smith & Sparkes, 2008). "People do things with words, and they do things with narratives" (Atkinson, Coffey & Delamont, 2003, cited in Smith & Sparkes, 2008, p. 16)

Hence, narrative is also seen as a form of verbal/social action that people utilise in order to achieve certain things (Smith, 2007). The telling of a specific account serves a particular discursive purpose (e.g., to argue, convince, blame, persuade and so on). So, no matter how banal, narratives are seen as always in some sense

accomplishing rhetorical work. They are what Bamberg (2004d) calls "rhetorical tools" (p. 223). This is highlighted by the dramaturgical metaphor in which narrative is seen as told, recounted, related, described, recited or reported for an audience(real or imagined) (Riessman, 2002). In this metaphor, the designations of narrator, character, and audience do not necessarily always name particular individuals, but may point to communication functions that can be taken up by or distributed among one person, a few/many people, and institutions. That is, one individual can perform all these functions or they may be distributed among several people (Peterson & Langellier, 2006).

Narration is therefore seen as involving various participant roles (or positions) in which a teller and listener/audience collaboratively produce the account (Riessman, 2002a). It is therefore a relational, reciprocal, and collaborative social activity (Bamberg, 2004d). As the teller is challenged or encouraged, identifies with or feels threatened by the listener/s, she or he shapes her or his account accordingly (Gergen, 2004). This collaboration partly entails audience comments, questions or challenges (Bamberg, 2006a; Riessman, 2002a&b; Wetherell, 1998) and is most noticeable in conversational narratives, such as the ones that I analyse in this thesis, where interlocutors overtly contribute to the telling (Ochs, 1997). Therefore, social relationality is therefore given primacy since, as narrators, "we are always addressing someone—either implicitly or explicitly—within a relationship" (Smith & Sparkes, 2008, p. 26) either in terms of the immediate social context of our listeners or *vis-à-vis* the world out there (Bamberg, 2006b).

Proceeding from a discursive perspective, analysts are not interested in structural analysis or the dynamics of plot development (Reynolds *et al.*, 2007). Rather, they are interested in the activity of narration and, perhaps more importantly, the discursive purpose of each narrative in terms of how the particular strategies are connected to relations of power (Bamberg, 2004d). In this regard the approach is similar to discourse analysis. However, by incorporating a narrative perspective it advances, in particular, a view of talk not only as social, but as inter-subjective and taking place within a complex aggregate of contexts (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). This fusion of discursive methods with narrative theory provides a unique analytic approach. The concern shifts from a preoccupation with coherence, structuring, and themes to the harnessing and mobilisation of discursive resources (as a rhetorical means of constructing an account), interactive operations (as negotiation of positioning and co-construction) and discursive positioning (Bamberg, 2004d).

3. KEY ANALYTICAL CONCEPTS

Analytically speaking, the narrative-discursive method has two aspects which capture both the performative and performance dimensions. The first entails the investigation of the available discursive resources that constrain narration. This could be said to point to the performative, or macro, dimension of narrative. The

second aspect is the grounding of the narrative in the interactive context, and includes attention to the rhetorical and argumentative organisation necessitated by a particular interchange (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). This aspect points to the narrative performance and the micro-politics of specific interactions. For the purpose of analytic work, the concept of "positioning" is applied in a way that captures the Foucauldian notion of "being positioned" in talk as well as how narrators position themselves (Taylor, 2005). I shall explicate each of the key analytic concepts that were employed in the analysis.

3.1. Discursive resources

The notion of a "discursive resource", defined as "a set of meanings that exist prior to an instance of talk and [are] detectable within it" (Reynolds *et al.,* 2007, p. 335), is common to a number of critical discursive psychological narrative analyses (Bamberg, 2004d). Following the basic assumption of discursive psychology that talk is constitutive, the narrative-discursive method utilises the notion of a discursive resource in a critical discursive psychological sense. Hence, this concept includes the prevailing socio-cultural understandings present in society's discursive language practices and in the particular context in which a narrative is situated (i.e., sets of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements, and so forth) (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). According to Taylor (2006a) the notion of discursive resource coincides with the notion of discourse and discursive regime. This method therefore clearly resonates with Butlerian theory and in this aspect points to the performative dimension of narration.

Hence, in drawing upon particular discursive resources, the narrator creates a localised, contextual narrative (Taylor, 2006). Individuals employ established and intelligible discursive resources available to them within a culture and so produce a particular conception of an event, person, or experience (Smith & Sparkes, 2008; Taylor, 2006). These constructions, especially those pertaining to one's "identity" or sense of selfhood, then become personalised by the unique circumstances of a particular life (Smith & Sparkes, 2008). In the narrative-discursive method, narrative is therefore considered as a *resource* itself that comprises of larger socially available meanings (Taylor, 2006), including canonical narratives and (what I term) "scripts". I shall explicate each of these concepts below, first discussing scripts and then turning to canonical narratives.

3.1.1. Scripts

In my own application of the narrative-discursive method, one discursive resource that I consider is a "script". This is equivalent to the concept of "interpretative repertoires", which are conventionally analysed in the narrative-discursive method. Edley (2001) defines the concept of an interpretative repertoire as a "relatively coherent way ... of talking about objects and events in the world" (p. 198), while Wetherell (1998) identifies it as "a culturally familiar and habitual link of argument comprised of recognizable themes, commonplaces and

tropes" (p. 400). In this line of thinking, an interpretative repertoire can be thought of as a socially-established way of speaking that determines what can be said about various topics (Edley, 2001). The concept of interpretative repertoires overlaps to some degree with a Foucauldian or post-structuralist concept of discourse (Taylor, 2005) in that both of these concepts "invoke the idea of repositories of meaning; that is, distinctive ways of talking about objects and events in the world" (Edley, 2001, p. 202). Moreover, both of these concepts are associated with the concept of ideology in that subjects are interpellated into particular culturally specific ways of understanding the world. Despite similar theoretical underpinnings, the concept of interpretative repertoires is usually distinguished from that of discourse in order to "place more emphasis upon human *agency* within the flexible deployment of language" (Edley, 2001, p. 202). Hence, interpretative repertoires are seen as less monolithic and offering a wider range of rhetorical opportunities that discourses (Edley, 2001).

In employing the term "script", I wish to retain this understanding in which agency is foregrounded but also to create theoretical continuity with Butler's understanding of performativity. "Script" is not a Butlerian term, but it is used by some commentators on Butler's work in order to highlight how performances are discursively regulated (e.g., Salih, 2006; Van Lenning, 2004). It introduces a dramaturgical metaphor, but also draws attention to the constraining power of discourse. In my conceptualisation, "scripts", like the interpretative repertoires, can be thought of as the "building blocks of conversation [comprising of] a range of linguistic resources that can be drawn upon in the course of everyday social interaction" (Edley, 2001, p. 198). These establish what is possible and acceptable, but may also be improvised upon. Of course, as within a Butlerian framework, though a script may be altered within certain bounds, it may not be abandoned entirely if one wishes to remain a culturally intelligible social subject. Hence, though narration is discursively regulated, it is possible for narrators to improvise within narrative performances as they draw on what is discursively available to them.

3.1.2. Canonical narratives

Discursive resources may also take the form of established meta-narratives, which Taylor (2006) calls "canonical narratives" (p. 97), drawing on Bruner's work. Bruner proposes that memories and experience are narratively organised and that a significant resource for talk are the "canonical narratives" of a culture (Taylor, 2006; 2005b). These are particular type of discursive resource available to speakers which afford speakers with culturally established and recognisable ways of characterising life events and experiences (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). Canonical narratives contain "expected connections of sequence and consequence" (Taylor & Littleton, 2006, p. 31) and provide particular culturally familiar ways of "storying" a life (Taylor & Littleton, 2006, p. 26). They act as a resource that offers a familiar sequence and "confers an apparent logic or rightness on certain

ideas and connections" (Taylor, 2005b, p. 99). For instance, a current "western" example of a canonical narrative is the "dominant coupledom narrative" (Taylor & Littleton, 2006, p. 24). According to Taylor and Littleton (2006), this canonical narrative entails "the story of a life which progresses through the stages and events of [heterosexual] coupledom, such as courting, getting married and becoming parents" (p. 24). From this example it is also possible to see that canonical narratives make available specific culturally familiar patterns of temporal ordering with distinctive socio-culturally established endpoints. It is this feature that distinguishes them from other kinds of discursive resources.

Hence, canonical narratives provide "a logic for talking about personal circumstances, life stories and decisions" (Taylor, 2006, p. 97) and particular ways of storying one's life (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). As established or recognisable biographical narratives, these discursive resources may carry broad social currency and also provide a kind of shorthand for speakers (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). Narrators may utilise these larger cultural storylines, adapting their own personal stories accordingly (Smith & Sparkes, 2008).   So, for example, in Taylor et al.'s (2007) study, single women structured their personal narratives to orient to the established sequence and narrative form of the coupledom narrative, regardless of the actual events of their lives. Hence, canonical narratives represent the prevailing possibilities within a culture and delimit what a narrator may say on a particular topic (Taylor, 2006).

3.2. Positioning

According to Riessman (2002), the notion of "positioning" signals the performance of narrative. As I discussed in the preceding chapter, positioning analysis enables narrative analysts to study the active, self-shaping quality of narration and the narrator's potential to (re)create personal identities within particular circumstances and locations (Riessman, 2002). In the narrative-discursive approach, the analytic concept of positioning is applied in such a way as to draw out the self-reflective, self-critical and agentic aspects of narration while at the same time attending to the ways that subjects may already be positioned in discourse. A tension is envisioned between being positioned and agentively negotiating positions for oneself, as I have mentioned before. This is seen as occurring "concurrently in a kind of dialectic as subjects engage in narratives-in-interaction and make sense of self and others in their stories" (Bamberg, 2004d, p. 224).   I shall explicate how this analytic strategy is utilised within the narrative-discursive approach.

The narrative-discursive method builds on Wetherell's (1998) attempt to synthesise the micro- and macro-levels of analysis. It attends to the ways that positions are conferred and actively claimed or contested within the dialogic process of discussions, interviews, and the like, but with less concern for turn-by-turn interaction (as in Wetherell's (1998) analysis and also work conducted by Bamberg (2004a; 2004b; & 2004c)). Taylor and

Littleton (2006) argue that "an expanded, discursive and narrative focus is needed to explore the possibilities and constraints which speakers bring to an encounter from their previous identity work, or, in other words, how they are positioned by who they already are" (p. 25). These positionings include not only material realities (e.g., gender, age, physical ability, "race" and so forth) that amount to forced positioning, but also the "prior positionings of previous tellings" (Taylor, 2005, p. 48). As Taylor and Littleton (2006) explain

> [t]his does not necessarily assume that speakers have met before. At the outset of any encounter a person is always already positioned. For example, her appearance and the circumstances of the meeting "tell" something about who she is, as do any references to past life and experiences (p. 25).

Their point is that narration is influenced by the positionings given by the facts of a person's existence (imperative positioning) as well as their previous accounts (Taylor, 2006), which Davies and Harré (1990) call "the cumulative fragments of lived autobiography" (p. 49). Taylor (2006) contends that although personal narratives are indeed shaped "to do work in particular circumstances of telling" (p. 98), the speaker will not be starting afresh, but rather will re/present a version of what has been told before. This provides consistency and continuity between accounts and, consequently, contributes to people's experience of who they believe themselves to be, that is, their life narrative. So, for the most part, people are not making an attempt to present an entirely new account or to deny their pasts (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). Gergen (2004) agrees that freely changing one's narrative, according to socio-cultural norms, is seen as something that is only done by "liars and crooks" (p. 275). The positionings adopted in previous interactions therefore act as a constraint, but also as a resource, for current and future interactions. Speakers face moments of "trouble", when they appear to occupy contradictory or undesirable positions (Taylor, 2006), discussed in the next section.

3.3. Trouble and repair

According to Wetherell (1998), two kinds of trouble may arise for a speaker. The first kind of trouble arises due to a violation of the cultural expectations that require a speaker to remain consistent within a particular narrative account. "Trouble" refers to instances in which there are different, often inconsistent, versions of events or people and their motives, characters and so forth within an account (Wetherell, 1998). This relates to the speaker's own contradictions of (a) previous position(s) that she or he has taken up within that account. This may also be referred to as "interactional trouble" (Bamberg, 2004d, p. 221) as it occurs at the interpersonal or micro-level between interlocutors within a particular communication setting. Interactional or micro-level trouble arises for speakers in relation to inconsistent positioning. For example, claiming to be a feminist but later stating that one needs a man in one's life could lead to trouble since many perceive these positions to be antithetical. This may be particularly troublesome in the immediate discursive context of the interview setting in which a female researcher could be seen to have particular views. The second kind of trouble arises in relation to negatively valued social identities in that a person will not wish to align her- or himself with a devalued social position. For instance, men who initially claim to be liberal and then later state

that they expected mothers to take the greater share of childcare ran the risk of being seen as conservative, unfair, or sexist. They could not be both "liberal" and "conservative" at the same time without doing some explanatory work. A troubled position, therefore, is one which is "potentially changeable as implausible or inconsistent" (Taylor, 2006, p. 98) or is socially undesirable or "spoiled" (as Goffman would call it) (Taylor, 2006).

In other work Taylor and colleagues also utilise the notion of "ideological dilemmas" (Reynolds *et al.*, 2007, p. 336). Drawing on Billig's work, this term is used to refer to the contradictions of the argumentative threads that run through a particular account. These contradictions or inconsistencies are the result of the speaker's employment of disparate discursive resources. The notion of ideological dilemmas alerts an analyst to the use of different scripts of the "same" social object (e.g., men, children etc.) and highlights rhetorical inconsistencies (Edley, 2001).

In most cases trouble necessitates repair; although a degree of inconsistency is expected and some instances of trouble are overlooked (Wetherell, 1998). "Repair" encompasses various narrative strategies like the use of rhetoric or argumentation. This is also called "rhetorical work" in the narrative-discursive method (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). When trouble occurs, speakers may re/construct their positions in order to be "interactively useful" (Bamberg, 2004d, p. 221). Narrators do labour, which as Bamberg (2004d) points out is similar to Goffman's notion of "facework", in order to attain "a positive social value". This **"relational maneuvering [*sic*]"** occurs in light of the fact that "Face can either be lost or saved" (Bamberg, 2004d, p. 221).

Narrators employ particular rhetorical strategies in order to forestall audience criticism or to avoid being negatively positioned and thus preserve positive positioning or "save face" (Bamberg, 2004d). Hence, rhetorical strategies can be thought of as "rhetorical finessing" or "discursive or interactive moves" made by the speaker so as to deal with interactive trouble (Bamberg, 2004b, p. 221). For instance, a speaker may "correct" or revise a previous statement when it becomes obvious that it is problematic or no longer interactively useful by saying, for example, "Well, what I mean to say is…" or move to adopt another contradictory position with the words "Now that I think about it…" Drawing on new discursive resources may resolve one dilemma, but may also introduce further quandaries for the speaker (Reynolds *et al.,* 2007). Wetherell (1998) points out that such precariousness and openness arises precisely because utterances are designed to perform interactional tasks and not for the sake of closure or consistency. It is, she maintains, the in-built reflexivity and the emergent transformative properties of an interaction that bring about these features. Earlier renditions of an account may thus be considered as a resource and a constraint on future

narration.   As this discussion shows, the focus is on interactional, micro-level trouble. Later I discuss how Butlerian theory might expand the focus to incorporate the consideration of trouble on the macro level.

3.4. Discursive tactics

Referring to this rhetorical work or "rhetorical finessing", Bamberg (2004d), and other theorists, use the term "strategy" (i.e., referring to a rhetorical or "positioning strategy"). This emphasises the active and deliberate use of language in this and potentially points to the broader political ramifications of rhetorical work. In a similar vein, Butler (1999) also suggests that the term "strategy" to refer to gender performances and this, she argues, reflects "the situation of duress under which gender performance always and variously occurs" (p. 178). However, in order to capture this "situation of duress" (Butler, 1990a, p. 178) as well as the active and reflexive character of narration, I utilise the analytical concept of the "discursive tactic".

Although, the concept of a "tactic" is essentially similar to that of the "rhetorical/discursive strategy", I make a distinction between "strategy" and "tactic" in order to guard against re-introducing intentionality into the analytical account. My intention is to underscore the fact that, in a Butlerian view of agency, the subject is indeed able to choose "how to repeat" (Butler, 1990a, p. 148), but is still constrained by the discursive context. I base the distinction on the one made by de Certeau (1984 cited in Cornwall, 2007) in which

> [t]he metaphor of strategy implies a conscious, deliberate series of plans or actions that are calculated in terms of a clear vision of potential outcomes. Strategy implies a starting point, a position of power. Tactics, in his analysis, are more defensive, reactive practices . . . for example, ways of making do, getting by, and coping with whatever comes along (p. p230).

The analytical concept of the "discursive tactic" is intended to capture the narrator's reflexive awareness and creative action within narrative performances, but at the same time to indicate that this is not a performance enacted by a pre-discursive, intentional actor, since she or he can only utilise existing discursive resources which constrain any performance. It also captures speakers' in-the-moment response to the discursive setting as they re-iterate scripts in different ways according to the demands of that discursive context (both local and global), including its power dynamics. According to Bamberg (2004d), instances of trouble "no longer appear as contradictions or inconsistencies, but rather as openings into which the analyst can delve and see how such multiple attending and rhetorical finessing is used" (p. 222).

3.5. Rehearsal: Taylor's expansion of the analytic lens

The narrative-discursive method adopts the concept of "trouble" as employed by other discursive methods, but also extends this concept. It differs from other discursive approaches in that moves beyond the analysis of turn taking within the immediate discursive context to include prior renditions and positions (Taylor, 2005a). In the narrative-discursive method, the audience is considered to be wider than merely those individuals involved

in the present interaction. Narrative construction does not only take place in the immediate (micro) context of turn-by-turn conversations and storytelling (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). Instead, drawing on Billig's work on rhetoric, Taylor (2006) argues that narration takes place on a number of levels concurrently. She maintains that narrators construct their current account in relation to the present audience but also, to prior tellings and the broader discursive context.

Hence, the narrative-discursive method looks at trouble caused in relation to the previous utterances within a particular dialogue as well as trouble related to the onus on speakers to be consistent with their own previous self-presentations and cultural expectations to comply with what is more generally recognised and expected of them. It also considers the wider discourses, including debates and contestations, that exist in the narrator's social world and may come to bear on an account (Taylor, 2005a).

The notion of "rehearsal" is significant to the expanded analytic focus advocated by Taylor (2005a), especially in regard to the expansion of the concept of "trouble". Taylor (2005a) argues that an account is also partly shaped by a narrator's awareness of and response to imagined others (Taylor, 2006). Narrators may anticipate trouble as they bring to bear previous audience responses on present or future narration. As a result, a narrator may rehearse her/his account in an attempt to mitigate potential trouble. This idea is similar to Goffman's concept of "backstage performances" where an "actor" performs a particular performance alone in anticipation of future responses to the performance (Riessman, 2002a); it is as though she or he is addressing anticipated disagreements and counter-arguments (Taylor, 2006). Gergen (2001) uses the notion of "social ghosts" (p.143) to capture this idea. The term describes the imaginal dialogues or interactions that individuals may engage in with real or fictitious characters over time. This is one of the ways that narrators attempt to manage interactive trouble and form a representation of themselves that is interactively useful (Bamberg, 2004d; Taylor, 2005b).

Another way that a narrator might anticipate trouble is through the awareness of the wider scripts or discourses that surround a particular topic (Taylor, 2006). For instance, when people answered my questions about their motivations and desires to have children, they do not respond *only* to me as a young female researcher, but also took up positions found in greater debates around reproduction and women's and men's roles in relation to reproduction. Participants would narrate in such a way as not to adopt positioning that could be considered to be socially undesirable in the broader context. This type of rhetorical work, according to Taylor and Littleton (2006), may entail "'talking against' established ideas" (p. 24). This may also be captured by the notion of ideological dilemmas (discussed earlier in this chapter), which suggest an awareness on the

part of the narrator of the understandings which prevail in the wider storied environment (Smith & Sparkes, 2008).

Thus, the notion of rehearsal "suggests that talk is not just an interaction with the other person(s) present but takes place on several levels simultaneously as a speaker also responds to imagined or previously experienced audiences and criticisms" (Taylor & Littleton, 2006, p. 24). In other words, rhetorical work does not only take place in relation to the immediate (micro) context of turn-by-turn conversations and storytelling and the audience is not necessarily limited to those individuals who are involved in the present interaction (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). The speaker is therefore seen as simultaneously orienting to the immediate interaction as well as to wider social debates (Taylor, 2006).

3.6. Contextual contingency

In discursive approaches to narrative, personal narratives are situated constructions that are re/produced and re/constituted within each new occasion of talk. Narratives are seen as produced for (and by) audiences in specific social situations. Talk is seen as local, highly situated and occasioned (Wetherell, 1998) and analyses are grounded in the context of a specific narrative performance. This emphasises the locatedness and contingency of particular narrative performances on a particular social context and social interactions that structure social behaviour (Riessman, 2002a). Here, context refers to "the sequential or interactional environment of the talk itself . . . as well as the local context—the setting in which the talk takes place" (Speer, 2005, p. 23). So, for instance, in this research the interview conversation, as well as the small university town setting in post-Apartheid South Africa, provides the context. Moreover, particular renditions of events are told according to the cultural standards that make sense within a particular context. Hence, the context in which the narrative is constructed (what others may consider to be background) is brought to the fore, and the researcher's concern lies in the contextual shaping of the account (Gergen, 2004).

Personal narratives are therefore seen as radically contextualised, that is, as inextricably linked to the context of their production. They are embodied in participants, situated within the situational and material constraints of the performance event and embedded within the discursive forces that fashion experiences, narratives and selves (Langellier & Peterson, 2006). The context therefore acts as a constraint on the narrative that is produced. Constraint, as Langellier and Peterson (2006) point out, refers both to facilitation and restriction. So, the context is viewed as both enabling and restricting particular stories according to the possibilities allowed by that setting and circumstance (Riessman, 2002a). It delimits the "boundary conditions" (Langellier & Peterson, 2004, p. 158) of a performance, but does not determine it.

Along with an acknowledgement of contextual contingency, the narrative-discursive approach recognises the role played by previously presented versions and the understandings which prevail in the wider storied environment (such as heteronormative expectations around the proper transition or progression to parenthood) in shaping an account (Smith & Sparkes, 2008), as I have discussed. In Taylor's (2006) expanded analytic focus, attention shifts beyond the turn taking of the immediate discursive context to the multiple levels at which narrative simultaneously takes place. This includes the macro-level of discourse as well as earlier accounts that the speaker has told. In other words, according to Taylor (2006), narratives are recounted *vis-á-vis* the here-and-now, the world out there, as well as an individual's own constructions that have occurred across multiple interactions.

To sum up thus far, the notions of "trouble", "repair" and "rhetorical work" imply awareness in the speaker of others' reactions and the associated potential outcomes (e.g., being discredited or occupying a maligned social position) and a conscious choice in self-presentation. As Taylor (2006) comments,

> Many discursive approaches seem to assume that talk involves a special state of activity which is somewhere between the automatic and the fully aware: the speaker is making decisions, but not in an everyday way which might involve reflection and forward planning. However, the notions of trouble and of rhetorical work in talk both imply more of the ordinary kind of thinking in which a speaker is aware of saying certain things in certain ways, and is consciously making choices (p. 99).

Hence, the speaker is active and reflexive. Moreover, these concepts point to the ways in which speakers may achieve particular discursive purposes in and through their narratives. It is clear then that coherence, consistency, and authenticity are considered to be something that the narrator works to achieve, or at least tries to present a semblance thereof. Since a range of discursive resources may be recited and a number of positions may be occupied within a single telling, it is possible for inconsistency or contradictions to occur. Speaker's attempts at coherence therefore require continuous re/working and entail the continual "finessing" of their narrative accounts. This labour occurs in the face of the challenges posed by the interactive moment, either in the form of self-contradictions, challenges from others, or a desire to portray oneself in a way that is interactively useful (Bamberg, 2004d).

4. EMPLOYING THE NARRATIVE-DISCURSIVE METHOD

The narrative-discursive method provides some useful insights and has some noteworthy advantages over other discursive approaches. Firstly, it incorporates the speaker's reflexivity and activity into the analysis by means of analytic concepts such as "trouble", "repair" and "rehearsal". The speaker is seen as not wholly determined by the broader discursive realm, but also as active in taking up and contesting these meanings (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). Secondly, this method allows one to consider subjectivity as complex and intersecting, in line with feminist post-structuralist accounts. As a result, adopting a narrative-discursive method enables an analyst to resist simplistic analyses that reduce subjects to single, homogenous identity

groupings (such as "Whites" or "men"). This method enables the analyst to attend to the intersection of fragmentary subjectivities, emphasising their multiplicity and contingency (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). Thirdly, the approach also draws attention to the dynamic, temporal nature of subject formation. Subjectivities are understood as re/produced and re/constituted within "each new occasion of talk but shaped by previously presented versions and also by understandings which prevail in the wider storied environment, such as expectations about the appropriate trajectory of a life" (Smith & Sparkes, 2008). As a result, the analyst is able to focus on how narrators "construct . . . and use gendered identities in their talk" (Speer, 2005, pp. 13).Such analyses are grounded in a particular context and guided by a concrete analytical strategy (i.e., positioning analysis).

Taylor's work is useful for the exploration of the process of identity construction and management. This is quite a ubiquitous analytic focus of such discursively-oriented work (e.g., Bamberg, 2004a; 2004b; 2004c; 2006a; 2006b; Kraus, 2006; Watson, 2007) as well as in narrative work more generally, where an interest in subjectivity, the "self", and the narration of identity has flourished (Byrne, 2003). This is most likely because the focus on positioning is a useful way to study the performance of identity/subjectivity (Riessman, 2002a&b; 2003). I, however, am more interested in narrative as a meaning-making device or rhetorical tool in which narrators both interpret and construct various versions of social "reality" and as a political site where meanings are struggled over (Bamberg, 2004d). Hence, I view narration as a tenuous, precarious process that is open to negotiation and that mediates between the individual and the social order (Mumby, 1993). I am interested in the ways that performances of personal narratives serve to legitimate and re-inscribe or to critique and resist existing power relations, especially in relation to gender.

4.1. The question of power

Discursive approaches, Bamberg (2004d) maintains, are underpinned by the assumption that all talk, including narrative, is inherently political. Since a narrative is recounted for a particular audience and *towards certain discursive purposes*, it can be considered narrative as "a site where the social is articulated, structured, and struggled over" (Langellier, 1999, p. 128). It is precisely because narrative performance does something in and with discourse that it is neither uniform nor stable and thus has both normalising and transgressive potential (Langellier & Peterson, 2006). Performing a narrative can re-inscribe and legitimate or resist certain conditions and power relations. Therefore, attending to the narrative performance "emphasizes narrative embodied in communication practices, constrained by situational and material conditions, embedded in fields of discourse, and strategically distributed to reproduce and critique existing relations of power and knowledge" (Peterson & Langellier, 2006, p. 173).

However, the political aspect of narration is somewhat under-theorised in the narrative-discursive method, even though a performative view is adopted. Firstly, the ways that "identity work" (i.e., the re/fashioning of subjectivity), or particular discursive tactics, relate to power is not explicitly articulated. For instance, speakers avoid being discredited, through self-contradictions or occupying a maligned social position (e.g., selfish parent) because this means that one occupies a less powerful social position. Secondly, the implications of "trouble" beyond the continuity of individual subjectivity are somewhat neglected. Moments of trouble that occur in a narrative performance also point to the broader political effects that narratives may have. In each narrative performance there are inevitably failures to accurately replicate the norm or instances when the naturalness of certain constructions is shown to be artificial that have to be managed and alternative ways of re-citing particular discursive resources or scripts emerge. Since narratives can also be altered or changed entirely they can be effective in social transformation (Gergen & Gergen, 2006; Smith, 2007).

However, by utilising this method within a Butlerian theoretical framework it is possible to elaborate on the politics of narration, both on the micro-level (in relation to positioning) and the macro-level (with regard to broader political implications of "trouble"). By utilising Butlerian understandings of "trouble" it is possible to make the broader implications of gender trouble and how power comes to bear on an account, as well as the possibilities for resistance, explicit when investigating troubled positions in relation to gender within narratives. Hence, the notion of "trouble" can be expanded to take into consideration how trouble on the micro level may also signal trouble at the macro level, that is, "gender trouble" used in a Butlerian sense. Gender can be seen as performed in narrative and re/produced for/by audiences within particular social settings and therefore ultimately as a fluid accomplishment (Riessman, 2002a; Speer, 2005). True to Butler's thesis of performativity, gender is a repeated performance and its reality is created through sustained social performances. Therefore, incorporating the narrative-discursive method into an explicitly performance-oriented approach—to form the performance/performative approach—allows us to explore how gender constructions may also re-cited and transformed.

In the performance/performative approach that I propose, trouble that occurs as a result of inconsistency or undesirable positioning can be thought of as interactional trouble or micro-level trouble. Trouble on the micro level, within the interaction, may signal trouble on the macro-level, for instance, in relation to gendered assumptions. Cases of interactional trouble in relation to gender may signal the failure to do gender properly, in other words, the troubling of gender norms. These cohere with the Butlerian idea of troubling moments, that is, the momentary discontinuities of specific performances. As Butler (1990a) maintains discontinuities or anomalies must be explained away, regulated, or ignored (or repaired) in order to maintain the illusion of gender. So too must instances of interactional be explained away or talked down so that narrators avoid

gender trouble and "do gender" in an acceptable way conforming to what may be more generally expected of them.   In short, they can be a gender trouble maker or not. Remember that this is not always a conscious process. Hence, in order to study gender trouble, to see what it looks like in "real life", so to speak, one must look to the micro-level of everyday specific concrete performances.

To occupy a troubled position in relation to gender is inherently political. To deviate from gender norms is to run the risk of, in Butlerian terms, becoming a gender trouble-maker and thereby being subjected to social sanctions, since this is invariably the consequence of the incorrect repetition of gender norms. However, people may have an interest in adhering more or less closely to the various gendered scripts according to what is interactively useful at the time. For instance, a woman may recite contemporary narratives of active fathering and co-parenting that imply non-traditional gender norms in order to account for her work outside the home and non-adherence to the traditional norms of female as primary caregiver. This may then amount to the reciting of one's gender in such a way that one deviates from the expected attributes, behaviours, desires and so on that denote femaleness (Butler, 1990a). Similarly, people may recite traditional narratives about intensive mothering being in the best interest of the child in order to justify the positioning of women as primary care-givers.

This points not only to the work that goes into fabricating and maintaining one's own gender and the gender system in general but it also points to the slow bending of citations and possibilities for resistance (Butler, 1990a). Various rhetorical strategies to "save face" point to the larger cultural survival strategy of maintaining the illusion of one's own gender and the gender system as a whole (Butler, 1990a). This suggests the conscious and wilful, albeit necessary, taking up of the "correct" position/s in relation to one's gender. Therefore, whether a person (consciously) adopts the "wrong" position, deviates slightly from the norm or simply re/cites received norms, there is some degree of reflexivity in this or resistance would not be possible. Resistance occurs within the existing discourses, as per Butler's theory of resistance, as citations are gradually altered and scripts change over time and this has implications for gender power relations more broadly.

5. CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I utilise Taylor's narrative-discursive method to ground Butler's performativity theory in the particular context of heterosexual couples' parenthood decision-making practices. This method also offers a concrete analytical strategy (i.e., positioning analysis). As I have stated, it is a discursive approach to narrative that has several advantages over other discursive approaches to narrative (which tend to focus on the turn-by-turn or talk-in-interaction), namely: it incorporates the speaker's reflexivity and activity into the analysis; it allows the analyst to attend to the intersection of fragmentary subjectivities, emphasising their multiplicity and

contingency; and it draws attention to the dynamic, temporal nature of subject formation. In particular, this method is not focused on the turn-by-turn interactions, but offers an expanded analytic lens that take into account the ways that the broader environment comes to bear on narration as well as the constraint of prior positionings. Significantly, constraint is understood in a way that is analogous to Butlerian theory, that is, it sees discursive action as both restricted and enabled by available discursive resources. This points to the synthetic nature of this method, which takes cognisance of both the micro and macro levels of narration— these levels can be seen as representing the performance and performativity dimensions respectively. The emphasis on talk-in- interaction, or the action orientation of narrative, in this method offers a means of realising and [extending] the theoretical notion of performance, while a Butlerian theoretical framework assists with making the political dimension of the method explicit. In this way, a dual analytical lens is fashioned. In the following chapter I shall discuss the practical application of this method as I turn to the matters of data collection and analysis procedures. I begin by listing the research questions that guided the study from the conceptualisation phase, through data collection and, finally, the analysis.

6
DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

1. INTRODUCTION

Parenthood decision-making, as the reader will recall from Chapter 1, concerns the initial undertaking toward becoming parents. In this study I concentrate specifically on personal narratives about this process whereby people in heterosexual partnerships become parents, including the ensuing decision-making that follows on from the initial (non)decision. Of particular interest, as I have intimated, was men's role in this process. In order to analyse these narratives, I utilised the approach outlined in the preceding chapter, namely the narrative-discursive method. The analysis centred on gendered constructions and the implications that this has for associated power relationships, with the aim of exploring how gender roles associated with the particular dynamic and changing constructions of gender inform male involvement in parenthood decision-making. This specific method calls attention to the ways that accounts of the (non)decision-making around parenthood are simultaneously resourced and constrained by larger socio-cultural meanings, as well as how the speakers engage in reflexive work while giving an account of this life event. Having outlined the underlying theoretical tenets of the method in the previous chapter, I now turn to the research design. I shall begin by describing the context in which data collection occurred. I then discuss the participants and recruitment procedures. Thereafter, I give details regarding the data collection process, outlining the research questions that guided the study and how data collection proceeded. I also discuss ethical concerns and how reflexivity was employed as a methodological tool. I end by explicating the analysis procedures.

2. AIM OF STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As I have stated, men's role in parenthood decision-making was the focus and the aim was to investigate the ways that gender roles associated with the particular dynamic and changing constructions of gender influence this. Corresponding with this overall aim, the following questions were used to guide the research from conceptualisation through to analysis:

- What discursive resources do "White" Afrikaners re-cite when speaking about past or anticipated parenthood decisions?

- In particular, what gendered scripts are re-cited by participants and what are the potential implications for gender power relations?

- What positions do participants adopt within their narratives and what is envisaged as male involvement?

- What instances of troubled positioning arise in relation to gender and how are these resolved

3. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted with "White" Afrikaners who at the time of interviewing all resided in Grahamstown, which is situated in the Makana municipal district of Eastern Cape, formerly frontier country during the Xhosa or Cape Frontier wars between the indigenous Xhosa inhabitants and the British settlers (Mostert, 1992). Grahamstown, a small university town, is the major metropolitan area for this district. The district statistics show that "White" Afrikaners constitute a minority group, despite the fact that Afrikaans is one of the dominant languages in the Eastern Cape. This can be seen in Table 1 below, which represents a breakdown by population group and the top three most widely spoken languages in Makana. (Nationally it is the third most commonly spoken language.) "White" Afrikaners number less than one and a half thousand (or 4.28%) of the total population (Statssa, 2001). This is possibly because the area was historically British territory and Grahamstown was an English frontier town, so that English tends to be the dominant language among the "White" population group and many resident Afrikaners are somewhat Anglicised. This was supported by many of my participants' own claims. For instance, Johann[5] (a young man) stated:

Extract1

Johann: I thought it's gonna be easier to do it [the interview] in English, 'cause there's some words in Afrikaans I've forgotten already, being Afrikaans myself, because 90% of the time at work I'm talking English. At home I talk Afrikaans. A lot of my friends are English. To me Afrikaans and English are the same, so it doesn't matter to me.

Those not originally from Grahamstown (e.g., the students) also reported being bilingual in English and Afrikaans, which is not unusual in South Africa where "White" English- and Afrikaans-speakers tend to be fairly fluent in each other's language. Indeed, most South Africans have some grasp of English, as is the country's *lingua franca* and the language of learning in schools (Olunye, 2009). Hence, language was not a major obstacle for data collection. I discuss how I dealt with the issue of language in the interviews later in this chapter.

*Table 1.*Census 2001 Makana municipality: language by population group (n = 74 544)

LANGUAGE GROUP	"Black"	"Coloured"	"Indian/Asian"	"White"	Total
AFRIKAANS	360	8 590	16	**1 319**	10 285
ENGLISH	900	448	422	5 923	7 693
XHOSA	55 910	173	3	6	56 092
OTHER	403	15	24	32	474

Table reproduced on http://www.statssa.gov.za/extract.htm

4. RECRUITMENT AND INCLUSION CRITERIA

Since my target group was very specific, a purposive snowballing sampling strategy was used. The participants were recruited *via* referral and word-of-mouth. Many potential participants, as well as those who did not qualify for the study themselves, referred me to others who did qualify. What was also particularly useful in this regard was finding gatekeepers who then functioned as credible referees. These included a minister of the

---

[5]Pseudonyms were used in this thesis to protect participant confidentiality.

Dutch Reformed Church (an Afrikaans protestant Christian denomination) as well as the Chair of the university's Afrikaans Society. The inclusion criteria for the study were quite narrow, and diversity was not a particular concern in sampling. I did try, however, to include some variation within the specified categories, as one can see from the description of the participants. For example, though many students were interested in participating, I tried to include both undergraduates and post-graduates as well younger people from various occupations.

Other than being "White" and Afrikaans speaking, the potential participants were required to meet certain other criteria. They either had to be: (1) men or women aged approximately 40 years and older (or past childbearing age) who were part of a long-term committed heterosexual relationship and were either parents or "non-parents" (i.e., had not had children); or (2) heterosexual 'non-parents' who were 21 to approximately 30 years of age. These two groups would form two age cohorts, which were then differentiated according to gender, reproductive status, and relationship status. I shall discuss the rationale for these inclusion criteria.

Both women and men were included in this study on male involvement in parenthood decision-making in order to take into account the interplay between men's and women's roles, rather than focusing on men's (or women's) perspectives alone. The chief rationale for this was to guard against (re)excluding women from such research. As I discussed in Chapter 3, many studies that are interested in men's perspectives adopt a masculinities studies framework and fall prey to the "exclusionary tendency" of this body of work. In addition, the incorporation of women's perspectives also allows for the production of rich data. In the same way, interviewing younger women and men also assisted with this purpose. The inclusion of both women and men, as well as people from different age groups, amounts to a form of data triangulation that not only contributes to the richness of the data, but also allows a researcher to develop "a cultural portrait of a culture-sharing group" (Sands & Roer-Strier, 2006, p. 256). (I reflect on the advantages of having done this in Chapter 12.) Accordingly, the purpose of including various sub-groups was not to assist with comparative analysis, although some comparisons are made in the course of the analysis.

In addition, those participants aged 21 to 30 years (cohort two) were required to be "childfree" (i.e., have no children). This requirement aimed to include people for whom parenthood was still a possible choice. In addition, the inclusion criteria allowed for the possibility that participants from cohort one could also be childfree (either by choice or circumstance). This criterion was included in order to incorporate responses that may have deviated from the usual heteronormative life-course in which parenthood is seen to be a milestone or a given (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). Though, in the event, no older childfree people volunteered and all the older participants were parents, this was an acceptable outcome, since researchers have rarely concentrated

on the parenthood choices of those who are considered to be the norm—married, fertile, heterosexuals—as I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2.

A further requirement for people in cohort one was that parenthood was no longer a prospective choice for them or part of their future plans. As I shall discuss in more detail later in the section on ethics, part of the rationale for this criterion was related to potential negative consequences of the research. Limiting the research to older participants who had already had a chance to form their families means that some time would have elapsed for those individuals who had perhaps had negative experiences in this area (e.g., difficulty conceiving, infertility, miscarriages and so on), making it easier for them to reflect on this. Another reason for the age restriction was that I had also hoped to include older childfree participants. An age cut-off would exclude childfree participants for whom having children (biologically speaking) was still an option. Many adoption agencies also limit the maximum age at which one may adopt a child in South Africa (this is usually around the late thirties to mid-forties depending on the organisation). I thereby limited the sample to a *past* decision around parenthood—either to have or not to have children, biologically or through adoption. For this reason I specified that participants must be over 40 years of age or "past childbearing age".

Some thought had to be given to what "past childbearing" means for this study, especially with regard to how it might pertain to male participants since the term could mean different things for women and men. Ordinarily, "childbearing age" is defined as the period of fertility for *women* from puberty to the menopause (Corcoran & Hardy, 2005). For men, although there is a decrease in fertility, this decline is less sharp than women's. In fact, men have been known to produce children at a much later age than women (Sherman, 1991). In terms of definite ages, it is commonly accepted that "childbearing age" for a woman ranges from 15 years to approximately 40 years, with some variation. According to government statistics, childbearing peaks in South African women aged 24 to 29 years and begins to taper off thereafter, dropping dramatically after age 35 to 39 years (Department of Health, 1998)[6]. This is corroborated by a more recent study conducted by Amoateng (2004), which states that the median age for first birth for "White" South African women is 25 years. Accordingly, "past childbearing age" translates as around 40 to 44 years of age for South African women and men. I also took into consideration that in the Afrikaans speaking "White" South African population specifically, women are more likely to have children at a younger age than their English counterparts and less likely to have children at a later age (Zuberi, Sibanda, & Udjo, 2005).

Consequently, I set the age cut-off at around 40 years, with some leeway given the likely age gap between partners, since in sub-Saharan Africa female partners tend to be about four to eight years younger than male

---

[6] These are the most recently published government statistics.

partners (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2004). Accordingly, in deciding whether or not to include a particular man in the study, the female partner's childbearing age was considered. This decision was based on the belief that marriage (and other similar partnerships) acts as a determinant of the length and pace of reproductive activity (Palamuleni, Kalule-Sabiti, & Makiwane, 2007). In other words, the assumption was that the fertility of men in enduring partnerships would be curtailed by their partner's age (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2004). Thus, the age at which men in partnerships have children usually more-or-less corresponds with women's childbearing age.

Following this logic, the relationship status of the older participants was an important consideration. I chose initially to interview older men and women who were in committed, long-term partnerships. However, I later decided also to include people who were no longer in such a partnership (e.g., divorced or widowed). In such cases the interview focused on their previous partnership and the parenthood decisions that took place in that context. This choice was purely pragmatic since divorce is relatively common in South Africa.[7] It is therefore possible for people of the "past childbearing" cohort to no longer be with their "original" partner with whom they had (or did not have) children, but could still comment on their decision-making experiences. This could also be the case for someone whose partner is deceased. The relationship status of the younger participants was not relevant in this respect; rather, their childfree status was more important.

Since relationship status was important for recruiting older participants, I had initially made one of the inclusion criteria that both partners of the *same* couple had to participate in the research. The rationale for this was related to findings in the literature that repeatedly show that gender norms affect couples' communication regarding reproductive matters in certain contexts (Blanc, 2001; Greene *et al*., 2006). However, recruiting both partners from the same couple proved to be a challenge. There were certain issues that complicated the matter, such as divorce (as mentioned above) or the fact that one partner might be Afrikaans but not the other. In cases of remarriage, sometimes the female partner was significantly younger than the male and therefore both partners could still be considered to be of childbearing age.

Moreover, people who initially showed interest later declined after discussing the matter with their partner. After this had occurred with approximately ten individuals, it appeared that there would be difficulty in getting *both* partners to agree to take part in the study. On a practical level, it is not always likely that both partners will be interested in a research study. In addition, the personal nature of the topic may have played a role since

---

[7] According to Statssa (2009) for the period 2000 – 2009 the total number of registered civil marriages was 1 717 422 and the total number of granted divorces was 315 974, which means that for every 5.4 marriages there was 1 divorce. Of course this does not accurately portray a divorce rate, because not all of the marriages terminated during this ten year period would have occurred during this same time. A number of them might well have, since, according to Statssa (2009), the average duration of a marriage that ends in divorce is 9 years, but this is not clear from the statistics. I have assumed that the statistics refer to heterosexual partnerships based on the terminology used in the report (e.g., brides/bridegrooms; spinsters/bachelors); this is not overtly stated, however.

many potential participants enquired about confidentiality, the location of the interview and related issues. Interviewing both partners could have posed a threat to maintaining each participant's confidentiality since there was no guarantee that partners would not feel compelled to share with one another either what they would say, or had said, in the interview. It could also have made partners feel as though they would be held accountable for their version of the story, either by me as the researcher or by their partner, and so threaten trust.

For this reason, rather than recruiting couples, I chose to include people who were in a partnership (or had been at one time) but not necessarily both partners from the same partnership. After doing so, some of the married participants expressed concern about their partner finding out that they had participated or about what they had said. One participant asked me not to e-mail information to their home computer, as she did not want her partner to know that she was taking part. She said, "[My partner] will want to know what I discussed all this stuff for" (Lettie). Some married participants, mostly women, did not want to meet at their homes or, if they did, showed signs of concern that their partner might overhear our conversation. Hence, it appeared that fears around confidentiality may well have been a factor that confounded my success in recruiting couples.

5. PARTICIPANTS

My data are from 24 "White" Afrikaans women and men who were interviewed during the course of 2009. All the participants identified as heterosexual and middle-class (as determined by occupation and educational background). The participants consisted of two main cohorts, one was people over 40 years old (cohort one) and the other consisted of people 21 to approximately 30 years old (cohort two). A further four sub- groups were formed, namely: (1) a group of younger men who had never had children; (2) a corresponding group of younger women; (3) a group of older men whose partners are past childbearing age and unlikely to be planning to have children in the future; and (4) a corresponding group of older women past childbearing age, as illustrated in the table below (Table 2). The narratives from the two age cohorts were treated as two data sets, one set of anticipated or prospective narratives and one set of retrospective narratives. As Table 2 below shows, in the analysis, I use the codes M1 or M2 and F1 or F2 to denote the gender and age of the speaker of a particular extract (M= male, F=female and the numbers 1 or 2 indicate the age cohort).

Table 2 Breakdown of participants according to gender, age, and reproductive status (n=23)

Cohort	Sub-group	Gender	No. of participants	Analysis code
1.> 40 yrs. (PARENTS)	1	Male	6	M1
	2	Female	5	F1
2. 21 - ±30 yrs. (CHILDFREE)	3	Male	6	M2
	4	Female	6	F2

5.1. Subgroup 1: Older Men

The older men who participated in the study were all employed and all parents. As shown in Table 3below, five of the men were still married to the partner with whom they had had their children and one was divorced. Four of them had tertiary qualifications. The average age of the group was 46.5 years and the age range was 41 to 59 years old. The partners of the men in their early forties were on average a few years younger than the men themselves and so, for the most part, were past or nearing the end of their childbearing years. However, all these men reported that childbearing was no longer a prospective decision for them.

Table 3 Older male participant information

Pseudonym	Age	Relationship status	Occupation
Elias	43	Married	Police officer
Stefanus	59	Divorced	Retired minister
Gerhardt	46	Married	IT technician
Thuis	41	Married	Teacher
Koos	48	Married	Self-employed
André	42	Married	Farmer & HR consultant

5.2. Sub-group 2: Older women

This group comprised of six older participants all formally employed or self-employed with the exception of one person. This participant had forgone formal employment to take care of the home and finances and to care for her children (one of the others had also done so, but had started her own business once her child was grown). Four of the six participants had tertiary qualifications. Every participant was a parent. Four participants were married to the partner with whom they had had their first child, one participant had divorced and re-married and one participant's husband was deceased. These participants ranged in age from 39 to 53, with an average age of 49.1 years. Only one of the participants was under 40 years old, but this woman and her partner had decided not to have any more children and they have taken measures to ensure this.

Table 4 *Older female participant information*

Pseudonym	Age	Relationship status	Occupation
Maria	39	Married	Administrator & trainer
Esmé	53	Remarried	Educator/teacher
Ilse	50	Married	Self-employed
Lettie	53	Married	Homemaker
Susan	51	Married	Senior clerk
Annelie	49	Widowed	Legal administrator

5.3. Sub-group 3: Younger men

"Non-parent" men aged in their early twenties to early thirties were recruited from their workplace or place of study. This group ranged in age from 21 to 32 years with an average age of 24 years. All, with the exception of one participant, have tertiary qualifications or are currently students. Three of the participants in this group

expressed a definite desire to have children, the others were mostly undecided or ambivalent (they had some reservations or conditions) and one was reluctant to have children.

Table 5 Younger male participant information

Pseudonym	Age	Occupation
Jakobus	21	Undergraduate student
Dawid	32	Lecturer
Riaan	25	Post-graduate student
Franco	32	Psychologist
Wouter	28	Medical doctor
Johann	29	Salesperson

5.4. Sub-group 4: Younger women

Recruitment of childfree middle-class, young women in their early twenties to early thirties occurred as above. The age range for this group was also 21 to 32 years with an average age of 24.4 years. All the participants either hold, or are in the process of obtaining, a tertiary qualification. Four of the five participants expressed the wish to become a parent in the future. The demographic information is summarised in Table 6 below.

Table 6 Younger female participant information

Pseudonym	Age	Occupation
Elize	22	Office administrator
Anel	21	Post-graduate Student
Petro	32	Psychologist
Mariska	25	Post-graduate student
Dalena	22	Undergraduate Student

6. STUDY DESIGN

In this section I discuss the overall research design. I shall begin by discussing the interviewing procedures, and then how these were refined by the use of a pilot phase. Thereafter I describe the main study, focusing on some of the differences between the interviews with the different cohorts.

6.1. Interview procedure

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with each of the participants described above. These consisted of loosely structured, open-ended questions. The interviews were tape-recorded and ranged in duration from approximately 45 to 90 minutes. After each interview was completed, it was transcribed in its entirety. The conventions that I used appear in Appendix B. My interest was in individuals' personal account and for this reason I made use of interviewing rather than other data collection methods, such as focus group discussions, that produce a different, public narrative (Barbour, 2007; Kvale, 2007). As such, I looked at accounts of personal experience (Langellier, 1999) that include both "the mundane happenings of an ordinary day and extraordinary events that mark our lives" (Langellier, 1989, p. 243).

Additionally, I approached the interviews not as a researcher "eliciting" a narrative, as many narrative approaches suggest, but rather as one producing a conversation or collaborative account *with* the participant. I attended to the narrative-in-interaction that is co/produced within the interview context (Bamberg, 2004d). This context serves to render salient a particular aspect of the interviewee's life, that is, their experiences or thoughts related to parenthood decisions. The interviewer and the interviewee discuss and collaboratively make meaning of this particular topic in relation to the respondent's life. The interview context also provides a familiar structure to the narrative performance in terms of turn-taking and who does the questioning and answering, and so forth (Taylor & Littleton, 2006).

For this reason, I was not too concerned by my own interventions in the talk, since these are part of this process of co-construction. I did, however, try to minimise these and allow the participant more space to talk. I also tried to limit the imposition my own frame on the telling (e.g., by starting off by asking about how partners had met one another). Henwood, Pidgeon, Simmons, and Smith (2008)highlight the potential pitfall of researchers unreflexively defining research situations from the outset. They maintain that researchers need to be self-reflexive of their own framings and remain aware of the consequences of imposing them on participants. I therefore began the interviews in an open-ended manner and thereafter followed up with questions. For the most part, my input was restricted to summary statements and requests for clarification or elaboration, but at times I did express an opinion, respond to the interviewees' questions about myself or reveal some personal information. Hence, the interviews were much more like ordinary conversations on a topic that might occur in "real life" than those conducted by analysts who attempt to "elicit" narrative (Bamberg, 2004b). This was often facilitated by the location of the interview (e.g., in the participant's home or at a coffee shop).

The interview guides were therefore not closely adhered to**,** as I attempted to let the conversation take its course. The purpose of these guides was simply to focus the conversation and to ensure that I had covered all the areas that I was interested in as well as providing prompts when the conversation lulled (Kvale, 2007). The guides were thematically arranged and related to the various areas that were of interest to me and tailored for each group according to gender, age, and parenthood status. I shall discuss these in detail in relation to each group shortly. Generally they addressed intentions and desires for conception, pregnancy, and parenthood (e.g., personal motivations for wanting children or not) as well as their own and their partner's (anticipated) involvement in the decisions to have children and the appropriate timing of parenthood, conditions for childbearing and family size and composition. I explicitly addressed men's role in this in the interview guides. In interviews with men I was concerned with their own experiences, perceptions, feeling and so on in relation to

becoming a parent. In the women's interviews I concentrated on their experiences as a partner and their experiences and perceptions of their partner's participation in the reproductive decision-making process.

6.2. Pilot interviews

The purpose of conducting a pilot study, in which the proposed data collection method is utilised, is to ascertain potential methodological and other problems. It allows a researcher ascertain any political issues, such as those related to the sensitivity of the topic or the researcher's identity (Macleod, 1999). My decision to conduct pilot interviews was based on the personal nature of the subject matter, which some might even consider "a women's issue" (Nyanzi, Nyanzi & Kalina, 2005), and my own identity as a female researcher. For this reason I chose to conduct pilot interviews with an older man (Jacques) and a younger man (Danie). The data from these interviews are not included in the final analysis.

Pilot interviews also allow the researcher to ensure that the depth of data is sufficient, as well as to check the quality and to ascertain the efficacy of interview materials, such as vignettes. In this vein, I had anticipated that some participants might struggle to recollect events or to envision those that had not (yet) occurred. I also speculated that it might be especially difficult for younger people, since the events under discussion were purely hypothetical and imaginary and some might not have given it much thought. For this reason I incorporated a pre-interview written narrative exercise in the pilot interviews (see Appendix A), with the aim of generating thought around the research problem. In the event, both of the interviewees said that they had struggled to find the time to get it done and had not actually managed to get it to me before our meeting. However, upon asking the participants to comment upon this exercise, both interviewees assured me that they had been helpful in generating thinking on the topic. For this reason I decided to keep the narrative exercise in the main study. However, in the main study these narratives were a deterrent with many people claiming that they did not have the time to complete them or that they had forgotten to do them (despite reminders). This also made it difficult to recruit couples (as per the original research design), since pre-interview exercises increased the possibility that confidentiality might be breached, for instance, if one partner asked to see what the other had written. I eliminated the narrative exercise when it became clear that it was more of a hindrance than a help. This might have been avoided if I had conducted more pilot interviews and elicited more feedback on the exercises.

Pilot interviews are also useful for refining the interview schedules (Macleod, 1999). In this respect, I had initially hoped that the interviews would be participant-driven with less input from me. However, when conducting the first pilot interview with Danie (the younger of the two participants) it was immediately obvious that this would not be the case. The topic was not one that he had previously considered in detail, despite his

enthusiasm about the narrative exercise. He said as much in the interview. This interview lasted only 34 minutes, despite my attempts to elicit more/longer responses. Fortunately, I had prepared some follow up questions and some brief vignettes to stimulate conversation. Afterward this participant mentioned that the vignettes had been particularly helpful and that he would have appreciated something similar as a non-threatening way of beginning the interview instead of "just diving in". This was confirmed in the other pilot interview, and vignettes and concrete illustrations proved useful in the main study. I also created more detailed interview guides in order to make sure that I had enough material to maintain the conversation should it lag and to ensure that all relevant areas were addressed (these appear in Appendix A).

Jacques (the older participant in the pilot interview) was more forthcoming than Danie. He spoke easily about his personal experiences in relation to fatherhood and the decision to become a parent. Although he had some trouble remembering details (such as dates for instance) he was able to reflect quite insightfully on his experiences and was enthusiastic about the study. This discussion helped me to refine my follow up questions for cohort two. I did not, however, design as extensive an interview schedule as the one for cohort one as I was fairly confident that I would be able to follow up from the information that they volunteered and that people recounting their personal experiences would need less prompting than those discussing hypothetical future events.

However, I did not realise or anticipate quite the degree to which having children was often generally something taken for granted by some as "natural" or spontaneous event and therefore not greatly reflected upon until the time of interviewing. This became increasingly apparent as the research went on. As the analysis shows, in some interviews the topic was almost a non-subject, despite my attempts to generate discussion. I am not certain that more comprehensive interview guides would have assisted with this, but, perhaps more pilot interviews with people from a non-academic setting would have been helpful since in retrospect, as a Social Science academic, Jacques had obviously given more thought to the topic.

In addition, the pilot phase assisted with issues around language and translation. I am competent in Afrikaans, but the pilot interviews offered an opportunity to check that my translations are correct, that I was able to make myself understood, with no ambiguities, and to check the equivalence of written translations used (i.e., in consent forms and so on) (Macleod, 1999). Though I am conversant in Afrikaans, the issue was that either I, as an English first-language speaker, would be conducting interviews in my second language, or the participants, Afrikaans first-language speakers, would be responding in theirs. The simplest manner to resolve this seemed to be to allow both the participants and myself to speak whatever language they felt most comfortable with and/or to use either language interchangeably. Both participants assured me that this suited

them and, like most of the participants in the actual study, expressed a preference for conducting the interviews in English. Jacques maintained that since he worked in a predominantly English setting it was actually easier for him to discuss the topic, which he deemed to be of a "technical" nature, in English. This was reiterated by several of the professional people and students (for all of whom the language of learning was English). The pilot interviewees (especially Jacques) were also helpful in pointing out errors and/or ambiguities related to my translation of the information letter and consent form from English to Afrikaans. For this reason I chose not to include this data as its quality may have been affected by this initial translation process.

6.3. Main study

After addressing the issues raised in the pilot phase I proceeded with the main study. As I have stated, I analysed the narratives of both female and male "White" Afrikaners from two age cohorts. One, young people who have never had children and, two, older people who have had children already. There were therefore two corresponding data sets, one of anticipated or prospective narratives and one of retrospective narratives. I shall discuss the dynamics of interviews with each of these cohorts in the following.

6.3.1. Interviews with cohort one (older participants)

As all of the older participants were (biological) parents, I asked them to recount their experiences around reproductive decision-making. I began the interviews with an open-ended request for the participant to tell me about their experiences around their decisions to have their first child. Of course, each interview is unique, but some participants responded at length and others more succinctly. In some cases a more spontaneous conversation emerged, as participants were more forthcoming and volunteered information more freely. In others, the conversation was more obviously directed by my questions and followed a question-answer format more closely as participants waited for my lead (Langellier, 1999). In general, the interviews were directed by my agenda and the respondents deferred to me and allowed me to direct the flow of the conversation.

After asking the main question, I waited for the participant to finish recounting what was significant to her or him and then I followed up with questions based on what she or he had told me, as well as what I wanted to find out. Since these narratives were essentially reflections on past events I did not imagine that participants would require much guidance, unlike with younger participants. I hoped that the interview would be participant-driven since it was a retrospective narrative. For this reason, the interview guide was less detailed than for the other cohort. I ensured that I had some follow-up questions pertaining to general themes, but I did not strictly adhere to these since I could not fully anticipate what the interviewees would disclose based on their own personal experiences. The follow up questions addressed the broad themes and ideas around parenthood decisions. I asked the participants about their motivations for becoming a parent including the role that their partners played in this decision, how they imagined their life might be if they had not had children,

whether voluntarily or involuntarily. I enquired about decision-making in relation to having their first child, including when and how discussions had transpired, the nature of these discussions, any disagreements or conflicts that arose, and whether one partner might have had more say and why. We discussed the timing of parenthood and what factors played a role, how decisions regarding timing of parenthood were made, and how these related to participants' ideals around family size and composition.

Confidentiality was an issue for some as I mentioned. In particular, some men maintained that the topic was of a personal nature, which generally inhibited discussion of the topic amongst men. For instance Elias said:

*Extract***2**

Elias (M1):   I must be honest I can't remember ever speaking to men about what we've just spoken about (.) What I'm saying is you shouldn't go and speak to [just] ANYBODY about this. You speak to someone that you trust or your (confidante?), or a close friend . . . I mean you don't get guys talking really about it because they feel it's private stuff.

For this reason some people also chose to meet at private locations, such as their homes or offices, rather than in public setting like a coffee shop.

6.3.2. Interviews with cohort two (younger participants)

The interviews with young people essentially involved narration about hopes, dreams, desires, beliefs and ideas around the anticipated life trajectory. The broad themes are similar to those addressed in the interviews with parents. I explored the idea of having children and being a parent and what this meant to the participants, thoughts and feelings related to this event and the role that their potential partner plays in their thoughts on the topic. I asked the participants about their motivations for becoming a parent or choosing to remain childfree including the role that significant others might play in this decision and how they imagined their life might be if they did/not have a child. We discussed the participants' thoughts related to the timing of parenthood as well as what factors were significant in this regard. I also attempted to move this discussion on to broader social ideals the ideal family size and composition. We also discussed the ideal conditions under which children should be born and ideals around parenthood. When discussing decision-making, the discussion centred on the role that one's partner might play in parenthood decisions, ideals around how decisions should be taken and possible disagreements or conflicts that might arise with regard to having children and decision-making. Various scenarios were introduced and the vignettes came in useful for this purpose.

Since none of the young participants had actually experienced parenthood they were not recounting actual events, which caused some participants difficulty. Most of the young men claimed that they had never given much thought to parenthood prior to the interview or imagined themselves in a parental role, bar fleeting thoughts or speculations, whereas the young women seemed to be able to speak more freely about the topic. It seemed that most young women had given more thought to the topic, but it could also be that they were

more comfortable or familiar with it. In contrast, many of the young men maintained that the topic was unfamiliar, that it was something that they had not really discussed before, and/or that it was considered unusual for men to discuss, even taboo. For instance, one younger man began the interview stating the following:

Extract 3

Jakobus (M2):   Look, I know you'll probably get a lot of, probably, opposition, you know, or whatever you want to call it from men who say, you know, "We don't want to talk about this topic". I'm quite free to say, look, I haven't thought about it. It's quite an interesting thing. But, you know, for me, I actually don't mind saying, you know, when it gets to that point…

A few claimed that the personal nature of the topic made it "unmanly" or embarrassing to talk about. Some said that they were initially bewildered or surprised when approached by me about the topic. One young man said he initially thought, "What does she want to know about that for?"

Many of them explicitly referred to the difficulty of discussing events that had not (yet) occurred in a way that the young women did not. For instance, Dawid said ". . . it's hard to conjure up (.) those are flesh-and-blood arguments or negotiations. So, it's sort of hard to imagine a scenario without putting a face to it or, you know, a smell. [Laugh] So, it's difficult for me to imagine that." Similarly another younger man said the following in his interview:

Extract 4

Wouter (M2):   It's probably making it difficult to talk sensibly about, because I mean all that I'm saying at the moment is all sort of very wishy-washy ideas (.) it might be completely different. It might be horrible. I don't know. At the moment I've just got ideas around it of what I would like it or envisage to be than what it's really gonna be like.

These young men often claimed that it was impossible to know or that "I can't say how I will feel in the future ... you have to walk over that bridge when you get to it, I think" (Riaan). This implies that this was possibly not something that they even *wanted* to give too much thought to and perhaps a topic that they perceived as not wholly relevant to their present lives. As Wouter said "I'm in a steady relationship at the moment, but there's no real thought at the moment of marrying and getting children, so it hasn't really been all that much something that I've been thinking about, reminiscing about." In fact many younger men discussed it as a potential event that was still far off, for instant Dawid said, "…these are things that I haven't really worked out, because it may happen in some distant future and when it's close to that time I'll probably be more opinionated or have a clearer view".

As I mentioned, I had anticipated some degree of difficulty in this regard from the outset. This was confirmed by the pilot interview in which I had used two brief vignettes. I made use of these before embarking on the interviews. These were in the form of magazine advice letters (see Appendix A). I found these quite useful at times because, as in group discussions, they served as a useful "icebreaker" and provided a less obtrusive way

to broach a sensitive or potentially embarrassing topic. They helpfully grounded the discussion in something more concrete, and to elicit specific comments about similar, but slightly differing, scenarios so as to gain depth of insight to the unfamiliar or unusual topic. They also helped to generate talk by drawing the focus of attention away from the participant. This may also have the advantage of moving the discussion on to broader, often political, issues (Barbour, 2007) thereby compelling participants to "talk against" established ideas and so engage in rhetorical work (Taylor & Littleton, 2006, p. 24).

Since the aim of the interviews in cohort two was to discuss anticipated, imagined events around the topic in question, the scenarios and so forth that were discussed were purely hypothetical. Though hypothetical scenarios also featured in interviews with cohort one (e.g., imagining their life without children) this was to a far lesser extent. The younger people's prospective future-oriented narratives, (arguably) differ from the retrospective accounts of the older groups of participants in terms of the "reality factor" (Langellier, 1999, p. 128). That is, the interdependence of the telling of the account and the actual experiences referred to. Yet, this does not mean that the younger participants were freely able to construct their personal narratives as they wished, since their accounts are constrained by established understandings and cultural narratives about adulthood, the (heterosexual) life course and other meanings at play in the wider socio-cultural milieu (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). As the analysis shows, certain pre-existing, entrenched positions and scripts in relation to childbearing had to be negotiated by participants as women and men from a particular social class. Prospective narratives are therefore still "shaped by both the unique circumstances of people's lives and the meanings in play within the wider society and culture [including] established categorisations of people and places, values attached to particular categories and expected connections of sequence and consequence" (Taylor & Littleton, 2006, p. 23). I shall deal with this in greater depth in the analysis.

The prospective accounts of the younger women and men also differ from past-experience narratives in that the researcher contributes more substantially to the way that the narrative is performed. This is not only in terms of her institutional authority (as "expert", psychologist, or researcher) but also in terms of being a co-narrator who contributes as one would in an ordinary conversation on a topic (Bamberg, 2004b). These kinds of interview conversations are quite fittingly analysed using a narrative-discursive approach. A narrative-discursive analysis, the reader will recall, entails the examination of the details of talk rather than the structuring of the overall story. The analyst considers the discursive resources that enable or limit such talk as well as the various positionings within it (Taylor & Littleton, 2006).

7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research was approved by the Research Projects and Ethics Review Committee (RPERC) of the Psychology Department at Rhodes University before recruitment or interviewing commenced. In adherence to RPERC guidelines, potential participants were supplied with an information letter outlining the details of the research and explaining the purpose of the study as well as a copy of the consent form which summarises the expectations and rights of a research participant. These potential participants were assured that their inquiry about the study did not oblige them to participate. Before the interviews took place I discussed the documentation with each participant and invited questions before asking her or him to sign the consent form. The information letter and consent form that was given to the participants appear as appendices (see Appendices C and D). In keeping with RPERC procedure, the subsequent issues were of especial concern.

7.1. Privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality of data

In order to ensure that no breach in anonymity/confidentiality occurs, I have secured[8] all records, including agreement forms and transcriptions, both electronic versions and hardcopy, so that they are not available to any other persons. Pseudonyms are used in this thesis to protect anonymity. I have used pseudonyms and have endeavoured to present personal information that participants may have chosen to disclose during the course of the research in such a manner that the participants will be unidentifiable to others. This matter was fully dealt with in the agreement form. Informed consent was on-going as participants were allowed to withdraw from the research at any point. After taking part in the study, participants were invited to reconsider their original decision to take part on the basis of what they disclosed in the interviews. They were also notified that they were entitled to a transcript of their interview.

7.2. Potential consequences of the research

Some ethical caution was necessary with regard to the personal risk of harm or embarrassment that participants could experience during interviewing. I anticipated that some degree of discomfort or embarrassment might be experienced by older men or women when recounting their personal experiences related to family planning particularly if these had been negative (such as difficulty in conceiving, failed pregnancies or infertility). I did not anticipate that there would be any serious distress experienced by the younger participants who were discussing hypothetical, prospective events. This was confirmed as some younger participants mentioned initial discomfort or minor embarrassment, but no severe responses. One or two of the younger participants expressed minor embarrassment or shyness, but this was quickly overcome.

All participants were informed that they need only disclose information they felt comfortable revealing. Although participants were prepared for the nature of the interview, there is never a guarantee that

---

[8]The documents are secured either electronically by means of passwords or kept under lock and key.

unanticipated emotions might not arise. Therefore, a number of safeguards were put in place. I endeavoured to maintain an awareness of the interviewee's comfort during the interview, as suggested by Kelly (1999), and encouraged participants to express discomfort. Participants were advised that participation could be withdrawn in the event that they experienced distress or discomfort during the interview or at any other time. I attempted to consciously incorporate this into questioning during the interview by prefacing questions related to sensitive topics with a reminder that the interviewee was not obliged to answer the question (Kelly, 1999). They were informed that should negative feelings arise as a result of the interview, they could receive a referral for "professional" help. I also invited participants to inform me whether the process had been distressing or triggered difficult memories at a later point.

In the event, it was obvious that many of the older participants did indeed consider the topic to be of a highly personal nature. For instance, when discussing her experience of discussing the particular topic one older woman, remarried with three children from her first marriage, said the following:

Extract 6

Esmé (F1):   [Y]ou're very lucky that I talk to you about it [...] it's just that you sometimes feel you're going to scratch open, you're gonna go down that road, but I suppose a person gets to a stage where you can talk about it without it really hurting or regrets or feeling like you've failed somewhere … No I think it's brilliant. I think, really it's very precious. Like I said, I won't just talk to anybody about it [...] it can open very emotional aspects, especially on the women's side, it can become very emotional if there's something that you want to forget. Because really it's here ((points to her heart)), any child it's part of you and you can't just, especially if there were difficulties or memories that you don't want to think about, it can become extremely emotional.

However, none of the participants experienced distress or severe embarrassment. This was probably because all the participants actually had children and had not suffered severe trauma or loss whilst forming their families. A few of the participants had experienced miscarriages, problems during pregnancy or childbirth, but none reported any negative emotions related to these. This might have been different had individuals experienced major fertility problems or the loss of a child. Furthermore, the fact that these events occurred many years prior was also a mitigating factor, as borne out by Esmé's statement above. This was one of the reasons that older people who had completed their family formation were considered for the study rather than those for whom parenthood decisions were a recent past or current issue.

On the other hand, I also anticipated that the interviews could be beneficial to participants by allowing them to reflect on their experiences, as Riessman (2000) notes. In fact, many participants expressed positive sentiments after the interviews, as I had anticipated. This is evident in the extract above. In addition, many of the younger men said that the interview helped them to think through an issue that they had not considered in great depth before. As Etherington (2007) states, ethical conduct is facilitated by the researcher's reflexivity by creating

transparency and sustaining ethical research relationships, especially with regard to power. I shall discuss reflexivity in the following section.

8. CRITICAL REFLEXIVITY IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Reflexivity refers to the "ability to notice our responses to the world around us, to stories, and to other people and events, and to use that knowledge to inform and direct our actions, communications, and understandings" (Etherington, 2007, p. 601). Qualitative researchers have been encouraged to develop this skill and to apply it as a methodological strategy to promote self-awareness and vigilance with regard to our research practices. In qualitative research "the researcher is a central figure who influences the collection, selection, and interpretation of data" (Finlay, 2002, p. 531) and is considered to be the research instrument. For this reason, we as researchers are required to explicate our own involvement in the research process. Qualitative researchers are therefore customarily enjoined to be self-reflexive and to reflect on, or "disclose", our own subjectivities. In addition, we are required to be transparent, opening our practices and processes to public scrutiny and revealing its messiness, problems, and pitfalls. We must therefore step out from behind "the protective barriers of objectivity" (Etherington, 2007, p. 599) and resist the urge to sanitise our accounts. Reflexivity is envisaged as an important methodological tool to accomplish these purposes in qualitative research (Etherington, 2007).

However, the term is contested and not always used uniformly by researchers, thereby making it unclear what is meant by the concept and how it ought to be applied. As commentators have noted, some researchers simply offer a confessionary tale that is predominantly focused on their own subjectivities and lapses into the morass of self-positionings. Such reflexive accounts have been critiqued as self-indulgent "navel gazing" that have little practical benefit for the research (Pillow, 2003). Others approach and implement reflexivity in such a way as to authorise their texts in order to promote the legitimacy, validity, and truthfulness of their accounts. This is implicitly based on the assumption that researchers are able to "get it right" and, consequently, "'reflexivity' is elevated to that status of scientific rigor" (Trinh, 1991, in Pillow, 2002, p. 186). As a result, these researchers employ a series of "reflexive" techniques or a set of methods devised to expose the "context" of knowledge production, assuming that

> as long as the required techniques are soundly and methodologically carried out, they can be assured that "reflexivity" has occurred and thus that their research is more valid, more truthful, and that they have captured the voice of their subjects (Pillow, 2002, p. 186).

Pillow (2002) argues that this reveals the continued dependence upon modernist notions of validity, truth, and essence. Thus, it is important for researchers to be clear about what they mean by "reflexivity" and their purposes for using this methodological device.

I do not apply reflexivity to my own work "to offer reassurance to the reader of a more valid tale" (Pillow, 2003, p. 183), but instead "'to reassure the reader that my findings are thoroughly contaminated'" (Ellingson, 1998, in Pillow, 2003, p. 183). One of the chief purposes of reflexivity in this research is to facilitate a critical appraisal of my identity and involvement in the research process that serves to *illuminate the findings*. In other words, the "confession" is only necessary insofar as it retains its novelty and power to inform. The aim is to produce a rich and complex understanding that emphasises the provisionality and contingency of the knowledge produced as well as the place that I as researcher occupy as a contradictory space entailing "collusion and oppositionality, complicity and subversion" (Villenas, 1996, in Pillow, 2002, p. 191). However, this kind of reflexivity is not only intended to enrich the account, but also to interrogate power relations in the research (Macleod, 2002). As Pillow (2003) maintains, attention to the researcher's subjectivity is necessary in relation to the colonial and colonising practices of research. Similarly, Macleod (2002) asserts that self-reflection in research should be explicitly connected to one's political practice.

Thus, the use of reflexivity ought to go beyond a mere "methodological exercise" (Pillow, 2003, p. 187) to a critical consciousness of "the interactional, relational and power dynamics" (Macleod, 2002, p. 20) of the research. The researcher needs "to be critically conscious through personal accounting of how [her or his] self-location (across for example, gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality), position, and interests influence all stages of the research process" (Pillow, 2003, p. 178). Hence, reflexivity is an ongoing mental activity that must occur from the outset of a project to its conclusion and critical self-awareness and vigilance must be built into the research procedure as well as the analytical strategies (Pillow, 2003). In order to do this, I documented my research activities, ideas and impressions in field notes and research journals—particularly during the recruitment and data collection phases. This allowed me to return at later points throughout the research process and to reflect upon observations and responses, the significance of which were not always immediately apparent. The transcripts and actual tape recordings were illuminating in this regard. Reflexivity therefore ranges from in-the-moment awareness to the meta-analysis of the research process in which the researcher re-visits the process and procedures.

Reflexivity was consequently envisaged as "a continuing mode of self-analysis and political awareness" (Callaway, 1992, cited in Pillow, 2003, p. 178) that proceeds from the commencement of the project through to the analysis and its final stages. In the first instance, a major concern was the recognition that the power relationship between the researcher and the researched is formed primarily on the researcher's terms. As Parker (2005) discusses, the researcher's power in this regard is located in institutional privilege to define the way that the research is conducted, including the terms of the interaction between her or him and the

participants. Indeed, this is even evident in our attempts to mitigate the effects of this power imbalance (Parker, 2005). For example, in my own research I offered to make the transcript available to the interviewees and invited them to question me at some point in the interview. Very few took me up on this and ultimately I appeared to retain control of the research process and procedures. To be sure, "no matter how much we include participants' views and voices and negotiate our relationships, in the end, the research is *our* work" (Etherington, 2007, pp. 613 – 614). Nevertheless, for this reason it is still useful to involve participants as far as possible in decision-making, to make our processes transparent, and to capitalise on the fluidity of power between the parties involved (Etherington, 2007). Our reflexivity is enhanced by involving "participants in a reflexive dialogue during data analysis or evaluation" (Finlay, 2002, p. 535).

In spite of my (arguable) status as the "expert" and relative control as researcher, power is not a property that is *possessed* by one or another person in the research process, but rather it is negotiated just as it is in everyday interactions. Power is fluid and negotiated between the researcher and the researched and not permanently skewed in favour of the researcher (Etherington, 2007). In reflecting on the research, one must attend to the intricacies of the micro-politics of research interactions and, as Macleod and Bhatia (2008) note, these criss-cross insider/outsider boundaries in dynamic and complex ways. Researchers may be simultaneously outsiders and insiders and may therefore occupy dual positions of power and subjugation (Pillow, 2003). For instance, being a woman resulted in particular power dynamics when interviewing male participants "given that the society remains stratified by gender" (Arendell, 1997, p. 343) and so I could potentially be considered "a 'low status stranger', an outsider, or an 'outlaw', [or be] positioned by the [male] participants into a subordinated status" (p343). (I shall return to some gendered dynamics that emerged shortly.) Yet, at the same time these dynamics were also affected by the intersection of other factors and social categorisations. My race and class positionings, for instance, potentially granted me insider status.

In this regard I was the same as all my participants, and consequently these aspects (race and class) remained invisible and uncommented upon. This silence can be interpreted in relation to Mazzei's (2004) assertion (which I cited in Chapter 1) that "White middle class is the measure for normal" (p. 27) and therefore "goes unnamed, unnoticed, and unspoken" (Mazzei, 2008, p. 1129). This was apparent in comments about my class background which was clearly supposed to be like that of the participants, for instance one older female participant's statement that my mother (like hers) *also* did not "have to" work. Other than these few comments our middle class "Whiteness" was an invisible norm. Another silence in the data was around sexuality. My sexual orientation—which is not visibly marked in the same was as racial categorisations are— was assumed to be heterosexual like that of all the participants. This was evident in the positioning of me

within the "normal" heterosexual life trajectory such as comments about me getting married and having children one day.

The silences around similarities in terms of race and sexuality were only shattered by references to certain "Others". There were references to "moffies" (Ilze, Elias), for example, which could only have been made if I was assumed to be heterosexual and to share a particular (heterosexist) worldview. There were more references to race than sexuality, in which "Black" people were positioned as "Other" as in Ilze's reference to "those Blacks". Koos stated that "The black people have got this other culture. I see now when the daughter has a child then *ouma* looks after the child and then the daughter goes to work. That's their way of doing it. [...] That's part of their culture. Luckily it's not *ours*." This comment can be read as invoking a shared culture between Koos and me. The term "culture" can also be interpreted as a way of sanitising or disguising an "underlying racializing project", as Macleod and Durrheim (2002, p. 778) argue. There were often allusions or indirect references made to racial issues that I was expected to understand (and did) by virtue of being "White". For example when discussing his "liberal" and "open-minded" upbringing Jakobus told a story about bringing home a friend, whom he never explicitly referred to as "Black", but rather situated the story just before the end of apartheid and told how his parents had "no problem" with the friend coming to visit but asked, "What about the dog?". From these details I can not only infer that the friend was "Black", but I also understand that the concern was that the dog might attack a "Black" child. I wondered whether Jakobus would have told this story in this particular way to a "Black" researcher.

Of course, as Pillow (2003) highlights, it is a mistake to think that our similarities with our participants increase our understanding of their points of view. For instance, as a young, childfree postgraduate student, I was most like the women from cohort two. However, a particular incident made me aware of my assumption that I had a similar frame of reference to these women, which was not always the case. The incident occurred during the interview with Mariska when we were discussing the timing of childbearing and maternity/parents' leave.

Extract 7

Tracy:	Ja it's four months for women and two weeks for dads.
Mariska (F2):	Really?
Tracy:	Ja (.) [*Kak* hey? [
Mariska:	] That's cool. [Laughter]
Tracy:	Hey I'd need someone to take the night shift; I don't function well without a lot of sleep! [Laughter].

In this exchange, Mariska and I simultaneously pronounce on the two weeks parents' leave that some institutions grant fathers—as seen by our overlapping speech. Our laughter reveals the realisation of our misunderstanding. She considered the two weeks leave a positive thing, whereas I did not. I assumed that Mariska, who is an acquaintance and who positioned herself as having feminist leanings earlier in the

interview, would share my thinking that the disparity in time allocation was unfair. I wondered how much I had taken for granted in other interviews with young women whom I believed shared similar views.

Therefore, similarities and differences at once enable certain ways of speaking and close others down. For example, being an English-first-language-speaker made me an outsider across the board and enabled a particular discursive tactic whereby Afrikaner culture was used as an explanatory resource, often as a way of justifying particular choices (as I discuss in Chapter 8). Afrikaner culture was generally constructed as conservative and even as oppressive or repressive, particularly by younger participants. This allowed for some participants to position themselves as different or more progressive or liberal. More importantly, these differences and similarities influence the ebb and flow of power in research relationships.

The negotiation of power was most evident in relation to my prior-positioning as a female student-researcher. This was especially noticeable in interviews with the older participants where my age and gender intersected with my professional positioning, producing paradoxical effects (Macleod, 2002). Many participants expressed an awareness of me as a "Psychologist", making comments such as "I'm just here to help understand the psyche of the Afrikaans male" (Wouter); "I'm a psychologist's nightmare" (Ilze); and "I base this purely on how I think it could be and not on any papers you're reading for research" (Andre). There was also some initial joking from participants about me "analysing" them. At the same time, however, I believe that my age acted as a marker of inexperience, both professionally and in terms of my "life experience" (Ilze). Many of the older participants appeared to believe that I was younger than my actual age at the time and some addressed me in a maternalistic/paternalistic manner (e.g., "my girl") or invited me to stay for supper or come for a meal at other times. These invitations can be seen as a sign of traditional Afrikaner hospitality, usually extended to "like" types, but could also be related to the assumption that students are inevitably struggling financially. The parental tone could be owing to the small university town setting where there are many students and/or the fact that many of the participants had children around my age, some of them students at the university. I believe that this may have counteracted the supposed expert status conferred by institutional privilege (Parker, 2005).

During the interviews many of the older participants positioned themselves as experienced and knowledgeable. For example, Ilze reiterated that "...there's nothing actually that can blow me away. And I've seen the bad side of life, I've seen the GOOD, good life . . . Life experience is the thing to have . . . I've got lots of life experience." Some of the older men also referred to their experience in relation to mine. For instance, when asking Koos to reflect on his experience of the interview he said, "I did research in my day on other topics and I know how it goes." Thuis also positioned himself as experienced and knowledgeable when he discussed

the advice that he gave to prospective or would-be parents. This positioning of being more experienced was often also related to parent status. It was assumed by most of the older participants that this was a milestone that I had not yet reached. This appeared to offer the participants a way of authorising their accounts and mitigating any troubled positioning that might occur if their accounts did not match up to my expectations or to the expert knowledge that I might possess. For instance, after revealing that he and his partner had not planned their first child Stefanus stated, "I was a minister then in the Baptist church for nine years full-time and nine years part-time, and I found that people don't do planning".

This self-positioning (as an older and wiser person) was most apparent amongst the older women who negotiated a powerful position of advice-giver. It was most obvious in an exchange where, adopting the powerful position of experienced mother and advice-giver, Maria was able to ask me personal questions and advise me. This exchange is shown in the following extract which occurred at the end of the interview. My own notes made after transcribing the interview are indicated indifferent font and intended to show my response upon reflection.

Extract 8

Tracy: Thank you, it was very interesting [speaking to you].
Maria (F1):   Ja, I hope some of it will stick in your mind for your life. Listen, how old are you now?
Tracy: 28.
Maria: Oh ja that's perfect. That's why you must quickly… When are you getting married? [I had mentioned my upcoming commitment ceremony. I don't correct the word "married"; in fact I think I might have used it! I do remember avoiding the word "fiancée".*]*
Tracy: The 21st of Feb.
Maria: Okay, March, April, May ((counts nine months)) NOVEMBER [Laughter] [November is the month that I would give birth should I conceive immediately!! This is unstated, we both understand her meaning.]
Tracy: I have to finish this PhD, that's like my child, my number one child! [I don't want to have children (or at least biological offspring) but instead of stating this I talk around the issue.]
Maria: No, that's wonderful that you're able to do that first.
Tracy: Mm, career-wise, get it out [of] the way. [This is blatant complicity with her assumption that I will become a mother/have biological offspring! Why did I say this?]

Maria had from time to time adopted the role of advice-giver and here her tone changes once more as she uses directives like "Listen" and "you must quickly". The implication of her comments is that I should procreate before it is "too late" and that my age at the time is the ideal age to have children. Men did not advise me about future parenthood in this way, as women did, and I assume that this was because they could not easily negotiate such a position in relation to parenthood, since women are generally deemed to be "natural parents" (LaRossa, 1997). I therefore interpret this as a particular gender dynamic whereby older women induct younger women into motherhood and "women's issues".

My private responses after re-listening to the interview with Maria reveal my complicity with her presumption that I would follow the "normal" adult life course and my failure to challenge her assumption. Instead, I positioned myself as the inductee and together Maria and I co-constructed an account where I postpone

childbearing to "get it out [of] the way", rather than make an alternative choice (e.g., adoption or voluntary childlessness). My collusion and reluctance to challenge Maria is indicative of a power disparity. Rather than "lying" to Maria, I fail to challenge her assumptions. Hence, as Etherington (2007) states, "As researchers, we cannot deny our position of power, neither should we deny that participants also have their power" (p. 613).

Such instances of collusion by the researcher highlight the fact that in qualitative research the researcher is often dependant on her/his participants. As Willot (1998) asserts:

> There is a tension between being a researcher and being a feminist. As a feminist I want to see a change in the patriarchal relations between men and women. I would like this change to extend to my relationships with the research participants, but found it difficult to challenge directly. As a researcher I was careful to nurture relationships, to avoid stepping over invisible lines in which these relationships might be jeopardized, and to enter sympathetically into the alien and possibly repugnant perspectives of rival thinkers (cited in Finlay, 2003, p. 537).

Braun (2000b) also raises this issue as she discusses instances of collusion where she as a focus group moderator failed to challenge heterosexist talk in group discussions. She states that,

> [t]he crucial issue of maintaining rapport with participants– which can be exacerbated by sensitive or difficult topics … might be at odds with a desire to challenge what participants are saying. Where rapport seems tenuous, the desire (or indeed 'need') to continue to collect data might override any desire the moderator might have to challenge the heterosexism within a group (p. 139).

In my own research I found this to be challenging, particularly in relation to (hetero)sexist talk. I tried to circumvent this talk and to avoid evaluative or critical commentary during the interviews. Part of my rationale for doing so was in order to be respectful to the participant's worldview and narrative, which I had after all requested, but also in order to maintain rapport. With some participants I found myself laughing at, or even joining in with, jokes that I would not ordinarily appreciate. With the younger women I would sometimes highlight our similarities as I contributed to teasing references and stereotypes about "what men are like". With some of the younger men I found myself softening my questioning of some of their remarks by joking about not understanding the "inner workings" of men. This sort of complicity is clearly related to the need to endear, or ingratiate, oneself with one's participants. Moreover, I was aware that the participants had to go out of their way to take part in the interviews, especially since I (or the gatekeeper) had approached most of them, and I was grateful that they were willing to share their stories. I was therefore careful to ensure that the participants were not inconvenienced and that the experience was not a negative one for them. This behaviour on my part suggests that even though I as researcher am ostensibly in control of the process, power is still negotiated in the researcher-participant relationship.

After reflecting on the interviews, especially with older men, I was surprised to notice my own complicity with gender norms and acceptance of certain gendered positions. For instance, one of the clearest incidents was when I arrived at Koos's home. He was on the phone to his partner and said, "*Die dametjie is nou hier*" (the

little lady is now here). Upon listening to the interview and reading the transcript I notice how I did indeed behave like a "little lady", speaking in a higher pitch, deferring to Koos, being very "nice" and polite and so on.

Commenting on her own experience as a female researcher, Arendell (1997) reports that in her study of divorced parents, male participants behaved very differently to the female participants, often unapologetically making misogynist comments or acting in sexist or stereotypical ways that were entirely inappropriate for the interview setting. Arendell (1997) ascribes certain male behaviour to dominant gender norms that allow men to take up certain positions and discusses her unease at having left much of this sexism and misogyny unchallenged. She cites the following:

> Unfortunately, there are no ready prescriptions for female researchers' coping with such situations. Obviously, a modicum of tolerance is necessary with respect to any behavior respondents may exhibit, otherwise very little field research would ever be accomplished. However, the question of where to draw the line is a difficult one. Perhaps the best strategy is to acknowledge the possible complications that could develop before one enters the setting (Gurney, 1985 in Arendell, 1997, p. 362).

Arendell (1997) ultimately concludes that her role in the research setting was to obtain the men's stories, regardless of their shape or form, not to raise men's consciousness or to correct their inaccurate assertions.

Arendell (1997) also points out how certain gendered behaviours could function as defensive strategies. She discusses how men would take control of the interviewing, asking her personal questions, questioning her interviewing techniques and competence with the recording equipment and so on, which women never did. I experienced similar behaviour from some of the older men, who were inclined to take charge of the interview from the outset and launch into their stories, talking "at" me. In two cases it was literally impossible for me to find an opportunity to intervene and re-direct the conversation and I had to wait until the men ran out of things to say before I could interject. In contrast, the women and younger men tended to defer to me and wait for me to direct the interview conversation. In fact, the older women tended to be frustratingly withholding as I noted in my research journal:

> I'm pleased the [older] women's interviews are over. The [older] women have tended to be more withholding than the [older] men . . . Many of them didn't seem to know what I expected of them, while the men seemed able to chat quite easily about the topic. Could it be the "man thing" that threw them? Either they don't understand or they're being protective [of their partners]. This could explain why some of them were cagey about their partners finding out that they'd participated/what they said.

At the time I connected the women's reticence to uncertainty about the topic, which surprised me as I had anticipated their being more comfortable talking about reproductive matters. However, as the excerpt from my notes above indicates, I began to realise that this was not necessarily the problem, since many of them recounted detailed stories of their pregnancies and birthing experiences—and men told similar stories. However, what appeared to flummox them was the issue of male involvement. Upon reflection, I now believe that women and men were equally at a loss in this regard, but handled their uncertainty in different ways.

Women tended to wait for me to question them and then often focused on their own experiences on other related issues like parenting. For instance, after my interview with Susanna, which was one of the last with the older cohort, I noted the following in my field notes:

> Very focused on own role, not too keen to chat about partner. A lot taken for granted. Absence of partner in interview may point to 'real' absence—he simply does not feature! She seemed a bit nervous and at a loss of what I actually wanted to talk about. It's like a non-subject!! So frustrating not to be able to bring to light all the 'taken-for-granteds' and I'm so conscious of not offending because she's doing me a favour and is an *acquaintance* (possibly why she was reluctant to speak about her partner?).

Men, on the other hand, masked their uncertainty for the most part by taking control or ploughing ahead. One man even criticised the topic as shown in the following extract with André, a farmer. This occurred at the start of this interview:

> ***Extract 9***
> **Tracy**:   I've supposed you gathered that my research is about=
> **André** (M1):   =boring subject!
> **Tracy**:   ((surprised)) HEY?
> **André**:   It's a boring subject [laughs]. Obviously you must do something, but couldn't you have chosen something more=
> **Tracy**:   [Laughs] I don't think it's boring! I suppose "different strokes", hey? (.) Well, I'll tell you why I decided on the particular topic. [Tell background of what interested me in the study.]
> **André**:   ((interrupting)) =okay maybe (good point?) but [if] I understand the motivation for choosing subject it will make it more clear, but if you look at it like (.) objectively=
> **Tracy**:   [Laughing] Well, I suppose if *Nguni* cows are your thing=

I was rather taken aback by this evaluation, as is evident from my similarly blunt response ("hey?"). Incidentally, this was one of the men who took control of the interview—often focusing on irrelevant topics like his career and his accomplishments—and it may be that the topic was deemed "boring" because he did not have much to say about it. In light of the findings that I discuss in the chapters that follow this one, it appears that the older participants, who were bound to the facticity of their stories in a way that those from cohort two were not, found the topic strange and even confusing and that their attempts to mask their confusion took on certain gendered forms.

Furthermore, looking back at the field notes it is clear that it was not only older women who struggled with the topic, but there were problems across the board with the topic, especially with those participants who were parents. My notes are littered with observations that point to the difficulty in generating discussion on the topic:

> …difficult to bring the obvious into the light [...] 'There's nothing to talk about really' seems to be the general feeling [...]Interviewed SN this morning . . . once again the 'nothing to talk about' conversation [...] It's difficult to ask questions when there's just nothing to talk about. How do I follow up on that? [...] the younger men/people are more willing to discuss the topic, but otherwise it's a non-topic, something 'van selfsprekend' [self-explanatory], nothing to discuss!

As I shall discuss in the following chapter, the narratives were framed by the "unstoryworthyness" on the topic.

Part of the critical reflexive endeavour, Finlay (2006) argues is an engagement with the ways that qualitative studies can be assessed for quality and rigour. For Finlay this entails the acknowledgement that "trust and truth are fragile [while engaging] with the messiness and complexity of data interpretation in ways that...reflect the lives of...participants (Savin-Baden and Fisher, 2002, cited in Finlay, 2006, pp. 324 - 325). Writing reflexively on this issue, Finlay (2006) expresses her reservations about this endeavour. I cite her reflection at length because it captures my own ambivalence and reticence as a qualitative researcher to explicitly engage research criteria. Finlay (2006) states:

> I sometimes worry that our preoccupation with evaluation criteria simply reflects our insecurities about the scientific status of our work as qualitative researchers. Does the mission to find and use appropriate criteria pander to the positivists? Aren't we just playing their game? Can't we be valued on our own terms? But then I see the other side of the argument. The reality is that we work in a competitive world where quantitative experimental methodology forms the bedrock of the dominant positivist paradigm. We have to play the 'science game' if we have a hope of competing. It comes down to politics and PR. After all, there are many people out there who still need to be convinced: funding bodies, ethics committees, sceptical supervisors and examiners, to say nothing of the qualitative researchers themselves who have a stake in seeing high quality studies being disseminated. So it is with mixed feelings that I write this paper on 'criteria', recognising it is both a game and a serious undertaking… (p. 325).

Like Finlay (2006) it is with mixed feelings that I engage in a discussion of evaluation criteria or quality assurance. I shall do so before going on to explicate the procedure that was utilised to analyse the narratives.

Finlay (2006) argues for the discerning and judicious application of evaluation criteria by qualitative researchers. She maintains that researchers should adopt only those "criteria which are responsive both to their qualitative ideals and the specific research in hand . . . need to be mindful of, and explicit about, our differing assumptions and commitments arising from chosen methodologies" (p.326). This means that the criteria applied by qualitative researchers are contingent on the requirements of the context. However, regardless of the specific criteria that are applied, the main aim should be to be transparent (Finlay, 2006). As I have discussed earlier, I have attempted to do so in this research by employing the methodological strategy of reflexivity. I have not only documented my decisions, methods and data collection methods, but also attempted to demonstrate my ongoing awareness of the research context, power differentials, participants' responses and the possibility of other interpretations. This coheres with my particular research perspective which, in line with a performative view of reality given by Butlerian theory, adopts a relativist ontological position.
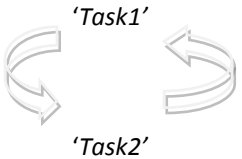
For the most part, evaluation of qualitative research rests on concerns regarding trustworthiness and rigour, requiring a study to be coherent, logical, orderly and systematic, as well as to display ethical integrity. Further, there is attention to the relevance of the research, that is, its impact and the contribution it makes (Finlay, 2006). My attempts to do this are not limited only to my exercise of reflexivity; though in line with Finlay (2006) it is fitting that this should be my

predominant approach, given my theoretical orientation. In the foregoing discussion in addition to evidencing sensitivity to the role played by the researcher in the co-construction of the narratives for analysis, I also have provided evidence of systematic and careful research conduct. This is evidenced in my use of field notes, a research journal and the sharing of relevant information from these and the provision of documentation that was used in the study (see appendices).Moreover, rather than trying to establish trustworthiness in terms of 'truth' I have acknowledged that the data was co-constructed and that there may be a range of interpretations other than my own. However, by providing lengthy extracts of participants words I have attempted to substantiate my own interpretation thereby attempting not only to be transparent, but to improve the persuasiveness and relevance of my interpretation while still inviting the possibility of alternative interpretations (Finlay, 2006).

9. ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

The aim of a narrative-discursive analysis is to uncover features of the data that are not immediately apparent and to make central the performance, the activity of narrating, the interactional activities that take place between people and social relationships (Smith & Sparkes, 2008). The analyst examines the details of talk (as opposed to the overall narrative structuring) and searches for patterns across the larger body of data. In this regard the analysis is much like discourse analysis. The analytical procedure is summarised in Table 7 below, which gives an overview of the process I am about to describe in the remainder of this chapter.

Table 7: *Phases of analysis*

PHASE	Description of process
Familiarisation with data	Transcribing, active re/reading and noting initial ideas
Preliminary content analysis	
Generating *initial* codes	Systematic coding/categorisation of interesting features of the data across the data set, collating data relevant to each code.
Decomposition	Searching for patterns across entire data set and gathering data relevant to each pattern
Synthesis	Collating relevant data into patterns that point to potential discursive resources
Narrative-discursive analysis	
'Task1'	Exploring the performative dimension (micro level): This involves identifying discursive resources within and across accounts. The analyst searches for patterns that occur across interviews and within the same interview.
'Task2'	Attending to the performance dimension (macro level): This entails exploring the operation and negotiation of the discursive resources within the particular constraints including attention to positioning and rhetorical work associated with trouble and repair. The analyst considers a resource contextually in order to analyse the work accomplished by the particular resource and possible trouble that it may give rise to.

As is evident from the table above, the analytic process begins with transcription, though many theorists do not explicitly recognise the "significant and vital role of transcription in the qualitative research process" (Bird, 2005, p. 226). The process of transcription is an interpretative act that entails the re/presentation of an interaction and the active creation of meaning. It allows the analyst to become familiar with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2008). Having transcribed the interviews myself I approached the analysis phase acquainted with the data and with some preliminary ideas about it. I then proceeded to actively read, re-read and sort data in order to familiarise myself with it and to ensure all the material that has been transcribed was considered (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). This initial re/reading produced tentative ideas about relationships and categories in the data, as informed by my particular approach. At this point I made tentative thematic notes relating to these preliminary ideas. Each of these was assigned a code. This served to identify units of data that would be addressed in the subsequent analytic procedures (Maxwell & Miller, 2008).

I then re-read the entire data set searching across it for repeated patterns of meaning that captured something important about the data in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This entailed searching specifically for repetitive features such as recurrent terms, phrases or positionings. These patterns were then coded. This coding may be referred to as "categorisation" (as indicated in Table 7 above) and helps the researcher to identify patterns in language. In this manner the data corpus becomes fractured into discrete, sometimes overlapping, units. These represent potential discursive resources (Maxwell & Miller, 2008).

The next phase entails the synthesis or re-composition of the data as it is re-ordered into meaningful groupings. This was facilitated by the use of *Microsoft Office Excel*, which allowed the codes to be grouped into meaningful categories in separate spread sheets, along with the relevant chunks of text. In order to do this I sorted the data according to the assigned codes gathering together all like items (Maxwell & Miller, 2008). I used the cut-and-paste function on my word processor programme in order to sort the marked text into groupings. These were then entered into the appropriate *Excel* spread sheet. The actual analysis required a continual re-reading of these groupings whilst engaging in the conceptual work of the narrative analysis. It involved the constant movement back and forth between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data, and the analysis of the data that was being produced (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The texts were analysed using theoretical insights outlined in the earlier chapters. I followed the analytical procedure of the narrative-discursive method specified by Taylor and Littleton (2006). (See also the procedure adopted by Reynolds *et al.,* 2007). According to Taylor and Littleton (2006), the analysis proceeds according to two main tasks (as shown in Table 7 above). These occur systematically and while the analytic process is described sequentially here, in practice the analytic process is iterative and circular and does not proceed in a straightforward, sequential manner. As is characteristic of forms of constructionist analysis, there were no distinct phases, but rather these were iterative (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

The first task involves attending to the discursive resources that are drawn upon in the accounts. This task essentially deals with the performative dimension of the narrative as the analyst considers how this particular account is resourced and constrained by larger discursive resources or scripts. The guiding question here is "what discursive resources are drawn on?" The analyst searches for these patterns within the data, that is, commonalities within and between narratives. This approach can therefore potentially show both the commonalities across accounts (e.g., established meanings and canonical narratives) but also the diversity among the narrator's voices (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). These may include canonical narratives or counter narratives, ritualised discourses or liberatory ones, normative or transgressive citational performances (Langellier & Peterson, 2006). One considers how the narrator has re-cited or repeated norms of gender, sexuality, race and so on (in the next task, one considers her or his positioning in relation to these).

The second task concerns the performance dimension of the narrative and involves the contextual consideration of the resources that were highlighted. The analyst considers how particular discursive resources were mobilised and how certain dominant scripts were recited and to what discursive end. Each discursive resource "does work" for narrators in various ways and therefore comprise different rhetorical or discursive tactics that allow participants to "save face", reconcile ideological dilemmas, or ward off potentially troubled positioning (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). Here the guiding question is: "How do these particular discursive resources relate to this particular context?" The analyst may also ask what purpose a particular utterance or construction in a particular narrative might serve in that context, i.e., "Why is it told *this* way?", "Why here and why now?" (Watson, 2007) or "Why this now?" (Wetherell, 1998).

The contextualisation of the discursive resources necessitates attention to positioning. Recall that positioning signifies performance within talk (Riessman, 2002a&b). The analyst considers the positions that are taken up in relation to the following:

(1) *The immediate discursive context (or interactional setting):* One considers positioning in relation to the interview narrative-in-interaction and the particular discursive purposes they might serve in this setting. (e.g., a speaker might position her- or himself as a rational decision-maker because she or he perceives this to be the response that the interviewer expects and so she or he acts as a good participant.) The analyst might question why particular speakers are positioned in a certain way (Watson, 2007). The interviewer's positioning is also relevant here.

(2) *The b roader discursive context:* This means that the analyst also considers how the narrators position themselves in relation to the discursive resources that they have recited.(e.g., participants might position themselves as "good" parents who base their decisions on their children's interests.) This shows how the

broader discursive milieu is implicated in narrators' personal accounts and how power operates within specific accounts.

(3) *Prior positioning:* The analyst considers how the narrator negotiates the constraints that are imposed by imperative positionings of their own biographic details. These pertain to gender, race, age, or sexual orientation, for example (Taylor, 2006). So, by virtue of being a woman or a man, a participant may be already positioned within a particular discourse. Participants have to negotiate this prior positioning within their talk.

These positioning levels are similar to Bamberg's (2004b) three levels of positioning, and also Riessman's (2002b) positioning levels, in that they move progressively from the local to the more global (Watson, 2007). However, I have tailored these to fit with my particular approach. I began by looking at the rhetorical strategies and the interactional effects of the specific narrative-in-interaction, trying to ascertain what the narrator is trying to accomplish with the narrative. (This corresponds with Bamberg's (2004b) second level and Riessman's (2002b) first.) The next level (which corresponds with Bamberg's (2004b) third level of analysis and Riessman's (2002b) second level) moves to make inferences about positioning within "ideological master narratives" (Bamberg, 2004b, p.367) and "broader cultural discourse" (Riessman, 2002b, p. 3). The third final level is derived from the narrative-discursive method's broadened analytic focus that includes attention to the narrator's positioning at the outset of talk (e.g., parent or childfree; woman or man). These positioning levels are not mutually exclusive since in a speaker's rhetorical work she or he "is simultaneously orienting to the immediate interaction and to wider social debates" (Taylor, 2006, p. 98).

Narrators are, therefore, able to position themselves, as well as others, in a variety of, contrasting ways during narration. This includes alignment with more powerful discourses and positions, alternative socially desirable positions, as well as those which grant more or less agency to the speakers and so, in turn, affect the degree to speakers can be held accountable for their "choices". Hence, broader societal understandings, and their related prior positionings, can either facilitate or constrain the construction of gendered subjectivity. These serve to create continuity across occasions of talk, but may cause the speaker some difficulty in reconciling these with other claims or positionings given by her or his life circumstances (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). Instances of inconsistency, contradiction, ambiguity, and incongruence, or trouble, invariably occur as a result and require explanation or repair as they create "trouble" for the speaker (Taylor, 2005a). I therefore attended to instances of rhetorical work that arise due to such "trouble". This is signalled by a narrator's attempt to correct contradiction, ambiguity, and inconsistencies in her or his talk.

10. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have outlined the procedures that I employed for recruitment and data collection, as well as pertinent issues such as ethics. I also explicated the method which I used to analyse the narratives of "White" Afrikaners regarding parenthood decisions. These include one data set of retrospective narratives (parents looking back on their experiences of decisions) and another set of prospective accounts (young childfree people discussing their anticipated domestic life). I adopt a performance/performative approach in order to analyse this data, and attend to the micro-political aspects of narration as well as the performative dimension, viewing narrators as constrained by discursive resources but also able to agentically and reflexively negotiate these. In the following chapters I present the findings of my analysis. In this chapter I discuss how the research amounted to the questioning of an unquestioned norm of parenthood as a spontaneous process and how narrators responded to this. In the following chapter (Chapter 8) I discuss how heterosexual reproduction was constructed as unfolding within the natural progression of the "normal" heterosexual life course and therefore a non-choice. The next chapter (Chapter 9) concentrates how procreation is governed by marriage and situated within the heterosexual nuclear family so that the female-male dyad of the heterosexual couple becomes the parenting dyad. In the final chapter (Chapter 10) I explore how hetero-patriarchal norms are reinforced by the situation of reproduction within this context.

7

The assumption of automatic childbearing: questioning an unquestioned norm

...awkwardness in accounting for oneself and testiness about one's chosen course bespeak autonomy deficits. If women [and men] were autonomously becoming [parents] or declining to, we would expect to hear a splendid chorus of distinctive, confident voices, but instead we are hearing a shrill cacophony of trite tunes (Meyers, 2001, p. 752).

1. INTRODUCTION

I shall begin the analysis by broadly contextualising the narratives under investigation. I explore the immediate discursive context, or interactional setting, in which the narratives were co/produced especially in order to make sense of the common participant responses of confusion, bewilderment and sometimes even disregard when enquiring about parenthood decision-making that I raised in the previous chapter. Many participants were unsure of what I expected from them or did not consider the topic particularly "storyworthy", to the extent that one person even openly declared it "boring", as I have reported. I attribute this kind of reaction to the taken for granted nature of the topic rooted in an assumption of automatic childbearing, so that my questioning represents an "unusual conversational move" (Reynolds & Taylor, 2004, p. 203), as I shall discuss. I also examine how the way in which I, as researcher, framed this topic affected narration and may have contributed to the participants' confusion and difficulty in answering my questions. I argue in this chapter that by enquiring about people's "decision-making" or "planning" I articulate the matter in terms of "choice". "The rhetoric of choice stems from liberal imagery of autonomous individuals making choices in their own self-interest" (Williams, 1991, p. 1561). In this chapter, I show how this framing of the topic may have contributed to the participants' confusion. I show how the rhetoric of choice acted as a constraint on narration, specifically in the guise of the family planning script and acted as a potential source of trouble. I also discuss the various discursive resources related to the topic that were available for narrators to negotiate the demands of this particular interactive setting, these include the family planning script, the romance/love script, the canonical couple narrative and the child-centred script.

2. QUESTIONING THE UNQUESTIONED NORM OF AUTOMATIC CHILDBEARING

Most participants regarded having children as an expected part of life, assuming that they could and would become (biological) parents, similar to Meyers's (2001) observation. In fact, all the parent participants claimed that the possibility of not having children, or even being unable to have children, had neither occurred to them nor been discussed with their partners. Based on this assumption of spontaneous or automatic childbearing, these individuals therefore unquestioningly presupposed that they could, and would, have children upon entering the marriage relationship. *Whether* to have children was not really a matter for discussion. The following excerpts illustrate this.

Extract 1

Maria (F1[9]):   I've always wanted, you know, since I was a little girl I wanted children [...] I always wanted [children] and I also never had this thing of "What if I can't have?" Those things didn't come up in my mind. You get people who are scared. I think it because you hear these days of so many people who cannot fall pregnant. I think it's because people are more aware of things. No, I never, I just knew I will have [children].

Extract 2

Anel (F2):   I've always sort've had that idea in mind that one day when everything is settled down that there would come a time that I would want children. This idea in the back of my head that I know that it will come, you know, me wanting children will come to me when I know that I'm right. [...] I've never tried to (.) it's never been a present time thing. It's always been a future ideal.

Extract 3

Thuis (M1):   I've always had, since I was very little, had this fantasy, this dream of having a massive family one day [with] lots of children all over the place. [...] [Laughs] I don't know why!

These extracts display the common belief that childbearing would feature in their lives at some point. For many of the participants, especially female participants, this was reported to be a strong desire from an early age, as shown in extracts 2 and 3. The claims that they had "always wanted" to or "just knew" that they would have children illustrate the unquestioned assumption that parenthood is inevitable. According to this way of speaking, parenthood is depicted as self-evident and as a foregone conclusion made well before adulthood. Although the expression of their desire in this way does not foreclose the possibility of making a rational and conscious decision about parenthood at some point in adulthood, the autonomy of such a decision may be questionable, as Meyers(2001) points out.

The assumption of automatic childbearing made it difficult for most of the participants to answer my questions about their parenthood decisions. I had anticipated this to some degree, as I stated in Chapter 6, but upon embarking upon the interviews I was surprised at how greatly taken for granted parenthood really appeared to be. I shall now go on to discuss the ways that this construction manifested in the narratives, and how in many ways it ruled out the notion of "choice". I begin by looking at the ways that it featured in the older participants narratives and then go on to look at two gendered tactics utilised by younger participants to "save face".

2.1. "It just happened"

This unquestioned assumption made it a challenge for older participants to explicate their rationale for wanting to have children or why they had become parents and, as the extract below shows, revealed a general lack of reflection on the matter.

Extract 4

Elias (M1):   Jis, that's a difficult one. Why did I want to have children? I think [pause] jislaaik! [Laughs] Ja, this is a difficult one, huh? [...] I think (.) it's not because it's the right thing to do. That's not the right answer. [...] I think both of us had the desire to have kids. Why? That's a difficult question. It's too hard! [Laugh] I

---

[9] The reader will recall that in this code F denotes female (and M, male) while 1 represents cohort 1 (and 2 stands for cohort two). See pp. 115 – 117 for details about participants.

never thought of it. Why, why? But I think I answered you there, there was the need, ja, the want for children. We really wanted children.

The taken for granted nature of the desire to have children is evidenced by Elias's obvious difficulty at answering my question about why he wanted to have children. He overtly states this in due course, maintaining that he had "never thought of it". So, while the motivation for having children is attributed to desire ("the need" or "want") for them, this desire is ultimately not really examined. Instead, the child is constructed as an end in itself. Children are depicted as wanted for their own sake. Therefore, in his attempt to explicate the rationale for his parenthood choice, Elias focuses on the intrinsic value of children. I shall discuss this common response later in this chapter when I discuss the child-centred script.

This difficulty in clearly articulating the reasons for having children or what motivated the participants to want to be parents was common amongst participants in cohort one, as Throsby and Gill (2004) also report in their study of couples undergoing fertility treatment. Elias's response above was exemplary of many the responses of many older participants in this study when asked about their motivations for becoming parents. These responses are summed up by the following remark made by Meyers (2001): "When asked why they want or don't want to have children, most people are flummoxed. Highly articulate individuals lose their fluency, grope for words, and stumble around, seizing on incompatible explanations and multiplying justifications" (p. 752). She goes on to explain that this "awkwardness in accounting for oneself and testiness about one's chosen course" (p. 752) is related to a deficit in autonomy. She claims that if parenthood choices were autonomously made "we would expect to hear a splendid chorus of distinctive, confident voices, but instead we are hearing a shrill cacophony of trite tunes" (p. 752).

In light of the taken for granted nature of the topic, my questioning denotes "an unusual conversational move" (Reynolds & Taylor, 2004, p. 203) in that it can be seen as curious or intrusive to explicitly question behaviour that can be considered normal and acceptable by current social standards (Reynolds & Taylor, 2004). Essentially what the asker does is make visible and questions the taken for granted norms of conventional behaviour (e.g., questioning a married person about why s/he decided *not* to remain single). Thus, my questioning of behaviour that is considered as "normal" or expected amongst married heterosexual people might have appeared strange. This is clearly illustrated by the following extract which occurred when I asked a participant to tell me her "story" of becoming a parent and she expressed bewilderment. This exchange appears below.

Extract 5

Ilze (F1):	Ja, but what STORY, what do you mean by "STORY"?
Tracy:	Well, I suppose like, um, kind of the story of how you came to be a parent (.) [...] So maybe you could tell me a bit more about [...] you not wanting kids in the first place and then how it came to be that you decided=

Ilze:	=no, **we didn't decide to have [a child]; it just happened** [laughter]. [...] It comes from generation to generation. We do it the same way. We don't even think about it. That's why I said, I don't know what you really want, **we don't talk about these things**, it just happens. [Laughs]
Tracy:	That's interesting. Then, here comes this person and says, "Let's talk about this." What did you think?
Ilze:	[Laugh] Ja, **there's nothing to talk about** [laugh]. It just happens.

The strangeness of my questioning is highlighted when Ilze asks me what I mean and by our laughter as she clarifies that "we didn't decide . . . it just happened". Speaking from the prior position of someone who had an unintended pregnancy several years after she first married, Ilze is bound by the "reality factor" (Langellier, 1999, p. 128) (i.e., her actual biography) and cannot discuss parenthood in terms of choice. However, according to Ilze, it is unusual for *anyone* to consciously reflect upon becoming, or to plan to become, a parent and, in this manner, she constructs her unplanned pregnancy and lack of conscious reflection as normal. What Ilze does in this extract is point out the normalcy of the lack of conscious reflection or of taking an active decision. Drawing on the naturalness of parenthood in the heterosexual life course, she positions herself as the rule, particularly as an Afrikaner, rather than the exception. Accordingly, her inability to formulate a "story" is not just because her own pregnancy was unintended and unplanned. Rather, constructing parenthood as taken for granted and not consciously reflected upon, the issue is rendered a non-topic stating and she overtly stated that "there's nothing to talk about". The lack of reflection on the topic therefore sets it up as "non-storyworthy".

Furthermore, Ilze's response calls into question the way that I "languaged" the topic in this study, that is, in terms of conscious deliberation or "choice". She talks against choice and rejects the position of autonomous individual who actively chooses according to self-interest, in a sense setting me straight, by stating explicitly, "No, we didn't decide". Instead she introduces an alternative picture of a spontaneous ("it just happened") and non-verbal ("we don't talk about it") process. This suggests a model of passive decision-making, which entails a lack of deliberate and rational planning and discussion and where matters are largely left to chance (Fennell, 2006). It is based on this construction that Ilze claims "there is nothing to talk about". It is a non-subject *on my terms* since, according to Ilze, having children is something that occurs spontaneously and is not necessarily reflected upon.

According to Nauk (2007), "spontaneous" decision-making occurs when a situation is perceived as familiar and potential costs of making incorrect decisions as being small. This is conveyed in Ilze's claim that, "It comes from generation to generation. We do it the same way. We don't even have to think about it". Later she added "It works and you don't go wrong with a thing that works. It works and why go and argue about something if you know it works, you see?" suggesting that minimal risk is anticipated in childbearing. Consequently, Nauk (2007) asserts, under these conditions parenthood decisions are culturally framed in such a way the "further individual reasoning seems superficial" (p. 618). In times of rapid social change, however, "calculated"

decision-making becomes more likely. Thus, with regard to parenthood decision-making, in the majority of cases decisions are conventional—that is automatic or spontaneous—except under certain conditions (Nauk, 2007). Likewise, Fennell (2006) maintains that "rather than representing the decision-making style of only a few individuals, this type of decision-making is actually quite common when considering fertility-related behavior" (p. 9).

It was not only the older participants who took parenthood for granted, however. Many of the participants from cohort two also expressed the belief that they would one day be parents. This is reflected in the extract below.

Extract6

Elize (F2):   I think because it's I think human nature to have kids and that, and the biological clock [laugh] I think that it truly is like that. You start wanting, I mean it's not like we were programmed to do it, but that is nature, you know, have kids and get married. [...]I think it's just something that's in us. Like, they say, everyone gets married. [...] It's life to have kids.

In this extract, having children is portrayed as a natural and inevitable part of life for "everyone". According to Elize, all people will "start wanting" children at some point in their lives and it points to a general trend amongst the younger participants in which parenthood was construed as something in the far off future. Riaan, for instance, stated elsewhere that parenthood was a bridge to be crossed in the future. In this respect, many of the young participants situated parenthood within the unfolding of adulthood or the "natural progression"(Riaan) of their lives. Consequently, parenthood was seen, as Mariska put it, as something that would occur in its own time. This logic often featured in the discursive tactics below.

2.2. Young men's nonchalance

As I have I mentioned in Chapter 6, most of the young male participants openly admitted to some a lack of conscious reflection on the topic before the interview. The exception was in the case of those who expressed a wish to abstain from parenthood. In the following extract young men overtly discuss their lack of thought in relation to future parenthood and these excerpts reveal a general trend of nonchalant responses from the younger male participants.

Extract 7

Jakobus (M2):   I'm quite free to say, look, I haven't thought about it. It's quite an interesting thing. But, you know, for me, I actually don't mind saying, you know, when it gets to that point… [...]You know we've got this unspoken code where we don't speak about these things because they are not, I won't say 'worthy', but they are not, um [...] They're not relevant to what we must do, for what we want to achieve.
Tracy: Do you mean for right now in your life, because you're not going to have a child anytime soon?
Jakobus: Yeah, yeah, so that's why, like I said in the beginning, it wasn't a thing I've ever thought about before. But when you came to me and said, "Just think about it and come and talk" it was for me "wow" an eye-opening experience. Just, what will I do if that time comes? How will other factors in my life influence these decisions of having children? It was just a whole new revelation.

Extract 8

Riaan (M2):   Also maybe if you get into, if you're married and you've got a settled job and stuff, for me, it's sort of a—it's probably the way I've grown up and stuff—it's sort of like a natural progression, that at some stage, someone, either both or one, the person is going to want to have a child.

Extract 9

Wouter (M2):   I found it quite difficult to get started on the topic, you know? For some reason I haven't really thought about it all that much. I think studying for a few years puts you back a bit and you don't really think about these things all that early [...]I can't remember speaking about things like that when I was like at 'varsity.

As shown above, the narrators claimed that they had not previously considered the matter of parenthood or, like Riaan, claimed that they hadn't given the topic more than a passing thought (see also extract 6 above). As with many of the other younger participants, such claims construct parenthood as something that is not a pressing concern and carry a tone of "nonchalance" to the prospect of parenthood. Such casual or nonchalant responses to questions about parenthood decisions indicate that parenthood is largely taken for granted and not consciously reflected upon (Meyers, 2001). Wouter's response in extract 9 takes on a tone of confession as he tries to account for his lack of reflection. This tone is also evident in Jakobus's extract as he states that he is willing to admit to his lack of reflection. These extracts show how participants constructed the choice to become a parent as something inappropriate for them to consider at particular times in their lives. This was echoed by several of the participants, like Dawid (M2) who said, "...you're not sort of supposed to think about those things if you're still studying". This suggests perhaps that there is a gendered expectation on men that, contrary to that placed on women; they should not unduly concern themselves with parenthood. This is corroborated by the following comment by an older man.

Extract 10

Thuis (M1):   I do think that the instinct or desire would be present in most people. They might not own up to it, or they might not enunciate it, or they might not want to talk about feeling that way, but I think it is there. We start playing roles that are expected of us before during and after, some of us more so than others, but I would be surprised if most men said that there was no such thing as a nurturing instinct. [...] We might not express it in the same way or act on it in the same way. [...] while you're doing your national service and running around playing soldier, you're not supposed to talk about your desire to nurse a child. It's not part of the lingo at the time.

Thuis construes parenthood as a natural desire for all people, including men, but suggests that men are expected to play certain "roles", which do not include the expression of the "desire to nurse a child". The implication here is that such desires are not appropriate to acceptable manliness.

Hence, it is possible to see how younger men capitalised on this construction and that rhetorical work occurred in which speakers justified their lack of reflection by constructing parenthood as a distant event that rightly did not warrant too much thought at this particular point in time in their lives. Male narrators used this tactic to save face at not being able to answer my questions as well as ward off potential trouble related to the perception that I expected them to have reflected on the matter. When Jakobus makes the claim in extract 7above that parenthood is "not relevant to what *we* must do, for what we want to achieve" he is speaking

specifically as a young man. This comment implies that the concern with parenthood might be deemed a gendered concern. In other words, that it is not a topic that is relevant to young men, since parenthood is not integral to their performance of adult masculinity.

2.3. Women and the "biological clock"

For women, on the other hand, marriage and parenthood are considered to be the twin goals of femininity (Williams, 1991). This is possibly the reason that although most of the young women took motherhood for granted as inevitable, they also ironically expressed a strong desire to have children and had given some thought to the matter. In general, the members of cohort 2 constructed women as desperate or driven to have children owing to an innate predisposition—rooted in biological difference and so attributed to "nature", "instinct" or "hormones"—which automatically takes effect at some point, so that women were seen as wanting children more or sooner than men. The comments below are part of this broader pattern.

Extract 11

Riaan (M2):   [I]t sounds sexist and biased, but women do get **broody** at stages. I've just seen it right (now?). [Laughs] My aunt, just after she got married, she got married quite late, so, fair enough, **the biological clock** was ticking.

Extract 12

Franco (M2):   I'm not sure to answer the question that's gonna follow on this one, but I do think often that women have greater need to have a child. But, I mean, maybe it is because they are just wired to be more nurturing [...] women are just made differently from men. I think males who are not married are less likely to speak about it, because it's just not relevant. But I *do* feel that women who are not married speak about it more than the males who are on the same level.

Extract 13

Anel (F2):   I think it's not normal for an 18 year-old guy to be craving a kid or even, often a 23 year-old guy, whereas a 23 year-old girl, that's often all that they can think about!

It is evident that the male participants are aware of potentially troubled positioning in making these claims, most likely to a female researcher, and potentially being positioned as "sexist" and therefore draw on experiential "evidence" to substantiate their claims. Franco suggests that it is "not relevant" for unmarried men (or possibly people in general) to be thinking about parenthood. His claim is echoed by Anel who comments that it is abnormal for men of a certain age to desire to have a child while women of the same age intensely desire one. This reasoning often functioned as an explanation for a failure to reflect on the topic amongst male participants in particular.

Some men rationalised their lack of reflection on the topic by constructing it as an issue that is more pressing for women or by referring to gender stereotypes that rendered the topic as a "women's issue" based on women's biological predisposition to wanting children or their greater desire for parenthood. For example:

Extract 14

153

Riaan (M2):   Ja we [men] don't really, don't really discuss it sort of in depth. Or maybe someone is pregnant, "Jeepers, that messed their life up that's gonna be difficult". [...] I think it's tough for girls. [...] Luckily, ja, I think my parents, they'd just be grateful if we [he and his brother] get married one day. [Laughter]

Extract15
Dawid (M2):   Um, again, it's very difficult to say what, you know, in a couple of years' time. (.) It's definitely not something that I'm working towards. It's not as if I draw up a list in the beginning of the year, like, what are the things I wanna do this year, you know, become a father. I can understand why women feel under a lot more pressure perhaps, because of biological reasons for wanting to perhaps include that in their lists as they near thirty. [...] Maybe when I'm forty years old and I've completed some of the things I wanna do, complete my thesis.

In these extracts having children is construed as a more pressing issue for women owing to social and biological pressure. Not being subject to similar pressures means that men do not have to reflect on the issue until they are ready to do so, if at all. Nyanzi *et al.,* (2005) propose that such rhetoric may mask young men's lack of reflection on the topic as well as their lack of knowledge and confidence. In light of this, Johann's comment mentioned above (that having childbearing is not relevant to "us" or something "we" must do) may also be considered as saving face, that is justifying why he had until then not contemplated the issue in much depth.

Thus, the act of questioning compelled participants to reflect on a topic that they claimed not to have previously have given much thought to, and may have been interpreted as an expectation (on my part) that they had reflected on it. This was often evidenced by a defensive or confessionary tone. Moreover, in explicating their motivations, desires, and intentions and/or past behaviour in relation to childbearing, participants' narratives were thus constrained by the language of choice. In other words, my questioning of a taken for granted norm created trouble on two levels for the participants. One, they were compelled to account for their decisions and/or desires in relation to parenthood and, two, they were obliged to engage in the topic in terms of conscious deliberation, or "choice". This invoked an influential socio-cultural script, *viz.,* the family planning script, which I expound on later in this chapter.

3. THE LANGUAGE OF CHOICE

The immediate discursive context in which the narratives were produced was therefore framed by my "languaging" of the topic under study in terms of "choice" as I enquired about people's "family planning" and "reproductive decision-making". This enquiry set up the perception that participants were expected to have gone about the process of "deciding" to become a parent in an active manner. Hence, a rational and more or less active decision-making process was invoked in which partners engage in direct communication with one another regarding their preferences and desires and as autonomous decision-makers. The topic was thereby situated within the realm of choice. The immediate discursive context of the research was framed by two central issues, firstly, assumptions (mine and the participants') of what parenthood decision-making is/ought to

be and, secondly, the participants' perceptions of my expectations regarding "male involvement" (i.e., that men should be actively involved in decision-making and that there should be collaborative decision-making).

The participants were obliged to use the language of choice in constructing their answers and had to talk around or against this particular rendition of decision-making in order to stay true to their own experiences and preferences. This is evidenced in the participant's rhetorical work which centred on the notion of "choice". Participants engaged in the "rhetoric of choice" (Williams, 1991, p. 1561) as they grappled with the related notions of "planning", "deciding", and "choosing", in order to explain, rationalise, or justify their own experiences or preferences and sometimes even to talk against the family planning model (i.e., rational and active decision-making). It must be noted that the participants from cohort two were not limited by the facticity of their narratives, since their accounts were largely speculative and hypothetical, but that there were still advantages and disadvantages of positioning themselves in various ways.

According to Reynolds *et al*. (2007), choice can be construed as a cultural resource (as opposed to an internal process) that may be drawn on or contested according to the situational context. Viewing choice as a discursive action allows for the examination of the performance of choice in people's narratives. It is not "a recollection of one unchanging moment of past choice" (Reynolds *et al*., 2007, p.334), but instead participants may recite and improvise upon existing scripts according to the demands of the interview setting. In the remainder of this chapter I explicate the discursive resources around the issue of having children that were at participants' disposal in order to engage in this "dance of chance and choice" (Reynolds *et al.*, 2007, p. 337), showing how they were utilised to respond to my unusual conversational move.

3.1. The constraint of the family planning script

This script is the most obvious discursive resource available to the participants since I used it to frame the topic, enquiring about "family planning[10]" and "decision-making". The reason that I myself originally drew on this discursive resource was because it is used as an official discourse in relation to reproduction and drawn on in policy documents, scholarly literature, research, and academic settings. This script is therefore institutionally authorised and for that reason relatively powerful. So, it was not possible for participants to ignore it and consequently it acted as a major source of constraint in the immediate discursive setting. This script envisions rational and more or less active decision-makers who do or do not choose to procreate based on certain preferences and ideals. "Choice" is therefore the central feature of this script, which stands in contradistinction to the norm of automatic childbearing.

---

[10] I purposely utilised the term "family planning" because I imagined that it would be more familiar to the participants (than reproductive decision-making"). See appendices C and D for documentation supplied to potential participants.

This script not only held dominance in the immediate discursive setting, but also has high social currency in other settings in the broader discursive context, particularly as an official discourse in demography and national population control, especially in "developing" contexts such as South Africa. Owing to the advent of modern contraception and subsequent international efforts at population control, the idea that one ought to plan one's children is not a foreign one in South Africa (recall the discussion of the South African national family planning programme in the introductory chapter) and most people would accept it in principle—as the participants in this study often did. This script is tied to notions of rationality, maturity, and responsibility and, conversely, there is potentially stigma attached to those who do not adhere to this script. They are potentially viewed as irresponsible citizens or "bad parents" because they have not taken the welfare of their future children into consideration by planning the timing and spacing of births so that they are able to meet their children's needs. Inherent in this script was the notion of children's wellbeing and part of the rationale for planning was to ensure that the optimal conditions for childbearing are provided; this aspect will become clearer when I discuss the child-centred script later in this chapter.

The family planning script therefore acted as a constraint on speakers' narratives, but also enabled socially desirable positions (i.e., as responsible citizens and "good" parents). The constraint of the family planning script can be seen in the rhetorical work engaged in by participants, especially in the older participants' attempts to "save face" because their own decision-making did not play out in accordance with the rational planning model prescribed by the family planning script. One way of doing this was to excuse non-adherence to the family planning model by citing it as an unattainable ideal. In this manner, participants managed to keep from challenging the central family planning script while at the same time positioning themselves as not to blame for failing to live up to the ideal. They were thus able to "talk around" the planning script and the trouble that it presented them with regard to undesirable positioning.

In order to achieve this, older participants positioned themselves as at the mercy of life circumstances and unable to choose even if they had so desired. They emphasised chance and contingency by citing circumstantial difficulties and "real life" barriers to planning. In this way rational planning was constructed as an unattainable or unrealistic, even naïve, ideal and the viability of the planning script was called into question. For instance:

***Extract* 16**

Thuis (M1):   In retrospect, I think I would've liked to have been different. You know you have a more romantic idea of how it SHOULD have been, in your mind. You should've sat down on a good day [laughs] and decided to become pregnant and whatnot, which wasn't the case at all, even though it was a conscious decision. [...] So, all of that happened, so, **not a pretty story**, in retrospect. At the time it didn't seem to be that terrible, you know, when you just live through your reality. So that's how they

came into being, basically. [...]Again, you live the life you're presented with. So, at the time I did what I had to do, or what I thought I had to do, with the knowledge and experience at my disposal.

Extract 17

Lettie (F1):   Ja, look **my story's quite different**. My pregnancies were not planned because nothing worked with me. […]Well, I had them without trying [laughter]. I often used to think it would have been so nice to say, "Okay now I'm going off the pill and now I wanna try" but I fell pregnant with everything. I had two miscarriages after Anita, so just no contraceptive worked for me.

Extract 18

Stefanus (M1):   For a while we used contraception and things, but then eventually we decided, "Ag there's nothing happening" and then a little surprise came nine years later. But I realised, I was a minister then in the Baptist church for nine years full-time and nine years part-time, that **people don't do planning**. They get married and then after married the wife will say, 'I don't want children" and the man says, "But I want children" and there comes your biggest first fight.

In these extracts the restriction that the family planning script places on narration is apparent in the confessional phrases highlighted above which indicate deviation from the script. In extract 16, Thuis's self-appraisal of his narrative as "not a pretty story" carries an apologetic tone and indicates an awareness that it has not lived up to the ideal as well as the assumption that such a story was expected. Like Thuis, in extract 17Lettie indicates an awareness of her deviation from the planning script by framing her account as a "different story". In order to repair potentially troubled positions, the speakers create a rhetorical divide between the ideal of actively planning children's births and what happens "in real life".

In extract 16, the reference to "how it SHOULD have been" constructs rational, active decision-making as the ideal, but by describing this ideal as "romantic" it is represented as idealistic or impractical. Instead, Thuis portrays himself as pragmatic and as having done the best that he could, given the circumstances of his life. The caveat that he and his partner's decision was in fact conscious, positions him as someone who has only just missed the mark, rather than completely deviated from the ideal. Similarly, in extract 17, Lettie constructs active planning as preferential to her actual experience of two unintended pregnancies (one pre-marital) and positions herself as a victim of circumstance (faulty contraception) and not liable for her failure to actively plan the pregnancies. Stefanus normalises his own experience of unplanned pregnancy in a similar way in extract 18. He calls into question the ideal of premeditated planning without challenging it directly. This allows Stefanus to save face without placing himself in the vulnerable position of rejecting a dominant norm and being confrontational.(Note how the use of "Partnership talk" (Dixon & Whetherell, 2004, p. 176) emphasises mutual agreement ("we decided"), but does not specify exactly how the decision to forgo contraception was taken.)

It is the reference to personal experience that lends this discursive tactic its rhetorical force. This is notable especially in extract 18 in which Stefanus cites his experience as a minister who had counselled many people, thereby positioning himself as an expert on the matter under discussion, pronouncing that "people don't do planning". In this way he represents his own experience as the usual case. While the other participants could not similarly claim expert status, they are speaking as parents to a non-parent interviewer and were thus

potentially able to talk against my framing of the topic. I shall discuss the various ways that the participants did this later in this chapter.

Furthermore, following the logic that a planned pregnancy amounts to a wanted pregnancy, the "wantedness" of a pregnancy could also be called into question. Therefore, another source of trouble for the older participants was the possible association of passive decision-making with unplanned pregnancy. Children who are the result of a passive decision-making process (e.g., leaving things to chance) could well be considered "unplanned" in the sense that it does not correspond with the image of autonomous individuals making rational, active choices envisaged by the family planning model. However, the notion of an "unplanned" pregnancy bears with it connotations of irresponsibility, immaturity, and possibly also self-interest (in that the interests and needs of the future child are not factored into decision-making).

For instance, Koos refuted the idea of actively planning to have children stating that "The purpose for me being here is to have kids. One of the purposes, I see it that way. Not that I don't want them of course." His caveat at the end shows that positioning himself as simply fulfilling his "purpose" might call into question whether he truly wanted to have children. As a result those who adopt passive planning strategies could be positioned negatively and they consequently laboured to show that automatic or spontaneous childbearing is not tantamount to unplanned or unwanted pregnancy. In this regard, it was clear that none of the parent participants considered their children to be unplanned, despite the lack of deliberate or active decision-making, including the absence of verbal discussion of the matter. Working within the constraints of their actual life circumstances and/or particular understandings of what "family planning" is or should be, the parent participants often recounted their stories in ways that highlighted "choice" and tried to show that the births of their children were in some way "planned". The rational planning model was therefore favoured at times as it held positive positions for the participants. In the following extracts, it is clear to see that the older participants recited a particular idea of "planning" as active, which coheres with the family planning script, but at the same time they struggle to reconcile this with their own passive decision-making. These extracts show how participants tried to align their personal narratives with the planning script.

Extract 19

Andre (M1): Um, that's a bit difficult. I assume we **discussed** it, love and the need to have something that is born from us was I think the biggest drive, because she used contraceptives then and she stopped using it. So it's not like there was a **slip up** and she got pregnant or something, so it was definitely something that was coupled to "Yes, we've made a **decision**". It was done because we loved one another. I think that was the main drive. Not to say that we have to have offspring to carry forward the [family] name [...] They were both conceived out of love, but at **a critical point** when we said, "right", I think we were married then three years, so we, "we've spent enough time together". We knew one another before that for many years. I cannot recall that we sat down and we had like a spread sheet and we said, "Right, is the house big enough?" because the house then was VERY small. [Laughter] [...] **Planned in the sense of we would like to have a child, stop that [contraception] and it actually happened very quickly**.

158

Extract 20

Elias (M1): Lena was actually **not planned**. […] I went on an officer's course in the Western Cape for six weeks. And we thought, "Alright, after this we'll plan". When I came back Trudy was pregnant! [Laughs] So ja, she was **not planned**, Lena; although we were then ready for kids. It's not that we put it off, **we were ready** and Trudy obviously went off the pill, things like that, and, ja, Lena was conceived. I was chuffed. I was chuffed. [Inaudible] Ooh, I was crazy when I heard that because I LOVE kids, ja, I REALLY love kids and wanting to have kids of my own. [...] And then Lena came **without us even talking about it**, because I was (.)well, **we DID plan it** and Trudy went off, as you said, **she went off the pill**. So **it was a planned [birth]**.

"Planning", as these extracts show, is construed as active, structured, and, importantly, entailing overt discussion, especially with regard to timing. However, the difficulty for these participants is that this (quite restricted) idea of family planning does not align with their own experiences which centre on emotion rather than rationality, tacit or limited communication, possibly even restricted to the discussion of contraceptive measures only. According to the family planning script, people make decisions about parenthood based on their fertility preferences in relation to available resources, and a certain amount of calculation is envisaged. In addition, some kind of negotiation and discussion between partners is envisaged. Decision-making is more or less active. There is no space in this script for leaving reproduction to chance or allowing it to unfold "naturally" within the couple context. Hence, the scenario of automatic childbearing, which these extracts evoke, is precluded by the family planning script. The troublesome position that this leaves a speaker in can be seen in extract 20 where Elias confesses that his daughter "was actually not planned" and his subsequent repair work. Extract 20 shows how many of the participants circled around this particular rendition of decision-making given by the family planning script, often contradicting themselves. According to the family planning script, Elias could not say that his child's birth was planned, but at the same time he attempts to show that it was not unintended. Similarly, in extract 19 André stresses that his son's birth was not related to "a slip up".

In order to rectify this quandary, both of the speakers above highlight two interrelated aspects that point to intention behind their behaviour and thereby construe their children's births as planned, *viz.*, wanting to have children (the "wantedness" of the pregnancy) and the discontinuation of contraception. This is summed up by the comment in extract 19, **"**Planned in the sense of we would like to have a child, stop that [contraception] and it actually happened very quickly." This is also evident in extract 20 as the narrator points out that both partners wanted to have children, were "ready" to do so and were pleased by the pregnancy. It is the stoppage of contraception that allows him to retract his original statement and to conclude that this had in fact been a "planned birth". These discursive tactics were commonly used by parent participants.

The difficulty for the participants then was to relate their experiences entirely in terms of rational choice. As Fennel (2006) notes, reproductive decisions may entail a complex mix of active and passive decisions in relation to sex, fertility preferences and contraception. Consequently, pinpointing the discontinuation of contraception

159

as indicating the "decision" to have children, a recurring feature in the talk of older participants, may signify a concrete action or choice in an otherwise passive or nebulous process. What was evident was the way in which the picture of rational planning was undercut by participants' claims that their children were planned *despite* the lack of overt or explicit discussion. For instance, in the extracts above, both of the narrators describe the lack of overt verbal communication. André cannot recall discussion and Elias states that there was none; though both assert that the children were not unplanned and base this on a passive decision-making model in which there is the tacit signalling of intention, usually through the stopping of contraceptive measures. For the most part, participants did not elaborate on how the stopping of contraception was initiated or negotiated. Men in particular gave no details, rather giving the impression of an harmonious decision.

There were some instances where a few older women addressed the topic of contraceptive decision-making. This issue is raised by Lettie in the extract below.

Extract 21

Lettie (F1): I think with the Afrikaans men, there is a bigger issue with vasectomies [than English men]. I see it with my brother. He doesn't want to go. A couple of Afrikaans men that I know that you speak to and they say, "No, it's not my responsibility" […] I think that [with] Afrikaans men it's probably very different [to English men]. The family planning was, and also the use of contraceptives, was very much the woman's issue. That's her problem.

This gendered positioning of women as responsible for family planning appeared to be related to the widespread usage of hormonal contraception (almost all older participants reported that they or their partners had used "the pill") as well as the designation of contraception as a woman's "problem". Although Lettie was more critical of Afrikaner men in this regard, other older women appeared to accept their role of being responsible for contraception. It was drawn on to justify the lack of direct couple communication between partners. It is possible to see that it is Afrikaans men specifically who are depicted as relegating the "responsibility" or "problem" of contraception to women. In this regard, many of the participants (men included) not only mentioned Afrikaner conservatism as a factor, but specifically singled out (older) Afrikaans men as the conservative ones who treated reproductive matters as a "woman's issue", especially birth control.

In the following extract Maria, the youngest participant in this cohort, explicitly addressed the issue, adopting a relatively uncritical position and attempting to rationalise non-discussion.

Extract 22

Maria (F1): We grew up as Afrikaans, traditional, you know, in our families it's not, **in those days**, in my days, it wasn't very **normal** for a mother and a daughter to sit and talk about these things. You accidentally hear. So we're quite shy about these things. It's not that we sit and say, "OK this is how it happens and on day this you [and] this", because we also didn't have problems so it was very natural. [...] We didn't even (.) this is very personal, we didn't even before we got married say, "Okay, are you on the pill? Or are we using this?" That's just not how we are. It's sort of the (.) That's how I felt and that's (.) I think, how he understood it, is that it's my responsibility and if I felt that it wasn't then I should have told him. Still it was **even worse** in **our mothers' days**. But the Afrikaners are very shy and not so open about things. I don't know now, but I know in my days when I was a teenager it definitely

wasn't like that, also, with my mom being much older. So we never sat and spoke about it, you know, the technical side of things.

Tracy: So, is the assumption that [...] if there's a problem, [then] you'll tell him?

Maria: Exactly. Absolutely. Exactly. Males are like that. I mean, if you want him to take the rubbish bags out, ask him. [Laughter] [...] Your partner, but anybody for that matter, if you want things [to be] done, just ask them.

In this extract Maria cites her conservative Afrikaans upbringing and generational norms of secrecy and silence with regard to sex and reproduction as the reason that she and her partner never discussed their contraceptive preferences. Interestingly, her indirect and euphemistic references to sexual matters as "these things" and "you know, the technical side of things" echoes this taboo. This is reinforced by the speaker's comment that the information she is about to share "is very personal". This allusion to the personal nature of her disclosure could also point to her embarrassment at this inhibition. This suggests an awareness of the speaker of the "correct" or desirable response and her deviation from the family planning script, which prescribes open communication. Rather than challenge this (and, per implication, me), Maria engages in some rhetorical work in order to repair the trouble entailed in the position of non-adherent.

Maria's justification rests on the fact that Afrikaners are "shy", which is a less condemning than "conservative" or "prudish" and might possibly even elicit sympathy. Once again, the narrator minimises the aspect of choice and positions herself as passive and not knowing any better, but simply doing what was required of her. In addition, she defends traditional gender norms, which allocate reproductive issues to women, by emphasising her willing compliance with the "arrangement" as well as the possibility for her to voice her dissatisfaction. However, she is not complying with an arrangement made overtly between the partners, but rather with a tacit, non-verbal understanding which is based on the assumption that she "was on the pill". In her response to my questioning, stereotypical gender constructions ("males are like that") are drawn on to justify the assumption that she would speak up if she had a problem with this tacit "arrangement". Other research also indicates that contraception is widely considered to be a woman's responsibility (e.g., Gipson & Hindin, 2007; Mankayi, 2009; Ndidna, 2007).

Of course, it is not the truthfulness of the participants' accounts that is at issue, but rather the way that participants struggled to reconcile their own experience with the ideal rational planning model. This suggests that this model had little bearing on their actual lives. Moreover, in the descriptions of pregnancies as "planned" there was also the intertwining of passive decision-making; for instance, participants do not report that a particular time frame was decided upon, but rather "deciding" to stop contraception and then simply allowing things to run their course. Hence, it was possible to see traces of a competing script portrayed in popular culture and social norms that encourage passive decision-making, these included ideals of love, spontaneity and romance. For example, both participants above mention the notion that children should be

"conceived out of love" (extract 19). As I shall show in the following section, this construction ran counter to the rational decision-making model. In the following section I consider discursive resources that allowed for the construction of counter narratives to the "official" narrative that is centred on "choice".

4. COUNTER NARRATIVES: REMOVING PARENTHOOD FROM THE REALM OF CHOICE

Owing to the constraint of the planning script and its concomitant notion of "choice", the participants were obliged to engage with this discursive resource and to speak in terms of choice. This entailed attempting to "story" their own experiences or preferences in these terms, as I showed in the previous section, as well as either talking around or against the notion of "choice". That is, they could attempt to explain or justify their deviation from the planning script when accounting for their own experiences and thoughts around parenthood, as was most often the case. In this section I shall discuss various common explanatory or justificatory discursive tactics that were resourced by two central and inter-connected scripts, *viz.,* the romance/love script and the canonical couple narrative. As I shall show, what these tactics have in common is that they remove parenthood from the realm of choice to some extent and therefore oppose the family planning script.

4.1. The romance/love script

In contradistinction to the descriptions of "planning", the participants commonly described a situation where they prefer to "go with the flow". Fennel (2006) refers to this common style of decision-making as "passive" in that it stands in contrast to the ideal type of "active decision-making". In this rendition of passive decision-making, people neither reflect on their motivations and desires to become parents, nor explicitly communicate these to their partner. This was prominent in the talk of cohort one and is exemplified by Thuis's statement that having children "just sort of happened organically" for him and his partner. The hallmark of this iconic script is spontaneity, and it is informed by a complex array of socio-cultural norms about passion, romance and gender roles that actively discourage rational or calculated action including communication and collaboration at the couple level (Fennel, 2006). Fennel (2006) asserts that such beliefs are tied to negotiation within the sexual relationship and promote passive decision-making within this context as well as resulting in overall less active fertility decision-making. The following extracts illustrate this more fully.

> **Extract 23**
> Thuis (M1): It was an **instinctive** thing that we happened to just, sort of, "click" and do it together. There wasn't any pressure from any side or conflict about that at all. Later on when it comes to dealing with things like discipline and so on then you start having disagreements about exactly how […] to parent [...] but, the decision to have children that **sort of just happened** for the two of us together.

> **Extract 24**

| Maria (F1): | The main thing is that we knew up front exactly how we were and what we were looking for. […] **We didn't even have to ask each other.** |

Extract25

| Stefanus (M1): | Actually **we didn't discuss it**. [We didn't discuss it. We just got married. We love each other. We both love children, but we didn't decide how many children we would have. As I said, after we were married we used contraception and at a point **we** said, "No, this is a burden, come let's leave it" and then it happened.]**[…] Let it take its course and see what happens**. |

In these extracts the speakers describe the lack of explicit, verbal communication around reproduction, specifically with regard to having the first child. This is expressed as leaving the matter to chance. This construal, like the reference to having children as "an instinctive thing", is in opposition to the notions of rationality supported by the rational planning model.

It is possible to see how the couple is foregrounded in these extracts as the participants engage in "Oneness talk" (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004, p. 176). Speaking in terms of "we" and "us", married couples represented the couple relationship as one of unity with regard to parenthood decision-making. This is especially evident in extract 25, for instance, where Stefanus states that "we said" that contraception should be stopped. This gives the impression of consensus, but also makes it unclear as to how this decision was arrived at (especially since he begins by stating that there was no discussion around reproduction) or if there was any negotiation entered into or dispute. In the main, the construal of their (non)decision-making experience was conflict-free. Participants from cohort one used terms and metaphors that described commonality, like in extract 23 where the participant refers to "click" of harmonious decision-making, and they emphasised mutual agreement, including the lack of conflict, about whether to have children or not. Notably, in extract 24 and 25 the speakers mention some sort of tacit understanding or indication of intentions. Maria mentions knowing one another's fertility preferences and Stefanus highlights the cessation of contraceptive measures as a sign of implicit agreement. What is not mentioned in this excerpt is that his partner actually struggled to conceive, so that the decision to forgo the "burden" of contraception may have been related to the perception that is was an unnecessary complication. However, this is omitted here, possibly to emphasise consensus between the partners in that the stoppage of contraception signals the acceptance of possible pregnancy, however slight or unlikely the chances of conception.

However, Fennel (2006) points out that the heterosexual couple context complicates the strict demarcation between active and passive decision-making. Since there are always at least two people who must make decisions, it could be that one partner is passive while the other active. Moreover, the strong effect that partners have on fertility preferences—as well as how this effect is often related to gendered power differences that determine whose preferences are actualised—has been well-documented (e.g., Agrillo & Nellini, 2008; Blanc, 2001; Chapagain, 2006; Ipas, 2009). Therefore, "Oneness talk" may actually serve to mask

inequity and disagreement so that couples live up to the romantic ideal of harmonious agreement that results in spontaneous or automatic childbearing. "Oneness talk" also serves to conceal the specifics of how discussions and negotiations occurred. This plays a role in obscuring the involvement, or lack thereof, of each partner. So, not only does this particular script re-construe parenthood as having little to do with "planning" or "choosing", but it also may serve the function of masking the lack of involvement of particular partners. In light of the fact that passive decision-making is encouraged by socio-cultural beliefs regarding passion, romance, and gender roles (Fennel, 2006), it may very well be that it is male passivity that is concealed.

The preference for a scenario of automatic childbearing also featured as ideal in the narratives of the cohort two. In fact, the younger people's narratives often contained highly idealised and romantic portrayals of parenthood decision-making in which there was generally as a preference for spontaneity and (passive) decision-making that involves minimal discussion and negotiation, as shown in the following extracts.

Extract 26
Mariska (F2):   I think I'm just **leaving it up to fate**. Hopefully one day he'll say to me, "Oh baby, don't you feel like having kids?" And then I'll be like, "Yes, only two." And then **it just happens**. […] as opposed to it being like, "I really want to have kids" "Well, I'm not ready yet" and then it being this constant battle. I really hope I'm not in that position but, I think, anything else we could negotiate around.

Extract 27
Franco (M2):   I've come to think about how babies SHOULD be made, or should come into being, quite a bit differently. And that only happened recently. Um, and this is maybe, this is definitely the **romantic** in me speaking [laughter]. I don't think it ever happens like that, but the way I would like it to happen for ME is, um, well if you get together with someone you, obviously, you like her and you wanna be with her and you phone her and later you want to hold her hand and then kiss her . . . [laugh] [...]. OK initially it's just attraction, but later on you, well I hope this is how it goes, that the longer you are with someone the deeper your love for that person grows. And I want then my kiddies to be **a result of that love**. I want to come to a place where I can't express my love for the women any more. Saying it doesn't work. Having sex doesn't work—I mean it still works to some extent, but I want to express it more. And then… so then **my child should be an overflow of my love for my partner**. So that's where I see kiddies should come from and that's why I can't say to the girl before I get married that I'm gonna have kids or not because I'm not sure if I'm gonna reach that place. See, how I (.) how I see it really happening is that, and I mean this will never happen because you need to discuss it because there are practical issues, but just in my **romantic** world that doesn't really exist it should happen… Ideally the man and the woman should sort of **at the same time grow to this point** and then it should just be, like, a **spontaneous expression of love** and then you have sex without the usual kind of…

Extract 28
Dawid (M2):   I don't know, in some ways, perhaps just intellectually, I sort of liked the idea of it happening from a mistake. [Laughs] […] I mean just because, I think, we tend to think anyway that we have way to much control over what happens in our life and that is a lie most of the time. So, the idea of it **just happening** and then you have to deal with it is sort of appealing.

All these extracts depict automatic childbearing as most ideal. In extracts 26 and 27 the rational family planning model is rejected in favour of passive parenthood decision-making that entails minimal (or no) discussion and a lack of deliberate planning. Instead, the narrators prefer a "romantic" scenario in which childbearing occurs spontaneously. In extract 28 Dawid rejects the notion of planning altogether. His

reference to "a mistake" links automatic childbearing with unintended pregnancy, calling into question the rational family planning model. Of course it is somewhat unusual to describe an unplanned pregnancy so positively and the speaker does do some rhetorical work around this as he constructs his preference for such an event as a more honest or realistic state of affairs.

In extracts 26 and 27 parenthood is described as an inevitable endpoint of the natural progression of the couple relationship.   This is especially evident in extract 27 in which having one's first child occurs as the culmination of a process of the unfolding of the heterosexual union as progressing through various stages or levels of growing intimacy. Although his final statement trails off, it could logically be finished with the words "precautions" or "contraception". This echoes the older participants' talk of engaging in sexual intercourse *sans* contraception as signalling a non-verbal, tacit decision-making or agreement to conceive. Therefore, the ideal, as these descriptions show, was that both partners simultaneously reach a point in their lives at which they mutually desire to have children and/or feel "ready" to become a parent.

Given that the participants from cohort two were not constrained by the "truth factor" in the same way as those from cohort one, they were able to adopt various positions more freely than their older counterparts according to the demands of the interview context. At times, they could re-cite the planning script to evoke the socially sanctioned and culturally meaningful portrayal of reproductive decisions as appropriately situated within the rational process of decision-making. For example, Anel stated that, "A lot of people have children I think for the wrong reasons and without planning it and for me it's a very structured idea of having children". As a consequence, the participants' talk centred on discussing and negotiating issues related to fertility.

Extract 29

Jakobus (M2):   It would definitely be a discussion. I think the opinion of the girl, but I 'm sure if my taste is ok then the girl I have would also be pretty outspoken about such an issue. First, we have to get married, I mean, that's a given. But when we decide such a thing, ja, it'll probably take the form of a discussion and we'll probably be the shortest discussion ever, you know: "Do you want a child?" "Ja." "OK."

Notice how within the context of heterosexual coupledom the "decision" to have a child is represented as uncomplicated and consensus is emphasised. Although descriptions such as this one lacked specificity, they are characterised by mutuality or consensual, *verbal* decision-making. At other times, the younger participants could recite the romance/spontaneity script and invoke popular ideals about romance, passion, and spontaneity. In such renditions, the partners' love for one another—and/or that conception was described as occurring in the context of a loving, conjugal relationship—signals that a child is wanted and, moreover, for the "right" reasons.

As a result, the younger participants sometimes experienced an ideological dilemma between the competing ideals of the love/romance script and the family planning script, both of which are powerful in their own right

within the broader discursive milieu and potentially allow for the negotiation of certain socially desirable positions. Of course, within the immediate discursive setting of the interview, as in the interviews with older participants, the planning script still often carried more weight. This meant that the rhetorical work that participants engaged in to repair the trouble of ideological dilemmas often entailed talking against or around the notion of planning. This is illustrated by the extract below which follows a somewhat lengthy exchange between Franco and me in which we collaboratively tried to make sense of his statement that he would like his child to be the result of "an overflow of love" for his partner. It is possible to see that there is an awareness of the potential trouble entailed by the love/romance script.

Extract 30

Franco (M2):   It's (.) um (.) It's, I dunno it's something like "I love you so much that I want to…" I can't explain it any better. I can't think. "I love you so much that, sort've (.) I wanna show you?" But not, here's the baby this is evidence. It's not that either. […] See how I, how I see it really happening is that, and I mean this will never happen because you need to discuss it because there are practical issues, but just in my **romantic** world that doesn't really exist it should happen… Ideally the man and the woman should sort of at the same time grow to this point and then it should just be, like, a **spontaneous expression of love** and then you have sex without the usual kind of... So (.) that's ideally how I'd like it to be. Obviously it won't be that way so I still don't want it to be "OK let's discuss having a baby now" because that would detract from my romantic picture. [Laugh] But obviously you need to because there is finances and stuff, and one's health and things like that. So, I guess you can say it a symbolic kind of thing.

It is evident that Franco is torn between the planning script and the romance/love script. He struggles to give a rational or logical explanation and he grapples with the idea of "the baby [as] evidence" of his love for his partner, ultimately resisting this construction. The romance/love script supports popular and powerful beliefs about the acceptable reasons/motivations for having children that he describes as appealing and he disputes the idea that "planning" indicates that a pregnancy is wanted (i.e., a planned child is a wanted child). Instead he maintains that unspoken consensus in the context of a loving marital relationship indicates that a child is desired. This runs counter to the ideals of the planning script, which offer positive positions of responsibility, especially in terms of practically considering the child's needs. Franco resolves the dilemma by acknowledging that his ideal is unrealistic and impractical. He juxtaposes "reality" and fantasy. By constructing his ideal as a fantasy, he resists undesirable positioning as irresponsible or reckless, since he is aware of the "practical issues" and, by implication, the responsibilities entailed by these. He therefore resolves the dilemma to a degree by retaining the romantic/spontaneous scenario as the ideal.

Like Franco, other younger participants often referred to active planning as a necessity—and specifically entailing explicit discussion—as related to the practicalities of real life or as arising due to circumstantial difficulties (e.g., infertility or conflict) or financial and other practical concerns that require discussion. In this way they could position themselves as responsible and a potentially "good" parent who considers their potential child's needs. The implication is, therefore, that open communication is either only necessary in

166

certain circumstances where the normal course of events does not unfold or a "necessary evil" (as in extract 12 above). In this manner, lip service is paid to the planning script while the romance/love script is clearly preferred. The large degree to which participants talked against rational planning indicates that the romance/love script still held some appeal and interactive usefulness for them, despite the power of the family planning script in this discursive setting.

This script of romantic love therefore allowed participants to cast passive or non-planning as a positive and desirable, rather than associating it with irresponsibility or immaturity. The extent to which this script acted as a competing or counter narrative is suggested not only by its widespread usage, but also the ways that it allowed participants to talk against the family planning model and, in many cases, to actively and overtly denigrate this model. Drawing on popular ideals of spontaneity, romance and love offered a way of opposing the planning script and/or legitimising deviations from the rational planning model. For instance, Thuis remarked, "I do have a couple of friends who did go about it a little bit more scientifically". Others, like André, portrayed active planning as unrealistic or even humorous, for example, he stated, "I cannot recall that we sat down and we had like a spread sheet and we said, 'Right, is the house big enough?'" The denigration of the rational planning model and positioning those who actively plan their reproduction in various less positive ways allowed participants (particularly those who were older) to save face. They could explain or justify their less active decision-making in such a way that mitigated the potentially troubled positions of irresponsibility, impulsivity, negligence or recklessness in relation to procreation. These participants were also able to negotiate alternative socially desirable positions. Rijken and Knijn (2008) also report that their participants made "negative references" (p. 784) to those who plan parenthood.

The following excerpts illustrate how active planning was disparaged so that the speakers could negotiate relatively desirable positions.

> ***Extract* 31**
> Lettie (F1):   But many people from my generation, most of them, had their kids in their twenties. The ones that had them in their 30s are very few and far between, that made a conscious decision to have them in their 30s. That was more planned I think than the lot of us that had our kids in our 20s. I think it was more spontaneous. It wasn't, "OK now we're gonna try and have a baby". I think it's [now] more **scientific** and more **mechanical** the whole pregnancy issue and trying to fall pregnant and all of that.
>
> ***Extract*32**
> Maria (F1):   It was just a natural thing. We didn't really sit and plan anything or look at the moon and the stars and whatever. […] We didn't sit and plan and take the diary and say I want this or I want a girl or I want a boy. **Nature must take its course** and that's just how it was. I also had a different way of (.) you get people who are very into **working according to the book**, but I think because I'm very independent and mature I wasn't worried so much about "What does the book say?"

In the first extract the conscious, rational or deliberate choice to reproduce is described as "scientific" and "mechanical". Hence, active decision-making is construed as a cold and calculating process and those who

actively plan to have children may be negatively positioned as lacking emotion, especially that of (all-important) love. In addition, this is presented as a contemporary phenomenon.   Speaking as a representative of her generation ("a lot of us") Lettie positions herself both as a product of her time (as in the earlier discursive tactic about Afrikaner culture) and also as the norm. Speaking as a member of a collective, rather than as an individual, lends the speaker a more authoritative voice. In contrast, the reference to those who plan as "very few and far between" represents such individuals as the exception. Adopting this discursive tactic the speaker is able to side-step potential censure, particularly legitimating her own early and unintended pregnancy.

Similarly, the narrator in extract 32 contrasts the spontaneity of the "natural" process of family formation—described as letting "nature do its thing"—with the inflexibility of active decision-making/planning, which is said to be "working according to the book". Letting nature take its course was a common theme, which came up quite frequently, in Maria's narrative in particular, and was used to justify passive decision-making. In this tactic, active planning can be associated with interfering, inauthenticity, unnaturalness, and so on. The use of hyperbolic language reinforces the construction of active decision-making as ridiculous and over-controlling. Those who do "work according to the book" are implicitly associated with lack of independence and immaturity.   Such constructions of active, conscious decision-making depict the process as somewhat ludicrous, as well as emotionless, perfunctory, and even unnatural. Participants were able to explain the lack of premeditation and/or the failure to make an active, rational choice to have a child and to re-cite this powerful resource to re/position themselves favourably.

In contrast to this construction of active planning as calculated, "scientific", and emotionless was the widespread association of automatic childbearing/passive decision-making with romance and love. In this rendition, the child is seen as an "expression" of a couple's love for one another. For instance, Jakobus described childbearing as *"the culmination of [a couple's] love for each other"* and "the supreme result of our undying love".   In this respect, participants maintained that children should be born out of love and desired for their intrinsic worth, for their own sake. This was depicted as the appropriate incentive for parenthood. Love and romance were highlighted in this way of speaking and childbearing was associated with passion and spontaneity. Premeditated thought or discussion was seen as detracting from this and calling into question the "wantedness" of the child. This is evident in the following extract.

Extract 33

Jakobus (M2):   But when we decide such a thing, ja, it'll probably take the form of a discussion and we'll probably be the shortest discussion ever, you know: "Do you want a child?" "Ja." "OK." [...]This is after we're married. Because I believe we make our plans and then having a child would just come in with these plans, it should. We should have plans that just manifest and having a child should be at the centre and then all the other plans should manifest around that. […] And that's why, you know, it would be the shortest discussion, you know, because she would be comfortable enough to say, "OK", you

know, "this should be the time it should happen". You, know we just come to an agreement. You know it should just be like that.

Although Jakobus asserts that decision-making will "take the form of a discussion", he also describes it as "the shortest discussion ever". This description suggests that the discussion of fertility preferences is seen as largely unnecessary or merely a formality. It appears as though Jakobus may be referring to a discussion of timing, a discussion, moreover, which his partner is described as initiating. Therefore, it appears that the responsibility for family planning discussion is assigned to his partner (a common tactic, which I discuss later in this chapter). The implication is that there simply is not much to talk about, beyond timing. Hence, childbearing is construed as more or less a non-choice as with the cohort one who viewed childbearing as a matter of "when" rather than "if"—a construction indicative of passive decision-making. Moreover, this description shows that the lack of conflict was seen as an ideal.

In this way, participants could justify their own passive decision-making and/or lack of reflection on the "choice" to become a parent. The heterosexual couple is central in this script, for it is within the couple context that it is possible to leave things to chance and "go with the flow". (I discuss this more fully in the following chapter.) The centrality of the heterosexual couple is also evident in the following discursive resource, and therefore it overlaps with the romance/love script to some degree. However, as I shall show, the next discursive resource functions as a canonical narrative as it outlines a particular normative sequence of events according to expected developmental stages, one of which is parenthood.

4.2. The canonical couple narrative

This canonical narrative describes the life trajectory which is seen as typical for heterosexual adults (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). It is a well-established heteronormative cultural storyline that provides the recognisable "sequence of love, courtship, marriage, parenthood and continuing coupledom" (Reynolds & Taylor, 2004, p. 199). According to this script, one progresses logically through these various stages associated with the heterosexual couple and family toward maturity. People are therefore depicted as contending with universal stages of development, usually designated as courtship, early marriage or "newlyweds", parenthood, family with adolescents, "empty nest", retirement and old age. As such, it is informed by the assumption that a "normal" life progresses through these stages, therefore reflecting a developmental model of identity that derives from psychological conceptualisations (particularly Eriksonian theory). Such conceptualisations have saturated popular understandings of the life course becoming a commonsensical resource for speakers to re-cite (Reynolds & Taylor, 2004). This canonical narrative is evident in the extracts below.

Extract 34

Esmé: (F1):   You get married and then the next step is you have children [...] Ja, I suppose, getting married, like I said to you, that was the first step and so now the next step is to have children. When and how and where? Ja, it was just the next step.

Extract 35

Maria (F1):   It's like when you're young and you're newly married, you'll see, you know, you go through **stages**. It's 21sts, then it's engagement parties, then it's weddings, and kitchen teas and then it's stork teas.

Extract 36

Johann: (M2):   Now, I've got engaged and I'm getting married, that's **the next step**. The norm is the very next step would be to have kids, but I'm not gonna. My very next step is not gonna be kids (.) It's gonna be to get everything ready for BEFORE that happens. [...] it's like **certain steps I have to take**, it's like certain **steps** in life, I have to do those **steps** before [having a child]. If I have a kid before that, before I've finished before I've finished all those **steps**, then I'm just gonna move it on a little bit and get ready, 'cause I mean, you've still got nine months to get ready, um, I don't wanna rush.

These extracts show how parenthood is described as a normal, and therefore expected, "step" or "stage" in a particular sequence of events. Extract 34 reflects the taken for granted nature of having children as "just the next step" and possibly not reflected upon. Similarly extract 35 shows how this standard life trajectory is assumed to be the path that I myself will take as Maria says "you'll see". Johann shows as awareness of this life trajectory as being "the norm" and positions himself as agentic, rather than simply going along with what is expected, unlike Esmé. Nevertheless, though he maintains that he will delay parenthood until he is "ready", he still maintains that there are "certain steps in life" that must be taken in a particular order.

The canonical couple narrative provided a familiar and recognisable story line and this may be the reason that it was drawn on by so many. Nearly all of the older participants began by situating childbearing within the marital relationship, using their courtship, engagement or marriage as a starting point for their account. Those who did not begin in this way inevitably drew on the canonical couple narrative elsewhere in their account. The dominance of this canonical narrative was shown by the fact that every participant in the study mobilises, or talks against it, at some point. Therefore, at the same time as what this canonical narrative provided a familiar resource, it also limited speakers in terms of what kind of stories could be told. The possibility of crafting a legitimate and recognisable alternative life story (i.e., one that deviates from the canonical heteronormative life course narrative) was therefore also virtually impossible. Consequently, those minority non-conformists had to construct their accounts on the terms of the dominant narratives. One might then also consider Lettie's statement in extract that her story is a "different story" in light of her deviation from the acceptable life course since her first pregnancy occurred before marriage. She describes her experience as follows: "Well, it was a helluva surprise because we weren't married yet . . . We got married when I was, I think, four months pregnant, but you couldn't see anything."

Constructing parenthood as natural stage, the participants harnessed "the recognizable naturalness" (Reynolds & Taylor, 2004, p. 206) of the culturally established life course in order to explain the lack of conscious

reflection on having children and/or the failure to make a rational choice. Older participants appeared to rely on its recognisability in order to answer my explicit questioning of behaviour that would ordinarily be considered normal and natural. This was epitomised by the following extract.

Extract 37

Susanna (F1):   Long, long time ago in 1980 [laugh]… We got married in 1982. We met in '80 and we were married in 1982, October '82. It's a long time ago, but I think, at that time I was 25 when I got married so I didn't want to wait too long before I had my first child. Also we didn't want to just get married and straight away have a baby. You want to have some time first, adapting your two minds, two people in the same house. So we were married about a year and then we said, "OK, let's decide." I was on the pill at that time. I started taking it when we got married, but it was a light one. Oh shucks I can't remember the name of the thing. Anyway, it was not a heavy pill. So almost within two three months I fell pregnant. John was born in July '88. No, I'm lying. Ian was '84, first *boytjie*, '84. Then we had John and (.) I'm trying to think now (.) Then you sort of want to know about what we did and whatever with raising the child or was it basically just deciding about having the baby and that kind of thing?

This extract occurred at the beginning of the interview. It begins in classic storytelling/fairy tale format and appears to encapsulate Susanna's entire story. By the end of the excerpt she seems to have told her entire story and struggles to think of what to add, as indicated by her pause followed by "I'm trying to think now". The final question seems to indicate uncertainty about what else to say. This extract is illustrative of a pattern of responses. Participants would begin by telling a similar version if the story above and then signal the "end of the story" by saying something to the effect of "and that was it" (Esmé) or "and that's basically it" (Maria) or be at a loss of what else to add, asking "So, ja, what more can I tell you?" (André) or "What else?" (Koos). This can be read as related to the constraint imposed on narration by the language of choice, as discussed in the previous chapter, and the difficulty that this creates in constructing the sort of account that I seemed to be seeking, that is, one structured around conscious reflection and active decision-making.

A prominent feature of the talk was reference to stages or steps in the life path. Parenthood was construed as a significant stage in the "normal" life path. The notion of "naturalness" was repeatedly evoked by parent participants when explaining why they had not consciously reflected upon or made an obviously deliberate decision to become a parent, as seen in the following extracts.

Extract 38

Koos (M1):   I think for me it was (.) it's like (.) it's a **natural** thing. If you get married then you have kids. It's not that you decide "I want to be a dad." You accept that that is the life. You grow up, do whatever studies you want to do, then you get a partner somehow and get married eventually and then you start with the family. That is **natural**, so there's no decision. Of course, before you get married, we did discuss our views. Before we got married we discussed whether we would be interested in having kids. If she had said, "No, I never want to have kids" it would probably be difficult for me. I won't say I wouldn't have married, I'm not sure.

Extract 39

André (M1):   I think because we knew each other for so long prior to us getting married, I think it was a **natural** progression, totally. We literally grew up together, from (.) being 10 years of age, right through. I can imagine we spoke about it when we were kids.

Extract 40

Maria (F1):	So when we got married finally, we met in ((counts)) '93 and in '96 we got married, '97... we just knew that we didn't want to wait long. I said I want my kids before I'm 30 and I think I was 27 and he was 26 when the first one was born. So really I think it was just a **natural** thing. We met each other, we've been together, we got married, '96 married, '97 fell pregnant, '98 the first one was born. It was just a **natural** thing.

In all of these extracts the speakers more or less explicitly denounce choice as implicated in childbearing. Instead, the narrators overtly refer to childbearing as a natural phase of life and as a non-decision. This is especially clear in extract 38 in which childbearing is construed as the inevitable end point of the normal life trajectory. This extract also highlights the idea of logical progression in the description of the various "normal" developmental stages focused on marriage and childbearing, particularly the repeated use of the conjunction "then". The use of the term "the family" as opposed to "a family" or "your family" depersonalises it (Koos has been using personal pronouns throughout) and invokes the nuclear heterosexual family as a universal ideal. Therefore, the emphasis on childbearing as "natural" constructs it as something "normal", to be expected and spontaneous and, in this way, the assumption of automatic childbearing was normalised.

Accordingly, the narrators positioned themselves as "normal" in that they comply with the expected trajectory of the heterosexual life course. Therefore, this discursive tactic offered speakers a way of "saving face" by creating a way to negotiate another positive, relatively powerful, position. Those who deviate from this particular model may potentially be positioned as "unnatural" or abnormal. Deliberate non-conformists could also be positioned as exceptions to the norm, and even trouble makers. In extract 38, for instance, this particular model of the life course is presented as one that a person must "accept" and, possibly not even question. Those who question the norm could be construed as not accepting "that this is life" and, consequently, could also be positioned as trouble makers. (See Chapter 9 for a discussion on such positioning tactics.)

Significantly, the reference to naturalness was not to childbearing as instinctive or an innate capacity, but rather to its particular place in the life course. This is most apparent in extract 38 where the speaker constructs childbearing as an inevitable outcome of marriage ("If you get married then you have kids"). In particular, participants constructed parenthood as a logical consequence or outcome of heterosexual marriage. One older participant maintained, for instance, that he saw having children as "just part of the process of marriage and life and going through the process" (Gerhardt). As the following extract shows childbearing was described as following logically on from marriage as "the next step".

Extract 41

Esmé (F1):	Well, it's a case of getting married and then deciding it's, because [of] being in teaching, (.) deciding **it's time to start a family**. I do think if Dawid was a girl there wouldn't have been a third one. That's it. Also, you know, it was always just important for me that the kids grow up as friends. That is why in a sense I spaced them in that way, that they can sort of be close to each other and not necessarily look after each other because they were all more or less the same age, but just so that they can be

friends. And that was it. [...] I suppose, getting married, like I said to you, that was the first step and so now the next step is to have children. **When and how and where?**

Esmé alludes to a particular order of events given by the normal heterosexual life course so that once one has taken the "first step" of marriage having children inevitably follows as the "next step". This extract is another example of how the topic was seen as "unstoryworthy" and apart from signalling the topic as a non-subject (as in, there is nothing really to tell), phrases such as "and that's it" or "that was it" underline the lack of choice or deliberation and intimate that the process was uncomplicated and effortless. Notice that Esmé uses the word "deciding" (twice), this decision is related to the timing of parenthood—which she reiterates at the end as she states "when and how and where?" The phrase "it's time to start a family" could imply conscious deliberation on Esmé's part to co-ordinate her teaching career with having children, but it could also point to social expectations around the appropriate timing of parenthood. This is supported by the construction of parenthood as "the next step" after marriage. According to this construction, the "choice" to become a parent is almost implied by the prior choice of marriage. Simply put, having a child is to be expected once one gets married. As a consequence, there is no need for conscious deliberation and, importantly, overt discussion or decision-making between partners. By the same token, it was not possible to explore the matter on my terms, that is, in terms of "choice" and conscious, rational "decision-making" or "planning".

The younger participants' narratives were also peppered with allusions to the normative life course of heterosexual adulthood. For example, in assertions such as: "I want to be a parent. I think it's life. [Laugh] Ja, [to] have a few kids. [...] You start wanting, I mean, you know, [to] have kids and get married. Well, obviously get married and THEN have kids [laughs]." (Elize) and "It's part of life. It's part of growing up" (Johann). Hence, parenthood was constructed as both natural and inevitable. It was often described as a life stage and therefore depicted as a milestone in a relationship and frequently associated with increasing maturity as in the following excerpts.

Extract 42

Riaan (M2): Also maybe if you get into (.) if you're married and you've got a settled job and stuff, for me, it's sort of a, it's probably the way I've grown up and stuff, it's sort of like **a natural progression**, that at some stage, someone, either both or one, the person is going to want to have a child. [...]Basically, once you're a parent you're **a proper adult**, fully-fledged. [Laughs] It's time to be an **adult**. Obviously mistakes happen, but I'd like to plan for it you know, when I'm in a committed relationship and I can provide for the family. What you'd like doesn't always work out that way, but that would be the ideal for me. Ja, once you're there it's time to take responsibility and **start acting like an adult**. That's my personal view.

Extract 43

Johann (M2): Now, I've got engaged and I'm getting married, that's **the next step**. The norm is the very **next step** would be to have kids, but I'm not gonna. My very **next step** is not gonna be kids (.) It's gonna be to get everything ready for BEFORE that happens. Um, then when everything's ready, then I'll do a moral inventory of myself and then see. [...] That's just to see if I'm mentally and physically and everything prepared for it, if I'm ready. 'Cause you can't just go [and] have kids, boom! [...] Many people just have kids and they're not, I've seen it, they're not ready for it. They don't know how to look after the kids or their moms are always there, running and on the phone. Okay, you obviously don't know everything. [Laughter] It's gonna be this big [inaudible]. It can't say why it's crying or

173

what's wrong so… But when you're ready, when I've done everything, it's like **certain steps I have to take**, it's like certain **steps** in life, I have to do those **steps** before. If I have a kid before that, before I've finished before I've finished all those **steps**, then I'm just gonna move it on a little bit and get ready. 'Cause I mean, you've still got nine months to get ready (.) um (.) **see I don't want to rush.**

In these extract both of the narrators construct having children as a natural and inevitable part of life, specifically for married people. Both of the speakers construct parenthood as a stage that most appropriately occurs *after* marriage. Riaan states that "mistakes happen" and expresses a preference for childbearing within a "committed relationship" and under certain conditions—this is "the ideal for [him]".Parenthood is construed as part of the progression of both the adult life path and the unfolding of the heterosexual marriage relationship. This is in line with broader social understandings of normal adulthood. As Mollen (2006) points out, "most developmental models include childbearing and rearing as normal components of adulthood" (p. 280) and it is evident that a developmental narrative interweaves their talk as the narrators refer to the "progression", stages and "steps" of their unfolding lives, suggesting that individual development follows the progression of the life course. According to this logic, as we see in extract 43, becoming a parent is constructed as a mark of maturity. That is, when one has a child one is considered to be a "fully-fledged" adult.

Both narrators also allude to maturity as a prerequisite for having children, along with marriage and financial stability or the ability to provide for the child. The allusion to "planning" therefore does not refer to the decision to have the child. Rather, as in extract 41, it refers to timing and conditions and these are dictated by the usual "steps" and "stages" of the heterosexual life course. Focusing on these aspects, especially in extract 43, allows a speaker to resist the passive positioning implied by the construction of automatic childbearing and potential trouble in the form of being positioned as irresponsible for not planning. Therefore, as with the older participants, the focus here is not on whether to have children but rather on the timing of parenthood, which is related to ideas about readiness and providing the ideal conditions for the child. Although the participants allude to the family planning script here, the usage of the notion of "planning" is limited since childbearing is ultimately still governed by the heteronormative life trajectory.

So, in cohort two having children, albeit under certain conditions, also featured largely as a given for married heterosexual adults. Of course, allusions to the child's needs and ideal conditions potentially censures very young people from becoming parents, because they are deemed "not ready". As extract 42 shows, the lack of readiness is associated with immaturity and inexperience. Similarly, the notion of children's needs may be harnessed to sanction childbearing under certain conditions only and thereby proscribe parenthood for certain individuals (Meyers, 2001). Morell (2000) asserts that politically powerful and institutionalised beliefs about who should become a parent and under what circumstances encourage parenthood in those who are "White", heterosexual, able-bodied, middle-class and wealthy, providing them with ever-expanding options and opportunities to become parents. In contrast, the desires to parent, and the actual parenting practices, of

those who are not privileged, are not similarly supported (Park, 2002). (I shall discuss this further in the Chapter 8 in which I look more closely at the containment of reproduction within the heterosexual marriage relationship.)

5. A SIGNIFICANT DISCURSIVE RESOURCE: THE CHILD-CENTRED DISCURSIVE SCRIPT

Allusion to children's needs—as just discussed—formed part of a powerful way of justifying particular arguments. The rhetoric of children's needs is embedded in an overarching discursive resource, the child-centred script, which was a significant and powerful discursive tool in that it could be mobilised to support various, even contradictory, discursive ends. As I discussed at the end of the previous section, it could be drawn upon to censure particular arrangements, like non-marital childbearing, but it was also drawn upon to support a range of scenarios, including both planning and non-planning, justifying postponing childbearing, and even "childfreeness". In order to achieve these various discursive purposes, speakers drew on a particular construction of the "sacralised child" in which children are discursively construed as priceless and their needs deemed to be paramount (Zelizer, 1985). I shall explicate this in this section.

Many participants highlighted the value of the child in their talk about parenthood decision-making. According to Hoffman and Hoffman (1973), "The value of children refers to the functions they serve or the needs they fulfil for parents" (cited in Nauk & Klaus, 2007, p. 488). As I discussed in Chapter 2, the value assigned to children is socio-culturally and historically variable (Nauk & Klaus, 2007). The extracts regarding automatic childbearing cited earlier (extracts 26 – 28) give some indication that the value assigned to children by the participants in this study was chiefly emotional and the children's worth was largely described as intrinsic. In these extracts the child is depicted as the culmination/fulfilment of the marital relationship and as wanted for its own sake, reflecting the dominant understanding of the emotionally priceless child. Hence, the child is purportedly desired in and of itself, the child itself is seen as valuable. The participants' reports of their reasons for wanting to have children, and the decisions they made in relation to this, time and time again, highlighted the intrinsic value of children. This is evidenced in extract 20 above where Elias states that he was motivated to become a parent by his love of children: "I REALLY love kids and [wanted] to have kids of my own". The following excerpts also illustrate this.

Extract 44
Mariska (F2): I used to want to have four and now I really think I only want to have two because of the living conditions here and financial stuff. I just really want to bring out the beauty and the creativity and the potential…I think children add a lot of colour and beauty and joy to people's lives. I think also, as parents, they're your personal delight. It's like a little part of who you are and just seeing how much, doing my teaching prac, just seeing how much amazingness is crammed into one little life.

Extract 45
Stefanus (M1): I wanted children because I loved children and that's part of the family for me. Now I have a bond. Even if I don't see them every day, I can talk with my children. I have photos of them and of my

grandchildren. I can phone them and they can phone me. [It brings a bond. It's wonderful, especially when you're older. [...]I love, as I say, I love children.

These extracts show how children were imbued with emotional value and intrinsic worth. Mariska describes children as something that provides satisfaction and enjoyment, a parent's "personal delight". Stefanus depicts a "close, intimate, emotional, life-long, bonded, and committed social relationship that contributes very directly to self-validation" (Nauk, 2007, p. 617). With very few exceptions, children were most often represented as infusing emotional value and significance into everyday life, offering meaning, companionship and warding off social isolation. This construction of children, according to Zelizer (1985),is rooted in a deeply middle class, contemporary understanding of childhood in which children are seen as emotionally priceless and invested with emotional and religious value. This construction of childhood arose at the start of the 20th century (mainly in the US and other western industrialized countries) as values of the child have shifted from economic worth to emotional pricelessness so that children have become sacred (i.e. invested with religious and sentimental meanings). The point, Meyer (2007) asserts, is not that children were not cared for prior to this or that they are now no longer economically useful, but rather "sacralization is a representative ideal referring to the child today being *valued exclusively* in emotional terms. This ideal includes a belief that economic and emotional values are incompatible, which encourages a tendency to downplay economic values" (p. 96).This is evident in the following extracts in which participants dismiss the financial, and other, costs involved in having children as inconsequential, necessary even, to having a child.

Extract 46
André (M1):   It's a blessing to actually have children. It's a blessing. [...] Although when they were born the first few months was hard on us, we were deprived of intimacy, we were deprived of [sleep] [...] [and] your freedom was restricted. But again, life works like this, it's like a positive defence mechanism, when I sit here today those things, I have to really think far back and go very deep into my unconscious state, because it doesn't matter. But that is just today, the treasures that we have today. [...] For me, the bad things then, make sense now.

Extract 47
Jakobus (M2):   Look, my dream would probably be the successful lawyer [and] my sacrifice would be probably not pursuing the career that I planned, which can get me far. I think also other things would be, you know, I think, um, being alone, on your own, and that sense of "selfness", I think, would disappear. I think other things would be hobbies that you had when you were young, going biking or something. Even then I'll take the little kid with on my bike and we'll just ride around. I think there'll be very little sacrifice, but if there is sacrifice, then, you know, the child is such a big part of my life that I would sleep well at night knowing that it's all part of it. I mean, the sacrifices do not surmount the value of having this child lying in my arms.

As these extracts show, children were seen as valuable for the emotional rewards that they offer, which were considered to justify any parental "sacrifices" or "hardships", especially those of a financial nature. In accordance with the child-centred script, children were considered a "blessed incumbrance [sic]" (McKelway, 1908, cited in Zelizer, 1985, p. 71) instead of an asset to the family (see chapter 9 for a detailed discussion on this). Implied in this talk, therefore, is the construction of parenthood as an altruistic, selfless, and even noble. It is possible, therefore, to link such constructions to pronatalist rhetoric, which also frequently construes procreating as a contribution to individual, family and social wellbeing (Agrillo & Nellini, 2008). This sort of

construction resonates with the pronatalist propaganda of the 1970s and 1980s(discussed in Chapter 1) that enjoined "Whites" to "sacrifice" for the greater good of the "White" population by having many children.

In this vein, the construction of "sacralised" childhood places children upon a pedestal and subordinates all goals, actions, claims, and other people to the needs and desires of the child (Lupton & Barclay, 1997; Zelizer, 1985). This, in turn, drives understandings of what constitutes "good" parenting, focusing on how to best meet children's needs (Almack, 2006). Parental activities that are not directly aimed at doing so are potentially seen as a threat to children's well-being and may result in the parents' negative positioning. Hence, the interests of the child are paramount (Andenæs, 2005). This is shown in the extract below.

Extract 48

Johann (M2):   If I have kids, or WHEN I have kids, that's gonna be the most important thing in my life. Work and everything else takes a back seat to that. That **kid has to come first in EVERYTHING** that you do, that you decide (.) everything. That kid has to come first. As soon as the child becomes second or third, things aren't gonna go *lekker*. **You can't think of yourself**. You have to sort your shit out because there's a kid to look after. [...] Your relationship with your wife or partner is also important [...] you have to work on that as well. Obviously it's there forever, but that kid has to come first. The kid is going to HAVE TO come first. It doesn't matter what you want to do—if you want to go here or there—you [are] **ALWAYS gonna have to consider the child**, especially when they're small. [...] Okay, you mustn't let your relationship fall on the wayside, hey. You have to give it attention, but the kid has to come first.

In this extract we see how the child's needs and interests are raised above all other concerns. Importantly, Johann intimates that if the child is not given priority, then the child's welfare may be at stake ("things aren't gonna go *lekker*"). This gives some indication of how the sacralisation of childhood also directs concerns toward children's development, particularly in terms of their emotional wellbeing and growth into independent and self-reliant individuals. Zelizer identifies sacralisation as the cause of public concern with children's welfare and indignation about potential threats toward children, but her theory does more than simply point to a contemporary cultural attitude, it offers an explanation for the social predisposition to be concerned about (risks to) children (Meyer, 2007). Accordingly, concerns centre on the vulnerability of children and the importance of parental actions in affecting children's emotional and psychological development. In this respect, children were seen as a product of parental labour and as something to be heavily invested in, in order to produce the best outcome. The excerpts below show how parental actions were seen as significantly affecting children's wellbeing, either positively or negatively.

Extract 49

Jakobus (M2):   ... to expose our child to the wonders that the world can give us [...] I think this exposure is extremely important because it adds to their character, it gives them character, it moulds them, because they can have the decision or choice to what they want to be if you expose them to more and more stuff. You know, it gives them more variety to [draw on] Ja, you can have the primary colours for painting, but the painting will be a masterpiece if you have all the colours, all the variables and have a master contrast. Jeez, I actually referred to a child as a painting!

Extract 50

Anel (F2):   That's the scary bit for me, what if your finger slips and you give them a skewed image or something. Ah! That's so scary because it's so much easier to look after the aesthetic and the health part of your child than it is to look… it's so much easier to mess up. Like I said, one little thing happens and your kid is scarred for life. That would scare me so much. I think I would probably go on a self-help book craze [laughter] and read every book about parenting while I was pregnant. I imagine that I would be so freaked out about making a mistake. [...]You know, with your life if you make a mistake you learn and you carry on, if you make a mistake with your kids your kids sort of like (.) screwed up forever. I don't know.

Extract 51

Ilze (F1):   Wait until you're a bit older and you're more patient, because people don't realise the psychological damage they do on a child by being tired, come home, sit down there, have to do the homework, in the back of your mind you know the washing must still be done there's no maid—these days lots of people don't have maids—"I must still do the dishes" blah, blah, blah, blah...

The common theme in these extracts is that of the child's vulnerability and, consequently, its dependence on caregivers. "Vulnerability is a key feature of western conceptions of childhood" according to Meyer (2007, p. 89). It is from the construction of childhood that the sacred status of the child gains its moral authority and which allows for public interest in children's wellbeing, especially that which is seen as threatening to children's welfare. The concern with child welfare has also led to an increase and intensification of expert discourses around adequate childcare, mostly psychological, instructing parents of their obligations to meet the particular "needs" of their young and, in particular, for mothers to be intensively involved in childrearing in order for this goal to be achieved (Lupton & Barclay, 1997). This is evident in Anel's reference to reading "self-help" literature and possibly also Ilze's reference to "psychological damage".

In the context of parenthood decision-making, the child-centred script focuses reproduction and the associated decisions on the prospective child and his/her needs, constructing a deeply pronatalist, child-centred and altruistic model of decision-making and parenthood in which all concerns are subject to children's welfare. For instance, Jakobus stated that with respect to parenthood decision-making the prospective child's welfare "is the most vital thing. It would probably be the first thing we consider". Stemming from this altruistic construction of parenthood were the twin notions of the selfish/self-interested vs. the selfless parent. For example:

Extract 52

Anel (F2):   It's very, very easy and very tempting to be **selfish** about going about the whole business of having kids, because I think it is a strong drive and that sort of feeling of cute little baby and raising and shaping young minds. [...] I think a lot of people are **selfish** when it comes to having children. They want to have children because they want children, **not for the children's sake**. They want to raise the children the way that makes them happy and not the **best way for the children** and that's always bothers me and that's very important to me.

In this extract, Anel positions people who choose to have children for the wrong reasons--that is, out of self-interest—as "selfish". This echoes the general view of parenthood as a noble endeavour undertaken for the sake of the child and the good of society, rather than personal gain. Later in the analysis I shall show how these

positions enabled rhetorical work—both supporting and contesting the hetero-norm—while at the same time acting as a source of constraint and a potentially troubled position that participants had to negotiate. It is possible to see that the child-centred script could potentially be used to support the family planning script as Anel (extract 52) and Ilze (extract 51) intimate that some thought should go into childbearing rather than simply being ruled by the "strong drive" to have a child.

At the same time, the child-centred script could be drawn on in order to argue against the planning model. In the following extract the child-centred script is drawn on in conjunction with the romance/love script.

Extract 53

Franco (M2): That's ideally how I'd like it to be. Obviously it won't be that way, so I still don't want it to be "OK let's discuss having a baby now" because that would detract from my romantic picture. [laugh] [...] Because then the baby becomes a [pause] result of a conscious decision. And I know that it should, because of the just the practical life. I don't want my baby just to be a decision. **I want Baby to be, because I want a baby**. So that's the other thing. I don't want baby to fulfil my wife's needs. It must come into a place, a home, a relationship where it's **wanted** but not... (.) **for its own sake**. I definitely think it's something that can be negotiated, although that takes me very far away from my romantic scenario. [laughter] Let's negotiate a baby like a car deal or something. But it can, it definitely can. It's actually difficult to answer because if I follow the negotiation route then obviously my child isn't that important, I think, and then I would be less likely to make other **sacrifices**. If it just happens in the more romantic way then my love for the child is true and I wouldn't mind making any **sacrifice** for the child or the relationship or the woman.

In this extract, automatic or spontaneous childbearing is seen as ideal because there is no conflict that could call into question whether both partners truly desire to have a child. "Negotiation" is depicted as somehow detracting from the "wantedness" of the child and the intimation is that if the child is wanted, then it must be desired by both parents and so there must be harmonious consensus. As I mentioned earlier, a lack of couple conflict was seen as an indication that both wanted to have a child, therefore making discussion unnecessary and undesirable. In the extract above, the couple's needs, in particular the "wife's", are depicted as conflicting with the child's needs. Franco draws attention to his motivations for having a child, highlighting that these should not be related to self-interest or in order to fulfil his or his partner's needs, but rather the child must be "wanted for its own sake". Negotiation is construed as calling into question the wantedness of the child, since the individual is concerned with her/his needs and interests rather than the child's alone. Self-interest, that is, parents' needs or desires, were not deemed to be justifiable motivators for having a child. The intersection of the child-centred script with the love/romance script renders the child as the end point or product of the heterosexual marital union, signifying the culmination of growing love, trust and intimacy within the heterosexual marital relationship. The child is the pinnacle or seal upon such a union. In this way, reproduction was situated within the context of romantic coupledom and participants minimised choice and promoted passive decision-making.

6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I concentrated on how the questioning of people about parenthood choices essentially amounted to an unusual conversational move, in that it required participants to reflect on a topic that was very much taken for granted because having children was largely deemed to be an inevitable and spontaneous event rather than a matter that required much reflection or active decision-making. In this respect, I highlighted the way that the immediate discursive context was discursively framed by the conceptualisation of the subject of becoming a parent as "parenthood decision-making". This suggests an active process and rational, autonomous *decision-makers* and invokes the dominant family planning script. As I discussed, framing the account thus may have created an onus on the speaker to engage with the topic in these terms and, therefore, the notion of "choice" and the family planning script acted as a constraint as well as a source of trouble.

Trouble therefore occurred on two levels. First, in the form of the requirement to account for and give reasons for their desires, preferences and/or behaviour in relation to parenthood, something that many claimed not to have previously have given much thought to. My questioning of the matter may have been interpreted by participants as an expectation on my part that they had reflected on this. The second form of trouble occurred in the form of the constraint imposed by the language of choice. That is, participants obliged to engage in the topic in terms "choice". As I shall go on to argue in the next chapter, participants had to manage this constraint by talking around or against choice. Therefore, they had to story their own narratives in the language of choice, to account for their deviations from the model of active, rational decision-making, or oppose the notion of choice.

It is possible to see that all the discursive resources that I have outlined above in some way encourage procreation, including the family planning script. As Meyers (2001) observes, the family planning script implicitly denies abstinence from procreation altogether. She states that, "Since the current (albeit outmoded) paradigm of the family is a social unit comprised of a heterosexual couple and their children, the concept of family planning does not include refusing to have children, for that would amount to family prevention" (Meyers, 2001, p. 736). However, it is also evident that several of these discursive resources potentially act as formidable counter narratives to the dominant family planning script, in that they act as resources for supporting a largely passive process of decision-making in which the lack of communication was construed not only as normative, but ideal.

As I have highlighted in this chapter, this rhetorical work is framed by assumptions of what parenthood/reproductive decision-making is/ought to be as well as the participants' perceptions of my

expectations regarding "male involvement" in parenthood decision-making. Based on the assumption of automatic childbearing, the participants were able to negotiate the discursive constraints of the interview setting in such a way that the notions of "family planning" or "decision-making" were side-lined so that questions of "male involvement" in these processes became irrelevant. This is part of a broader rhetorical manoeuvre, which shall become clearer during the course of the analysis. In the following chapter, I show how the norm of automatic childbearing was reinforced to the point that childbearing was construed as a non-choice. I concentrate on the dual strategies of the glorification of reproduction (mainly through the emphasis placed on the value of children) and the denigration of non-reproduction which together render parenthood the only viable choice for married heterosexuals, constructing a "procreation imperative".

8

Constructing a procreation imperative

[The pronatalist] discourse singles out women's [and men's] preferred course and trumpets its attractions; it conceals the drawbacks of embarking on this course and quells apprehension; it scolds and humiliates those who dare to contemplate any alternative. Both in virtue of its cunning coordination of inducements and admonitions and in virtue of its pervasiveness, it constitutes a concerted attack on women's [and men's] autonomy with respect to motherhood [or fatherhood] (Meyers, 2001, p. 747).

---

1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I showed how the issue of male involvement in reproductive decision-making was shifted to the background chiefly by the common portrayal of parenthood as an inevitable end-point of heterosexual coupledom. As such, having children was rendered a non-choice. In this chapter I examine talk that builds on this construction, so that parenthood might even be deemed an obligation or requirement. I concentrate on the ways that participants not only normalised procreative heterosexuality, but constructed a scenario of "procreative heterosexual bliss" (Meyers, 2001, p. 762) through highly idealised portrayals of parenthood. Juxtaposed with such portrayals were negative depictions of childlessness that serve to denigrate non-reproduction and, especially, those individuals who eschew parenthood. As I shall show, these people were "Othered" in various ways in order to counter the potential trouble created by purposeful deviation from the "normal", acceptable life course. In this manner trouble at the macro level is regulated. I shall demonstrate how the glorification of reproduction and the denigration of non-reproduction are two sides of the same coin and part of a strategy that further entrenches the notion of procreation as a non-choice, at least, for particular individuals.

At the heart of this talk, as I shall show, is the construction of the child as intrinsically valuable. In the previous chapter I discussed how parenthood was considered to be a normal and natural part of life, a construction that clearly draws on the canonical couple narrative. In this chapter I consider how the child centred script and the idea of the child as emotionally priceless was also brought to bear in order to highlight the value of (biological) parenthood and imbue it with meaning. In this way procreation by heterosexual *couples* (specifically) was not only naturalised, but also valorised and portrayed as a normal desire or longing. This is best illustrated by one participant's response to my question about whether she and her partner had ever considered/discussed not having children. She answered, "No. No, we knew. I think every couple dreams of having a child" (Annelie). According to this statement having children is not simply desired by all couples, but that it is something that they aspire to. Hence, children are construed as valuable and to be sought after. This response reiterates the findings of other research on parenthood decisions. Reviewing such studies Meyers (2001) reports that "[m]ost people presume that children are necessary to personal fulfilment and never consider not having children" (p.

746). For the most part, in my research, childlessness (voluntary or otherwise) was notably absent from the narratives of the parents or those childfree participants who wished to be parents. This resulted in a silence around the topic in the bulk of the narratives that was usually only ruptured by my questioning (e.g., about whether there were considerations about not having children, how they imagined their lives would be/would have been without children, any regrets related to having children) or circumstances that called "automatic childbearing" into question (e.g., difficulty conceiving, the possibility of not being able to have children, or a future partner who does not share the desire to be a parent). Normalising the desire to become a parent reinforces the assumption of automatic childbearing and in turn creates the potential for the lack of this desire to be seen as unusual and for the negative positioning of those who forgo parenthood.

2. THE GLORIFICATION OF REPRODUCTION

In this section, I focus on two ways of speaking about parenthood in which the intrinsic value of children is central and, as such, strongly supported by the child-centred script. The first way of speaking comprises of romanticised representations of pregnancy and parenthood. In the second, related, way of speaking the potential drawbacks of parenthood are downplayed and expressions of reluctance are muted. Together these ways of speaking serve to construct a scenario of "procreative heterosexual bliss" (Meyers, 2001, p. 762), thus rendering parenthood as highly desirable and, as I shall show later, creating a standard to which childlessness is compared. This construction of reproduction and parenthood as a valuable and deeply meaningful experience, or the glorification of reproduction, creates a powerful incentive for people to procreate. As Meyers (2001) points out, the glorification of reproduction also underpins pronatalist discourse which similarly "trumpets its attractions, [. . .] conceals the drawbacks of embarking on this course and quells apprehension" (p. 762).

2.1. Parenting as a Utopia

Representations of "pregnancy and infant care as utopia" (Meyers, 2001, p. 761) were underpinned by notions of children's intrinsic value and resourced by the child-centred script. In the following extract, for example, in order to explicate the rationale for his parenthood choice, Elias highlights the benefits that children bring to one's life.

Extract1

Elias (M1): I think (.) it's not because it's the right thing to do. That's not the right answer. I think because (.) I had a passion for children I really wanted children of my own and I think (.) children just change or **Fulfils marriage**. Uh, and obviously we would like companions as well. You know, it's better than a friend. A child's better than a friend. A child is family. I mean it is your, [...] flesh and blood. It's given by God, but it's yours and there's that bond there. I think that must be one of the big motivations for having children. Obviously to have a family and to share, to impart things to them and just to make the… You could be whole in a bigger sense just being married, not having children, but I think it's just **so much bigger when you've got children**. It's a sense of **fulfilment**. I think both of us had the desire to have kids. Why? That's a difficult question. It's too hard! [Laugh] I never thought of it. Why, why? But I think I answered you there, there was the need, ja, the want for children. We really wanted children.

Elias focuses on the intrinsic value of children in this extract. They are constructed as inherently valuable and wanted for their own sake and ultimately his answer amounts to something along the lines of: "we wanted to have children because we wanted children". Children are seen as offering a unique form of companionship, owing to biological connection, as well as meaning and fulfilment to life and, in particular, children are constructed as perfecting or completing the heterosexual marriage relationship as the narrator intimates that a marriage is not really fulfilled until one has children. This extract clearly illustrates the common belief that wanting to have children is a normal desire, particularly within the context of marriage. This assumption serves to reinforce parenthood as a highly desirable life option for married heterosexuals. The construal of childbearing as "normal" within the heterosexual marriage relationship naturalises the expectation of biological parenthood for married (heterosexual) couples.

Romanticised constructions of parenting were common in the narratives, but were most obvious in the narratives of young people. Significantly, it even featured in the narratives of those who did not wish to be parents. This attests to the pervasiveness and power of the child-centred script. Although, many younger participants were generally open to alternatives to biological parenthood and, as I have stated, a few had entertained the possibility of voluntary childlessness, the majority of the young people were, as Meyers (2001) describes it, "extraordinarily illusionistic" (p. 746) about potential parenthood, as demonstrated by the following examples.

Extract 2

Mariska (F2):   I think I'd like the privilege of watching something that me and whoever else have created being here. [...] I'm just aware that I have a huge capacity to love and I think I'd like to, I don't know, just see… I don't… it's more like inquisitiveness really. I'd just like to see what comes out of me. A three headed monster [laughter] one head might be scary enough as it is [Laughter]. I just think it's a huge privilege to have children. [...] I just really want to bring out the **beauty** and the creativity and the potential… [...] I think when you're with somebody and you realise, "**Wow** this could potentially be somebody that I want to spend the rest of my life with", like, imagining YOU having kids together. 'Cause there's so much **beauty** within the two of you to then produce something out of that. I think that for me has been like, **wow**, that would be really **amazing**. It's something I think about but I can't ever imagine happening because it would be **so wonderful**. I think that has got a large part to do with it. [...] I think it's just that fascination of what my own spawn would look like [laugh] and seeing myself in my kids. I just think it would be an **amazing** experience.

Extract 3

Dawid (M2):   I'd love that in fact if she can go to the office and earn some money [laughter] not big money necessarily. Ja. No, I'd more than willing to sit at home and make music, write books and change nappies, definitely. In fact that sounds, ja, it sounds **very romantic** for me now, but until it happens it will probably be very different.

Extract 4

Johann (M2):   I think it will be **AWESOME**. I think it will be awesome to be a dad, um, to see your kid and help them along the, you know, try to keep them on the right path to the best of your ability. [...] I think to be a dad would be **awesome**. (It would be?) someone that would love you unconditionally. Your kid is gonna love you unconditionally, it doesn't matter what you do. And you will love your kid unconditionally, it doesn't matter what the kid does, what he or she does. So, it's unconditional love

straight away. When that kid's born it's there. It doesn't matter what the kid does [or] what you do. Okay, obviously you're gonna have fights with the kid. You're not gonna agree on everything, but there's definitely that unconditional love. I'd say there's more love between—I don't know if it's right to say it—but there's more love between kids [and their parents] than what there is between husbands and wives, maybe, 'cause it's unconditional. It's a different bond totally. That kid is part of who you are. […] But ja, I'd love to have kids, it would be **awesome**.

These extracts paint a romantic picture of parenting. The superlatives "amazing", "wonderful", and "awesome" are used to describe the anticipated experience of having one's own child. The first extract depicts procreation as the creation of "beauty" and an outcome of the heterosexual marital union. The second describes the practice of parenting (i.e., being a father) as a blissful experience; although the speaker does acknowledge his romanticism. Infant care is pictured as something that can easily be combined with other pleasurable pursuits. The final extract also portrays heterosexual parenthood as a potentially wonderful experience citing "unconditional love" and a sense of belonging that emerges from biological connectedness. Through this biological tie the parent-child relationship signifies a unique relationship that bestows an enduring attachment which persists in the face of disagreement. According to Smart and Neale's (1999), owing to the impermanence of the marital/sexual bond in contemporary society, many men now see the parent-child bond as the only remaining enduring relationship. Hence, children represent a more certain, permanent way of fulfilling one's emotional needs and "a way to infuse value and significance into [one's] everyday life [and to meet] the needs for meaning and companionship" (Meyers, 2001, p. 750).

While it is probably true that there are many joys to be had in the caring for and companionship of children, what was significant about this talk was the emphasis on children as a way of infusing value and significance into daily life (Meyers, 2001). As Morell (2000) puts it "a child is presented as a magic bullet, a guarantor of joy and fulfilment" (p. 317). This is worrying in terms of the autonomy of such choices, especially when other options and positive subjectivities are in short supply, and the potential costs entailed in having children are simultaneously downplayed (Morell, 2000), as I shall show in the following section.

2.2. Downplaying the negatives of parenthood

Drawing on the sacralised construction of childhood, children were frequently portrayed by participants as "blessed incumbrance [*sic*]" (McKelway, 1908, cited in Zelizer, 1994, p. 71) or "blessed expense", which I alluded to in Chapter 7. The investment of the child with religious and sentimental meaning eclipses all the difficulties, hardships, and costs (including and especially financial costs) involved in parenthood. These were generally considered to be a necessary sacrifice of parenthood. So, at the same time as participants enthused about the value that children impart to one's life, they downplayed the costs of parenthood as insignificant in comparison to the rewards that children bring. For instance, Ilze mentioned the financial costs of parenthood stating, "So, not having a child, we would have had more money, but it doesn't weigh up. [I] wouldn't change

it". In this vein, the participants engaged in "costs-versus-rewards" rhetoric that maintained a pronatalist construction of children (and childbearing) as all-important. This is summed up by Jakobus's statement that "the sacrifices do not surmount the value of having this child lying in my arms" and echoed by Esmé who said, "You know Tracy, it's up and down, but still (.) I think any child (.) it's something special for any parent". This rhetoric was common, especially amongst parents who perhaps had more invested in defending their choices than participants from cohort 2. The following excerpts illustrate more fully how this rhetoric was employed.

Extract 5

André (M1):   So the fact that the kids were born, if I can go back to that, it was not a coincidence, it was a **blessing** if I look at the whole biological process and logically the **pleasures** that go with it as a father and with your wife and the **hardships** also. There were **severe hardships**. When the youngest one was born they drew blood from Nenna [his partner] and some or other count said that the child would be retarded. So, we had to make a decision, because based on that you can have an abortion. We decided, "No, we're not going to do that." And what was born? Willem: blond, funny [laughs] always smiling, wonderful child. I mean can you think that one could have made that decision [not] to conceive THAT child. It would have been totally wrong I think. [...] What else matters? If other things start mattering more than these things then these things don't matter and life is ultimately about this. I mean, (this house can be worth?) nothing, worth absolutely nothing. I came to that point also when I realised it. Now life is just fun. I don't want to change the kids for anything, because you can just get worse especially in today's time and age. Both of them academically [are] very strong, lovely personalities, friendly… ((Trails off))

Extract 6

Annelie (F2):   *Jissie*, when they wake up at two and the cry and don't want to sleep, ah! You know people say that you must wait until they're five years old and then they're off your hands, but our kids were four years apart. So that five-year time never really came. When the fifth year came the second one was a year. But there's [sic] many things in life that look rosier than what it really is. But there are so many good times as well that it **cancels out** those difficult times.

In the extracts above, both the financial and social costs of parent are downplayed. The claim in extract 5 that having children is more important than material possessions was common to most of the narratives. The social costs are discussed by both narrators as the "severe hardships" or "difficult times" related to parenthood. These are described as outweighed or "cancel[led] out" by the "pleasures" or "good times" that having children bring.   In extract 5, children are depicted as providing meaning and significance to life (which, as I mentioned earlier, was a common construction) so that they are construed as the purpose of one's existence. André recounts the experience of his partner's second pregnancy, though she had "understandable", and (at that time) legal, grounds for a pregnancy termination, he deems this decision as "totally wrong" based on the fact that their son was in fact not "retarded", but a healthy "wonderful child". Notice also that the decision is couched in "Partnership talk" (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004, p. 176), which emphasises the mutuality of decision-making and obscures the specificities. This anecdote implicitly positions the child—healthy or not—as most important. This positioning is made more overt later by the question, "What else matters?" and the claim that "life is ultimately about this" (extract 5).

The construction of the child as all-important is given extra force by the construction of children as a "blessing", in other words, both God-ordained and something for which the appropriate response is appreciation. This echoes other participants' admonishments for considering the costs of having children as overshadowing the rewards. For example, Jakobus argued that a child ought to be regarded as a "gift and not a burden [or] responsibility". Consequently, this prescribes the appropriate attitude that one should have towards childbearing. Reading extract 5 in light of this, the speaker's claim that the drawbacks of motherhood are negated by "the good times" can be interpreted as a socially desirable response that grants her positive positioning, lest her account of her difficulties are construed as complaining and position her in a troublesome way.

It was evident that such constructions of children placed children's interests centre stage and rendered all other endeavours secondary to these. For example, Jakobus argued that his "job would be a means to an end really" and that "having a child should be at the centre and then all the other plans should manifest around that". This allowed the narrators to position themselves in a socially desirable manner, as altruistic and selfless, as Thuis does in the next extract. It is possible to see that the speaker displays some degree of wry self-awareness of this positioning.

Extract 7

Thuis (M1): That is (.) one of those weird questions that I think all parents struggle with sometimes. I mean, you go through hell with children. [Laughs] It's not a walk in the park, it really isn't, and then every so often you reach that point where you ask yourself, "Well, what if they weren't here at all?" Say for instance they go for a sleep over at a friend's house and all of a sudden you've got the house all to yourself and it's all quiet and peaceful. You think, "Oh wonderful, bliss" and then within half an hour you get that panicky feeling, "My God, what's my **purpose** here?" or "What will I do with myself all the time if there were no children to look after?" You do, and it's a terribly anti-intellectual feeling and realisation, but you do find **reason for your own existence** because they are there. That wasn't the reason why you wanted them, not consciously at least, but now you can't see any point to your going through all this work and trouble and toil if it wasn't for them. If they weren't around you'd just chuck it all and bugger off and do something else. They give you a reason to carry on, which is terribly middle-class and it keeps you tied into the system for the rest of your life. You will pay the bond so that the kids can have somewhere to go and you realise that full well and you accept it gladly, in our case. [Laughs] It is a funny thing. I mean, when you do that. I think it's just **biology** kicking in, you know, telling you "You're doing your little bit for the **survival of the species**, so shut up and put up" or something like that [laughs]. But, you do, you just, I guess when everything works, then you just happily accept that, even when you become aware of it. I guess some people don't accept that and then things might not work out well. I don't know, but in our case at least, even when they drive you to complete distraction you can't imagine your life without them AT all.

In this extract, parenthood is represented as a somewhat noble endeavour since one should "happily accept" any sacrifices for the child's sake, but also for the greater good of humanity. As I have stated, there does appear to be some degree of reflexivity displayed here as the speaker comments on the "terribly middle-classed" nature of his altruistic self-positioning. (This was a particular characteristic of the interview with this participant, who tended to be more critical than many of the other parent participants and positioned himself as an "outsider" in the Afrikaans community owing to his progressive, and especially anti-racist, politics.) He

resolves the ambivalence by invoking a biological discourse and in this way reaffirms the altruistic self-positioning he began with. Operating within a biological discursive framework, this speaker portrays childbearing as "anti-intellectual" or, in other words, a-rational, even unconscious, and as related to species survival. In this account, those who procreate are positively positioned as productive and "doing their part" for humankind as a species. Reproduction, therefore, is cast as a noble and inherently selfless undertaking, despite the fact that this is unconscious or instinctive and one might be unaware that one is being duped by "biology". Hence, parenthood is not only depicted as part of the natural progression of life, but the most important facet of existence. The constructions of reproduction as biologically programmed in this excerpt do not only naturalise and normalise procreative heterosexuality, but also the altruism or self-sacrifice attached to parenthood.

Notably, this rendition of parenthood as biologically driven situates parenthood outside of the domain of choice. In other interviews a biological discourse was also used to resource a discursive tactic whereby procreation was cast as a (often uncontrollable) biological imperative. Similarly, participants, especially from cohort one, drew on a religious discourse to cast reproduction as a Godly mandate. Both of these ways of speaking were used to construe having children as a duty. Following this line of thinking, speakers positioned themselves positively as simply obeying a command or an adaptive biological drive, adopting the positions of exemplary Christian or contributing member of the species/society respectively. As such they could save face for not having gone about family planning in a rational manner.

The biological discourse was drawn on by older participants to support constructions of childbearing as something that is beyond individual control and, therefore, not really a choice as illustrated by the following extracts.

Extract 19
Thuis (M1):   I think it's just biology kicking in, you know, telling you "You're doing your little bit for the survival of the species, so shut up and put up" or something like that [laughs]. But, you do, you just, I guess when everything works, then you just happily accept that, even when you become aware of it. I guess some people don't accept that and then things might not work out well.

Extract 20
Gerhardt (M1): You know it's that whole (.) you've got parents and I think it's sort of your duty to contribute and replace the ones that die, maybe. I think you are supposed to [inaudible] […] I think that is definitely sort of built into us, maybe, programmed into us.

Extract 21
André (M1):   I've got cattle here that have stolen calves. They stole them from their moms and if the mom is not a very aggressive type then the heifer or the cow that steals the calf is stronger in their instincts, she'll wean the calf, she'll give him milk, and whatever. You can't interfere there. The cow that gave birth to that calf will dry up and the other one will [inaudible].

Tracy: So do you think that people have the same kind of, I mean not [laugh] stealing other people's children necessarily, but the same kind of drive?

André: The need to have children, I believe so and I base this purely on how I think it could be and not on any papers you're reading for research. Children, at the end of the day, are fantastic. Why are we here in

188

any case? What are we doing here? Just to work or just to mess the world up? If you in any case believe in what I believe in…What [I believe] in, one of those things, is to create offspring and to do it responsibly.

Having children is described in the examples above as species survival, making childbearing a biological "duty" as well as the purpose of human beings' existence. Hence, the "God-given urge" discussed earlier becomes "biology kicking in" in extract 19 and something intrinsic that is "programmed into us" in extract 20. Similarly, in extract 21 the speaker refers to "instincts", implicitly invoking the pervasive notion of "the maternal instinct". The anecdote about cattle portrays childbearing as natural and contingent on biological drives rather than a product of rational choice. This anecdote also serves to construct childbearing as a (feminine) "need" rooted in biology. Thus, once more all these extracts remove childbearing from the realm of rational choice as they depict it as beyond rational control.

In much the same way, a religious discourse was mobilised to construct having children as a non-choice. Many older participants referred to having children as "a blessing" (André) and as part of the "the Lord's plan" (Annelie). Others discussed how "the Lord just undertook" and spoke of things just falling into place because "it's the way that the Lord works" (Esmé). Even unintended pregnancies were described as "a blessing in disguise" (Lettie). This is evidenced in the following extracts, for instance.

Extract 17

Stefanus (M1):   Ja, you have your children, marry, they have children, I mean, [it's just planned that way. God said, "Multiply and fill the Earth". Now China has a problem, it's tragic what has happened there now, hey?]

Extract 18

Koos (M1):   I think one must say from the beginning that I'm looking at everything out of a Christian's perspective, with the Bible as guideline for my life and for everything [in] life revolves around that guideline. In that sense you will have a different angle from another person probably, but that's the angle that I see my life and family and issues around it [from]. So I think the first thing is when you get married there's a natural, I would almost say, **God-given urge** to multiply and to have kids. The only thing is, I suppose, to decide when to start.

In these extracts the heteronormative life course is depicted as divinely planned and procreation as a command. As Meyer's (2001) points out, "Diverse religious traditions mandate procreative heterosexuality by condemning 'barren' marriages" (p. 759). In extract 17, Stefanus, a retired minister, describes reproduction as a Godly decree and cites scripture to support the notion of procreation as an imperative. The reference to China's one child policy functions as an illustration of the "tragedy" that can occur when people disobey God and take matters into their own hands. China is, of course, a context in which Christianity has met with great resistance and therefore has connotations of ungodliness for believers, thus lending force to the illustration. This is reiterated in extract 18 where, echoing Stefanus, childbearing is constructed here as "a natural God-given urge". Here, it is explicitly construed as a non-choice, a matter of timing rather than a question of whether to have children. This discourse is relatively powerful, but some rhetorical work occurs in justifying such claims. The speaker's particular Christian perspective is presented tentatively as a personal opinion,

189

denoting a less certain position, as reflected by the hedging statements "I would almost say" and "I suppose". This stems perhaps from the awareness that a religious discourse may lack authority in some contexts or be challengeable by others, especially academics or psychologists such as myself, thus signifying a potentially troubled position.

This talk of childbearing as an obligation or responsibility has moral overtones. It draws on the altruistic model of reproductive decision-making (given by the child-centred script) and so, notions of self-sacrifice also come into play. Ideas of contributing to humanity, continuity, and species survival are deployed to construct having children as something that one is "supposed to" (extract 20) do as a (good) member of the human species. This, in conjunction with the representation of reproduction as natural, serves to remove reproduction from the arena of choice and to glorify parenthood as a noble and worthy endeavour. As a consequence, those who have children are favourably positioned as doing their bit for the greater good (i.e., survival of the species), while those who do not may be construed as selfish and irresponsible. (I discuss this negative positioning mentioned more fully in see Chapter 9 for more on this). Both extracts 19 and 21, for example, imply negative positioning for those who fail to comply with the norm. Moreover, having children is cast as something that should be at worst tolerated ("so shut up and put up" – extract 19) or at best "happily" (extract 19) accepted. The implication is clear, this is not really something to be questioned and, once again, those who do can be positioned as deviant trouble-makers. In the following section, I shall show how the idea of sacrifice was mobilised in relation to non-procreation associating non-reproduction with guilt and fear which contributes to the force of the procreation imperative (Meyers, 2001; Gillespie, 2000; Zecchi, 2005).

3. THE DENIGRATATION OF NON-REPRODUCTION

As I have shown thus far, reproduction was glorified, so that many participants' claimed that their lives would have been empty and unfulfilled without children, as well as how the disadvantages of childbearing—including potential unhappiness or disappointment, loss of personal freedom, increased financial commitments, intrusion into or interruption of career—were trivialised and construed as necessary sacrifices of parenthood. According to Nauk (2007), the ascription of high value to parenthood in combination with a perception of low costs is more likely to lead to "the routinized, spontaneous mode of decision-making or the acceptance of a pregnancy" (Nauk, 2007, p. 618). That is, people are less likely to reflect upon their parenthood decisions and therefore prone to make "decisions" passively. What I shall show in this section, is that in addition to downplaying the drawbacks of parenthood, the potential *advantages* of remaining childfree were also often not acknowledged. Talk that denigrates non-reproduction is informed by the construction of sacralised childhood and admits no alternatives (Meyers, 2001). I begin by considering how the prospect of childlessness was portrayed as a distressing possibility. Based on this construction the possibility that someone would

voluntarily choose to remain childfree was deemed unfathomable and even unlikely. This created the possibility for various discursive tactics that denigrate non-reproduction and, specifically, cast the voluntarily childfree in a negative light as deviant "Others".

3.1. The horror of childlessness

The belief that children bring incomparable benefits or rewards to a person's life reinforced parenthood as the most desirable option. The construction of parenthood as a "normal", inevitable, and *desirable* part of heterosexual adulthood has implications for those who do not become (biological) parents. When childlessness is juxtaposed with an image of "procreative heterosexual bliss" (Meyers, 2001, p. 762), it is frequently deemed to be unsatisfactory and lacking. Against the pronatalist backdrop, in which procreation is valorised, parenthood romanticised, and children portrayed as sacred, childlessness appeared as a horrific and distressing possibility. Based on this belief, as other research corroborates, "for most [people] the childless choice is unfathomable, full of fears of social isolation and of the need to constantly justify that choice" (Park, 2002, p. 23). Hence, for many participants childlessness was described as an unthinkable and extremely distressing possibility. This response is illustrated by the subsequent extracts.

Extract 8
Mariska (F2):   I also realised that there would be a big part of me that would die, in my soul, if I wasn't allowed that privilege. I also thought that I would lose out on quite a big part of experiencing life in the sense of what that period is like. [...] I think children add a lot of colour and beauty and joy to people's lives. I think also, as parents, they're your personal delight. It's like a little part of who you are and just seeing how much, doing my teaching prac, just seeing how much amazingness is crammed into one little life. I would definitely (.) I would be absolutely devastated if I was told that I couldn't have my own children. I don't really know if I'd want to adopt or to foster children, because I don't see it as a replacement, but it's sort of, like, thinking if I can't have my own children then I don't really want to. [...]I know that there's that whole like there's lots of kids who don't have moms and dads and you could be available, which I'm all for, but I don't know if it's something that I personally could do. It's quite weird, I actually thought about it a couple of days ago and I think I would be absolutely devastated if I couldn't have **my own** kids.

Excerpt 9
André (M1):   I cannot imagine tonight sitting in this huge house with myself and Nenna, just the two of us. Maybe you would adapt to circumstances, but I think it's a very lonely life. The children bring fun and adventure and activities and incidents into the house. It's just unbelievable. Again, we're blessed to have two children who are very (.) normal.

Extract 10
Esmé (F1):   I won't change them, not at all, and you know that is something that through everything I've never yet regretted having the children. Never once in my life did I think what a pleasure it would have been if they weren't around. I can't think [of] my life without them. If I've got to have my life over again I will have the three of them over again. I won't change anything with them. [...]
Tracy: How DO you imagine your life would be if you never had children?
Esmé: I think it would have been terrible. It really would have been terrible. (.) If I didn't have children of my own I would have adopted children. I can't imagine myself without them.

All of the narrators above portray childlessness as unthinkable and as entailing lack. In extract 8 Mariska describes having children in exceptionally illusionistic language and childlessness as "devastating" in comparison. In extracts 9 and 10the corollary to the construction of children as a source of fulfilment is

childlessness as entailing emptiness and loneliness. Mariska and Esmé depict adoption as a solution to the horrifying possibility of childlessness. Adoption was seen as an alternative to procreation and it was generally viewed as noble or charitable in that it presented a chance to "get involved in an orphan's life who doesn't have any opportunities" (Dawid). However, as in Mariska's extract above, it was generally not seen as a truly viable alternative or otherwise considered only as a last resort in the case of infertility. For instance, Johann stated that, "My first choice would be biological. If I can't biologically, then it would be (.) artificial insemination and if that doesn't work, then I'd adopt". As this comment shows, adoption was ranked was as a second choice in relation to having biological children. Similarly, Haelyon (2006) notes that women undergoing IVF regard adoption as an "an act of "defeatism," whereas the value of biological parenthood was maximized and filled with meaning" (p. 189).

Some (especially older men) were averse to the idea of adoption altogether. For example:

Extract 11

Koos (M1): I don't think it's always a good thing to adopt a child. The reason for that is, I might sound, (.) I might be wrong, but a child that's up for adoption is sometimes from relationships that are (.) Well, what I want to say is that later on many people experience problems with adopted children when they grow up, because the genetic background of the child is not always good. It might be somebody who's an alcoholic, or whatever, and that genetically is passed on sometimes.

It is possible to see, however, that this rejection of adoption is not achieved without some rhetorical work to smooth over some inconsistencies with the child-centred script. Koos shows some awareness of potentially troubled positioning which arises due to the fact that rejecting adoption departs from the child-centred script in which children are sacred and valuable. For this reason he furnishes sound reasons for why adoption is not "always a good thing". This rhetorical work shows that the matter is not just about being a parent/having a child but about procreation, that is, *having* a biological child. It suggests that part of the "horror" of involuntary childlessness in not just not being able to experience parenthood (and therefore being lonely and so on), but being unable to produce one's "own" biological offspring. It is possible to see how biological connection was valorised in many of the extracts in the preceding section. Hence, this talk assists in constructing a procreation imperative. Thus, any alternatives to (biological) parenthood are unthinkable and/or highly disagreeable and thereby other routes to parenthood are obscured, as well as alternative life paths that do not include parenthood.

3.2. "Othering" tactics: negative positioning of the childfree

While the *inability* to procreate could be easily understood as thwarting a natural and "normal" desire and beyond individual control, thus evoking responses of pity, childlessness as a voluntary decision represents

deliberate deviance. It may therefore be less understandable (Mollen, 2006). Based on the construction of the child as emotionally priceless, it is inconceivable that someone would *voluntarily* forgo the opportunity of parenthood.   Owing to the large degree to which childbearing is normalised, the deliberate choice to remain childfree amounts to an active deviation from the hetero-norm and therefore troubles normative constructions of procreative heterosexuality (Mollen, 2006). As Park (2002) avers,

> [T]he deviance of the voluntarily childless lies not only in the fact that they do not have children, but primarily, and especially for women, in the fact that they do not want them. This is in contrast to the involuntarily childless, who embrace the parenting role in principle … parents find the voluntarily childless threatening as their lifestyle challenges parents' sense of distributive justice, their convictions that the rewards of their choice offset the sacrifices and that marriage and children are the best routes to personal happiness (p. 22, 24).

For this reason, such troubling moments must be regulated.   Regulation occurs through the denigration and marginalisation of those who choose to remain childfree through negative constructions of voluntary childlessness as selfish, dishonourable, or shameful. Positioning those who abstain from reproducing as deficient, deviant, or selfish is part of a discursive tactic that serves to regulate troubling moments created by the purposeful deviation from the "normal", acceptable life course.   By excluding the "abnormal" and suppressing challenges to the dominant construction of procreative heterosexuality and to normatively determined gender identities, denigrating talk functions as a regulatory mechanism for heteronormativity. Those who voluntarily and actively choose a subjectivity that deviates from the norm were rendered as abnormal "unsubjects" (Butler, 1991, p. 20) and relegated to the position of deviant "Other".   Inhabiting the constitutive outside of the hetero-norm, any trouble posed to constructions of procreative heterosexuality is kept in check (Butler, 1993a). As Park (2002) states, "deviant reference groups are needed to uphold social norms, in this case the norm of parenthood and convictions of its 'naturalness', 'rightness', and 'selflessness'" (p. 25).

Such positioning is often used to explain away the choice to remain childfree as an anomalous one, related to personal shortcoming. It functions discursively to discredit and marginalise experiences that seek to redefine the norm, and potentially silences those who express reluctance to procreate or who describe their experiences of voluntary childlessness as anything other than comprising of loss, regret, and longing (Gillespie, 2000). The rhetoric of choice featured significantly in regulatory discursive tactics to explain away deliberate childlessness by constructing it as not really chosen, so positioning those who do not procreate as exceptions (or anomalies), or to align those making a deliberate choice with selfishness. Therefore, Meyers (2001) argues, such stigmatising talk matches and reinforces idealised pronatalist constructions.   I explore three main discursive tactics that position the childfree as "Other", firstly as deficient (i.e., as lacking in various ways), secondly as damaged or deviant, and finally, as selfish. I shall show how negative attributions and stereotypes

of childfree people serve to further reinforce idealised heteronormative formulations, such as those discussed in the preceding chapter.

3.2.1. The deficient "Other"

The participants consistently spoke of those who could not, or would not, have children as in some way lacking. Responses to childlessness (whether chosen or not) revealed an "assumption that [it] implies defect and ensures dissatisfaction" (Meyers, 2001, p. 747). Viewing the experience of voluntary childlessness through what Morell (2000) calls "the lens of deficiency" (p. 313), participants frequently constructed those who deliberately choose childlessness as unfulfilled or as having failed, desolate, and wasted lives (Gillespie, 2000). These sorts of constructions contribute to the negative, even pejorative, positioning of the (voluntarily) childless. This has also been shown by other research, which indicates that women who have rejected maternity in favour of non-maternal alternatives were perceived as defective and that the majority of people construct childfree women as missing something central (a child) and are defined by this absence (Morell, 2000).

> Studies in western nations have repeatedly found . . . [that] intentionally childless [women are] widely perceived as unfeminine, socially undesirable, selfish, malcontent, unnatural, bitter, emotionally maladjusted and leading less fulfilling lives. Mothers in contrast are selfless, patient, dedicated to their children and always responsive to their demands, and because deliberately childless women are juxtaposed against this image they are frequently constructed as abnormal and deviant, suffering 'psychopathological disturbance', or intrinsically selfish and unwilling to make the sacrifices parenthood requires (Carmichael & Whittaker, 2007, pp. 123 – 124).

Morell (2000) maintains that the prominent interweaving of motherhood into the construction of adult femininity makes it nearly impossible to conceive of women who are childless without considering them in terms of absence, lack, or deficiency. However, as I shall show, such stereotypes are not exclusively associated with women. A fair amount of research has shown that women may be especially stigmatised for choosing childlessness, and so face a great deal of pressure to become mothers. Though less research has been conducted on voluntarily childless men, Park (2002) concurs that these men also face stigmatising responses (see also Lunnenborg (1999) for men's own perspectives on chosen childlessness). The participants' responses in my study show that childless men were also positioned negatively, stereotyped, and stigmatised, particularly if these men are married.

The marital context is therefore significant factor in this respect, as illustrated by the following excerpt.

Extract 12

Petro (F2): This whole thing of "There MUST be something wrong with you, because [...] this is what you are here for. And why do you want to go on studying, why do you want a career? Just find any guy, even if he's half decent, and just get on with it". [...] Um, but there will always be, like, "Ag shame she couldn't get a husband" or "Ag shame, she can't have children". Also, talking from a very traditional [perspective], because I must make it clear that it's a very traditional Afrikaans family, so they will think that there's something wrong with ME in not having children. Say, for example, you have the partner, but you don't have the children, they will think that there's medically something wrong or,

that I'm very selfish not to have it. So there's [something] emotionally very wrong with me, because it's seen as your duty basically. So, the family will not… luckily I don't have grandmothers anymore, but the aunts and the uncles and the nieces and the nephews and the cousins and everyone will be like "Oh shame." There will always be like a [pity]. […] Ja, so first of all pity because maybe you can't have them, or you're missing out because your life is so wonderful [when you have children]. Okay, wonderful if that's for them, but I mean (.) why is there something wrong with me if I don't want children but there's nothing wrong with my brother if he doesn't want children? That whole thing and that's again traditional, very traditional.

In this extract Petro discusses her extended family's negative evaluations of her choice to remain childfree. They are implicitly seen as having a stake in her procreating. It is evident that strategies of pity reinforce a procreative imperative and that there are multiple possibilities to create stigma around chosen childlessness. Among the various negative responses described here are those in which Petro is positioned as defective— either medically or emotionally— and as "missing out". This extract clearly highlights the gendered nature of the stigma attached to non-procreative females. The questioning of her pursuit of studies and career allude to the stereotype of childfree women as "career women". Several authors point to a common stereotypical construction of deliberately childless women as "the career woman". Generally speaking, this gender stereotype is often attached to childfree women—regardless of their reasons for abstaining from parenthood (Carmichael & Whittaker, 2007; Gillespie, 2000) rendering them as "selfish, cold and excessively ambitious" (Lee & Gramotnev, 2006, p. 7). Carmichael and Whittaker (2007) maintain that selfishness is an attribution frequently, though not exclusively, associated with women and that childfree women often bear the brunt of stigmatising talk. (I shall discuss the attribution of selfishness in more depth shortly.)

The "career women" stereotype was in fact alluded to more or less directly in my study. There were fewer direct references to childfree "career women" and the epithet was usually used in relation to discussions of "working mothers" to criticise them for jeopardising their children's welfare by working outside the home. (My own subjectivity as a young female academic could have played a role in this.) For instance, in discussing the possibility of having been "a career woman" Lettie stated, "I'm actually quite glad that I didn't have to work. I spent all my time with my kids and that was my whole point about having kids that I was going to be there for them." Similarly, Koos said the following: "Why is it that the women won't stay at home with the kids? Because they want to make money, that is the only reason". It was, however, deemed acceptable for involuntarily childless women to be "career women". For instance discussing the possibility of infertility, Koos later stated that if this were to happen "then you probably just concentrate on your work, career, [and] the wife will become a career woman". Comments such as these suggests that the primary subjectivity for women is that of mother and non-maternal subjectivities may act as substitute for thwarted motherhood, but not as an alternative, as in Petro's case.

Moreover, Petro also claims that her brother is not seen in a similarly negative light. As such, she links the perception of deficiency to a failed gender performance. However, her "failure" is not simply associated with

her wish to remain childfree, but also to her non-adherence to the accepted heteronormative trajectory of the adult female life course. Speaking as an unmarried, voluntarily childfree woman, much of the narrative revolves around her failure to "get a husband" and have children. Petro's marital status is therefore seen as significant and this excerpt demonstrates how marriage and reproduction are interwoven. The statement "you have the partner, but you don't have the children" suggests that childless married (heterosexual) couples are expected to fulfil the next life stage after marriage. The interweaving of marriage and reproduction creates a powerful imperative or obligation to procreate (Meyers, 2001).

The salience of the marriage is also evident in the following excerpts, in which the narrators discuss childless couples that they know.

Extract 13
Thuis (M1):   I referred to another couple that we are friendly with and they only had their first children after they both had turned 40, 41, they only had their children. We always compared ourselves to them, you know, sitting there with our kids, not being able to go away spur of the moment and go and camp somewhere and whatnot and the two of them being able to do it and we PITIED them. [Laughter] Instead of pitying OURSELVES, we pitied them!

Extract 14
Gerhardt (M1): We know people with no kids and when you see them you definitely think that they would love to have children. They're maybe alone, they haven't left anything behind, [or] when they're old they don't have kids to look after you in your old age. [...] I think that is definitely sort of built into us, maybe, programmed into us. I think that the decision not to have kids at all is a bigger decision, most probably, than the one to have kids.

Extract 15
Koos (M1):   [. . .] my brother doesn't have kids. That's also in the back of your mind. I'm not 100% sure why he doesn't. It's something in the family that wasn't discussed finally, whether it's his wife that can't fall pregnant or what the problem is. I'm not too sure, but he's older than me and he doesn't have children and that's in the back of your mind as well. So you are the only family member that can carry on the family. In our tradition, or in our culture, to carry on with the family name is quite an important thing.

It is clear to see that the couples here are described in all these extracts as lacking. The underlying assumption that married couples ought to have had children by a particular point is suggested by the reference to people's ages, which marks out the situation as odd or unconventional. In extract 13, even temporarily refraining from procreating as a married couple amounts to the deviation from the ordinary life course and opens married childless individuals up to being positioned as potentially defective and lacking. Likewise in extract 15 the implication is that one would normally expect married people of a certain age to have children, especially if their siblings do. Childlessness takes on a gendered perspective in this excerpt in that childlessness interrupts the patriarchal lineage of name. Since childlessness is understood by blaming the female partner's infertility, it is likely that she could also be held responsible for thwarting the patriarchal lineage.

Children are construed as all-important, sacred, or priceless and therefore the most valuable thing to "leave behind" (extract 14). As a result, the childfree life is portrayed as deficient and inferior to family life. In extract

13, in which Thuis discusses friends who postponed childbearing until they were much older, children were constructed as indisputably valuable. Comparing his own situation with that of their then-childfree friends, Thuis implies that the relative freedom that this childfree couple had is meaningless in relation to having children. Consequently, he positions these childfree people as objects of pity. Similarly, in extract 14 Gerhardt presumes that childfree people are lonely and alone. Having children is seen as leaving a legacy or a contribution to broader society and he invokes the ideals of altruism and self-sacrifice given by the child-centred view, implying not only a lack of productivity or meaningful contribution on the part of childfree people, but even self-interest or selfishness.

It is possible to see an instrumentalist view of children in this extract as well when Gerhardt suggests that one value of children is that they might care for their parents in their old age and value is ascribed to children as social resources. Here, an instrumentalist script works in conjunction with the child-centred script to construct children as valuable. This indicates the underlying pronatalism of both of these discursive resources in that children are seen as valuable, though for different, but not necessarily contradictory, reasons. The worth that is attributed to children is most often connected to the economic situation of families or class (Nauk, 2007; Nauk & Klaus, 2007) and owing to the middle class background of my participants, instrumentalist and economic constructions of children's worth did not really feature. However, as Meyer (2007) points out, various "social issues *tend* to be marked by the predominance of different discourses [but] these trends are patchy" (p. 87) as discursive resources exist side by side and reinforce (or oppose) one another. So, although the construction of children as emotionally priceless was certainly the most influential and central to most accounts, participants were able to draw on other conceptualisations of children's value. Hence, as Reynolds et al. (2007) maintain, people's narratives comprise of "a patchwork of 'quotations'" (p. 335) from various scripts which assist with the speaker's discursive purpose.

What is also apparent in extracts 13 to 14 above is how the construction of childlessness as deficiency allowed for the marginalising or minimising of choice. It is possible to see how the possibility that people might voluntarily *choose* childlessness was disregarded or discredited in people's accounts. This discursive tactic helped to maintain the pronatalist belief that parenthood is the only truly viable available choice. In extract 12 Petro maintains that people dismiss the possibility that her childlessness is chosen by attributing it to unfavourable circumstances beyond her control. She states that in a married couple scenario the presumption might be that she *cannot* have children, whereas if she remains single, people attribute her childlessness to a failure to find a suitable partner. Either way, the assumption is that her intentions for parenthood have been thwarted rather than seeing childlessness as voluntary. This assumption disregards the element of choice and

allows others to see her as deficient and to respond with pity. Ultimately the challenge posed by childlessness is explained away.

Similarly, in extracts 14 and 15 the narrators assume that their friends' childlessness is involuntary. In extract 14 Gerhardt maintains that the childfree people he encounters would in fact like to have children. Elize made a similar statement in her interview, saying, "I think most people, even people that choose not to have kids, deep down they want to have kids but they just wouldn't say it out loud." In addition, the construction of childbearing as natural or biologically pre-programmed further reinforces the rejection of childlessness as a truly valid choice for married heterosexuals. For this reason, the "decision" not to have children is also rendered curious. Gerhardt describes this as "a bigger decision than the decision to have kids". Speaking in terms of the "decision" to have or not have children, the narrator constructs having children as the standard or default option, possibly alluding to the notion of automatic childbearing (introduced in Chapter 1) where little or no conscious thought is dedicated to becoming a parent (Meyers, 2001). In contrast, the "decision" to remain childfree is seen as a more serious, alternative choice. In extract 15 Koos speculates that his brother's partner might be infertile. This indicates a broader trend in which women are assumed to be reproductively defective and frequently blamed for infertility, as Throsby and Gill (2004) report. This assumption is fuelled "by the traditional perception of women's bodies as fundamentally unpredictable and liable to failure" (Throsby & Gill, 2004, p. 337). The blaming of women means that they potentially face greater stigma than men in relation to childlessness, whether involuntary of chosen.

These constructions in which choice is marginalised suggest that the possibility of voluntarily choosing childlessness was unthinkable to participants so that it was often not taken into account. Minimising the element of choice through the depiction of childlessness as not truly chosen allowed for any reservations about parenthood to be trivialised or disregarded. This was achieved by construing childlessness as a temporary choice for young people so that their reservations about parenthood were downplayed or muted (Gillespie, 2000; Meyers, 2001). This is evident in the following extract in which the narrator accounts for her change of heart with regard to becoming a mother as she evokes the widespread notion that childlessness is a temporary "choice".

Extract 16

Elize (F2):   [Y]ou asked me what changed my mind. I think being in the relationship you're in changes your mind. I know with my ex I didn't wanna have kids and I used to tell him I don't want kids, because I think in the back of your mind you know "It's not gonna work out with you", especially me being so naïve, I never wanted to realise it, but something in the back of my mind already put a block there. Now, being with a kinder softer person, I can see myself being in love for a long time and getting married and having kids and having the whole, you know, the house and the picket fence. [Laughs] [...]

Tracy: Okay, and if you'd decided to never have children, how do you imagine your life would be?

Elize: I think it would be empty. Who wants to grow old with cats? I've got two already. I always tell Jacques I'm well on my way [to being] the old lady with the cats. I think it would be empty I think a child fulfils your life, I mean, the little things they say.

In this extract Elize describes how she changed her mind about "getting married and having kids". In this somewhat psychologised account she ascribes her initial reluctance about parenthood to an unconscious mental "block" that prevented her from realising the true reason for her unwillingness to be a parent. She also associates her initial decision to remain childfree with naïveté. Hence, this choice is associated to some degree with psychological "issues" as well as with immaturity. In this manner Elize discredits her initial reasons for wishing to forgo motherhood, which earlier in the interview she attributed to the fear of being an inadequate mother. Elize downplays this fear as she ascribes her change of heart to the realisation that her reluctance was related to not having an appropriate partner.

This account rests on the notion of a "turning point". Elize dissociates herself with any connotations of abnormality associated with her initial decision of voluntary childlessness and aligns herself with the recognisable normality of the usual heterosexual life path, signalled by her use of the "picket fence" metaphor. This metaphor is highly recognisable and signifies the conventionality but also highly idealised nature of this life course. She explains her turnaround by re-storying her initial decision to remain childless as a temporary decision. The success of this explanation may rely on the larger cultural assumption that childless women will inevitably change their minds with the onset of maturity and the assumed inevitability of heterosexual partnerships. This reinforces childlessness as a temporary choice and trivialises or disregards the reservations that she, and others, may have had in relation to parenthood (Gillespie, 2000).

Commenting on how she imagines her life would be if she had kept to her initial decision, she utilises the discursive tactic of childlessness as deficiency, depicting the alternative of chosen childlessness as representing an unfulfilled life. She also invokes a "deficit identity" (Reynolds & Taylor, 2007, p. 197) in the form of the common stereotype of childless women, namely, "the old lady with cats", perhaps more commonly known as the "spinster". This gender stereotype represents failed femininity, since neither of the defining feminine goals of marriage and motherhood have been attained. It therefore underscores the importance of marriage and childbearing to femininity and reinforces the construction of childlessness as deficiency (Meyers, 2001). The allusion to the spinster stereotype also suggests fear at the possibility of growing old alone due to circumstantial childlessness and/or not finding a suitable partner. The narrator ostensibly rejects this position, professing to her desire for "the picket fence" scenario, but the comment that she is "well on [her] way to becoming" the spinster stereotype indicates uncertainty and possibly alludes to fears around aging without having found a suitable partner. It suggests that she may very well end up old and alone, pointing to the

anxiety expressed by many of the younger women about finding the right partner (Carmichael & Whittaker, 2007).

As intimated above, another comparable way that the choice to remain childfree was discredited was to construe the decision as a sign of (emotional) immaturity. This construction was rooted in the common belief that childbearing is a sign of adulthood or maturity, as dictated by the dominant narrative of the heterosexual life course in which procreation features as a definitive end point (Reynolds et al., 2007). This appeared to be a commonly held view as several participants associated parenthood with adulthood and maturity and positioning those who express the wish to remain childfree as lacking in maturity. This relates to ideas around childbearing and rearing as normal developmental stages in the progression to adulthood, which I have already discussed (Mollen, 2006).

Extract 17

Anel (F2): That would depend on **how young** we were. I think **a lot of young people think that they don't want children**. So, I think it would depend on the age of the person that I met. [...] If that person's sort of **mature** in everything. If I met someone who was **mature in everything else** except that they wouldn't have kids, then I probably wouldn't pursue it. [...] If I met someone who didn't want kids and I wasn't sure if it was just because you know he's **not mature enough** to think about life in that way, 'cause he's still in the "I'm gonna get everything out of my life and my career and education" and thinks that maybe kids are a hamper on that then I'll say to him, "You know just be aware of the fact that I do want kids one day." I think that it's important to think about the **maturity** of the person that you're talking to. I, personally, think that girls should always date older guys because I think that girls mature much faster than guys.

Extract 18

Tracy: And that response of "Just wait you'll change your mind"?

Petro (F2): And then they, another thing that more and more I see, that they actually force their grandchildren on you. So, "Just hold the baby, if you hold them then you will like…" And I'm like, "I can hold the baby and the baby is beautiful and I can love the baby, but it does not… [...] It's your child will you please take it back home [Laughter] I don't want it". But they think that a little thing like that, being a **silly girl you didn't think this through** so (.) we will HELP you to make the decision.

In extract 17 the desire to have children is described as an age-appropriate phenomenon. As I discussed in chapter six, this also is gendered since the narrator claims that "girls mature faster than boys" do and have the tendency to become preoccupied with motherhood at a younger age. The association of maturity and childbearing is evident in the statement of a future partner as "mature in everything else except" the desire to have children. In this extract, expressions of the wish to remain childfree are discredited as related to immaturity, as the narrator states that many "young people *think* that they don't want children". Once again, the rhetoric of choice is employed here as voluntary childlessness is constructed as a temporary choice, which is also related to the self-oriented, youthful desire to "get everything out of life" and pursue career objectives. The insinuation is that upon reaching maturity one will inevitably change one's mind and/or be prepared make the appropriate sacrifices (to set one's ambitions aside) in order to be a parent. Hence, the influence of the child-centred discourse is obvious as selfishness is equated with immaturity and sacrifice is associated with

maturity. Those who do not change their mind and surmount their inclination toward self-interest are therefore open to being positioned as selfish.

This sort of dismissive response is also evident in extract 18 in which Petro shares her experiences of people attempting to persuade her to change her mind about remaining childfree. In this extract voluntary childlessness is also linked with immaturity as the speaker reports being positioned as "a silly girl". She describes pushy relatives who wish to "help [her] to make the decision", presumably by showing her what she might be missing out on or by triggering some sort of maternal response through exposing her to infants, claiming that they believe that she has not thought through the decision. The implication, as pointed out in other research (e.g., Gillespie, 2000), is that she does not know her own mind and will inevitably change it upon realisation of the repercussions or gravity of her choice. This was also implied by other participants, such as Stefanus, who maintained that his daughter and her partner had initially "said that they don't want children, until they realised what they were saying". The implication of such "conversion tales", as Carmichael and Whittaker (2007, p. 127) refer to them, is not only that "[d]ecisions to remain childless are not necessarily irrevocable" (p. 127), but also that one will inevitably regret one's choice. As a result, childfree people are regarded with scepticism and mistrust (Gillespie, 2000; Mollen, 2006).

Those who wished to remain childfree had to talk against this belief that people will either change their minds or regret their decision. In the following excerpts, for example, the narrators address the possibility of regretting the decision not to have children.

Extract 19

Franco (M2): I think there's a possibility that I might regret [it] if I don't have kiddies. But I can't say exactly why. Um, I might, I think that I might regret it—not having children—just as much as it's likely that I'll regret having children. […] if I don't have kiddies I don't know what I'm missing out on, if I do and I regret it for some or other reason, I mean it must be a pretty serious regret, because it's your own child and stuff like that. So if I have to, have to, like, work out statistically to minimise my regrets then I'll still lean on the not having children. If I have to minimise my possible future regret and then if you have a kiddie you might not regret it so… [Laugh] Um, I do think when you have a child you add a whole dimension to your life and that's got the potential to be wonderful and great, but if you've never had that dimension then it's OK. I'll be OK.

Extract 20

Petro (F2): The road less travelled... [Pause] That's why I actually had to think it through. If you make the decision then you know why you made it and there will always be, it's probably biologically programmed into us and emotionally, that you would like to and that there will be a missing of. If I had my own little one and then when I'm sixty then there's actually somebody to look after me when everybody else dies, in that sense. So, maybe yes, I'm sure that there will be a yearning, there will be a missing, something that's not complete. But having thought through it and actually logically and sanely made the decision. So it's, you made the decision, you have to live with it.

Both of the narrators argue against the widespread belief that those who decline parenthood will inevitably regret their decision, engaging in the rhetoric of "choice" to do so, but, at the same time, they reiterate the construction of childlessness as entailing loss.   The narrators position themselves as rational agents of choice

and juxtapose the emotional and/or thoughtless "urge" to procreate with the properly thought out and considered choice to remain childfree. In this way, the speakers recognise that some loss may be incurred by remaining childless, but maintain that potential regret would be minimised by their rational approach. Moreover, Franco even alludes to the possibility of "regret" involved in *having* children. This counter positioning of those who choose to procreate implies that there may be negatives to having children too. He therefore disrupts the relative silence or muting of the disadvantages of parenthood, to some degree challenging the construction of parenting as a tremendously positive experience.

Yet, at the same time both speakers reiterate the common pronatalist belief that children "add a whole dimension to your life" and that "there will be a missing". Neither of them counters this image of childlessness by citing the benefits of remaining childfree or considering potentially positive outcomes thereof. Rather, they repeat the construction of the voluntarily childless as entailing "yearning" and potential social isolation or loneliness. This is part of a common trope in cohort two regarding the fear of "missing out" of "losing out" in regards to parenthood. It is interesting to notice that even those participants who expressed a wish to abstain from childbearing or reluctance about parenthood alluded to the possibility of "missing out" and described their choice to remain childfree in these terms of lack and deficiency. This bears witness to the power of the child-centred discourse in relation to parenthood decisions as it potentially obscures both the disadvantages of parenthood as well as the potential benefits of "non-parenthood".

I have thus far demonstrated how those who purposely do not procreate—women and men alike—are not taken on their own terms, but instead measured by the idealised pronatalist standards. Ultimately, a childless life is conceptualised as an unfeasible and unappealing choice (Morell, 2000). For this reason, those who voluntarily take this ostensibly unthinkable option were positioned as abnormal and deviant in various ways as I show in the next section. Choosing to remain childfree does not cohere with the altruistic decision-making model that predominated in the talk, and so the voluntarily childless were positioned as "Other".

3.2.2.   The damaged or deviant "Other"

 "[C]hosen childlessness is often incomprehensible to others who feel the need to express their bewilderment" (Gillespie, 2000, p. 230) and this was certainly apparent in some of the reactions of members of cohort two to the hypothetical scenarios of infertility or of a future partner who wishes to remain childfree. These scenarios were most often introduced by my questioning and disrupted the taken for granted nature of future parenthood. The possibility that a future partner might not want to have children arose for participants from cohort two when discussing possible disagreements regarding parenthood decisions.   Many of these

participants assigned motivations to chosen childlessness that helped to render this unexpected, "deviant" desire understandable.

Possible explanations for not wanting children often focused on personal deficit or impairment (i.e., implying that there is, or must be, something wrong with someone who wishes to abstain from procreating). While such descriptions may not display the enmity toward the childfree that much of the literature documents, it certainly serves to reinforce the construction of such people as "sour, maladjusted misanthropes" (Meyer, 2001, p. 760). This response has been highlighted by other researchers (e.g., Gillespie, 2000; Letherby, 1999, 2002) who maintain that while childfree women in general are considered "Other", the outsider status of those who have *chosen* childlessness is further constructed as deviance. As I have stated, my research shows that men who choose not to procreate are also stigmatised and this is evident in the "Othering" talk that manifest itself in both the younger women's and the younger men's attempts to make sense of the choice of voluntary childlessness. A common discursive tactic arose in which hypothetical future partners' wish to remain childfree was attributed to individual abnormality of some kind and focused on negative reasons that might deter the person from becoming a parent. The wish to remain childfree was therefore individualised and pathologised, positioning those who express this wish an exception, rather than the rule.

A common construction of future partners who did not wish to procreate was of an individual who is reluctant about or fearful of parenting due to bad childhood experiences (e.g., divorce or child abuse) which cause psychological or emotional trauma. This sort of explanation reiterates the idea that children from certain non-ideal contexts, like the fatherless family, may be more inclined to perpetuate these undesirable conditions in their own lives. It individualises deviant desire and allows it to potentially be explained away as an anomaly. Moreover, such reasoning serves to minimise the non-conformist's intentionality, thereby preserving the notion of the desire to procreate as a normal and universal desire. In other words, under normal circumstances the person would choose to procreate but negative experiences have coloured her or his vision of parenthood. Thus explained, the person who chooses to abstain is depicted as someone who can possibly be "cured" or convinced. This is evident in each of the following extracts, which emphasise the potential for their reluctant partner to be persuaded to change her or his mind.

Extract 21

Jakobus (M2): Ja (.) uh, it's a good question because it depends on the background of that person. You know, say the girl was (.) or the guy was **abused when he was a child** and **fearful** of these things, that's pretty hard to beat. If the conviction is so strong, it's out of hand but at least if you can have, if the negotiation can bring out things, because I struggle to believe in the other person knowing everything that there is to know about you which is relevant to the relationship. There's nothing that can break it if all is on the table. So, that's why I think the conversation would probably develop in saying that "OK, you don't want to have a child, I do, let's… um… hmmm" Ja, it's quite a hard one! Hmmm. Jis, I'd say, "OK, you don't want a child well, you know, please tell me the reasons". "OK reasons are you were **abused [as] a child**. I'm very sorry to hear about that"… Jis, well not so formal [laugh] [...] then, I

think, if it's not against her will, I'd take her to a crèche [laughter]. I'd probably take her to my old crèche that I went to and we'd spend the day there, or spend like an hour or so there. You know, just to let her have some time with children if she hasn't already. And if she still has that conviction in her, then I'd say "Well times have been fun. You know what I want I know what you want." Then, is it going to be advantageous to both of us if we carry on? And if the answer is "no" then we stay friends. At least if I've given an opportunity to her to consider it and have time with children to, um, come to terms with it. I don't think you can ever come to terms with a thing like **child abuse**, but just come close to it and experience the love and care of a child, which she never had, and the love that you give to that child, or the love being given to that child. You can see that sometimes not all people are **evil towards children**.

Extract 22

Dalena (F2):   I will ask him his reasons. Maybe he had **a very bad child experience**. Maybe his parents weren't good to him and therefore he feels that he won't be a good father to the children. Maybe it's psychologically (.) maybe he's something messed up there ((points to her head)) or something [laugh]. So we'll have to sort out our issues. Take the skeletons out the closet; fix him before he can actually get involved. He needs to fix his life and fix his problems and his bad memories before he can go into something. Ja, I'm pretty sure that if someone had issues in their lives and you're there and you help them through those issues. I mean it's useless telling the guy, "Sorry I've got feelings now for you but I can't have you because you don't want to have children so I'm just gonna push you away, I don't need you anymore." I would work through their problems with them. I'd be the support for them and help them understand that having children isn't bad. (.) It all depends on why they don't want to have children. [...] If I were the woman in that case, **there's got to be a very big reason why**. Maybe (.) something in the family went wrong, maybe, I don't know… Maybe he's got a fear that he's not going to be a good enough father. Maybe they've been having marital problems or something and he's not sure that he wants to stay with her any more. Maybe he's scared that he's gonna end up messing up in a relationship and then they're going to have these children without fathers and mothers, spilt, you know. Most of my friends I've spoken to have said, "Look, I don't want to have any children, because what if I get divorced? Then they're going to end up like me!" type of thing. So, there's a lot of pain involved.

The "reasons" that are offered in these extracts are deemed as acceptable or understandable reasons that a person would opt out of having children—as suggested by the narrator in extract 22 who states that "there's got to be a very big reason why". These reasons include "child abuse" and other painful childhood experiences, "fear", and/or psychological "problems". These are posited as things that might dissuade someone from having children, clearly positioning those who desire to remain childfree as "Other", deviant or abnormal, and suggesting that such a decision is made due to personal damage or defect of some kind, or as Dalena asserted, being "psychologically messed up". In other words, there must be something wrong with a person who chooses to abstain from reproducing. According to this line of reasoning, it is inconceivable that someone could rationally decide to remain childfree or that this choice could have positive outcomes. However, the same reasoning is not applied to those who do wish to have children. That is, it is not acknowledged or considered that decisions to *have* children could also be made due to some sort of emotional or psychological impairment. Instead, it is voluntary childlessness that is associated with irrational decision-making. Moreover, individuals who wish to procreate do not have to account for their desire because they occupy a position of normality, while, in contrast, an explanation is required from those who wish to deviate from the norm (Gillespie, 2000). They must provide "reasons" which are then judged as adequate or not. Thus, as Gillespie (2000) points out, the normalisation of motherhood—and in this case fatherhood as well—means that those

who choose to be childfree are called upon to account for themselves in ways that those who become mothers, and fathers, do not.

It is also possible to see that the speakers are caught in a conundrum presented by the possibility of their future partner not sharing the desire to have children. On one hand, they wish to preserve their relationship, while, on the other, they want to fulfil their desire to have children. Explaining the choice to remain childfree as related to some sort of personal upset or psychological distress offers a way out of this dilemma as the recalcitrant partner is able to be "fixed" or cured of their misapprehension about childbearing. Jakobus's suggestion that he would take his partner to a crèche in order to expose her to children is reminiscent of Petro's account of relatives trying to persuade her to change her mind by exposing her to their grandchildren (see extract 18). In these extracts, the statements "that's pretty hard to beat" (extract 21) and "there's got to be a very big reason why" (extract 22) suggest a conflict of interest, even setting up somewhat combative positioning. Positioning the partner who wishes to remain childfree as deviant or abnormal, however, justifies the resolution that it should be *this* partner who capitulates rather than the other way around. So, clearly, refraining from having children is not entertained as a viable option (Morell, 2000).

It is evident that this discursive tactic in which the deviant desire to remain childfree is individualised, and even pathologised, allowed the narrators to retain their own positive positioning. Narrators positioned themselves as understanding and helpful in relation to their future partner's understandable concerns and "problems" rather than as someone who wishes to get her or his own way in a conflict of interests. Had they considered possible positive or advantageous reasons that someone might wish to remain childfree—such as greater personal freedom or time to give of oneself to a particular cause perhaps—then they themselves may have run the risk of being positioned as selfish or unreasonable. However, by positioning their future partner as someone who might otherwise have chosen to procreate, this choice remains desirable and "normal".

Suggestions of dysfunctionality and damage seem to imply that no one would truly freely choose "non-parenthood" (Meyers, 2001) and for this reason "there MUST be something wrong with you" (Petro, extract 4). This sort of explanation is reinforced by the fact that it does not allow for any potentially positive outcomes of chosen childlessness, which would then explain people's wish to abstain from parenthood in favour of other pleasures (other than those children are seen to bring). Therefore, no benefits are associated with childlessness and so the choice to remain childless is construed as peculiar or absurd. Thus, choice was the crux of the matter again as certain parenthood decisions were disregarded or disbelieved and at times even treated as temporary. The rhetoric of choice featured significantly in regulatory discursive tactics such as this

one and was drawn on to explain away deliberate childlessness by constructing is as not really chosen, so positioning those who do not procreate as exceptions (or anomalies).

3.2.3. The selfish "Other"

Ironically, at the same time as any pleasures or benefits to remaining childfree are ignored, the argument that voluntarily childless people are selfish was also deployed. In this rendition of the discursive tactic, the possible advantages of childlessness (such as greater personal and economic freedom) *were* acknowledged, but the childfree were described as "intrinsically selfish and unwilling to make the sacrifices that parenthood requires" (Carmichael & Whittaker, 2007, p. 124). The childfree are therefore positioned as selfish.   So, although the possibility of accruing advantages from childlessness is acknowledged, this is still cast in a deviant, socially unacceptable light.

The indictment of selfishness forms part of the broader, overarching preoccupation with serving the best interests of children and/or addressing their needs and so the child-centred script is central in this regard. As I have shown, this script was mobilised to valorise procreation and assisted in resourcing constructions of children as special and supremely important. According to this script, children are a blessed expense, that is, their worth outweighs any sacrifice made on their behalf (Zelizer, 1994). This was also evident in claims that a child should be wanted "for its own sake" and "for the right reasons". In other words, children should not be conceived in response to an individual's own needs. Likewise, abstaining from having children should also not be motivated by the desire to fulfil one's own needs. An altruistic model of parenthood decision-making was therefore discernable.   As a consequence, those who choose to meet their own needs through remaining childless violate the notion of altruism that permeates talk about both parenthood and parenting decisions. The accusation of selfishness is therefore an indictment on focusing on one's own needs in relation to reproduction, for whatever reason (Gillespie, 2000). It acted as a constraint on narration because this appellation could conceivably be applied to anyone who deviated from the child-centred norm. For instance, many participants admonished themselves for being "selfish" in specifying a preference for a child of a particular gender. This is evident in the extract below in which the participant responds to my question about how she imagines a childfree life.

Extract 23

Dalena (F2):   Self-consumed, to be honest. If I didn't have children, if I didn't have a relationship I'd be me, myself and I. I'll probably end up wearing the best fashion. I'll live in an incredible flat somewhere. I don't think I'll own a house. No, I won't own a house; I'll have a flat somewhere in a larney area. Or, alternatively if I don't do office work, I'll be travelling along with my entomology professors or something, going around the world, doing new experiments, getting out there, travelling, but I don't want that, it's so empty. There's no purpose almost. I want to have children definitely. I don't really want to picture my life without them.

Dalena describes the childfree life as one that is "self-consumed" and "empty" largely because it is centred on one's own needs and interests. Children are again construed as imbuing life with providing meaning and purpose so that sacrificing one's own interests for them is seen as more desirable than "selfishly" pursuing one's own interests or attaining one's own goals.

It is possible to see how the individual's own needs were set in opposition to those of the child, giving rise to the corresponding dichotomous subject positions of either selfless or selfish/self-centred. This selfless/selfish positioning is central to this discursive tactic and governs much of the talk around reproductive decision-making. This is made clear in the extracts that follow.

Extract 24

Franco (M2):   [Having children] would only be **selfish** for some couples for others it won't be because they have completely different perceptions about children and their own lives. For some people not having children would be selfish. [...] I mean if you have two people that love life and they get married and they don't want children, for them not having kiddies isn't selfish because there was [sighs] I don't know it's really difficult [...] I think, I think, many people have kiddies because there's a need they wanna fulfil and then it's selfish. So I think every child that's born because they have to fulfil a parent's need is selfish. But then the other side, I guess it then does depend on the motivation for not having a child, your reasons for not having a child would determine whether it's selfish or not. But you can also ask is it selfish of the couple or one of the individuals. [...]I'll just be concerned about the little bugger from birth to like the day I die. I don't want that either. Ja. So in that sense, by not having a baby I'm fulfilling one of my own needs [laugh].

The issue in this extract is with the motivations behind parenthood decisions. As we see later in the narrative, when the speaker reflects on his own reluctance to become a parent he implicitly condemns his reasons for wanting to abstain from having children as self-centred since he would be "fulfilling one of [his] own needs". It is precisely this motive (the fulfilment of one's own needs) that is deemed as unacceptable and "selfish". As this example suggests, this argument gives rise to a powerful way of governing reproductive decisions. Following this logic, any decisions related to procreation should be guided by altruism and selflessness. It is not the adult's/prospective parent's needs that are important, but those of the child/child-to-be.

The allegation of selfishness on the part of the childfree often bore with it a tone of reproach. For example, one participant stated, "I just get so pissed off when there's people that can have kids and they don't want babies" (Elize). This was also evident in childfree people's reports of being overtly questioned, criticised or admonished for their choice. For example, in Petro's account (extract 3 above) she tells of the questioning she experienced in relation to her wish to remain childfree: "Why do you want to go on studying? Why do you want a career?". In this extract, Petro shows an awareness of this potentially troublesome position, stating that she will be seen as "very selfish not to have [a child]". Mollen (2006) and Gillespie (2000) report similar findings. It appeared then that, for the most part, the choice to remain childfree was met with disapproval and, as in Letherby's (2002) findings, the childfree were often construed as "too selfish" to have a child.

In line with the theme of altruism, having children was cast as a noble endeavour for a cause greater than oneself. The belief that having children is a positive contribution to humanity or a way of making a difference was expressed by several participants and is illustrated in the following two examples. In these extracts, choosing to refrain from having children due to non-ideal environmental conditions is construed as a less honourable choice. Attention to altruism on a broader scale appears to anticipate the counter-argument that children's wellbeing is being considered by those who choose not to procreate under suboptimal conditions. This shows how the child-centred script may be used strategically and politically in the micro-political context of talk about parenthood decision-making (as I discuss more fully in the subsequent chapter).

> *Extract* 25
>
> Anel (F2): A lot of people don't want children merely because they feel that the world is such a horrible place to bring children up in. I think that's a very pessimistic view and I think having children is a hopeful act as well. [...] There is the feeling that you want to leave something behind I think. Especially with people who feel that they've accomplished a lot in their lives, they want to give that accomplishment to someone else or give them the tools to accomplish something as well. For me, I'm very big on education so [...] having a well-educated, conscious child, someone who's conscious and curious about the world around them and may someday go on to make a big contribution (.) I think **your children are your last hope of contributing something to the world**, indirectly. Maybe even people who feel like they haven't accomplished a lot in life, but for me I've always felt that I'd love to leave my child with the tools to change the world.

> *Extract* 26
>
> Andrè (M2): Unfortunately now there are so many irresponsible things happening. It's actually heart-breaking. I don't know where the world is going. It's actually a disaster. We are still fortunate. [...] I don't know what they ((points in the direction of his children in the next room)) will experience.
>
> Tracy: If you had thought of that before you had children, do you think that might have put you off?
>
> Andrè: [No]. I think that's also an irresponsible way of thinking about it because then you deny your own **responsibility**, because who must change the world? [...] So I think it will be a sad day when people start saying, "We are not going to have children", because I think it's selfish. It's **totally selfish** (.) but again that's my personal opinion. We must control the world. If everybody controls the world in a responsible manner and enjoys it also, I mean, jis it's a great place. [...] Every time has got its good and bad. How would it be if the 1820 Settlers had said, "Not the hell, we're not going to have children in this place"? If it wasn't for them, we wouldn't have been here.

The speakers in these extracts invoke "the socio-political, religious, and familial idealism of creating the next generation" (Mollen, 2006, p. 278) inherent in pronatalist discourse, suggesting that it is the children who must "make a big contribution" (extract 25) and "change the world" (extract 26). The belief that it is better not to have children under less than ideal conditions could itself be considered noble (as some participants did argue).Instead this antinatalist stance is deemed "pessimistic", "irresponsible" and "totally selfish". This indicates a lapse in the child-centred view, where it is in actual fact *not* children's best interests that are being advanced, but the parents' interests—their legacy or "last hope of contributing something to the world" (extract 25). Hence, childbearing was pictured as part of a larger endeavour that renders it an act of self-sacrifice and altruism, as indicated by the allusion to the bravery and selflessness of the 1820 Settlers in extract 26. According to this argument, one has a responsibility to humanity so that failing to reproduce is equated with failing to take up this responsibility and as the ultimate form of selfishness, as suggested by the penultimate line of extract 26. Governed by the dichotomous positions of selflessness/selfishness, the child-

centred script is central to this discursive tactic in that choices which are motivated by the desire to meet one's own needs, including through choosing childlessness, was framed as selfish and spoken of in terms of deviance and abnormality.

4. CONCLUSION

Talk that valorises reproduction and that which denigrates non-reproduction and the childfree, according to Meyers (2001), are two sides of the same coin. Collectively, these ways of speaking serve to discursively render procreation as the only viable choice. The only choice for married heterosexuals, that is. I have shown in this chapter how this occurred through the simultaneous glorification of reproduction and denigration of non-reproduction. Crucial to this project, is the uncontested construction of the sacred child: the guarantor of personal and marital fulfilment.

This sacralised construction of childhood, which centres on the intrinsic emotional worth of children, is at the heart of idealised images of "procreative heterosexual bliss" (Meyers, 2001, p. 762), in which parenthood is imbued with the promise of pleasure and with incontrovertible value, while its costs and challenges are relatively absent or muted. Such idealised renditions of, specifically, *biological* parenthood call into question the autonomy of those who choose to procreate, particularly when one considers the degree to which biological parenthood is normalised so that for many it is reported to be an [unconscious] desire formed well before adulthood. It is against the idealised images of "natural" parenthood that the horror of childlessness is juxtaposed, in such a way that non-reproduction looms as both undesirable and unfeasible. The contrasting of the fulfilment and joys of procreation with the emptiness and longing of childlessness is heightened by the failure to take into account any possible advantages of non-reproduction. Thus, biological parenthood emerges as the preferred life path, rendering alternatives undesirable, even unthinkable. As a result, "[h]eterosexuality is not only normative, it is imbued with a procreation imperative" (Meyers, 2001, p. 758) and incorporates a pronatalist injunction of compulsory parenthood for married heterosexuals.

However, as Butler (1993a) asserts, the "unthinkable" is always fully within the culture, threatening to undermine its norms, and so deliberately chosen childlessness, particularly among married heterosexuals, troubles the norm of procreative heterosexuality by disobeying the mandate to reproduce. Hence, as I have shown, this threat must be managed and so, such instances of non-reproduction were cast as anomalous—and so dismissed or explained away—or overtly disparaged by positioning dissidents as "Other", that is, as deficient, deviant, damaged, or selfish. Since non-reproduction is not acknowledged as having any real advantages or seen as a truly viable choice, those who do choose it voluntarily were met with incredulity, mistrust, and even animosity, as speakers openly denigrated non-reproduction.

In this way, the norm of procreative heterosexuality was defended building on the construction of reproduction as a non-choice introduced in the preceding chapter, emerging here as an injunction to procreate. As I have already intimated in this chapter, this injunction appears to be most powerful for married couples, and in this way married men who do not procreate are also stigmatised. In the following chapter I highlight just how central marriage was to the construction of heterosexual procreativity. Though, I argue, it functioned largely as an invisible norm, marriage was significant to the concealment of male involvement in reproduction.

9

Marriage as a pivotal transitional point in the canonical couple narrative: The conjugalising of procreation

[Parenthood] is a strong expectation . . . and in this ideological context women [and men] who are married or in stable heterosexual relationships need less to consider whether or not to have children but rather when to have children, how many to have or in what social context to have them (Sevón, 2005, p. 463).

---

1. INTRODUCTION

A largely unstated feature of the narratives was the fact that it is only within the marriage context specifically that automatic or passive decision-making is allowed to unfold and to occur spontaneously. In the previous chapter I alluded to the fact that parenthood was an expectation for married people specifically. This expectation points to the containment of reproduction within the marital context, so that marriage governs the appropriate timing and acceptable conditions for reproduction to occur. On the whole, marriage was taken for granted as a given. All but one of the participants situated childbearing within the marital relationship. It is possible to see that childbearing was frequently evoked as "the next step" after marriage by the majority of the participants.   This was evident in the older participants, who were all married. They discussed marriage uncritically, constructing it as the obvious and natural antecedent to having children. Marriage (sometimes preceded by courtship/engagement) was most frequently the starting point for the accounts of the older participants' retrospective accounts. Those who did not begin in this way inevitably drew on the life course narrative elsewhere in their account. However, this went largely unreflected upon and none of them explicitly stated that marriage was the preferred site for parenthood.

Thus, marriage was identified by most participants as a prerequisite to childbearing and constructed as a prominent part of and a *precursor* to childbearing. Drawing on canonical couple narrative the assumption was that "love leads 'normally' to marriage" (Reynolds & Taylor, 2004, p. 201), childbearing was constructed as the logical endpoint or "culmination" of this relationship, bringing to bear powerful socio-cultural norms of love and romance that support automatic childbearing. Marriage featured as a pivotal "transitional point" (Reynolds & Taylor, 2004, p. 206) within this storyline because it is specifically within the context of marriage that reproduction is allowed to unfold as part of the heteronormative life course. The spontaneity of automatic childbearing that participants defended was allowed by the heterosexual married couple context, since passive decision-making is only realistically possible or permitted within the context of marriage. Marriage therefore forms the moral context in which childbearing is legitimated, sanctioning some reproductive decisions and censuring others (Macleod, 2003; Meyers, 2001).

Marriage was significant not only in determining the timing of parenthood but also the ideal conditions under which children should be born. In this chapter I examine the underlying assumption that marriage and the creation and maintenance of the nuclear family—a male-female dyad with children—is both normal and, importantly, beneficial to children (Macleod, 2002). Accordingly, the child-centred script featured prominently and was often employed within talk about the ideal conditions for childbearing in order to legitimise the nuclear family form as the most appropriate context in which children's needs can be fully met and to render this the sanctioned site for parenthood. The notion of "children's needs", as I argued earlier, is entrenched in the child-centred discourse and based upon a view of the child as helpless, passive, and, wholly reliant on her/his parents (Woodhead, 1990).   Needs talk was also used in various ways by the research participants to accomplish particular situated purposes.   Implicit in their talk, then, are the expert voices and often psychologised understandings of childhood and parenting.

I shall concentrate on the way that marriage featured as a key transitional point in the heterosexual life course, governing decisions associated with first parenthood. These decisions were made central in the narratives, since parenthood itself was unquestioned and unquestionable, as I have demonstrated, that is, a non-choice. In addition, it is possible to see that the construction of parenthood as a non-choice entails relatively passive self-positioning. As I discuss in the next chapter, participants were able to reclaim some agency by shifting the focus to matters of associated decision-making, such as timing and ideal conditions as Esmé put it, "when and how and where?". It is possible to see to some extent in the past chapters that there is a common thread running through many of the narratives in which parenthood is deemed to be largely a matter of timing as narrators speak of deciding when to start a family. These were matters in which participants were able to exercise control and present themselves as more or less actively making decisions, particularly those that were seen as congruent with the child-centred script.   In this way, participants could position themselves as responsible and active child-centred decision-makers. Consequently, the focus was deflected from their passive decision-making regarding becoming a parent at all and/or their lack of reflection on the issue to questions of timing and conditions. As a consequence, the original question of male involvement in decision-making recedes. This rhetorical manoeuvre serves to put the discussion back on track, so to speak. In this chapter, I shall show how the focus was shifted to matters of timing and ideal conditions, which were matters in which they showed active decision-making and, significantly, were congruent with the child-centred script.

2.   MARRIAGE AS A STABLE FOUNDATION FOR THE COUPLE AND THEIR CHILD

Most of the participants spoke about marriage ensuring that their relationship was "stable" before having children. Marriage was deemed to provide the ideal conditions for childbearing because it meets the child's "need" for stability and security. Likewise, in the context of gay parenting, Almack (2006) asserts that "the overall focus emphasised children's need for stability and the belief that 'marriage' is the surest way to bring

up their children. This notion of stability for the child is firmly linked to living with the biological mother and father" (p. 8). In my study, marriage was depicted as a lasting relationship, which, owing to its legally binding nature, provided stability and security for both the parents and, along with a reliable income, offers children continuity, stability, and emotional well-being in turn. In this respect, marriage was often described by members of cohort two as a "foundation" for childbearing or, in Wouter's words, a "foundation of stability". These are all responses to my follow-up questions about marriage.

Extract 5

Wouter (M2):	But, I guess you first need the wife <u>before</u> you get the kids!
Tracy**:**	So you would want to be in a marriage relationship before you had children?
Wouter**:**	Ja. […] I'm not inflexible, but (.) that's the way I always envisioned it, you know? For no specific reason, just, I think (.) sort of the knowledge of some sort of **stability**, I guess, again it's important when deciding on having children. I guess, I would like to be in a relationship that is **committed** to that sort of point <u>before</u> I start having children.

Extract 6

Tracy:	OK, […] you mentioned that you would have to be married, why would that be important for you? […]
Jakobus (M2)**:**	I think marriage is a symbol. It's a symbol of unconditional love for one another that you are willing to take the step. The thing is, I will be completely insecure to have a child with someone <u>before</u> we declare that unconditional love for one another because the having of the child would be the culmination of our love for each other and basically it would the supreme result of our undying love […] for one another, yeah. And that is why it would basically be, I wanna say, **irresponsible** to have a child <u>before</u> you're married because there are so many things that can … they say that marriage is a dinosaur, but at least it's better than having no recognition of anything. I think that's why I'd rather get married. I think it would be (better for the child?). Oh, yes, I don't think, I KNOW. To have a stable household, like I said, it would be because he'd have no problems with us, he or she, thinking, "Oh hell mommy and daddy might split." Because ai […] Ja, I've got a lot of friends whose parents did divorce and it is pretty traumatising. I was also pretty traumatised by these things. Ja, that is a very good question, whether it is better for the child that we are married. I think it's better for the child because I mean the thought of abandonment is inconceivable, it's absolutely terrible. The parent, if he's not willing to take responsibility for it at least let him have a duty under the law to take care of that child.

Extract 7

Tracy:	One thing that I wanted to ask about is, it seems that it's important for you to be in a married relationship?
Mariska (F2):	Ja, I couldn't do it without that **security**. Maybe that's just the **weak female part of me** but that's what I want.
Tracy:	So it's not just about your values or religious beliefs, but also about the security of commitment?
Mariska:	Ja, definitely. I've even been like that in dating. That's why a lot of guys have run away from me [laughter]. I've never gone into dating like, "Ah well this can be okay for a year and then fizzle out". I've been like that since I've been little actually. I want all **commitment** or nothing.

Excerpt 8

Elize (F2):	Ja, married and [then] have kids. I think with the person that I love I would want to be married and, you know, [then] bring my children into the world in, you know? A lot of **old values** have fallen away, but I think it's (best?). [...] like being married, go on honeymoon and settle for maybe like a year [laughs].

As these extracts illustrate, marriage signified an enduring "commitment" that provides a degree of certainty, "stability" (extract 5), and "security" (extract 7) for a couple and, in turn, for their children. The nature and quality of the parents' relationship, and its endurance, was therefore seen as significant for the child's welfare. In extract 6, for instance, the narrator explicitly states that having married parents is "better for the child"

because the married couple relationship represents "a stable household" and makes the child feel secure. Childbearing was therefore depicted as ideally being contained within marriage and the nuclear family, comprising of a female-male dyad with (biological) children, which was construed as ensuring the child's emotional well-being. This construction is reinforced in extract 6 by the allusion to the "trauma" caused by divorce and the fear of "abandonment". (I shall address negative portrayals of non-conjugal situations later in this chapter). Consequently, participants expressed a desire to be married *before* having children. The issue, therefore, is the appropriate timing of parenthood. In extract 6, for example, Jakobus's concern is not with having a child out of wedlock *per se*, but rather with pre-marital childbearing, that is, with not waiting until the appropriate time to procreate. The presumption, it appears, underlying this talk is that marriage is inevitable and the speakers do not question marriage as a norm. Furthermore, the idea of waiting until one is married implicitly condemns early, pre-marital reproduction, since is prescribes a particular time within life span development for parenthood.

It is also evident from the extracts above that participants were not only responding to my questioning, but also addressing the broader discursive context. In defending the necessity of marriage, participants had to talk against possible counter arguments that circulate within larger debates about the relevance or necessity of marriage in contemporary society. Acknowledging counter arguments in this way contributes to the rhetorical force of one's own argument (Riley, 2003). This can be seen in extract 6 where Jakobus refers to the claim that "marriage is a dinosaur", as well as extract 7 in which Mariska shows an awareness of liberal feminist scripts which counter the traditional notion that women *need* to be married. These counter arguments—that marriage is unnecessary, no longer relevant, or out-dated—hold potentially troubled positions for the participants as old fashioned, conservative, or "weak". In order to avoid this negative positioning, the participants adopted a moral position, given by the child-centred script. This is clear in extracts 6 and 8. In extract 8 Elize refers to "old values", suggesting some sort of moral decline or decay in contemporary society. Jakobus positions unwed parents as "irresponsible" in extract 6. Reference to children's wellbeing therefore offered a way of evading undesirable positioning and allowed participants to construct an alternative socially desirable position of "good parent", who puts the child's needs first.

Following this line of reasoning, speakers claimed that getting married is responsible, as can be seen in the following extract in which the issue, once more, is with pre-marital childbearing and in which some interesting rhetorical work occurs.

Extract 9

Anel (F2):   I don't condemn people who have kids <u>before</u> they're married. It happens. Sometimes it happens on purpose, sometimes it happens by accident and you make the best of the situation, but I think if you were planning a child and you were planning to raise a family [then] I just think **it's the responsible thing to do**. If you have a baby and you're not married there's nothing wrong with your family, but I

just think if you're planning, if you have the advantage of knowing beforehand I want my child and this is the ideal situation that I want my child in. I think it's **just responsible to raise a child in a married couple situation**, whether it's a guy and a girl, a husband and a wife or a husband and a husband or a wife and a wife.

Anel's construction of childbearing within marriage as responsible is underscored by drawing on the family planning script, invoking a rational model of decision-making in order to construct an image of the responsible parent. In this extract, "planning" signals the "wantedness" of a child and unplanned pregnancy is conflated with unwanted pregnancy. Significantly, though Anel describes the "married couple situation" as "responsible" and "the ideal situation", she explicitly adopts a liberal and non-judgemental position stating that she does not "condemn" those who have children out of wedlock. She therefore attempts to show that her position is not a moralistic one, but rather adopts a practical tone. Alluding to gay marriage and parenthood reinforces her open-minded, liberal self-positioning. She also recognises that some people might choose not to marry in order to have children. However, this possibility is glossed over and unplanned, accidental pregnancy is focused on instead. This is construed as a less ideal scenario.

Interestingly, extending the mandate to be married before having children to homosexual couples disrupts accepted, heterocentric ideas about what the "correct" family should look like. According to Butler (2002), such constructions can be interpreted as both a parody of the recognisable family form (*viz.,* the patriarchal, nuclear family that continues to legitimate kinship bonds) as well as a reinforcement of it. Anel transposes the heterosexual family form onto the homosexual family, thus reiterating the *gendered* two-parent norm. By interpreting the homosexual family from within the gender binary, she reiterates heteronormative assumptions about parenthood and gender norms so that the potential challenge it presents to the heterosexual nuclear family is minimised. In this way, Anel simultaneously reproduces and transgresses traditional family values (Folgerø, 2008). As a consequence, homosexual parents are still subject to the dominant conventions of heterosexual gendered family norms, in this case, marriage, which is implicitly rationalised as being in children's best interests (Almack, 2006; Nentwich, 2008). The subversiveness of divergence from the heteronorm and the biological imperatives of reproduction represented by the homosexual family is therefore domesticated and the heterosexual matrix may potentially be reinforced (Butler, 1990a).

Like Anel, most participants avoided being seen as moralising or judgemental and rather positioned themselves as concerned for the welfare of children, and even society at large. Some even explicitly denied morality as the rationale for their defence of marriage. Retaining the emphasis on children's well-being, they stressed pragmatic reasons for marriage over moral ones. This "practical considerations talk" (Edley & Wetherell, 1999, p. 189) is evident in extract 6 above where Jakobus refers to the "recognition" that marriage affords. Similarly,

in the following extract, the legal recognition of the union is constructed as beneficial to the child while illegitimacy was presented as potentially posing a threat to a child's welfare.

Extract 10

Tracy:	And then one thing that you touched on that I'd like to chat about, I know we should probably wrap up, you mentioned being married, do you think that is [one of] the ideal conditions for having a child?
Anel (F2):	Yes, I do. It's got nothing to do with, uh=
Tracy:	= morality?
Anel:	Yes, it's just a social convention and it's just a religious thing and it doesn't matter if your parents are married. I think in years to come your parents being married might not be as important as it is now, but I think kids are mean. Kids are incredibly (.) little kids are meaner than grownups, because they have no social filters. To expose a kid to being called a bastard in school, by… You know even if you're not religious and you don't think it's a social contract that should be (.) I've always thought of marriage as a contract that should be carried on with. I think you should still do it. […] Maybe in years to come, because it's relaxing a lot obviously, there are more and more people not getting married. If you think about where does marriage really even come from? It is a religious thing, its origins are religious. It's not really even… Like my dad said the other day, because my god brother didn't get married and they don't believe in marriage and they have two children and before the second child was born they got married because they experienced a lot of problems not being married. It's not just about the kid, it's also just financially, [and] it's so much easier to be married. It's so much easier because the world is marriage (.) is right orientated. Getting life insurance policies, getting a loan for your child, all that type of stuff is so much easier when you're married. Just the legal aspect of is sort of [a] **functional, very pragmatic** aspect of being married. It's like you're trying to be a steam train on an electric train's track if you sort of go against that.

In this extract Anel claims that in *theory* marriage may be redundant or less than ideal, but she argues that in *practice* it is an unavoidable institution because it legally sanctions a child's birth and protects a child from social stigma attached to illegitimacy as well as providing other practical benefits. Hence, Anel positions herself as practical rather than judgemental.   Anel describes marriage as a "contract" and a "social convention" that is both in flux and unnecessary, thus acknowledging counter arguments and bolstering her own case. She overtly rejects religious or moral arguments for childbearing, which might make her appear to be conservative or old-fashioned, foregrounding the "functional" and "pragmatic" aspects that contribute to the child's welfare instead.   In this way, Anel continues to present marriage as merely a practical consideration, which may undercut the ideal.

This construction is reinforced as Anel highlights the sway that marriage still holds in contemporary society and the real life examples she cites lend force to her point. Foregrounding the way that the institution of marriage is privileged without challenging the processes that maintain this privilege constructs the *status quo* as unchangeable and beyond human agency. Accordingly, those who do not comply with the norm are described as "trying to be a steam train on an electric train's track" and may be positioned as irresponsible, as naïve, foolish trouble-makers or as "selfish". This obscures the operation of hetero-patriarchal norms. Since a child's legitimacy is determined by paternal legal recognition, her or his security is derived from compliance with hetero-normative structures (i.e., the patrilineal nuclear family).   Hence, talk of children's welfare here

obscures the fact that what is at issue is not the fulfilment of the child's intrinsic need for constancy, permanence and security in the family, but rather the compliance with hetero-patriarchal norms, like marriage.

As Woodhead (1997) reasons, "statements about children's needs convey an element of judgement about what is good for them and how this can be achieved" (p. 64), but the rhetoric of needs conceals value judgements. Need statements appear to describe the qualities of children's nature and the task of identifying and meeting these "needs" then becomes an empirical one as opposed to a matter of values of deciding what is beneficial for them. Moreover, normative relationships (such as having two married parents) are, as a consequence, too readily interpreted as universal prescriptions for childhood (Woodhead, 1990). Thus, talk about the needs and best interests of the child masks moralisation. So, although Anel rejects morality as the rationale for her claim (as seen in our exchange), her argument is morally loaded. She uses the "stigma term" (Goffman, 1963, p. 5) "bastard" and passes judgement on parents who ignore the potential suffering that an "illegitimate" child might experience. She implies that such individuals are not good parents because they place their own interests before the child's needs. According to the speaker, parents should marry for the sake of their child. Later in her narrative, she openly condemns people who want to make a political stand against marriage as selfish and negligent parents. Hence, those who fail to comply with hetero-norms are not openly castigated, but they are subtly positioned outside the norm and on the negative side of a moral boundary.

3. NOT "IF", BUT "WHEN": MARRIAGE AND TIMING OF PARENTHOOD

When it came to parenthood, the common sentiment for the majority of the participants was that it was not a matter of whether to have children, since this was essentially construed as a non-choice or imperative, but when to have children and under what conditions. People tended to focus on the timing of their first child and, as I have mentioned in Chapter 7, often when they spoke of "deciding" what they were actually referring to was decisions of timing rather than an initial parenthood decision. The following extracts illustrate the construal of having children as chiefly a matter of timing.

Extract 1

Gerhardt (M1): We always wanted children and I think you always sort wonder **when's the right time**. [...] I think there was always a combined (.) "We will have kids" and when we had the children, "It's time now". [...] I think it was always a combined decision, a combined process of "We want children and **when are we going to**?"

Extract 2

Koos (M1): When you get married there's a natural (.) God-given urge to multiply, **the only thing is, I suppose, to decide when to start**. Well, we were I think married for (.) My oldest daughter was born in '84 and we were married in '82. I think it was '84. So we didn't wait too long.

Extract 3

Esmé (F1): Ja, I suppose, getting married, like I said to you, that was the first step and so now the next step is to have children. **When and how and where**?

These extracts depict having children as a foregone conclusion and a matter of course that requires no discussion. They all uphold the notions of automatic childbearing and passive decision-making and extracts 2 and 3 clearly situate childbearing at a particular time in the life course, that is, after marriage. Marriage is therefore depicted almost as a prior choice after which childbearing is a given. Instead the issue of timing is raised. Following Koos's logic in extract 2, the construal of parenthood as a natural and inevitable part of the normal life trajectory essentially rendered it a non-choice and renders couple's discussion of their fertility preferences needless (Gipson & Hindin, 2007). The assumption was "if you're married and you have sex eventually a child will come" (Stefanus). As I mentioned earlier, the "choice" to become a parent is almost implied by the prior choice of marriage. The belief that "marriage self-evidently brings children" (Gipson & Hindin, 2007, p. 779) was also found amongst Dutch couples interviewed by Rijken and Knijn (2008). Gipson and Hindin (2007) encountered similar sentiments amongst the participants in a study on the communication and negotiation of childbearing preferences among Bangladeshi couples. For instance, one participant clearly summed this up stating, "Marriage means having children and forming your family, so what is the need of discussion?" Thus, parenthood is not a matter of choice for married heterosexuals. As Koos put it "it's a natural thing. If you get married then you have kids. It's not that you decide" (Koos).Following this logic, Stefanus commented on people who expressed reluctance to procreate due to unfavourable conditions. He stated, "If you are scared of the circumstances then you mustn't even get married", implying that childbearing is a "normal" expectation for those heterosexual people who marry, to the extent that childbearing can be construed as the purpose of marriage. Like Stefanus, for several older participants saw children as the *sine qua non* of marriage. This was largely taken for granted by the members of cohort one.

The participants from cohort two, on the other hand, explicitly named marriage as a necessary condition for parenthood. For instance one younger woman stated, "Well, obviously get married and then have kids [laughs]!"(Elize) and a younger man maintained that, "First, we have to get married, I mean, that's a given" (Jakobus). This explicit endorsement of marriage as a prerequisite for procreation can be interpreted as deliberate self-positioning within the heteronorm. Older participants already occupied the socially acceptable prior-position of married parent, but younger participants had to actively position themselves as someone who intends to marry before having children in order to comply with what is more generally expected of them. This self-positioning could also be owing to the fact that none of these participants were married when the interviews were conducted and therefore made mention marriage as a future ideal. This made it easier for me to question these participants about the presupposition of marriage, than those from cohort one. To question the older, married participants would be another unusual conversational move. Admittedly it was only upon reflection that I noticed that I had not similarly questioned this group, which seems to indicate just how ordinary and taken for granted the containment of reproduction within marriage is. When I enquired about

their stated preference for marriage, members of cohort two justified this by constructing the "married couple situation" (as Anel referred to it) as advantageous to the child. I shall outline two discursive tactics in which participants made recourse to the rhetoric of children's needs in order to construct the marital context as the best place to meet the child's needs. In the next section, I discuss a similar child-centred discursive tactic was used in order to argue that the child benefits from the continued presence of two heterosexual parents.

4. THE HETEROSEXUAL FEMALE-MALE DYAD AS MOTHER-FATHER DYAD

Many participants argued that it was advantageous for children to have "both parents" present and in some way involved in their lives. This discursive tactic is based on the heteronormative assumption that "both parents" refers to the biological parents and, therefore, consisted of a woman and a man. It is marriage, however, that holds this in place and maintains the heterosexual matrix as the female-male dyad becomes the parenting dyad. As Donovan (2000) states,

> [T]he traditional heterosexual nuclear family is built by transposing the central parenting relationships on to a central sexual relationship so that parenting is gendered – "mother" and "father" come to reflect traditional characteristics of heterosexual femininity and masculinity which are found in a wife and husband respectively (p. 152).

This construction is underpinned by the notion of heterosexual gender complementarity, that is, the belief that femininity and masculinity are not only bipolar opposites, but also complementary and each defined by what the other lacks (Butler, 1990a), as discussed in Chapter 3. This discourse of heterosexual gender complementarity derives its meaning from the two-sex model; that is, understandings of two distinct and essentially different, but complementary, genders (Butler, 1990a). It is therefore predicated upon "an understanding of gender as a fundamental and complementary difference between 'man' and 'woman'" (Folgerø, 2008, p. 136).

The assumption that there is a natural distinction between motherhood and fatherhood was common, despite that "from a number of vantage points, in fact, it can be argued that [they] are more alike than not" (LaRossa, 1997, p. 15). The central feature of this discursive tactic, therefore, is the maintenance of a gender difference between parents. The tendency to accentuate differences and ignore similarities is rooted in gender politics. Constructions of parenthood are intimately connected to socio-cultural constructions of gender (LaRossa, 1997). These constructions are subject to change and conflict and this was evidenced by the older and newer, oppositional gender scripts drawn on in parental positioning. These gender scripts were utilised to support the discursive tactic in which the presence of both a female and male parent was construed as constituting an ideal condition for childbearing. This was justified in one of two ways. Firstly, by drawing on a traditional gender script to argue that parents can make a unique contribution to their children's lives by virtue of their gender. This argument was employed by speakers from both cohorts. Secondly, mobilising a contemporary gender

script, the intensive involvement of "both" parents was claimed to assist with child development or wellbeing. This line of reasoning was taken up by members of cohort two.   I shall discuss each of these tactics.

4.1. Using the traditional gender script to construct unique gendered parental roles

The traditional gender script retains the separation between fatherhood and motherhood on the basis of gender. While the egalitarian gender script tends to de-gender parenting, the gendered nature of parenting is particularly apparent in the traditional gender script in which the subject positions of "mother" and "father" are analogous to those of "woman" and "man" (Kendall, 2007). Therefore, the traditional gender script was influential in retaining this distinction. Originating in patriarchy, this script supports the gendered division of roles as well as the unequal positioning of women and men according to the gender binary. Parenting work and paid work are therefore constructed as separate spheres, which is expressed as the familiar breadwinner/caretaker positioning, which entails uneven power differentials (Kendall, 2007). Following this script then, the man was positioned the breadwinner/provider and the woman the primary caregiver/intensive mother and most frequently seen as the natural parents. The following extract illustrates such positioning.

Extract 11

Koos (M1):   So, I thought that my wife must stay with the kids—and she also thought that, it's not that there was any problem with that—until they are a certain age so that she can teach them the values from that age that we want them to have. So that was important and I based it basically only on that advice from the book that says that for the first six or seven years you've got to lay the right foundation and that would make a big difference later on. **[...]** in **the family structure as I'm used to it** the dad is responsible for winning the bread and even if might've been better for me [to look after the children] (.) or if we had to switch, it would be **abnormal** for me to be winning the bread and I'm looking after the kids, but I'm sure… But I think that she has a better way with kids, especially when they're that size ((gestures)). I'm more the wise guy at the end of the [day], supposed to be, [laughs] that would give advice and would be **overall the manager** I reckon, if you can put it that way. But doing the day things, "Clean up here, you threw this out or wash your hands before you eat, did you brush your teeth this morning" a woman is more, I would say, (.) they concentrate on nitty-gritty things. A man is not like that. That's why they use women to pack parachutes because they are focused on small things and doing them right. They look at the smaller picture and the man looks at the bigger picture, I think. So, I think it's better for the woman or the wife to do that job, of laying that foundation.

In this extract Koos rationalises traditional gender positioning, clearly showing asymmetrical gender positioning of father/man as breadwinner and "manager" and mother/woman as caregiver. This positioning is clearly based on what women and men "are like", that is, innate gender differences—as illustrated by the parachute packing anecdotal "evidence" that Koos cites to substantiate his claim. Koos evokes ideas of normality and, significantly, he specifically mentions children's wellbeing, based on a childcare advice text, as the rationale for this gender positioning. It is "better" for children to have a female primary caregiver. This is reinforced by engaging in "Oneness talk" (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004, p. 176), which foregrounds commonality, as Koos draws attention to the fact that his partner agreed with the arrangement. In this manner Koos also potentially sidesteps being positioned as unfair or chauvinist.

In this extract, Koos invokes the notion of intensive mothering. This contemporary model of appropriate care-giving "tells us that children are innocent and priceless, and that their rearing should be carried out primarily by individual mothers and that it should be centred on upon children's needs" (Hays, 1996, p. 21, cited in Almack, 2006, p. 6). Intensive mothering is therefore characterised by the following beliefs: (1) the mother should be the primary caregivers; (2) the child's needs should guide suitable care-giving, rather than the mother's (e.g., the "need" to be taught "values"); (3) parenting should be labour intensive (so that mothers/parents spend the maximum allowable quantity of time with their children), financially expensive and emotionally absorbing; and (4) care-giving should draw on expertise, such as parenting manuals (Kendall, 2007). These characteristics are clearly evidenced above.

As I have stated, when utilising this discursive tactic, the participants spent a significant amount of attention delineating the distinction between motherhood and fatherhood (LaRossa, 1997), so that parenting was construed as a fundamentally gendered enterprise. The traditional gender script as the dominant, established narrative in relation to parenting was most utilised in this respect, especially since participants were able re-cite it without having to do much justification, unless the positions that they negotiated were troubled. Based on this script, female and male parents were therefore seen as having unique gender specific roles to play in their children's lives. Following this logic, talk about the ideal conditions for childbearing focused on parent-child gender differences or similarities and the understanding of women and men as bipolar opposites enables the dichotomous constructions of similarity and difference in parent-child relationships.

For example, the following excerpts illustrate the common belief that parents relate better to their "same-gender" children. They show how people's gender preferences were strongly related to the belief that, on the basis of gender similarity, children act as a friend or companion to their same gender parents. Fathers and mothers were described as engaging in gender stereotypical pursuits with their sons or daughters respectively.

Extract 13

Dalena (F2): Personally I really want a little boy. I really, really want both sexes actually, I want both genders, but I want my first to be a little boy. Just for purposes (.) I want a companion for myself as well in a child, but I want the first one to be a boy for the husband, but then at the same time I also want a girl first because… It's confusing… because the girl would, like, soften the husband a little bit. I see when my sister and myself when we were born, myself actually, when I was born because I was first, my dad softened up a lot. With a boy it will be a little bit more rough [sic], more aggressive. (.) I wouldn't mind a little boy first, but I also really want a little girl. So, two [laugh] if I can genetically modify it [laughs] I'm doing microbiology I will genetically modify myself to have a boy first [Laughs]. Oh dear!

Extract 14

Koos (M1): I must say, the son that I've got, I'm very grateful for the way he's shaping up, if I can put it that way, he's also interested in doing things with his hands. You'll get one who just wants to play the piano or something or has got other interests, but the one I've got, we can do a lot of things together and we've got the same way of trying to do things with our hands; welding and servicing the car. […] I think he really fulfilled that wish of mine, of having a boy. […] He's a real BOY, you know? He loves

hunting and he's even now and then cleaning his rifle. He's, for me, like a farm boy. […] He's as I think a boy should be.

Extract 15

Elias (M1): A mother wants to do things with the daughter; a father wants to do things with sons. I was alone, hunting and fishing alone. […] I've been taught since I was about three years old, I've been going with my dad hunting and fishing; and Ryno exactly the same. [...] But that is nice and I think that is probably one of the reasons why I would really [have] liked a son. So I can impart the knowledge I have of these things to him and have a companion. Today, it's the best thing that's happened to me, to have the kids. I mean, like on the weekends when we have time we go fishing, myself and Ryno, and Trudy and Lena spend time together. Lena also goes out with me quite often, even hunting. Even hunting, she goes with me. This year she will be shooting her first buck. She's not crazy about it, but I think it's a challenge for her. (.) You know, it's better than a friend. A child's better than a friend.

These extracts illustrate how participants maintained a binaristic view of gender, which was expressed in the belief that parents relate better to their same-gender child, and how anomalies that may challenge or disrupt this view are suppressed or assimilated into the norm (Lisle, 2003). The narrators re-cite stereotypical gender constructions (as reflected in the pursuits associated with men here) rooted in a dualistic model of gender. The construction of gender as oppositional and complementary is particularly clear in extract 13 in which femininity and masculinity are stereotypically associated with paired traits or characteristics. Extract 14 also shows how gender gains its meaning in opposition as well as how its boundaries must be maintained as masculinity is distinguished by the speaker from that which it is not (i.e., femininity or deviant/effeminate masculinity). In order to depict the son as "a real boy", stereotypically manly pursuits were contrasted with "other interests" such as piano playing, which are implicitly feminine. The son is "as […] a boy should be" since he performs his gender correctly. Thus the definition of "boy" here is premised upon difference; that it, it consists of opposite and distinct traits that point back to the sexed body (Butler, 1990a). According to a Butlerian understanding, sex is seen to cause gender and what one *does* (welding, servicing the car, hunting and so on) must coincide with what one *is* (masculine). This amounts to "real" and normal masculinity. So, although the description centres on "interests" and what one does, such as working with one's hands or hunting, the crux of the matter is whether this coincides with the sexed body, with what one *is* essentially.

It is possible to see how same-gender relationships (i.e., mother/daughter or father/son) were portrayed as based on commonality and friendship and same-gender children were often referred to as "companions" who engaged in gender-specific tasks with parents; described as "guy stuff" or "girlie stuff" by Mariska (several other participants used similar terms). In extract 15, for instance, the boy child is "for" the male partner while the daughter is the mother's companion. The very idea of children as companions suggests changing parent-child relationships that are rooted in a sacralised view of children (Lupton & Barclay, 1997; LaRossa, 1997). As a result of the view of children as gendered companions, the "pigeon pair" (Elias) of one girl child and one boy child was seen as ideal. (Although a general preference for sons was usually expressed over a desire for daughters.) As Johann explained it "A boy and a girl would be perfect, obviously, one for mom and one for me

[laughs]."   However, it is obvious that the primary criterion for companionship was gender. No mention was made of other sources of similarity or difference, such as shared interests or similar character traits, as these extracts show. In extract 14, for example, the commonality shared by father and son ("we can do a lot of things together") is primarily rooted in the fact that they are both men. The interests that they share are described chiefly as manly occupations carried out by "real" men. Thus, gender was singled out most significant to parent-child relationships.

In order to maintain the positioning of mothers and fathers as distinct—and therefore both necessary to the child—it was imperative that participants maintain a binary model of gender, in turn sustaining the dualistic episteme of the "two-sex-model" and reinforcing the heterosexual two-parent norm as the ideal condition for childbearing (Folgerø, 2008). For example, the following extract argues that parents are better able to relate to same-gender children.

Extract 16

Anel (F2):   I think that it's such a team effort, <u>but</u> I think that men and women <u>also</u> play a different role in kids' lives. [...] Having daughters, I think, [would be easier] for a mother than having sons would be for a dad, er, than having sons for a mother. There are things that a woman can speak to about to a woman that a man can't (.) not in the same [way]. Like, my dad once went and bought me pads and tampons for me when I was in std. six and it wasn't weird at all because my mom was sick and my dad was going to town. When he came back we sort of tortured him and said, "How did you ask the lady for it?" [Laughs] We tortured him about it. But, you know, that type of thing, I think, is important to divide between one parent and the other.

In this extract, Anel expresses support for equally shared co-parenting, as given by the egalitarian gender scripts, yet she ultimately talks against this in order to argue for the distinct roles that women and men lay in their children's lives. She renegotiates her earlier position on the topic (discussed prior to this), that parenting should be "a team effort" and not determined by gender—as evidenced by the words "but" and "also" in the first sentence. Here she advocates the gender-based division of tasks between heterosexual parents. Women are constructed as being able to relate to daughters more easily because they have certain experiential knowledge that men do not(because they also menstruate). So, in this case, difference and similarity are explicitly predicated on the grounds of biology. Circumscribed as a woman's issue and associated with male embarrassment, it is the mother's task to take care of the daughter's needs in this regard and to purchase tampons for her. The crux of this story is that the father's performance of this task was exceptional. The fact that anyone can buy tampons whether or not s/he is able menstruate is not considered. Instead, "real" biological differences are named as justification of distinct gender roles. The entrenching of the woman/man dichotomy in biology performs a naturalising discursive function in that it "constructs a 'natural' and 'universal' connection between anatomy, character, and desire" (Folgerø, 2008, p. 137). Therefore, not only does each parent have a distinctive role to play in the life of a child, but there are particular things that *only* a woman or a man can offer a child based on gender similarity.

It was not only gender similarity that was deemed to allow a particular parent to play a distinct role in a child's life, however. "Opposite gender" parents were also described as being able to make a unique contribution to parenting. Based on the notion of heterosexual complementarity, which underpins the traditional gender script, gender difference was also seen as significant in parent-child relationships. For example, in the next excerpt the notion of heterosexual gender complementarity informs the argument.

Extract 17

Dalena (F2): [Discipline has] got to come from both parents, because I mean Mother is generally the most, more emotional, more loving […] If you have a child, especially a daughter, and she starts bringing home boys, the father has to be the active one in that role. He has to be the lion that looks after his [daughter]. Then he has to be the bad cop, because he will be able to relate to that boy and understand that boy more than what I would as a woman. (.) He was a boy, he knows what boys do. He knows what goes through their minds. I know what goes through the girl's mind, so I will be able to relate to the girls if I have to have my son bring home girls. [...]So, as a mother, if I have a daughter I will guard that gift [of virginity] as far as I possibly can. I want to make sure and I want my husband to help me make sure that that girl will be given to her husband in a pure form. If it had to be a boy, it's a little bit more difficult I think, but I would also like that male virginity to be kept, [laugh] if you can say that.

In this extract the positions of mother and father are constructed according to the gender binary. The parental positioning in this excerpt points to the construction of gender as established upon universal and innate similarities (with the "same" gender) and differences (with the "opposite" gender) (Lisle, 2006). Fatherhood is associated with certain stereotypical connotations of masculinity (*viz.,* aggression) and protection, while motherhood is associated with contrasting "feminine" connotations (*viz.,* relationality and emotionality). The heteronormative binary also structures thinking around gender and desire as Dalena makes the assumption that her future children will engage in heterosexual dating. The parents are pictured as uniquely qualified to keep watch over the "opposite gender" child based on shared gender with the son or daughter's date, which affords insider knowledge. The positioning of the father as protector, especially of daughters, was common. However, while it is not uncommon to position a mother as protector of her child, it is unusual to position a woman as protector of a man and especially of a man's virtue. Young men are customarily depicted as the sexual aggressor and so do not require protection as young women do. Resorting to the construction of "male virginity", as somehow distinct from feminine purity, the speaker is able to justify positioning herself in a role ordinarily associated with masculinity.

This rhetorical work points to some difficulty in fashioning cross-gender parent-child interactions. In extract 13, for example, Elias mentions non-gender specific involvement with his daughter, namely, hunting. In order to avoid the troubled positioning of the daughter in relation to gender, because she is engaging in non-stereotypical gendered behaviour, this activity is treated as an anomaly. He comments that she "even" goes hunting with him. He also points out that "she's not crazy about it" and that it's challenging for her, which

suggests some rhetorical work around gender. In this way the gender binary maintained. Therefore, as this rhetorical work shows, maintenance of the gender binary is required when it is breached by incorrect gender performances. One way of doing this was to draw on familiar gendered relationship dynamics or gender roles. This is evident in the following extract in which the speaker has difficulty in envisioning a father-daughter interaction.

Extract 18

Mariska (F2):	I definitely believe that the father needs to do the disciplining because the mom does the nurturing and the caring and whatever, but I hope that the way that he would go about disciplining our children would be in a gentle, loving manner, but still firm […] Ja, emotionally available to the children. To play a big role in their lives, practically, like take them fishing and do, like, guy stuff with them, if there's a son, then to do that with the son, and if there's a girl then to do girly things with the girl. I mean, not like have tea parties with the doll.
Tracy:	Hmm, it sounds quite sweet though.
Mariska:	That is quite sweet actually. So, I mean, a bit of that would be really cool as well. I've heard stories of dad's taking their daughters out since they've been little for a milkshake every once a week. Then they have connecting time and they go and they watch a movie. They've done that right up until the age of eighteen. I'd really, really love that to be there as well.

Trouble occurs in this extract due to the construal of parent-child interactions as entailing "guy stuff", associated with the outdoors as masculine pursuits often were, versus "girly things", associated with domesticity and the private sphere. This appears to make it difficult for the speaker to determine what exactly fathers and daughters ought to do together. Trouble presents itself when the father is portrayed in an unusual gendered interaction as indicated by the speaker's floundering after the statement that a man should do "girly things". My comment assists with repair of the gender trouble to some extent, in that a father can do "a bit of that" (i.e., engage in "girly things" with daughters). Ultimately, the speaker then constructs a scenario that mimics the recognisable form of heterosexual female-male interaction, namely a date.

Similarly, in the next extract, Ilze explains the deviance from the usual assumption that women relate better to girl children.

Extract 19

Ilze (F1):	I actually wanted a girl, but I'm very happy with my son. He's, because he's got lots of female things that he [does]. We can bake together, as you know, and so on. So, I'm very happy with him. [...] [A]s a woman you always feel like I know how to handle a little girl. I've been there [so] I know what to tell her. And, knowing how the men react and whatever when they see their boy. I was afraid that emotionally the boy would be neglected. That didn't happen, but I thought it would because there will be a father that's always studying away from home and then I sit with this little boy and I don't know how to handle it. […]
Tracy**:**	And did it turn out that way?
Ilze**:**	No, it didn't. From the day ONE we had a connection. Oh yes, we have a better connection than that way ((gestures to husband in next room)). This way ((gestures to self)) is better connection than that way ((gestures again to husband)). But they say NORMALLY mothers have a better connection with their sons and fathers and daughters have a better connection.
Tracy:	Oh really? Why do you think that is?
Ilze:	Um … it can be opposites attract, you see? And fathers will feel more protective against their daughters. And mothers will always think the son can protect me when I'm older. You see?

This excerpt occurred in the context of a discussion around the gender preference of her child before becoming a parent. She is not disappointed in having had a son since he still acts as a companion to her and they share interests (e.g., baking), which interestingly are described as "female things", indicating the centrality of gender in constructing parent-child relationships. The idea that same-gender parents and children ought to act as companions is disrupted by the fact that she and her son had a better "connection" than he and his father did. This trouble is repaired by invoking the notion of gender complementarity to assert that "opposites attract". Further, the speaker also draws on traditional gender roles in which men protect women as the grown-up son is described as a potential protector of his mother. (Incidentally, this also indexes the value of sons as a social resource). By drawing on the masculine "protector" role, the speaker constructs a recognisable and acceptable gendered relationship that maintains a dualistic construction of gender.

Hence, the anomaly, which might otherwise threaten established ideas about gender and expose their constructed nature, is explained away (Butler, 1990a). Such talk ultimately serves to reiterate the gender binary and to support the construction of the parents' complementary gender roles as essential to the child's wellbeing in terms of normal childhood development (Folgerø, 2008). (This becomes even clearer when the participants discuss the notion of gender role models, which I discuss in the next chapter.) Following this logic, each parent is considered offer something unique to the child by virtue of her or his gender and, for this reason, ought to be involved in the child's life in order to promote optimal development. Thus, the child's wellbeing remains central to this discursive tactic.

4.2. Drawing on the contemporary gender script to argue that children need "both parents"

The contemporary gender script "constitutes an uneasy compromise" (Kendall, 2007, p. 150) between the opposing traditional and egalitarian gender scripts. This discursive resource is a progressive, feminist-influenced script and functioned as a counter narrative to the traditional gender script in that it supports equitable arrangements between female and male partners. According to this script, mothers and fathers' roles are not differentiated and both parenting work and paid work are construed as equally important. One of its chief features, therefore, is to de-gender parenting practice. For this reason, it was not particularly effective in supporting the discursive tactic under discussion and was therefore drawn upon less often. This script does become significant for this purpose when it is combined with the traditional gender script in to form a composite gender script called "the contemporary gender script" (Kendall, 2007).

The contemporary gender script incorporates the ideals of equitable gender relations, fairness, and role-sharing into traditional understandings of gender and therefore amounts to an improvisation on the traditional gender script. This script allows for the stretching conventional gender roles. According to this script, women

226

and men are able to participate in tasks not traditionally assigned to them and so it accommodates broader changes in the culture of parenthood that dictate what "good" parenting entails, specifically the ideal of a more active, participating father. Hence, the female partner in the heterosexual couple features as the main parent, while the male partner as secondary, parent. Hence, the power relations remain uneven as women are required to take on the bulk of parenting and domestic work in conjunction to their non-parenting roles. The contemporary gender script also allows for women to occupy roles outside of the home, but still primarily positioned them as mothers and men as providers and thereby producing "an account that maintains underlying power structures while 'evolving' to incorporate social change" (Riley, 2003, p. 107). Thus, the gendered differentiation between mothers and fathers is preserved by this script.

Other participants maintained that it was best for the child if both parents were involved in care-giving and invoked a contemporary gender construction of the active or hands-on father in order to argue that *both* fathers and mothers ought to be thoroughly involved in their children's lives in order to ensure their optimal development and wellbeing. This somewhat more progressive gender positioning deviates from the traditional gender constructions to some degree, while still retaining the distinction between mothers and fathers and is, therefore, resourced by a contemporary gender script. This script allows for the positioning of men as secondary or "helper" parents who might "cook supper every now and then" (Mariska), "help with nappy changing" (Elize), or engage in activities like going for walks and watching children's sport. In this manner, participants could fashion a parental position for men, but not one that usurps the placement of women as best suited to meet the needs of children. This positioning is evidenced in the extract below.

Extract20

Petro (F2):   I think because we are sensitive in the field and we've already seen what it does to little ones if they don't **see mommy and daddy all the time**. So you're just more aware of it. […]That's why I'm so set on a little one **needs a mom and a dad** and ideally live in Sweden where you can have a **mom and a dad**. [...]I just thought that basically, ja, you need to be available in any which way, <u>especially Dad</u>, because how many times do you hear, "I saw my dad (.) whenever"? [Pause] You basically then need to stop being human because you need to be available all the time. It doesn't matter if you're having an off day. You have to put on your smile and be there for the little one because it's your responsibility. So, emotionally, physically, financially spiritually, [...] you need to be there in every possible way that you can. [...] So, emotionally a father needs to be there. It's not the mom's job to dry off tears and tell them it's gonna be okay. The dad must actually get his hands dirty as well and **help** changing the diapers. I've got an example. Somebody working with me, he is the absolute ideal father. Any little one to have him is just… He wakes up at night to feed the little one so wife can sleep. She's a stay-at-home mom, but he is so involved because he made that decision that he's gonna be involved.

In these extracts the welfare of the child is forms the rationale for the intensive involvement of both "a mom and a dad". This is expressly articulated as a need statement. This is lent further authority in that it is presented as the speaker's professional opinion. Speaking as an expert (child psychologist) she uses the collective "we" to position herself within a community of specialists. This has the effect of substantiating her claim as well as emphasising the prevalence of the detrimental effect of parental absence on children.

Consistent with this positioning, she draws on ideas about parenting informed by developmental psychology models and strongly underpinned by the ideology of intensive mothering. Showing once again how intensive mothering acts as a model of child-centred parenting practice to guide parenting in general. Good *parents*, in this vein of thinking, sacrifice their own needs for their children's well-being whether they are female or male. As such, this altruistic model of parenting therefore extends some of the requirements traditionally placed on women to fathers and advocates some degree of paternal participation in parenting. The narrator's reference to living "in Sweden" is an allusion to an earlier exchange regarding contexts where both women and men are able to be intensively involved in parenting.

While this could support equally shared co-parenting—as envisaged by the egalitarian script—it is clear that fathers are cast in a secondary role to mothers and they are required to be "emotionally involved" and to "help" mothers. Hence, ultimate responsibility for parenting does not lie with the male parent. Rather than a concern for gender equity, this extract seems to centre on the absent or emotionally uninvolved father—hence the call for father involvement. This is evident in the way that Petro singles out the father ("especially Dad") and notes his absence as an especial concern.

Father absence and passivity was a common theme and there was a preoccupation with the presence of fathers in particular in children's lives as the following extracts illustrate.

Extract 21
Elize (F2): Ja, well that's what I would want. You know, being married, loved and happy, so that it comes from both ways, because a child does need, not necessarily NEED, but it's better for a child to have **two parents** I think. Because with me growing up without my father, it's not that I MISSED, missed him, but I missed having that in my life that other people have in their life. So, not having a father (.) so, I think, it's nice to have two parents.

Extract22
Petro(F2): [Y]ou need to be available in any which way, especially Dad, because how many times do you hear, "I saw my dad (.) whenever"? [Pause] [...] So, a dad needs to be emotionally involved from the start, not from, Okay, ja you're a boy now and you're 13 years old=

Tracy: =let's go fishing?

Petro: Ja, that's it. No, from the start if it's a little girl you need to be emotionally involved or if it's a little boy. You need to **help** when the little one is ill or when it's not going well or if the little one is dirty. You can't say, "Ooh I've got to be up early tomorrow morning so I'm going to sleep." That's nonsense.

Tracy: So those traditional roles, that's not ideal for the child?

Petro: No. No not for a little [one] (.) Well, we all survived with it. We're not too **damaged**, but I mean ideally. [...] I mean if you talk to girls and you talk to boys it's like, "Ja but my dad was never there when I was little". So it's a part that's missing in everybody's lives. Okay, yes, maybe later on he makes a guest appearance but still everybody would like to have a daddy to pick them up and throw them in the air.

Extract 23
Anel (F2): That's always been a big fear of mine. What if you have two kids and your husband dies and you're left all alone? You have to be a family unit in one sense but then you also have to be the **parent team** versus the [child] team all alone, because there's just one of you. It is sort of like a competition a bit of a battle between the parents and the children for authority. That's always been a fear of mine, if I

were to be left alone with my children, would I be able to handle it? How do you keep that **balance** and how do you fill that **gap** in their lives with something meaningful and play **that parenting role** as well. It's scary. I'm always very conscious of my boyfriend's health. "You shouldn't drink so much, please. I need you! Stick around." [Laughter]

These extracts display the common sentiment that two heterosexual parents represent the optimal conditions for the child's development. In extract 21, Elize overtly states that "it's *better* for children to have two parents". Her caution or reluctance to express this as a need statement could possibly be related to her own prior-positioning as the child of a single mother, which could mean trouble for her. Elize refers to the two-parent norm as a way of ensuring that "it comes from both ways." This could mean that the input into the child's life comes from both parents, which coheres with her ensuing argument that shared parenting is beneficial to the child. She justifies this by referring to her personal experience of not having had a father, which she intimates disadvantaged her and possibly even made her different from others. "Having a father" is therefore considered to be a norm. This is similar to the argument in extract 10 about the stigma attached to illegitimacy. Once more, a father is depicted as important to a child's welfare and non-compliance with the hetero-norm of the nuclear family marks a child out as "Other" and is potentially detrimental or disadvantageous, since a measure of the child's security is derived from complying with and fitting into such structures.

Similarly, in extract 22, Petro draws on the contemporary gender script as she positions the father as the mother's helper and therefore as having a distinct role from the mother, who is the main caregiver. She depicts father absence as potentially damaging and an "emotionally involved" father is seen as important to all children's well-being. Notably, the notion of gender-specific parental involvement is refuted as an "excuse" for the lack of father's engagement with daughters. Constructing fathers as a "missing part" "in everybody's lives" and a father who is present as something "everyone" longs for speaks to the idea that fathers should be involved with daughters too and perhaps also pervasiveness of father absence. In addition, it valorises fatherhood. This is reinforced by the somewhat romantic portrayal of the father-child relationship, in which the father is described as a "daddy" who picks up the child and throws her/him in the air.

In extract 23 the father's absence breaks apart the parental alliance, creating an imbalance and a "gap" in the family. The loss of the father is described as somehow compromising the "family unit". The role of father is therefore portrayed as unique and distinct "parenting role" which must somehow be compensated for by the widowed mother. Each parent therefore features as a distinct part of the "unit". In the next chapter I shall discuss how the absence of a father was a central concern as participants expressed fears over the "broken" or fatherless family.

5. CONCLUSION

One can see how the possibility of parenthood was discursively moved further from the realm of choice and childbearing became firmly entrenched in the domain of heterosexual coupledom where it is governed by marriage. In this context, having children is an imperative and the issues which are pertinent are those of decisions associated with parenthood, such as the matters of timing and ideal conditions for parenthood. Marriage was a central determinant of these decisions, regulating the timing of parenthood as well as ostensibly meeting certain needs that children may have because this setting ensured that children's "need" for stability and security was met and provided the continued presence of a female and, especially, a male parent which was deemed to be beneficial to children—a belief that reinforces the heterosexual conjugal norm. Conceptions of children's wellbeing were tied to a particular family form.

Children's wellbeing was cited as one of the chief rationalisations of the claim that marriage is a necessary or ideal condition for childbearing and reference to children's needs provided an effective defence of this heteronorm. The rhetoric of children's needs therefore served to legitimate childbearing exclusively within heterosexual marriage. In this manner reproduction is "conjugalised", that is, marriage coincides with and contains reproduction (Macleod, 2003, p. 24). This in turn supports a particular family form— the nuclear family—which comprises of two, married, heterosexual parents and their children. The heterosexual nuclear family was therefore constructed as the most appropriate place for having children. Marriage, as the stable foundation for the heterosexual couple, therefore puts in place and maintains the heterosexual matrix as the female-male dyad becomes the parenting dyad.

In addition, parenting was envisaged as a profoundly gendered enterprise, significantly, one that ideally occurs within the heterosexual family. This discursive tactic draws on, and upholds, the "the regulatory illusion of heterosexual coherence" (Butler, 1990, p. 173), mainly, as I have shown, through the notion of heterosexual gender complementarity. This concept was drawn on to construct the roles of father and mother as distinct from one another, and to argue that the presence of both parents is important to a child's well-being, since each parent makes a unique contribution to a child's life. According to Butler (1990a), the notion of gender complementarity forms the basis of compulsory heterosexuality and ultimately serves to bolster the heterosexual matrix (as discussed in the theory chapter). In this vein, I have shown how maternity and paternity were differentiated along traditional gender lines, so that parents were seen as similar or different to their children by virtue of their gender alone and uniquely able to meet a child's needs by virtue of particular gendered attributes. Based on this logic, it was argued not only that the two-parent hetero-norm best served children's needs, but that children need both parents, especially their fathers, to fulfil a specific, gendered role in their lives.

As participants turned to these issues, the question of male involvement in the parenthood decision-making process receded even further as this process was construed as largely determined by established heteronorms in which particular circumscribed gender roles pre-exist. It is evident that this does not just amount to the concealment of male involvement, but an active defence of the *status quo*. It is possible to see that the child-centred script—and the rhetoric of children's needs—was as one of the chief discursive tools used to achieve this purpose. This discursive resource provided a formidable defence of normative relationships since it acted as an "unchallengeable discourse". This is rooted articulation of ideal conditions as "needs" causes value judgements and normative relationships, rooted in a particular socio-political context, to appear as timeless and universal facts and lends them moral force (Woodhead, 1990).

As I intimated, amidst talk of children needing "both" parents there was a definite concern expressed with regard to father absence. As I shall show in the subsequent chapter, this was especially apparent when talk turned to children's need for a father figure or male role model. Hence, following on from the construction of female and male parents each being able to make a uniquely meet a child's needs, fathers in particular were positioned as making a matchless contribution to child development, thereby offering men a unique role within the traditional nuclear family. I turn next to the argument that children need fathers.

10

Children need fathers: Enshrining the role and the rule of the father in the heterosexual nuclear family

1. INTRODUCTION

The sacralisation of childhood has focused attention onto the bodily and the emotional or psychological welfare of the child so that at the same time, childcare has become sentimentalised and associated with femininity. As a result, "[m]otherhood ... is socially constituted in terms of a *response* to children's needs" (Lawler, 1999, p. 73). The ideology of intensive mothering is entangled with sacralised childhood. It "tells us that children are innocent and priceless, that their rearing should be carried out primarily by individual mothers and that it should be centred upon children's needs" (Almack, 2006, p. 6). Following this line of thinking, mothers were frequently construed as best able to meet children's needs. This leaves fathers in rather a precarious position, however, especially as gender norms shift and mothers are able to meet many of children's "needs" that were traditionally assigned to the father. It is for this reason that much attention has been focused on absent fathers and in particular, as I shall discuss in this chapter, on the dangers of fatherlessness. As I have already intimated in the previous chapter, there was a preoccupation with the presence and absence of a father or father figure in children's lives.

This talk builds on the talk about ideal conditions, specifically the notion that children need both a "mom and a dad", which I addressed in the preceding chapter. I must also point out, however, that talk about parenthood and child-rearing also appeared to be a subject around which talk could cohere, given the fact that the topic of male involvement in reproductive decision-making had been rendered a non-topic and effectively silenced by the construction of automatic childbearing. Particular constructions of parenthood and ideal childrearing conditions did ultimately serve to bolster the canonical couple method and the associated norm of automatic child bearing, as I shall discuss in this chapter. I shall show how participants fashioned a unique role for fathers predicated upon needs that he *as a man* can only meet. In this way, fathers were depicted as necessary to children's wellbeing and as making a unrivalled contribution to their lives. As a result, a new needs statement materialised, namely that children need fathers for optimal development. Juxtaposed with this, once again, were the dangers of not meeting this "need". The fatherless family was seen as posing a threat to the child's normal development as well as to society as a whole. As I shall discuss, the various strands of this argument work together to valorise(a particular kind) of manhood and, in turn, fatherhood, thereby re/asserting a place for the father in the (heterosexual, nuclear) family. I shall first examine the way that participants constructed a unique familial position for men and then deal with talk that concentrates on the dangers of fatherlessness. Finally, I shall discuss broader ramifications of the particular gender positioning that I highlight.

2. THE MATCHLESS CONTRIBUTION OF THE FATHER TO CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

The notion of the gender specificity of parenting, as explicated in the previous chapter, ensured that female and male parents were assigned distinctive roles in the family in the traditional and conventional gender scripts. The tasks that were allocated to fathers comprise of some of those outlined by Dermott (2008), including "being there", which refers both to being "accessible" rather than engaged with the child, as well as spending "intensive time" with children, that is, time dedicated to children in joint activity, excluding direct caring. As I stated in that chapter, the father's role, especially that of male role model, was largely passive. In this respect, the mere presence of the father was considered beneficial. In this section I shall outline various roles that were assigned to fathers specifically and which singled them out as absolutely necessary to children's development and welfare. The commonality of all of these functions, as I shall show, is that they cohere around the father's "being there". What is important, therefore, is men's presence in the home and in children's lives. LaRossa (1997) argues that such constructions of fathering, especially that of the father as male role model, affords men a way of dealing with raised expectations that they will play a more active role in rearing their children. By being "technically present, but functionally absent" (LaRossa, 1997, p. 133) men are still able to adhere to modern standards for good (i.e., intensive) parenting and meet children's needs.

2.1. The father as the "stabiliser" of the family

In particular, the father's presence was construed as providing stability and security so that this may even be interpreted as one of the father's main functions in the family. Recall the discussion in the previous chapter regarding the stability that marriage provides for the child, in which it was implied that children need stability and security for their well-being. The construction positions the father specifically as providing these "needs". For instance, one younger male participant maintained that "the role of the father [is] being the sort of stabilising part of the family" (Wouter), and clarified this statement as follows.

Extract 1

Wouter (M2):   Well, I guess, sort of **the one person** in like a time of crisis that you can always go back to and ask for guidance. I mean also, probably, **as a provider** also sort of being a stabiliser in the family, you know. Ag, it's difficult to say exactly, taking care of business or whatever. I mean, for me, the father's always sort of been the one that does need to provide, you know. In terms of a lot of things, in terms of financial stability, things like that.

A traditional gender script is drawn on in this extract in order to delineate a distinctive father role. This role includes the long-established "breadwinner" role which entails the provision not only of finances, but "financial stability". This was something that was stressed time and again by all the participants as a crucial condition for childbearing and if this is specifically a male role, then it renders male parents indispensable in the family. The role of (primary) economic provider therefore raises the status of the traditional male role. As other researchers have also shown (e.g., Riley 2003), male participants continued to display an attachment to the breadwinner role. In fact, despite changing gender norms and challenges to the traditional gender script, most

participants were reluctant to supplant this established and influential masculine role with newer (or gender neutral) roles. Ironically, the task of financial provision is one which removes the father from the home for significant amounts of time. In addition to economic provision, in this extract the father role is pictured as the "stabiliser in the family", which seems to entail acting as a reliable guide. The distinctiveness of this role is denoted by the descriptor "the one person".

2.2. Father as providing instruction

The pedagogical or instructive function of fathering was drawn on in various ways to differentiate masculine care from feminine care. It was described as distinct from mothering, which was usually seen to comprise of routine day-to-day childcare or the "nitty-gritty" parenting tasks, in Koos's words (extract 11, previous chapter) and so fatherly contribution to children's physical, emotional and psychological welfare was represented as less direct than mothers. Participants often described fathers as mentors, guides and teachers and masculine care was related to teaching children independence, and life skills as well as challenging children and encouraging them to explore their surroundings. This often entailed, as I have intimated, spending "intensive time" with children in joint activity, excluding direct caring (Dermott, 2008). This can be seen in the following extracts.

> ### Extract 2
> Annelie (F1): He taught them things, he'd go fishing with them. He taught them to play golf, cricket […] he had special times with them watching TV. He loved cartoons and animal programmes and that's what he taught them. I think each parent has a role to play.
>
> ### Extract 3
> Lettie (F1): The kids learned a hell of a lot from him about (.) how to enjoy life and how to make the most of life. He's a very inquisitive person so when we go on holiday he goes into all the little corners and inspects everything and has to see everything. So, he had a huge influence on their lives. Quality time. I see a lot of fathers that have sons that don't do with their sons that he did with these kids that are girls. (.) I think that's also why they're as independent as they are, because of that.

In these extracts the father is depicted as passing on knowledge and skills. Significantly, the father was also most often positioned as the parent who promotes independence in children, as Brandth and Kvande (1998) also report. They maintain that "Masculinity is often associated with independence" (p. 302) and that many studies "indicate that the father *promotes the independence* of both girls and boys" (p. 302). Moreover, they assert, their participants related this to the types of activities that fathers engage in with their children, most notably "*outgoing* activities" (p. 304), which entails outings and interaction outside of the home. This is illustrated by extract 3 above. The activities that are described above mostly comprise on stereotypically manly pursuits though, significantly, both of these extracts specifically describe father-daughter interactions (this is not stated). This was also true of other narratives in which participants described fathers taking both boy and girl children hunting, watching sport and so on. These activities could be seen as beneficial to both girl and boy children precisely because of their instructive function, as well as their learning "independence". Significantly, as both these extracts show, this instructive function occurs during activities that could be considered leisure activities, described as "quality time" in extract 3 (e.g., playing sport, watching television).

In this vein, these extracts illustrate how father-child interaction was often pictured as incidental rather than actively sought out and often the children were portrayed as being involved in what the father was doing rather than *vice versa*. Continuing on from the idea of the father as a mentor or teacher was a similar construction of the father as a moral guide or teacher.

1.1. Father as moral/religious pedagogue

This section concentrates on a fairly well-established construction of the father as a moral and religious pedagogue, which can be traced to colonial understandings of fatherhood (Lupton & Barclay, 1997). According to LaRossa (1997), colonial fathers were tasked with the moral and spiritual welfare of their offspring. At this time, children's moral wellbeing was a central concern and the role of moral pedagogue was specifically assigned to fathers because of men's supposed lack of emotionality and superior moral fibre in comparison to women. As a result of this particular construction, the colonial father was considered to be the "natural parent" while mothers were less important (LaRossa, 1997; Lupton & Barclay, 1997). As a result, fathers were almost always given custody of their children and pre-nineteenth century child rearing literature was aimed at fathers, with such texts cautioning against leaving the mother out (LaRossa, 1997).

This is the reverse of the current situation where parenting is "feminised" and mothers are deemed the natural parents. This change was brought about as a result of the increasing attention focused upon children's emotional and psychological welfare, also referred to as the sentimentalisation of childcare. This, largely a middle class phenomenon, and was driven by broad ranging socio-economic changes in the West and expert discourses, which emphasised emotional and psychological well-being over religious concerns with children's moral and spiritual welfare. In many contexts, especially industrialised and "westernised" settings, women's "emotionality" now qualifies them to be good parents, including their supposedly innate capacity for love and nurturance (LaRossa, 1997; Lupton & Barclay, 1997). The feminisation of parenthood has meant "less participation of the father in the rearing of children and more responsibility placed on the mother" (Lupton & Barclay, 1997, p. 37), an arrangement that became ubiquitous. This positioning of male parents was fairly common and can be seen in the extracts below.

Extract 4

Wouter (M2): I don't know, you know, as things go along trying to, I guess in a way, trying to pass on some of your belief systems and values onto this little person would probably be the main focus. […] Ja, and I guess in terms of values and sort of trying to raise someone that's, I don't know, a likeable person at the end of the day.

Extract 5

Jakobus (M2): Yeah, my dad when he, he's a helluva guy [laugh]. We got brought up in this code thing, but my dad's sense of compassion and sense of humility, it wore off on us. […] What he gave over to us, I think it sticks with me and when it comes to having children I would follow his example and practice a lot of things that he left over to me because I think it enabled me to have this open-mindedness about issues. I would like to give it over to my children because I find that it enriches them.

Extract 6

Koos (M1):	The garage joins the house. [...] I like to work in the garage sometimes and you are part of the house and the kids are in and out and you are here. It's not that you (.) values and things are not taught officially. "Come and sit here I want to tell you this." In the garage there would be a *tok-tokkie* running on the ground and the kid will want to hit it and I say, "No man, why do you want to hit the thing now?" "No, but it's a *gogo*." "No, but what has the *gogo* done to you? Just take it outside." That's something you've taught now while lying under the *bakkie* and draining the oil. So that's why I say if you want certain **values** for your kids and have the biggest effect on them **you've got to be there** and teach this type of thing.

In these extracts the father is assigned the moral function of instilling certain values and producing a decent adult. The construction of the father as moral pedagogue frequently implied traditionally masculine attributes of strength, steadfastness, sensibility and so on and the masculine norm was privileged as the ideal (generic) "person" ought to display traits that are generally associated with masculinity. In extract 5, for instance, Jakobus speaks about "being brought up in this code thing". The "code", he later explained, is related to masculine honour (e.g., not "ratting on your mates", "personal sacrifice to a friend", "look[ing] out for one another", "being responsible for one another" and "cover[ing] each other's backs"). Hence, many of the "values" that participants described as necessary to be passed on to all children were covertly gendered.

From extract 6 it is possible to see that moral instruction occurred during the course of the man's routine tasks (in this case working in the garage), as in the section above where men's instructive interactions with their children occurs during leisure time. As Koos states, the issue is that "you've got to be there" since children's moral education occurs informally. Once again, this reiterates the idea that children need fathers to "be there" for them, the masculine presence is required. As Lawler (1999) asserts, "fathers . . . represent a bulwark against social disorder largely by just being there" (p. 70). Hence, the construction of the father as moral pedagogue assisted participants in constructing a distinctive parental role for fathers in the family and in this way re-inscribes the necessity of the father to children's wellbeing. In the following section I shall look at how an important part of the fathers "being there" was constructed as providing a male role model for children.

1.2. Father as male role model

When participants discussed role models it was specifically the *male* role model that was focused on. Hence, the unique attributes and skills of men *as men* were deemed important for men to model or pass on to children, a task which can be seen as an extension of the father's function of being an instructor or mentor to children. Significantly, no mention was made of "mother figures" or "female role models". This is remarkably similar to Folgerø's (2008) findings in his research on gay parenting. According to Folgerø (2008), his informants defined

the issue of "role models" to be a question of *father*hood, of the value of having a father participating in the care for the children. The informants clearly looked upon fathers as "role models," while mothers simply were mothers. Mothers can certainly be good or bad, but the informants did not consider it necessary to argue that mothers are needed to ensure that children have "female role models." For this reason, there are plenty of discussions of

fatherhood in the interviews while the gender specificity of being a mother was either absent or implicit in the interviews (p. 136).

Likewise, in my research, gender role modelling was depicted by participants to be a paternal function. The preoccupation with male role models and the relative silence about the equivalent of "female role models" suggests more of a concern with the presence of men in the family than with women's presence.

Underpinning this construction is the notion of heterosexual gender complementarity, which I discussed in Chapter 2. To briefly recapitulate, according to "the law of two sexes", femininity and masculinity are as complementary opposites. Each is defined in terms of what the other lacks so that genders are thought of as counterparts to one another (Butler, 1990a). "Normal", "healthy" child development was therefore described by participants as including gender role modelling, whereby the adult sets an example for children of the "correct" gender behaviour. This mostly relies on the child observing the adult and participating in certain activities with him (or her).

The notions of modelling or "teaching" used by the participants has certain connotations that resonate with the social psychological concept of "socialisation" in that fathers were seen as instructing children in the proper performance of their gender. This could be indicative of the broad impact of psychology, particularly developmental psychology. The circulation of psychological concepts and terms—such as that of a gender "role model" or "identification"—in public debates regarding children's needs and best interests inform not only popular understandings of gender, but also of good parenting (Folgerø, 2008). "A basic assumption in common understanding, deriving from [these] psychological concepts, is that men and women *are* different, and that it is important for a child's development to experience this fundamental difference within the family and among the carepersons" (Folgerø, 2008, p. 138). In the following, I shall discuss how the construction of the male role model is underpinned by the script of "masculine domesticity" (LaRossa, 1997, p. 33), which functions primarily to valorise manhood and to distinguish fathers from mothers. One of the prime tasks of domestic masculinity is acting as a manly guide to children.

2.5.1. The script of masculine domesticity

According to LaRossa (1997), the notion of fathers as role models originates in a script of "masculine domesticity" of which the fundamental premise is "that men have a 'special something' garnered from nature or nurture, or both, that allows them to make a unique and, depending on your perspective, positive contribution to an activity" (LaRossa, 1997, p. 33). The term "domestic masculinity" describes a particular construction of masculine care in which masculinity is valorised as men perform domestic activities, traditionally consigned to women, in a manly way (or, in other words, interject manliness into domestic work).

LaRossa (1997) maintains that this construction of fatherhood describes a particular middle class (Western) model of participatory fatherhood, in which a central feature is the celebration of the manly way in which domestic activities, such as childcare, are performed by men. This script is evidenced in the following extract.

Extract 7

André (M1):   A good father should be an **all-rounder**. You must be. I bake the nicest cakes. I cook. I can clean this house better than the maid [can]. I actually give her lessons. I can be a ruffian. I can lie in the bed and [laughs] have a fart competition with the boys. You understand? I can kill a puff adder; I've done it plenty of times. I'm an excellent horseman (.) rider. I am an outdoors type. The kids go camping with me. At the church I'm the lead elder. So **in terms of all the extremes I can really do anything**. I think I'm very soft-hearted in essence. I cry. Not the emotional crying that people say, "Oh this guy..." but with compassion. If I see something that really touches my heart, a nice movie, I'll be the one that sheds a tear, because I've got either sympathy or empathy for what is going on. I love animals. I (.) like nice things. So I think I'm sort of balanced, I can do anything. I can do needlework, I can iron. [...] I think it was just how I am. I can really bake the nicest cake. I've got a cake that I bake for the church fête every year. I bake weekly cakes. I'm also giving Sunday school so if I don't [inaudible] with the kids, then I'm also baking for them on Sunday. Even our maid says that I'm a (.) *cordon bleu* (.) whatever it's called. She says I'm the best and my wife can just get a recommendation. [Laughter]

In this extract the script of masculine domesticity functions in such a way as to ward off any trouble that might arise as a result of the speaker's claims of engagement in domestic tasks like baking, cleaning, sewing, ironing, teaching young children and so on. It is possible to see that these tasks are considered rightly feminine tasks since the speaker calls on feminine expertise (of his partner and the "maid") to validate his superior performance of these tasks. His accomplishment rests in the fact that he performs these activities "better" than the women who are supposed to perform them. He also calls on the masculinised professional cordon bleu (or blue ribbon) chef to legitimate his position as superior to females in domestic issues (particularly cake baking). Despite this self-positioning (of superiority), it is because these activities are rightly considered feminine that he must call on the opinion of women to make his argument (and arguably one of whom, the "maid", who has the least power in the household).

These stereotypically feminine activities are incorporated into his construction of the father as "an all-rounder". Rather than a source of potential embarrassment, these activities are an achievement in that they actually bolster the traditional construction of manhood as based on achievement and conquest. André performs domestic tasks *in addition* to being "a ruffian", an outdoorsman, killing snakes, riding horses, camping and so forth. So, upon the face of it*,* this may appear to be a less stereotypical rendition of masculinity, but, ironically, it is framed in a distinctly masculine terms of competition and accomplishment. As Wetherell and Edley (1999) point out, often what is celebrated in such positioning is not so much the performance of non-stereotypical gendered tasks (such the sewing or the crying) *per se,* but the courage (or benevolence) *as men* to engage in potentially demeaning activities. As Wetherell and Edley (1999) state, "being a gender non-conformist trades on the hegemonic values of autonomy and independence" (p. 350) that, paradoxically, are

associated with stereotypical masculinity. It is possible to see that this extract conveys a tone of pride as the narrator professes to have performed these tasks better than women.

Similarly, in their study of heterosexual Norwegian fathers on parental leave, Brandth and Kvande (1998) found that the fathers who were comfortable being home on parental leave were the ones "who did it their own way" (p. 307), that is, they "shape[d] their own masculine form of care-work" (p. 293) and "create[d] their own masculine form of caring" (p. 297). These men often combined care work with other masculine pursuits, usually leaving housework to their partners, and considered the mastering the challenge of childcare as a masculine achievement. Care and intimacy with children were therefore generally admired and seen as a new territory to be conquered while incompetence with children was not considered particularly masculine.

André's descriptions of himself as an "all-rounder", "balanced" and able to "do anything" (all socially desirable attributes) stretches the boundaries of masculinity to incorporate unconventional behaviour, but the gender binary is ultimately reproduced. His engagement in both traditionally female and stereotypically male behaviour is described as engaging in "extremes", thereby constructing masculinity and femininity as polar opposites. Hence, this description reiterates and reinforces the "two-sex" model of gender (Butler, 1990a). The speaker portrays himself as somehow straddling the gender divide and claims to have gained mastery over both domains. His unconventional behaviour is not taken for granted, but considered to be related to a personal capacity. Moreover, he engages in rhetorical work to explain his "unmanly" behaviour, but does not similarly qualify any of his manly pursuits, that is, those that he is expected to perform. For instance, discussing his essential soft-heartedness and his ability to cry he qualifies this not "emotional" but related to "compassion", thereby disavowing emotionality, which is conventionally associated with femininity, in favour of "compassion", which is a desirable (gender-neutral) human quality. That is, he constructs his crying as rational or reasonable. He cries for a reason and his initial statement "I cry" is eventually recast more moderately as "shed[ding] a tear". The speaker therefore constructs himself as a well-integrated man, unafraid to act in terms of personal preferences, thereby rendering the position he has negotiated a positive one.

As LaRossa (1997) maintains, this particular construction of manhood does not (significantly) trouble gender norms. Instead, it assists in distinguishing fatherhood and motherhood and enshrining men's place in the family since men are seen as able to make a unique and positive contribution to the domestic realm. Therefore, although the participation in something ostensibly feminine could potentially allow speakers to be positioned as unmanly and create a troubling moment, this behaviour was qualified by rhetorical work so that speakers appeared as "gender rebels" (Wetherell & Edley, 1999, p. 347), but not gender troublemakers. As Nentwich (2008) argues, gender trouble is prohibited by rhetorical work around unconventional gender behaviour.

When narrators attempt to explain or justify unconventional gender performances, the radical potential of these troubling moments is undermined. Justifications of this nature reify the gender binary exactly because the narrator must articulate valid reasons or explanations for their behaviours, desires and pleasures rather than taking these for granted. Accordingly, Nentwich (2008) contends that in order to truly challenge the binary, unconventional gender performances would have to be enacted in an unquestioning manner, as though they were a given, or supported by arguments that are based on different, non-stereotypical assumptions (e.g., a man arguing that he engages in domestic work because caring for his family's welfare is important to him and not because he is "helping out").

Thus, the script of domestic masculinity allows men take on greater responsibility for childcare without challenging gender norms and so traditional renditions of manhood are not threatened or troubled. Instead, the concepts of domestic masculinity and manliness actually complement one another, firstly, because domestic masculinity does not supplant the father as economic provider as the principle precept for men to follow. Therefore, it does not disrupt the strong association between masculinity and paid work. Secondly, the exercise of supposedly feminine activities does not call manliness into question (LaRossa, 1997). As a result, the gender binary is reiterated and, accordingly, fathers are positioned as fundamentally different from mothers and able to make a necessary and matchless contribution to children's proper development (Folgerø, 2008).

The most distinctive and fundamental task of domestic masculinity is that of being a manly guide to children (LaRossa, 1997). As one young woman described it, a father should ideally "show them how to be a man and to be a woman and how to treat women and how to treat men" (Mariska). Role modelling was described most commonly as teaching boys to be a men or teaching girls how to relate to the "opposite sex". Notably, this was the case for both sons and daughters. Although, "teaching a boy to be a man" was most common, fathers were also deemed to be exemplars of masculinity for their daughters. I shall address each of these in turn.

2.5.2. Teaching boys to be men

Based on the notion of heterosexual gender complementarity, fathers were seen to have a particular affinity with their sons by virtue of their shared gender, as I discussed in the preceding chapter. Their task was to display appropriately manly behaviour for the son to emulate and to impart masculine skills and knowledge, as the subsequent excerpts illustrate.

> *Extract 8*
> Riaan (M2)**:** (I think it's about?) striking a balance, as I said now, striking a balance between being, you know—especially if you're a male child you identify with your father a lot quicker—it's a balance between teaching you to be a man and what you're supposed to do and being sensitive to your skill-set or your emotional profile . But, ja, it is very difficult to, especially if you're a father and you're living your life

and trying to guide the young life and sometimes the two get mixed up a bit. But that's life and most of us come out of it OK. So ja, my ideal father is definitely, from a male-child perspective, is just to, to make you know what it is to be a man and a male and what your duties are. […] Just to use my brother and I has an example, my brother is younger than me, two years younger, but he and my dad are similar, similar outlooks, similar how they think, my dad thinks very scientifically, very […] rationally, very knowledgeably. Whereas I'm sort of more of my mom's side, I'm more (.) I talk to people a lot easier than my brother does. I'm a lot more sensitive in certain aspects, but my dad's managed to sort of balance the two of us. He knows when to just leave me and to say "whatever". He's just managed to figure out which way to treat both of us without demeaning either of us, which is quite a fine line. […] No child's the same, so you've try and just . . .

Tracy: Um, the whole kind of teaching the child, your boy, to be a man, what does that entail?

Riaan: The way my parents raised us (.) very traditionally, you know, respect women and never hit a girl, that sort of stuff, the sort of traditionalist views. Right and wrong, this is right, this is wrong, you did what was wrong, got a hiding, you learnt very quickly which was right. And also, just there was no confusion, are you a guy, are you a girl type of thing. It sounds a bit [inaudible] in this new PC world, but that's just the way it [was]. You knew where you stood and what your role was, you were going to be the head of the house, you know, you had to provide for your family. Now that's . . .

Tracy: And do you think that's more specifically a dad's job?

Riaan: I think with the male child, definitely. I think a mom [inaudible] provides more of the emotional side of things, thinking about people's feelings and what not, whereas your father sort of, you know, this is right this is wrong.

Extract 9

Lettie (F1):   [M]y father never did anything with my brother because he was an alcoholic. When my brother came along that's when the alcoholism really started. So, in my brother's case he actually looked up to Wayne [her partner], he was his role model and his father figure. From when he was little, I got married when I was 22, he was 12 so he was just going into his teenage years, and until today. His sport that he did he played cricket and he played squash, but he was specifically good at cricket and that was all through Wayne's influence because he played cricket. And he loves motorbikes, he's got a motorbike again and that's because Wayne rides motorbikes.

In these extracts fathers, or "the father figure", is constructed as modelling correct behaviour and imparting certain values so that boys develop a "proper" identity as heterosexual men. In extract 8 Riaan invokes the psychologised notion of "identification" (Folgerø, 2008).   Fathers and mothers are depicted in a gender stereotypical way and as complementary opposites. The mother is disqualified from being a gender role model for her sons by virtue of her gender which equips her to be an emotional care giver instead. It is the father who instructs sons on the correct masculine behaviours and duties, whilst taking individual differences into account. He argues that this task is specifically the role of the father in relation to the son. This is also implied in extract 9. The young boy in this extract "looks up to" a father figure and imitates his manly behaviour. The child is involved in his pursuits. (Again, these are stereotypically masculine leisure pastimes and are unrelated to the more pragmatic aspects of parenting work.) The father surrogate then implicitly counterbalances the potentially negative effects of having an absent father.

In these extracts masculinity is associated with conduct and the performance of gender appropriate tasks. The speakers focus on "traditional" gender norms (e.g., respecting women), duties and roles (e.g., provider, head of the home) and stereotypically manly pursuits (e.g., playing sport and riding motorbikes). Gender is therefore

not strictly associated with innate traits but rather with correct performance. In extract 9, for instance, the participant's partner is positioned as a role model and a surrogate for a father who "never did anything with [her] brother". The job of the man is to "teach" or "model" the correct gender performances. In this respect the participants invoke the notion of socialisation whereby the boy child learns appropriate behaviour from an older man. The assumption is that that outward behaviour, what one does, should be consistent with what one "is", as determined the sexed body. In other words, there should be a correspondence between sex and gender. Based on this assumption a gender performance can be "correct" or "incorrect". This is evident in extract 8 in the reference to "confusion" over one's true gender identity (whether one *is* a "guy" or a "girl"). So, if one is seen to be "biologically male" one is expected to enact proper masculinity and to display the appropriate traits of masculinity (Butler, 1990a). Talk of gender role modelling was therefore based upon an understanding of gender as emanating from a stable "gender core" which is then attributed with a series of gendered coherences; Indian's case man = masculine = "scientific thinker"/rational, while woman = feminine = emotional/relational. So though Riaan describes himself as associated with stereotypically feminine traits ("more of my mom's side", extract 8) he is able to avoid the potential gender trouble related to this positioning, which he intimates could be "demeaning", by referring to individual variation in the form of "skill sets" and "emotional profiles" but the essentialist, dualistic construction of gender is maintained.

The reference to possible gender "confusion" "in this new PC world" also calls to mind a crisis narrative. Traditional masculinity is depicted as threatened by changing gender norms, trivialised in this excerpt as mere political correctness, and vulnerable to change. Moreover, the interweaving of "what is right and what is wrong" with normative gender behaviour, imbues gender performances with a moral dimension. There is a "right" and a "wrong" way to perform gender. This implies not only that traditional masculinity, and positions associated with masculinity (e.g., head of the home and the others mentioned here) are valid and reasonable, but that they ought to be defended. Thus, importantly, it is possible to see from the examples above that the discursive purpose performed by much of this talk was to bolster traditional renditions of manhood.

In addition to instructing a boy child in his "true" or "correct" gender, it is also evident from these examples that masculine care has a moral function of preventing moral decay or degeneration. This invokes the construction of the father as a moral pedagogue, which I discussed earlier. This moral function was extended to include girls too. The father was therefore charged with children's moral well-being in general. This is evident in the following extract in which the notion of gender complementarity presents the speaker with a challenge in constructing fathering in relation to an "opposite gender" child. The task of being a moral role model presents a way of overcoming this challenge.

Extract 10

Franco (M2):   I guess also being an example. If you have a boy, to be a role model for the boy on how to be a man and then for the daughter, I'm not exactly sure [laugh]. But, ja, being a role model, I think that's the short answer. I'm sure there's more.

Tracy: And being a role model in terms of being a man, what would that entail?

Franco: Sho. [Laugh] I don't know! [laughter] [...]if you don't just focus on the boy, [then] just how to be a good person. I can say a lot about that but I think that summarises it quite nicely. Ja, and how to love yourself and your family and the world, people, things like that.

The speaker delineates the father's role in relation to a son as a gendered one, specifically, being a "role model". The constraint posed by the notion of heterosexual gender complementarity makes constructing a similar gendered role in relation to an "opposite" gender child more difficult for him. Fathers and daughters are seen to be so entirely unlike one another, that men are not able to be *gender* role models for girls. Moreover, the speaker has difficulty in explaining what precisely he means by "teaching a boy to be a man". It is possible that this difficulty could be related to the passive nature of the task. It does not necessarily entail doing anything, but simply being present. In order to alleviate this trouble and fashion a role for men in daughter's lives too, the speaker repositions the father as a moral pedagogue instead of just a male role model. With gender out of the equation, fathering is broadened beyond being a gender role model to instructing a child of any gender "how to be a good person". The majority of the talk about fathering as role modelling was related to teaching boys to be men so that, as Adenæs (2005) points out, the main concern appears to be about boys. However, as I have mentioned before, male role models were also considered to be important for girls. Next, I discuss how participants constructed recognisable and acceptable gendered relationships between fathers and daughters.

2.5.3. Providing girls with exemplars of masculinity

In talk about the father's role in relation to daughters the emphasis was placed on the father as an exemplar of masculinity within the heterosexual relationship. This is based upon the heterocentric assumption that girls will grow up to have a relationship with a person of the "opposite sex". In the following extracts, the father is portrayed as, what would be described in psychological terms, "an agent of socialisation" for girls.

Extract 11

Lettie (F1):   I've got friends that have got two boys, now the little daughter does more sport than what those two boys ever did. So, there's a scenario there where the father doesn't really push them to do sport or let's go and do this together and yet the girl is doing everything that they never did. So why should you keep on trying to have a boy, because you might have a boy and he's not interested in fishing or watching rugby, you know he might be interested in drama and art. So I don't think it's gender specific. It shouldn't be gender specific, the involvement of the parents, because with that fishing that you do with them at the river, it's bonding time and you teach them how to interact with members of the opposite sex for when they're older. So, I think that in that respect a father's involvement is just as important.

Extract 12

Annelie (F1):   I think the special way in which he respected them and the way he spoke of his kids and the way he treated me with respect and love. I think that taught them that there must be a perfect relationship between a husband and wife. We had our differences but they always knew that we loved and

respected each other. […] Um, he always kissed me hello or goodbye and when I cooked he'd come and stand behind me and whisper in my ear, always called me 'lovey' and never yelled at me. (.) I think that's important especially for a girl to see that your father respects your mother and the man that you're going to marry one day must respect you like that.

In these extracts fathers are portrayed as providing an exemplar for future heterosexual partnerships. In extract 11, the father teaches his daughters how to behave in future cross-gender interactions. The reference to "the *opposite* sex" clearly denotes a particular conceptualisation of gender. Similarly, in extract 12 the father sets the example of an ideal (marriage) partner. The mother and father's respectful and loving marriage relationship is envisioned as an example of the "perfect" heterosexual relationship. Thus, it is precisely the man's *difference* from his female partner and his daughter that qualifies the father for this task. A mother cannot perform this role in her daughter's life and so the father has a unique role to play.

It is clear that the notion of gender complementarity makes sense of father-daughter interactions as, for example, in extract 11 where sport and fishing are portrayed as a more appropriate activity for boys, although the speaker mentions that there may be variation in this when boys are "not interested" in these conventionally manly pursuits. (This recalls the reference in extract 14 to the interests of a "real boy" as not including piano playing.) Following this binary logic, although the speaker uses gender neutral pronouns in the ensuing example of a non-gender specific interaction, fishing with children, the audience can infer that the parent is a man and the children are girls since fishing has already been described as a masculine occupation. Hence, it is possible to see that, as with father-son interactions, gender role modelling reiterated dualistic, traditional understandings of gender.

To sum up thus far, the idea that children benefit from the unique care that men provide reinforces the belief that ideally children "need" to have their (biological) father fully and continuously present, preferably residing in the same home as both the children and their mother. The welfare of the child was depicted as being at stake should this ideal condition not be met, as I shall show in the following section, and so this tactic relies on the potential negative outcomes if the child is deprived of a father figure and/or an involved father. As I shall show in the following section, participants' narratives displayed the premise that grow[ing] up with a "mother" (female) and a "father" (male) is an imperative prerequisite for a "normal" development of personality, enabling boys to develop an identity as heterosexual men and girls to develop an identity as heterosexual women (Folgerø, 2008, p. 138).

3. THE DANGERS OF FATHERLESSNESS

According to Woodhead (1997), focusing on potential threats to children's psychological development as a result of not meeting certain needs, is a pathological approach to defining children's needs, since the emphasis

is on the potential negative outcome. In this case, the threat to children's wellbeing is of failing to provide the child with a father figure. Hence, "'[n]eed' here does not presume qualities that are intrinsic to children; it is an inference from the relationship between certain qualities of *mothering* and a valued consequence for children" (Woodhead, 1997, p. 68; emphasis mine). As I shall show in this section, it is most certainly, mothering that is at issue, even though the talk focuses on father absence. In the subsequent section I demonstrate how the single parent family and the "broken" or divorced family were portrayed as creating family forms that threaten children's well-being.

3.1. The "broken home"

I have already shown (in the previous chapter) how many participants argued that marriage meets the child's need for stability and security. It is the heterosexual union that ties conceptions of stability and security to the nuclear family. The corollary of this argument, which I now turn to, is that a "broken home" is harmful to the child. In such talk, the heterosexual nuclear family form was usually taken for granted as the ideal childrearing context and instead the non-marital family was characterised as unsound and as potentially detrimental to children's wellbeing. For example, in the following extract, Esmè(who got divorced when her children were fairly young) comments on her anxiety that this event might have adversely affected her children.

> ***Extract 13***
>
> Esmè (F1): I suppose any person would have wanted to make sure that their marriage would have stayed solid, to give that to them, but I won't change them [the children] at all. […]I prayed and asked that [God] takes away all of the negative, horrible memories. So there's [sic] parts that I can't remember and I accept that that is how He works. It's just every now and then when I hear someone talking about their background that I will ask the kids, "Is there anything you would change?" you know, "Are you OK? Just checking up" [laughs].

Here, talking about her "regrets", Esmé intimates that a "solid" marriage is something that one can "give" one's children, that is, an ideal condition that a parent provides to ensure their wellbeing. The idea that she has to check up on her children indicates some apprehension that their own "background" might have affected them negatively. The possibility that they may have benefited from the termination of an unhappy and fraught marriage was not considered by Esmé or any of the other participants when discussing divorce. Instead it was the dangers of the "broken home" that were focused upon, based on the notion that the stability of the parents' marriage extends to the children, as reiterated in the following extracts.

> ***Extract 14***
>
> Lettie (F1): I think they had the **stability** of their parents. Even when they were going to school and I'm sure you remember too, there was then **already a high divorce rate**. There were lots of kids from **broken homes** and I think they loved the **stability**. What happened through all the years is they would bring kids from **broken homes** home because our house was always seen as a **safe** house. On both sides there's [sic] friends that still regard us as surrogate parents because of that. They all adored Wayne because he used to have such an easy relationship with kids in general.

Extract15

Jakobus (M2):   I've got a lot of friends whose parents did divorce and it is pretty **traumatising**. I was also pretty traumatised by these things. Ja, that is a very good question, whether it is **better for the child** that we are married. I think it's **better for the child** because I mean the thought of abandonment is inconceivable, it's absolutely terrible. The parent, if **he's** not willing to take responsibility for it at least let **him** have a duty under the law to take care of that child.

The underlying assumption in these extract is of the normality and benefit of "marriage and the creation and maintenance of a male-female dyad with children" (Macleod, 2003, p. 24).   In extract 14, Lettie constructs the heterosexual nuclear family as stable and "safe" and, by implication, single parent families as the opposite. She maintains that she and her partner were able to provide children from divorced families with the security that they otherwise lacked. Notably, Lettie specifically refers to "broken homes" (where most people usually spoke of divorced families). This particular construction (of "broken homes") not only bears connotations of dysfunction and damage to the original ideal family form but it is also morally loaded, as further suggested by the reference to the "already" "high divorce rate", which links the "broken" or divorced family to broader societal decline.

Similarly, in extract 15, divorce is described as distressing and painful for children, whilst having married parents allows children to feel secure. Furthermore, extract 15 shows a concern with paternal absence. In this excerpt, the official recognition of the parents' union is represented as beneficial to children because it legally obliges parents to care for their children. The masculine pronouns suggest that it is unmarried *men,* in particular, who "abandon" their families and are as less inclined or unwilling to care for and take responsibility for their offspring. This, once again, invokes the undesirable subjectivity of absentee father, often referred to in popular discourse as the "deadbeat dad" or a "feckless father" (Lupton & Barclay, 1997; Smart & Neil, 1999) and points to similar pragmatic reasons for marriage. In particular, the divorced or so-called "broken family" represented a particular threat to children's wellbeing because it was seen as depriving them of the stability and security ostensibly offered by the heterosexual nuclear family and, especially, by the father. The "broken" family was condemned for creating a family form devoid of a father and it was this specifically that was seen as jeopardising the welfare of children, and even broader society. As a result, fatherless families were delegitimized and stigmatised, as Macleod (2003) also shows in her research on the construction of teenage pregnancy.

3.2. The fatherless family and the threat of the single mother

Much of the attention that fathers receive in relation to children's welfare is therefore focused on *absent* fathers (as in extract 15 for example).   In both popular and academic fora, it is the father's physical presence/absence that is considered to be a determinant of how children—and, as I shall show, boys in particular—turn out (Lawler, 1999).   Likewise, in my study in comparison to the concern expressed for

fatherless children, there was a relative lack of concern for children's need for a mother. This is not to say that people did not believe that mothers are not important to children's wellbeing. On the contrary, as I have already mentioned, mothers were most frequently positioned as the "primary meeters of [children's] needs" (Lawler, 1999, p. 70). This was, however, was unremarkable since such gender positioning is within the usual ambit of the female gender role (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004). It was largely accepted as a given and usually always presupposed that a mother would be present in her child's life as the guardian and primary caretaker. This was the invisible norm and as a consequence, the mother's absence was not conceived of as a real possibility in the same way as a father's might be. When discussing single "parents", it was therefore the fathers who were presumed to be absent and the mothers who were the sole parent—though this was typically articulated in gender neutral terms. The issue, therefore, was with fatherless families specifically and in the participants' talk about divorce and single "parenthood", much of the concern was with father absence, or the lack of a father figure/ male role model.

Nevertheless, the blame for how children turn out lies not with the absent father, but with the single mother, since mothers are positioned as primarily responsible for meeting children's needs. Consequently, in the context of divorced or "broken" families, participants focused on the potentially harmful effects of lone *mother*hood, which was depicted as sub-optimal with regard to the ideal childbearing conditions. The "good" or "normal" mother is married (and heterosexual) and has no needs beyond those which benefit the child, and certainly no desires, bar the desire to have a child (Lawler, 1999). This is evident as the following excerpts.

Extract 16
Anel (F2):   The chances that I will go overseas [next year] to do my masters are quite strong, or the year after. So it's a long way off. My parents are always like, "We want grandchildren." My brother's getting married in October. My brother doesn't want children so I don't know. I think that shouldn't (.) I'd never let that make my decision for me, because, once again, that's selfish. It's not about my parents. I'd love to give them a grandchild. I'd love to. My mom would be an awesome grandmother, but it's not about the grandmother it's about the grandchild. I wouldn't want her to have the pleasure of having a grandchild, little baby, for three years and then deal with my child's issues of having been **the child of a single mother, a single or unwed mother** for fifteen more years or fifty more years, it's not fair. But, ja, my parents are quite hard up for kids, for grandkids!

Extract 17
Elize (F2):   I think **single parenthood** wouldn't scare me because I know that I'm a strong person and I'd be able to. Still it's gonna be hard and there's always gonna be questions that your kid's gonna want ask that you can't [answer], which I think makes it hard. But I think women can still be **single parents**, even if they fall pregnant and they don't have that [a career and stable relationship] yet. I mean, a baby is a baby, go and learn, change the course of life. Then again, nothing in life is guaranteed [...] I think financially, that's why I said, it's not putting it off, that I don't want kids. Nothing will ever change my mind about that, but at this moment I don't wanna have kids because I won't be able to look after [them]. So, I wouldn't be able to give them what my idea of what it is to be a parent.

Extract 18
Petro (F2):   You would want to give them the best not just financially, but in every way and people just change so much I mean a child's not safe anywhere anymore. [...] There's just too much going wrong and maybe I'm paranoid, but it's just **unfair toward the child**. (.) [...] I mean I compare it with my childhood and

within 30 years it's a different world. […] That's a main concern and then also you don't know if it's gonna be, if your partner is gonna be there forever and a day. Then to have a little one in a **divorced family** or whatever reason, the other parent gets killed off. [...] I know you can't shy them away from **hurt** and whatever but still you can try your best. […] Growing up in the '80s basically it was still safe. You could still live to a certain degree. I know what it feels like to run around barefoot without stepping into something horrible like a needle and I know how it feels to actually have a garden with a big dog instead of a flat now, to have my mom at home. So, in that sense I had the ideal childhood [...] But now I won't be able to give them the ideal childhood and [...] and that's not good enough for me. [...] And then, I come from [...] a mining area, so you see a lot of abused little ones, a lot of little ones who don't have the means. And, even though you're little, that makes an impression on you that this is what a little one looks like if they don't have food at home or their dad died in a mining accident or whatever. So you see that and then you see a longitudinal study of now 20 years later what has become of them and where am I?

All of these extracts display, to some degree, the belief that a single mother scenario is either less than ideal or, at worst, detrimental to the child. The participants utilise this in order to rationalise their own interests, thus drawing on the rhetoric of children's needs to do so. The subjectivity of single mother featured as an undesirable "Other" from whom participants could potentially distance themselves and so avoid undesirable positions themselves. This is especially clear in extract 16. The "single or unwed" (extract 16) motherhood is portrayed as potentially detrimental to the child's well-being to some degree and as prohibiting the provision of the ideal conditions for children. These conditions are spoken of in terms of either ideal parenthood or ideal childhood. Extracts 16 and 17 most directly address the issue of single motherhood and the necessity of postponing reproduction until the optimal conditions are met (i.e., one is married). Extract 18 focuses on the dangers of "divorced" and fatherless families, which are associated with negative outcomes for the child and which creates some trouble because marriage is, of course, not guaranteed to be permanent.

In extracts 16 and 17 the speakers rationalise their choice to postpone childbearing by presenting child-centred motives. In this way, their desire to pursue non-maternal options, which could potentially be seen as selfish or detracting from the child's best interests, are presented as the opposite. In extract 16, Anel states that the decision to procreate is foremost about the needs/interests of "the grandchild". This is reinforced by the emphasis on her current "unwed" status, which is highlighted as an unfavourable condition for reproduction since it potentially threatens the child's emotional wellbeing. The implication, therefore, is that she ought to be married first before she considers having children. Similarly, in extract 17—part of a larger discussion about the desire to postpone childbearing in order to establish a career—marriage is depicted as the ideal. The wish to pursue a career is presented along with marriage as in the child's best interests. Elize alludes to early and unplanned pregnancy, attributing single *mother*hood to male absence or abandonment. It is constructed more sympathetically than in the previous extract as occurring at the "wrong" stage of the heteronormative life course (when one is unmarried and not established).

Elize draws on a skill discourse of mothering (as opposed to the construction of mothering as natural) stating that young and/or inexperienced women can "go and learn" how to meet their child's needs. As Macleod (2001), asserts, this discourse potentially stigmatises young single mothers because it positions them as potentially unskilled and inadequate parents; their youth and supposed inexperience counts against them. While Elize refutes this construction to some extent, she nevertheless maintains that this context is less than ideal for the child and not her "idea of what it is to be a parent". Hence, her wish to pursue a career is not cast as self-interest, but as a means of attaining the financial security and stability in order to provide the ideal context for her children. She also clarifies that she only wishes to delay childbearing and not forgo it altogether.

In extract 18 Petro uses the self-same rhetoric of children's needs in order to justify a different decision, that is to remain childfree, and to ward off potentially troubled positioning that deviation from the norm might entail. Her rationalisation for the decision to eschew reproduction is therefore also child-centred. From the outset, Petro positions herself as self-sacrificing, even noble. Her decision not to have children is portrayed as child-centred, rather than self-centred, as she focuses on the impossibility of providing the best conditions for the future child. In this extract, middle-class social conditions are privileged as ideal for the child (Macleod, 2003). Petro also draws on a particular middle-class rendition of childhood in order to construct an unattainable "ideal childhood" that centres on the child's innocence, vulnerability and dependence, (Jenks, 1998; Meyer, 2007). Emphasis on children's vulnerability, Lupton and Barclay (1997) assert, serves to highlight "parental actions in affecting children's moral, emotional, social, physical, and cognitive development" (p. 20) and construct children as needing their parents to provide special protection. This construction of childhood was epitomised by the "image of the 'outdoors-child'" (Brandth & Kvande, 1998, p. 302) and by many of the participants. In this extract, this construction is also obliquely tied to race, since "growing up in the 80's" it was "safe" only for a minority of mostly "White" South African children. The traditional nuclear family, with a "mom at home", is also central to this construction and features as part of the "ideal childhood" with which the sub-optimal, potentially single mother family is juxtaposed. (The fact that she would be able to be an intensive mother is also a non-ideal condition.)

Petro's argument is that having children under less than desirable circumstances is construed as "unfair toward the child" and so the child's needs are depicted as paramount. She refers to various sub-optimal conditions that threaten children's safety as well as their physical and emotional security. These include the "divorced" and fatherless family which are equated with harm. The absence of the father is grouped with the poor developmental outcomes caused by malnutrition, poverty and so. Therefore, along with these other

undesirable conditions, the fatherless family is construed as a potentially harmful context that, along with various other less favourable conditions, could "hurt" the child.

Thus, these extracts show how the child-centred discourse was used to various discursive ends, in this case, either to justify the choice to postpone reproduction until fulfilling certain goals (extracts 16 and 17) or to forgo motherhood entirely (extract 18). However, although participants were able to rationalise their choices and to withstand some of the gendered expectations of them, in some cases challenging conventional ideas about good mothering, at the same time they reinforced the prevailing belief that the heterosexual nuclear family was the ideal context for childbearing. It is possible to see how single mothers were positioned as the undesirable "Other" against whom the narrators could position themselves as well as how the "broken"/divorced or fatherless family was made central and, in turn, how the heterosexual nuclear family was normalised. Central to this was a particular idealised construction of sacralised childhood which undergirded participants' talk of the child's needs. As shown in extract 18 in particular, the ideal conditions for childbearing were often based on a specific, distinctly Western and middle-classed, model of childhood.

From these extracts, it is clear that maternal presence alone is deemed insufficient for adequate parenting (Lawler, 1999). Children's "need" for security and stability was firmly linked to living with the married biological mother *and* father (as I showed in chapter eight) and, furthermore, fathers in particular were construed as offering stability to their offspring. As I mentioned earlier, fatherless families were constructed as posing dangers for both the individual welfare of children and society as a whole (Almack, 2006). This forms the moral context in which reproductive decisions are made so that any deviations were judged according to this standard (Almack, 2006).

3.2.1. "Wussies" and "Barbie doll" boys: The threat of sole mothering

The claim that children "need" fathers has been linked to the interrelated concerns regarding the loss of male authority in the home and the so-called feminisation of boys in the mother-dominated family (Lupton & Barclay, 1997). These concerns were generally not made explicit, but one participant did overtly discuss the supposed corrupting influence of femininity on boy children in fatherless families. This is seen in the following excerpt.

Extract 19

Dalena (F2):	From what I've witnessed and what I've learnt (.) from reading books, from seeing things, it's something psychological I think when it comes to, um, **when parents split** and **the child** ends up with the mother, they're usually softer, more feminine, almost squeamish about everything, little wussie type of boys, no backbone, because they don't have that active father role in their lives and they don't know how to relate to a man. So, I want my, the husband must be VERY actively [involved] in the son's life to make sure that he doesn't turn out to be a little Barbie doll.
Tracy:	A role model?

Dalena:	An incredible role model. He must be taking him on hunting trips, fishing trips, do boy things. He must be there when he goes to his first bar type thing, if he ever has to go out for something. The father must be there for his first drink. That's not my duty. I think mine would be with the girls.
Tracy:	Okay, so would Dad be the guardian of the boy too?
Dalena:	In a very different way, more teaching him how to be a man, whereas with the girl he'd be guarding what he needs to guard in that girl, making sure that the boy that gets involved with the girl behaves himself.

Referring to expert knowledge and experiential "evidence", the speaker in this extract denounces the divorced family in which the mother is the sole parent and head of the home as a less than ideal context for (boy) children's wellbeing. The reason for this is the supposedly damaging or distorting influence of femininity on manhood. The feminisation of boys is deemed to be a "psychological" outcome of living in the fatherless family and is prevented by the father's active involvement in the son's life and role modelling appropriate behaviour for him. The father is tasked with "teaching [the son] how to be a man", which involves doing "boy things", that is, stereotypically manly activities like hunting, fishing, and going to bars. The father is constructed, therefore, as a counterbalance to the potentially threatening feminine influence of sole mothers (Lupton & Barclay, 1997). It is the father's task to guard against the feminisation of the boy, which is essentially failed masculinity, and is represented by the "wussie" and the "little Barbie doll".

The demarcation of "boy things", as well as the differentiation of masculinity from femininity (as toughness and softness respectively), denotes a construction of gender that is underpinned by the notion of heterosexual gender complementarity. In this construction the stability and oppositionality of heterosexuality functions as a prerequisite for the internal coherence of gender categories. Masculinity is constructed in terms of difference, indexed by particular pursuits associated with stereotypical manliness and, importantly, contrasted with femininity. Not only is a rigid distinction is drawn between the categories of masculinity and femininity, but there is also an opposition between identification and desire (Anonymous, 1995, p. 1976). Boy children identify with their fathers by virtue of their shared gender, which uniquely qualifies the father to "model" the appropriate gendered behaviour for boys. The issue in this excerpt is the lack of someone deemed "biologically male" to display the traits of masculinity, and possibly also to sexually desire women (as the word "wussie" may suggest). It is clear that such binary gender distinctions come to exist only though the invocation of heterosexuality (Butler, 1990).

Moreover, a particular conventional rendition of masculinity is reiterated in this extract. Performances of masculinity that are unsuccessful, and therefore considered to be unacceptable or deviant, are those associated with femininity and, potentially, with homosexuality. This threatening spectre of failed gender performance (the effeminate "wussie"/"Barbie doll" boy) must be explicitly designated as "Other" in order to be managed. In this way these subjectivities form the constitutive outside of acceptable masculinity and

function as abject positions, defining the boundaries of the dominant category of "normal" masculinity, marking the alterity of the constructed inside and assigning its social significance (Pascoe, 2005). The concern, therefore, is with the maintenance of "proper" masculinity, even though the speaker refers generically to "the child". The concern with *boys/sons* coheres with Adenæs's (2005) contention that the fixation on male role models "is mainly a concern about boys, not children in general" (p. 217).

The threat of the feminisation of boys was attributed, more or less explicitly, to sons who do not have an "active" male role model to instruct them on "how to be a man". The implication is that the proper development of boy children is contingent not only on the father's presence, but also on his active contribution to the psychological and emotional development of his offspring (Barclay & Lupton, 1997). Although the focus is far more on boys than girls (as other commentators, such as LaRossa (1997, pp. 134 -136), have pointed out), contrary to Adenæs's (2005) assertion, the concern was not *entirely* for boys, as I show in the next section.

3.2.2. Girls with "daddy issues"

As I discussed in chapter eight, fathering was depicted as distinct from mothering and for that reason necessary for both daughters' and sons' well-being. I showed that fathers were often constructed as exemplars of masculinity and models of cross gender interactions for their daughters. Following this logic, a few of the participants regarded the father figure as necessary for girls' healthy development and/or cited father absence or the lack of a father figure as potentially detrimental to girls too. In the following extract, for instance, the speaker asserts that the active contribution of fathers to their children's psychological and emotional development is important regardless of a child's gender (Barclay & Lupton, 1996).

Extract 20

Anel (F2):   I think a lot of people underestimate the role that men play in girls' lives and I think a lot of girls underestimate the role that their parents (.) their DAD played in their lives. I mean that's a whole another issue, the whole daddy issue. I can just think of two of my cousins who grew up without their fathers. One of them is the same age as me and she's got a kid. She's living with her boyfriend and she jumps from one boyfriend to the next for as long as I've known her. It's a very obvious, some people say it's just a stereotype, but it's not it really makes big, big difference on a kid's life. For example, the little girl that's staying with my parents at the moment, she's my cousin's daughter. Her dad and my cousin just got divorced. She's quite old, she's std. seven now, but just the impact that that's had on her life. It's huge. Now I think she's very lucky. I'm very proud of my parents so I might have shutters on about my parents, but I think she's very lucky to be growing up [with them] as opposed to living with her mom who works a nine to five job, who studies part-time as well, who lives alone in a town with no school, so Marie would have to go to boarding school and then spending holidays with her dad who works a nine to five dad and who is now married to another woman. She lives with my mom and dad who care a LOT about her. We were there for her first Christmas before we went to school and we spoilt her terribly. We've always had great affection for her. She's sort of the youngest one in our extended family, and she loves my parents. They're just as interested in her life as they were in ours and involved in her life as they were in ours. I think she's very lucky to have been, not saved, but given the chance of a more structured life. I think a lot of people underestimate the role that men play in kids' lives, not just girls, but boys as well. That's why I say that it's such a team thing, having children. It's not just a woman's thing.

In this extract it is the father's continued presence that is of concern. The presence of the mother as the primary caregiver is, once more, taken as a given. It is clear that it is deemed insufficient to simply have a father who is available to the child (e.g. through visits), but rather the implication is that the father ought to be continuously present, residing in the same home as the child and the mother. The child does not simply need to have a male role model in her life but to live in a "normal" heterosexual nuclear family. Anel expresses the common belief that children need fathers who are physically present and involved in their lives. Most significantly, this is construed as necessary to children's wellbeing regardless of her/his gender. The speaker in extract 20 reiterates that men play an important role in both girl and boy children's lives. Arguing against gender specific involvement on the father's part, (as Petro does in extract 20 in the previous chapter) Anel asserts that the father is just as important as a mother to children. Therefore, the female-male dyad is reinforced, as well as the importance of father's presence, since he is represented as having something unique to offer.

Arguing against gender specific parental parent-child interaction was common among younger women and could suggest resistance to the greater burden of care that is placed on female parents—as Anel says, "It's not just a woman thing". Rather than argue for shared parenting though, father involvement is depicted as necessary for children's wellbeing and, in so doing fatherhood was valorised. This is evident in the extract above where father role is constructed as undervalued as men are positioned as overlooked or taken for granted with regard to parenting and especially important to girl children. Hence, the attention is shifted from men's choices to be present or not. The issue is not about why men may choose not to be present in a child's life, or if they even want to be. As a result of this passive positioning, men may be potentially absolved from blame for their absence or lack of participation in parenting. (Recall Petro's description—in extract 20, Chapter 9—of fathers as a "missing part . . . in everybody's lives" that "everyone" longs for). So, as with boys, both speakers stress the potentially negative outcomes of damage and loss to daughters should the father be absent. Having a father is considered to "make a big difference" to girl children. The allusion to "the whole daddy issue" in this extract calls upon a popular term used to describe emotional issues that result for girl children as a consequence of absent or minimal fathering.

This allowed for the repudiation of other family forms and the stigmatising of fatherless families, particularly those comprised of female sole parents and their children. As I have stated, single mothers were frequently criticised rather than the absent fathers. This criticism is less here than in talk about the detrimental effects of single mothering on boys, but, nevertheless, it is the mother's failings that are described at length. In order to make her case, Anel tells of fatherless women who have gone on to become "bad" mothers in that they are unable to provide the ideal conditions for their children (*viz.,* a stable nuclear family). These stories not only

construct the fatherless family is as a non-ideal condition for childbearing, because of various negative outcomes, but also implicate this context in causing the women in question to be "bad" mothers. Thus, Anel intimates that one outcome of fatherlessness is the perpetuation of the fatherless family. She describes one woman as an unwed mother with an unstable (possibly promiscuous) lifestyle who "jumps" from man to man. The other single mother discussed by Anel, is her divorced cousin who has relinquished custody of the daughter to her aunt and uncle (Anel's own parents). In contrast, Anel portrays them as caring, "interested" and involved, implying that these are all the things that the child might otherwise lack. This context offers stability ("a more structured life") not provided by the fatherless family. The child is consequently described as "lucky" for having been spared a similar fate to her mother. Again, the fatherless family is juxtaposed with the heterosexual nuclear family.

Thus, as I have shown, the discursive tactic in which children are described as *needing* fathers valorises fatherhood and often undermines and blames single mothers (Adenæs, 2005). Talk of potential harm to children is linked specifically to the absence of fathers or male role models and supports the argument that children need fathers. According to Adenæs (2005), the "families need fathers" argument stresses the dangers of father absence and supports the belief that living with single mothers leads to social problems, especially for boys. Consequently, this tactic not only pathologises the "broken" family, but also undermines and blames single mothers for any problems that their children may encounter (Adenæs, 2005; Macleod, 2003). As I mentioned, this pathological approach to defining children's needs is inferred from the relationship between *mothering* and a particular desired outcome for children (Woodhead, 1997). It is not necessarily the quality of the father-child relationship that is of concern, but simply that the father is "there" for his children. Rather, as the blaming of single mothers suggests, it is mothering that is under scrutiny. As the primary "meeters of children's needs", female parents must ensure the ideal conditions, including a stable home where the father is present. The failure to provide adequate conditions results in the blaming of women, rather than men.

The single (unmarried or divorced) mother is overtly repudiated in this talk and represents the constitutive outside of the hetero-norm, delineating what good parenting entails. This can, therefore, be seen as an excluded subjectivity. She is the aberrant or abject (un)subject which "haunts signification as its abject borders" (Butler, 1993a, p. 188) and therefore forms the constitutive outside of the hegemonic norm, that is the conjugalised, two-parent, nuclear family (Macleod, 2003). In other words, the single mother is the "Other", who both threatens and constitutes the norm of the whole and functional family, defining its boundary (Butler, 1993a; Macleod, 2003). Moreover, the single mother represents a threat to the hetero-norm, as does the "threatening spectre" (Butler, 1993a, p. 3) of failed gender in the form of effeminate masculinity. Both the

single mother and the effeminate boy child must be repudiated so that the need of a male presence, a particular *kind* of male presence, in the family can be asserted.

4. ENSHRINING THE ROLE AND RULE OF THE FATHER

Though having a female and a male parent was deemed to be best for children, fathers were constructed as having a unique role to play in children's lives. The positioning of fathers as male role models also serves to valorise fatherhood and enshrine the place of men within the nuclear family. In particular, it is the positioning of fathers as gender role models for both boy and girl children that fashions a unique role for fathers. Mothers may able to provide for many of the same needs as fathers do (e.g., financial provision, protection), potentially infringing upon traditionally masculine territory, but they cannot be *male* role model to their children.

In addition, as I have shown, there was greater concern for boys' welfare than girls with regard to father absence. This was reflected in the particular concern with male role models and the relative silence about the equivalent of "female role models". Fathers were seen as especially important to boys' "normal" and healthy development—especially with regard to their healthy gender development. Underlying this issue seems to be a concern with reiterating or bolstering particular traditional constructions of masculinity. Some have argued that such talk can be read in the light of the (perceived) threat to men's established positions within the family, which has traditionally been the source of men's power and authority. Broader social changes, like rising divorce rates and women's economic empowerment, make men's position within the family more precarious, especially in light of women's relatively greater power and authority over the domestic sphere (Finn & Henwood, 2009; Henwood & Procter, 2003; Smart & Neale, 1999).

3.1. The patriarchal family

In this respect, the majority of the participants alluded to men as authority figures within the family. This was sometimes done directly, for instance when Riaan (in extract 10 above) maintains that a father must teach a son his proper role, including being the "head of the house". Below are two more examples, also from men's narratives.

Extract 21

Elias (M1): Firstly, I am the **head of the house** [laugh] and Trudy supports me. Trudy would not do anything, would not take a decision without consulting me. That is one of those things in our house that I must really say, it is quite Biblical. She supports me 100% there. If the kids want something, want to do something, I've got to be consulted first. In that I'm not saying that Trudy doesn't make decisions. If she has to do something that doesn't affect the whole family, she does it and I don't have a problem with that because … uh… Yes, I am the **head of the house**.

Extract 22

Koos (M1): What I always say, in the later years, I'm like a fullback and that's exactly how I feel. In rugby, you know the full back, or even in soccer? The wife and the kids they are like in the scrum they're talking and planning and doing things and discussing certain things. Then they will get out of it and the opposition will come and break through and at the END OF THE DAY, what I'm saying is I'm alone at

the back. You've gotta sort out the problem. There's a high ball coming on you or there's somebody and only you are there. They will try and tackle and go mad in the front, but what I'm saying is **you always carry the, as a man, you always carry the responsibility**. It's part of being a father, so it's not that I'm... (.) it's just something that I've recognised a few years on that that is one of the roles that you are playing as a father. [...] when I talk to my friends that have more or less the same kids they all have the same experience.

Elias overtly positions himself stating that he is the authority in the family and holds decision-making power, which he justifies by stating that his position is Biblically sanctioned. He also highlights that he has his partner's agreement on this, thus engaging in "Partnership talk" (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004, p. 761) in order to justify this positioning and mitigate potential accusations of unfairness. Koos's self-positioning is less overt, but it is clear to see that he positions himself in a position of control and as ultimately responsible for the family. He too spends a moment justifying this at the end of this excerpt. These speakers' justifications show that this position is not necessarily accepted by all, and indeed it was outright rejected, most notably by Dawid. My subjectivity as a female researcher must also be taken into consideration in this respect.

After positioning himself as the head of the home, Elias went on to say that he disciplined the children, which he claimed he and his partner believed was "the man's job" (once again engaging in "Partnership talk"). However, he then went on to explain at length that he did not discipline them often and was in fact "the one in the family that probably gives the most love [and] the one that will cuddle the kids and laugh and play with them and they sit on my lap and things like that". He also stated that owing to his own father's lack of emotional involvement he made a point of showing his emotions and "to show them that I really, really do care about them". Elias made use of similar softening statements, claiming that he attempted to be more approachable and emotionally involved than his own father was. This extract shows how, as parenting has become sentimentalised, the emphasis is less on a hierarchical father-child relationship in which the father features as patriarch and more on relating to children in such a way that their individuality can develop fully (Lupton & Barclay, 1997). In order to accommodate these changes, Elias and Koos therefore contrasted themselves with their own fathers in order to position themselves as modern, more involved fathers.

3.2. The modern father: Using the contemporary gender script to "stretch" gender norms

This positioning is reflected in a tactic that was used by other participants order to account for, and to accommodate changing gender norms. Most of the participants constructed a version of modern fathering in which male authority is retained, but in a moderate manner. The modern father was commonly contrasted with the emotionally distant, uninvolved patriarch and required to be involved with his children to some degree, whether just emotionally or by contributing to their care. The participants therefore referred to "extreme" constructions of masculinity, such as the traditional emotionally distant and authoritarian patriarch, as a counterpoint to the "emotionally involved", and perhaps even "hands-on", modern father. In this manner,

constructions that retained many of the characteristics of traditional manhood were construed as more moderate, modern or reasonable. This can be seen in the following extracts.

Extract 23

Mariska (F2): I don't want to be married to **a dictator**. Glory! I want to be married to somebody who's quite **calm and confident** within himself and doesn't have **a huge macho ego** with something to prove so that his family lives under the fear of him opening the door. But I do want him to be like **the voice of the house**. It would be really nice if he could cook supper every now and then. I really think that it's important that he's part in the younger days of fetching kids and bathing kids. I think that's something that should be done <u>together</u>. I think it's probably a little bit of the feminist in me. Just because I'm a woman it doesn't mean that I want to be in the kitchen cooking and cleaning and cleaning the house. I've also got a career that I want to pursue. There are also interests that I have and I wanted to be treated as an individual and for him to keep that in mind from the time that we're dating to the time that we're old and sipping gin and tonics [laughter]. [...] I think if it was any other way I would end up quite resentful towards him. If I have to look back now at my parent's marriage, that's pretty much how it was and to make matters worse, there wasn't very much (.) the distance and the love grew less because my dad just wasn't doing his part. He wasn't disciplining and she pretty took over and she just got *gatvol* and had enough.

Extract 24

Elize (F2): It must be someone that's also strong-willed and sincere and loving and caring so that he can be, not strict on them, but teach them wrong from right, but not in an abusive way like some men can be. Like with Morné, from what I could see, he'd be a very controlling dad. I think he would push his child too much. I want to push my kids to be better people but I don't want them pushed to the point that they are 16 and drink and [take] drugs and all that stuff. They must feel comfortable to be able to come and talk to us. [...] He must be loving and want to spend time with them. It mustn't be like a chore to him. It must be that he wants to do it, like go for walks on the beach and go to watch their games and that. [...] And nappy changing would be nice! [...] Morné was Afrikaans and that stereotype that comes out. It's almost as though everything that was done to him he carries over, but I want my husband to also listen. I don't want to be like, "Okay, I'm married, you wear the pants." It must be common ground. "Okay I'm the mother, you're the father and if there's a problem we're raising OUR child. We're not raising your child or mine."

These young women both overtly talk against traditional gender norms in which men "wear the pants". In this respect, the speakers re-cite a newer gender script as evidenced by the reference to "the feminist in me" (extract 23) and the use of the phrase "common ground" (extract 24) to describe role sharing. (Once again, my subjectivity as a female researcher must be taken into consideration in interpreting these statements.) Yet, at the same time, these speakers reaffirm traditional constructions of masculinity as the ideal father features as an authority figure and disciplinarian. This potential contradiction is resolved by the contemporary gender script (which as I discussed earlier is a composite of the traditional and egalitarian scripts). Male partners can be considered to be helper parents and parenting roles remain gendered ("I'm the mother, you're the father") and bound to gendered assumptions of what they should entail.

Additionally, these narrators invoke a more reasonable, modern construction of the man as household head. The extreme construction of the "dictator" with "a huge macho ego" is juxtaposed with man who is "calm and confident within himself" and "the voice of the house" in extract 23. Mariska's own father could also be thought of as an example of an "Other"—or an extreme rendition of stereotypical masculinity—with whom to contrast a reasonable construction of manhood. In extract 24, Elize echoes this. She describes a "firm" but

loving father who disciplines the children contrasting this with a less desirable rendition of aggressive manhood and stereotypical Afrikaner manhood. She claims that she wants her future partner "also to listen". This construction of the firm but loving modern father is not a new one, according to LaRossa (1997). It has its roots in (conservative) Christianity and Colonial constructions of fatherhood. As I have mentioned, fathers, considered the natural parents in the 19th century, were enjoined to emulate God the Father and to be both just and ever-loving. Men were also religiously bound, according to a particular biblical interpretation, to be the authority figure in their homes. The construction of the firm but loving modern father may therefore incorporate changing ideas about men's roles, whilst retaining traditional renditions in which men have greater authority in the household. Like the contemporary gender script, these constructions allow social change whilst ultimately keeping underlying power structures intact (Riley, 2003).

Based on these common understandings of the father role, the discursive tactic that constructs men as uniquely able to meet their children's needs by virtue of being men, enshrines men's place in the heterosexual nuclear family, but may also be implicated in defending established male roles within the traditional family space, such as head of the home, and thereby supporting male authority. This tactic may literally support the rule of the (modern) father and forms a powerful defence of the traditional, hetero-patriarchal family form and preserves the place of fathers within it. Thus, I contend that the primary purpose of such constructions is to ameliorate threats to male authority, which has traditionally proceeded through the family, and that along with marriage, male headship was a normalised, and taken-for-granted invisible norm, as Macleod (2003) found in her analysis of teenage pregnancy literature.

5. CONCLUSION

The fundamental assumption, which I have shown in this chapter, was that women and men are fundamentally different; thinking that is rooted in a binaristic view of gender. Based on this assumption, fathers were distinguished from mothers according to the gender binary—the female/male dyad of the heterosexual couple becomes the mother/father dyad. Harnessing this construction of gender, participants then argued not only that "it is important for a child's development to experience this fundamental difference within the family and among the carepersons" (Folgerø, 2008, p. 138), but that the presence of a father was especially important to both girls and boys development. In short, the implication was that children *need* fathers. As I showed, men were positioned as fulfilling the important roles of family stabiliser, mentor or guide, the moral pedagogue responsible for instilling certain (androcentric) values, and, most significantly, being a gender role model to children. The function of gender role model is most significant amongst these fatherly functions, since it is a role that a woman—precisely by virtue of being a woman—cannot fulfil. Hence, more than any other role that the father performs, the task of modelling the appropriate gender performances—which serves to reproduce an acceptable construction of masculinity—is the one which preserves men's position in the family. Thus, the

positioning of fathers as male role models serves to valorise masculinity and fatherhood and so to enshrine the place of men within the heterosexual nuclear family (Folgerø, 2008).

The necessity of fathers in children's lives was reinforced by the juxtaposition of the positive role that fathers play with the potential harm that can come to children from fatherless families, as well as the broader social implications of moral decay that might result. Fatherless families were depicted as producing an unstable home environment, inappropriately gendered sons and daughters who may themselves go on to perpetuate this non-ideal family form. The latter points to the recurrent theme of blaming women, as the meters of children's needs and the taken for granted "natural" caregiver for failing to provide optimal childrearing conditions—including a father figure—rather than the absent male parents. Therefore, at the same time as fatherhood was valorised, the place of mother as primary caregiver was firmly entrenched and certain kinds of mothers were denigrated. The condemnation of non-marital contexts as potentially detrimental to the child and the "Othering" of single mothers reinforce the heterosexual nuclear family as a normative standard in society and the ideal context for optimal childhood development (Almack, 2006; Folgerø, 2008; Macleod, 2003). The rhetoric of "children's needs" was therefore mobilised in such a way as to re-iterate the structural and ideological underpinnings of the traditional heterosexual nuclear family, which was presented as the most appropriate context for ensuring children's optimal development.

This discursive tactic in which fathering is valorised acts against the de-gendering of parenting (i.e., disconnection from the usual gendered assumptions that inform constructions of parenthood) advocated by progressive scripts in which parenting is depicted as equally shared (as discussed in Chapter 9). Ultimately, it justifies the two-parent hetero-norm as the presence of both a female and male parent is once more discursively construed as a crucial requirement for children's healthy development. In upholding the two-parent norm, premised upon the law of two sexes, the canonical couple narrative is reinforced. This discursive resource is central to the construction of procreative heterosexuality and the norm of automatic childbearing. Moreover, it is not only a particular family form that is being defended—the heterosexual nuclear family—but also the hierarchical gendered positions within it that offer men greater power and authority than women, which may well have implications for decision-making, including parenthood decision-making.

11
Concluding discussion

By way of concluding this work, I revisit the questions that I sought to answer in this study. As outlined in Chapter 6, an aim of the data analysis was to examine the discursive resources, and especially the gendered scripts, recited by "White" Afrikaners when narrating past or anticipated parenthood decisions with a view of the implications that this might have for gender power relations. Further, I also sought to investigate the positions participants adopted within their narratives, including troubled positioning that the repair of these. From the analysis above it is clear that I have certainly endeavoured to meet these aims. Nevertheless, there is one question which, to some extent, apparently remains elusive, namely: *what is envisaged as male involvement*? As I have discussed above, the participants were inclined to talk around or remain silent on this issue, thus making a straight- forward answer difficult. In this closing chapter, I shall reflect upon this issue and what to make of the silence in the data around this central topic. Another issue that I shall reflect on is the role of the child-centred discourse in bolstering the heterosexual matrix and the possibility of resistance and subversion of the hetero-patriarchal norm, which, as I discussed in the preceding chapter, the participants appeared to so consistently reiterate. Before turning to these issues, I shall begin by presenting a summation of the key findings in an attempt to present a coherent picture, or overview, of the thesis. I end this chapter by reflecting on the limits of this study and possibilities for further research.

1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

As I stated at the outset, one of the aims of this study was to address the lack of South African reproductive research on male roles in reproductive decision-making prior to conception, that is, parenthood decision-making. More specifically, the agenda of this research was to investigate the ways that male involvement in these "decisions" was envisaged by "White" Afrikaans participants, how this was affected by gender constructions, and the implications that this might have for gender power dynamics. Including both women and men in the sample, I adopted a gendered and relational view in order to enrich the data, as well as to ensure that women, and their perspectives, were not re/excluded, particularly in relation to an issue that has the potential to affect them greatly. As explicated in Chapters 4 and 5, the participants' narratives were analysed by means of the narrative-discursive method, which was infused with Butlerian theory in order to fashion a dual lens that takes cognisance of the both the performative and performance dimensions of narration. The narrative-discursive method was selected because it attends to the interactional dynamics of talk and the reflexivity of the speaker, thereby allowing for a way of grounding Butlerian theory, as well as offering a concrete means of extending the notion of performance to supplement that of performativity. In

turn, the Butlerian framework was useful for tuning the analysis in to the dimension of power, particularly in terms of enhancing the way that the notion of constraint is understood by this method and making the macro dimension of power explicit. This is a weakness of the narrative-discursive method as I pointed out in chapter 5.

To briefly reiterate the findings, I have shown how participants were caught between two contradictory conceptualisations of childbearing. One, the scenario (inadvertently) introduced by the researcher, which frames the topic as one of choice and, two ,the spontaneous, automatic scenario in which childbearing is a non-choice. The former scenario is backed by the family planning script, which is an official script and holds high currency in certain settings. In this scenario, men can either be involved in discussion, deliberation and "choices", or not. In recent times, the argument that men should be active in reproductive matters and parenting has been given growing emphasis as gender norms have shifted to embrace constructions of caring masculinity/fatherhood which include greater male participation in family and domestic issues (see for example Barker *et al.,* 2010).The latter scenario, of parenthood as a non-choice, is supported by powerful socio-cultural norms and beliefs about sex and reproduction, including the dominant storyline of heterosexual coupledom. In this rendition, parenthood is compulsory and does not entail "decision-making". Consequently, the issue of male involvement in decision-making becomes redundant. The power of this scenario is shown by the fact that it was supported by many of the young people, who were not bound to the facticity of past reproductive experiences as the older people were. I was surprised that younger participants did not articulate their experiences in terms of "planning" or "choosing", as this is the very group that might have done so.

In relation to the dilemma of being caught between contradictory understandings of the path to parenthood, the research was framed by expectations of what parenthood decision-making (or family planning) is and what male involvement in this process should be and, significantly, the participants' perceptions of my expectations that this should look a certain way. This entailed a discursive negotiation in the interviews between the way that the participants framed the issue and my own frame (Henwood, et al., 2008). I discussed this framing of the research in Chapter 7. Since I, as researcher, introduced the topic in terms of "choice", it appears that the participants may have felt obliged to engage with me on my terms, thereby negotiating favourable positioning within the immediate discursive setting as an amenable participant and more broadly in terms of social desirability. However, in so doing, the issue of male involvement was not made clear. Instead, in positioning themselves as active choosers, consensus was usually emphasised, thereby making each partner's role in planning and deciding indistinct. In this respect, younger participants referred to consensual decisions, but neglected to outline specificities. Likewise, older participants engaged in "Oneness talk" or "Partnership talk" (Dixon &Wetherell, 2004, p. 176), which works to create the impression of consensus and commonality and

also makes the details of male involvement unclear. Hence, the issue of male involvement remained ambiguous.

Yet, for the most part, as was evident throughout the analysis and discussion chapters, participants talked against this scenario, contesting the notion of "choice" in my formulation of the matter of having children and becoming a parent as "parenthood decision-making" or "family planning". They rejected the idea of some sort of defined process, especially one that entails open dialogue and discussion. Instead, a "go-with-the-flow" process was constructed that is largely driven by heteronorms and traditional gender roles. Situated within the conventional heterosexual life trajectory, and importantly within marriage, parenthood was construed as mandatory, with those who refuse compulsory parenthood or who reproduce under different conditions pictured as "Other", as I discussed in Chapter 8. The passivity of this positioning was offset by foregrounding associated decision-making (i.e., timing and ideal conditions) as an area in which active choice could be exercised. However, these decisions were also pictured as largely governed by the traditional norms of the typical heterosexual life course, specifically marriage.

Therefore, associated choices were highly constrained and also appeared as essentially determined by the natural progression of events marked out in the "normal" lifespan, thereby cohering with the overall picture of spontaneous or automatic childbearing. As I showed in Chapter 9, the construction of parenthood as part of the heterosexual life course, circumscribed by marriage, allowed participants to re-articulate the matter at hand in such a way that "male involvement" was discursively shifted to the background. In this way, participants could mitigate any troubled positioning that may result from the failure to meet researcher (or broader) expectations.

It appears then that envisaging what male involvement might look like or entail was difficult for the participants. Therefore, what is most striking about the narratives across the board is that at first glance they appear to have very little to do with male involvement in parenthood decision-making. I have already reported the difficulty this presented for me as researcher when enquiring about this topic; firstly, in relation to participant's confusion about the way that the topic was framed and, secondly, in getting the narrators to stay on the topic. Interviews meandered into various other (I speculate) "safe" topics, such as accounts of the conception of their first child, blow-by-blow tales of pregnancy and labour, and, especially, parenting. These topics were "safe" in the sense that they circumvented the issue of male involvement and acted as a familiar reference point for people's stories about parenthood. Therefore, as I have shown, there was a consistent tendency toward *not* talking about this issue. However, as I shall argue in the following section, though it

appears that the narratives had little to do with male involvement in parenthood decision-making; this relative silence has everything to do with this issue.

2. HEARING THE SILENCES THROUGH THE "NOISE"

I began this thesis by pointing to the lack of attention in reproductive research literature, especially South African research, to male roles in decision-making prior to conception. In this section I discuss how this silence in the literature also occurs in the data from my own study, showing just how unquestioned and taken for granted the topic is. "Silence on a subject should make an analyst pause", Randall and Koppenhaver (2004, p. 74) suggest. They ask: "Does [silence] necessarily mean that the subject is unimportant, or might it mean that the subject is potentially extremely important but not to be discussed with just anyone?" (p.74).It is to the task of interpreting the silence in the data, and the "noise" around it, that I now turn. I am not, of course, referring to literal silence, but rather the metaphorical silence, as Mazzei (2003) discusses, in which participants narratives skirt the main topic under investigation. Like Mazzei(2004), I found that "The absences in the narratives had become absent from the narratives"(p. 24).

As I have mentioned, the silence around the main problematic of this thesis seems to suggest that it was difficult for participants to construct a story about their transition to parenthood in terms of "choice", and especially one in which men were involved in "decision-making". In interpreting this silence, it is useful to look at instances where the silence was circumvented by direct questioning. This may occur inadvertently owing to the researcher's lack of awareness that a certain topic is "unspeakable" or as a researcher becomes aware of the unspoken nature of a particular topic (Randall & Koppenhaver, 2004). The deliberate asking of direct questions "might be risky in certain circumstances, given that the silence itself may be an indication of where boundaries lie" (Randall & Koppenhaver, 2004, p. 76). However, as I have shown, there were instances in which some participants expressed their bewilderment outright, asking me to clarify what I meant, or explicitly stating that "planning" was not how things happened in reality and/or not the ideal.

Clichéd responses to or difficulty in answering my direct question about why someone wanted to become a parent are also significant since these indicate that, essentially, most people could not really give an answer. Mazzei (2003) describes a similar phenomenon in her research, which she refers to as "veiled silences". According to her, these occur "because we do not know how else to respond" (p. 366). Mazzei (2003) states that, when she posed a series of questions that she hoped would initiate discussion, "the answers that were given were silences. The participants were not literally silent but were metaphorically silent. They did speak, but their speaking was an attentiveness to a different question, not the specific one offered by me to generate discussion" (p. 365). Regarding these "nonresponses" (Mazzei, 2004, p. 29), she comments that, "It was not

that the participants didn't [sic] 'speak' to my queries, but rather they gave responses to different questions than those I had posed" (Mazzei, 2004, p. 29).Like Mazzei's (2003) participants, those who took part in my study frequently "did not address in any substantive manner the question posed" (p. 360). Rather, as I mentioned above, they regularly redirected the conversation, often to "safer" topics that were not really directly related to the topic under discussion.

Of course, neither I nor Mazzei (2003, 2004) are suggesting that the participants were deliberately avoiding questioning. Indeed they were most often "storying" their experiences according to the discursive resources available to them or simply unable to articulate the issue on my terms. Yet, as Mazzei (2004) states, "Answering a question other than the one posed . . . results in a deflection that, although often not intentional, is purposeful nonetheless" (p. 30). This is congruent with the view of the active narrating subject that I have adopted in this thesis. As I argued in Chapter 4, though there is no pre-discursive "self" who narrates—since selfhood is discursively constituted—this does not preclude a reflexive narrator who in narration imagines, thinks back, anticipates (un/desired) responses, and so forth.

Furthermore, the notion of "veiled silences" also draws attention to the possibility that speakers may have felt obliged to say *something*, albeit unrelated. As volunteers in a research project, there was an onus on them to act as a co-operative participant and provide some kind of information. Of course, another way to understand the "noise" produced around the silence on the main issue is to interpret non-responses, evasions and rationalisations—of the kind mentioned also by Mazzei (2004)—as a way for the participants to reclaim agency or power in the interview setting. As I discussed in Chapter 6, older participants in particular were able to position themselves as experienced and knowledgeable on the topic and thereby commandeer the discussion in various ways, shifting the conversation to other related topics. Moreover, Randall & Koppenhaver (2004) point out that a researcher's own interests and preoccupations can help to "interpret noise" (p. 81). This means that, in relation to silence in interviews, I must also consider my complicity in producing "noise" in the interview conversations. As I have stated already, the participants frequently went about reframing or re-articulating the terms of the discussion and, alongside the lack of talk about "planning" and "choosing" and the notable silence around male involvement in decision-making, there was much talk around male involvement in other arenas of family life. This side-tracking could have been encouraged by my own interest in those particular topics as well as the difficulty in trying to keep the discussion on track, which caused me to pursue other avenues of questioning.

2.1. Interpreting the silence around male involvement in decision-making

Reflecting on her participants' failure to respond to the questions she asked them, Mazzei (2003) states the following:

> What slowly emerged as I gained intimacy with these conversations was the realization that the acts of avoidance, denial, deflection, reframing, and intellectualizing that were prevalent in their interactions and in their responses to my questions was indeed neither inaction nor passivity but rather a silence that was speaking without speaking (p. 363).

Like Mazzei (2004) it took me some time to realise that although the participants were frustratingly withholding on the topic of male involvement in decision-making (as I reflected upon in Chapter 6) they were not necessarily disinterested or inactive. Rather, I came to realise that this particular silence was significant. The silence around male involvement in particular can be interpreted, not only in relation to the fact that the notion of "parenthood *decision-making*" was foreign or even undesirable to the participants, but also in relation to the gendered assumptions that were evident in many of the narratives.

The side-lining and silencing of the question of male involvement can be interpreted as serving to disguise the lack of collaboration and men's relative passivity in decisions around parenthood. Certainly, there are instances of gender positionings in the narratives that validate this reading. In Chapter 2 I discussed the common assumption that women are responsible for reproductive matters, particularly with regard to contraception, and that men are therefore largely inactive in the already passive process of "decision-making" prior to conception. It is possible to surmise that there is not really a specific role for men prior to conception, which could also explain why talk turned to male involvement in parenting and childrearing. This discursive action (of veiling silences) can be interpreted as a face saving discursive manoeuvre in relation to the framing of the research question, which created the perception that men *ought* to be involved. In this vein, one should also take into account contemporary shifts in gender discourses toward involved fatherhood—including in pregnancy and birthing— and in reproductive issues more generally.

Interestingly, this reasoning for the silence in the data reiterates the assumption in the literature that "women are responsible for reproduction [and] women make decisions on their own or in perfect agreement with their male partners" (Greene, 2002, p. 161). This supposition originally contributed to the omission of men from research, but has since been addressed by researchers who have actively sought to incorporate male perspectives in research in a variety of ways (and often for differing reasons), as I discussed in Chapter 1. However, as I also mentioned, there remains a silence around the topic of becoming a parent in research, specifically in relation to interrogating (certain) people's "parenthood motives" and how they go about deciding (or not deciding) to have children. This lacuna in the research, I argued, is a result of a heteronormative bias in which researchers do not critically interrogate the normalcy parenthood for fertile or

healthy heterosexuals. This bias, as I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, means that it is usually only the "abnormal" who are questioned, and then most often only women. Hence, the gaze of researchers is usually cast on lesbians, the voluntarily childfree and those who are infertile and/or utilise new reproductive technologies in order to conceive (Meyers, 2001). In addition, the motherhood choices of those deemed unfit or unsuitable parents, such as teenaged women (see Macleod, 2001) or those who are HIV positive (e.g., Cooper *et al.*, 2007), are also questioned. When the gaze is turned to men, it is gay men and those who do not fit the norm who are subjected to questioning.

Otherwise, when it comes to "normal" heterosexuals, researchers most often treat the "transition to parenthood" in an uncritical manner and do not really consider parenthood decision-making. This double silence in the literature and the data underscores the taken for granted nature of the topic at hand. In light of this silence on the issue of male involvement, it was beneficial to have triangulated the data by including younger participants in the sample in the current study. Their inclusion assisted in showing that the silence was not necessarily a generational phenomenon—although there were some differences between the cohorts—but rather rooted in a strong attachment to particular socio-cultural norms and a defence of the status quo. The fact that the members of cohort two drew on and defended the ideal of automatic childbearing, as I alluded to earlier in this chapter, indicates the power of the norms and ideals that underpin this construction. Similarly, it was useful to adopt a gendered and relational view, specifically to include women's voices, as this prevented the positioning of men as disinterested or uninformed with regard to parenthood decision-making. Instead, it was possible to see the ways that women endorse and are complicit in particular constructions of heterosexual procreativity that may render them more accountable than men with regard to reproductive decision-making and ultimately do themselves a disservice. Women's perspectives therefore enriched the account significantly and provided a balanced view. Furthermore, this allowed for men to be incorporated in a nuanced way that is not politically reductive, which was one of my originally stated aims (see Chapters 1 and 2).

3. THE POWER OF THE SACRALISED CHILD CONSTRUCTIONIN BOLSTERING THE HETERO-PATIARCHAL PROJECT

It is evident from the analysis that the child-centered script, with its focus on children's needs, comprised an overarching discursive resource and a powerful and persuasive discursive tool to defend the norm. As I have demonstrated, this script—and the rhetoric of children's needs in particular—could be harnessed toward various discursive ends: explanatory, justificatory, regulatory and, as I shall discuss shortly, also as a means of resistance. However, the construction of sacralised childhood and the belief in the intrinsic value of children remained central and went unchallenged. This shows the power of the child-centred script and its efficacy as a discursive resource, especially in assisting in the normalisation of hetero-patriarchal arrangements (like the

nuclear family) and heterosexual procreation. In Chapters 9 and 10 I discussed how the child-centred script was responsible for reiterating the structural and ideological underpinnings of the traditional heterosexual nuclear family and how this ultimately serves to reinforce hetero-patriarchal norms (Almack, 2006; Folgerø, 2008). It was evident from this that talk of children's welfare or "needs" is not the transparent, apolitical talk it might represent itself as being. Rather it is political and theory-laden talk that obscures the socio-political preoccupations underwriting its production through its claims to describe something inherent within a child's "nature". It is powerful talk, which carries tremendous authority that compels others to act (Lawler, 1999).

The project of normalisation is, in essence, a hetero-patriarchal project, which proceeds through the specific construction of sacralised childhood, and ultimately reinforces and re-iterates the heterosexual nuclear family and the power of the father role within it. Of course, this occurs amidst a range of other conflicting and contradictory discursive resources that provide opportunities for subjects to oppose, reject and transform, as well as to support this project at particular times and for particular purposes. Consequently, the child-centred script could also be used in order to contest "Otherness" and to resist hetero-patriarchal norms. Dominantdiscourses, such as the child-centred script, are never totalising, but instead "give rise to the eruption of difference and the subversion of meaning" (Gillespie, 1997, p. 231). It is the changeability and instability of discourses that allow for resistance and for identical formulae to be used for contrary purposes (Lawler, 1999). The rhetoric of children's needs could therefore be used for the purposes of resistance (e.g., to justify the deviation from the usual heterosexual life course for those who refrain from having children or do so outside of marriage). In the following section I turn to issue of resistance within the narratives and the possibility of subversion of hetero-patriarchal norms.

3.1 Voices of dissent, resistance, and the possibility of subversion: Reciting the child-centred script for contrary objectives

My focus on the general silence in the data and the reiteration of the heteronorm may have created the impression that there were little or no instances of dissent in the narratives and that these supported a set of monolithic or seamless systems of power relations. I did not intend for this, and I now return to the instances of contradiction or resistance to the norm, which were perhaps only briefly alluded to in the analysis. I did not focus upon them because these instances comprise a small minority of responses, more the exception than the rule, and at times were also not directly related to the central problematic. Nevertheless, voices of dissent often indicate moments of resistance in the narratives and the possibility for the subversion of norms. Significantly, participants who deviated from the norm harnessed the powerful child-centred script and the rhetoric of children's needs in order to justify their deviation. This shows how dominant discursive resources, like the child-centred script, are not absolute or all encompassing, but instead narrators may use an "identical

formula [for] contrary objectives" (Foucault, 1990, p. 100 cited in Lawler 1999, p. 81). As Edley and Wetherell (1999) assert, "Discourse is multi-layered, worked up for occasions and dilemmatic in character" (p. 191), thereby opening up possibilities for different arguments and for negotiations between people. As I discussed in Chapter 5, this is consonant with the view adopted in this thesis of talk as a site of conflict and struggle that potentially allows for transformations.

Moreover, though the child-centred script enabled various discursive tactics, it also constrained the ways that people could speak about their "choices". On one hand, it allowed positive, socially-desirable self-positioning (e.g., selfless, noble, a productive member of society) and for the negative positioning of dissidents as selfish and as threatening the welfare of children (see Chapter 8). On the other hand, however, narrators had to guard against speaking in such a way that would allow them to be seen as acting against children's best interests or putting their own needs first. This is seen in repair work, that is, the frequent qualifications made by narrators with regard to their preferences and intentions in instances when these could be interpreted as being placed above the child's needs or as selfish. This possibility was capitalised on by those who deviated from the norm and harnessed the child-centred script for contradictory purposes.The use of "an identical formula" for an opposite objective was evident in three main discursive tactics: (1) the inversion of the attribution of selfishness by the childfree; (2) young women's repair of troubled positioning by redefining children's "needs" as a way of pursuing their own (non-domestic) interests; and (3) the rejection of traditional gender roles (*viz.,* intensive mother/breadwinning father) by arguing that children need "both parents" to ensure optimal development.

The first tactic saw younger participants who did not wish to become parents arguing that it was best not to have children if ideal conditions could not be met.(I alluded to this tactic very briefly at the end of Chapter 8, when discussing reactions to antinatalist sentiments.) References to non-ideal conditions centred mainly on the general state of affairs of the world and South Africa specifically, which was described as unsafe or otherwise unsuitable, as well as the ability to be an adequate parent (usually owing to competing career demands) or provide the ideal childhood. Participants therefore construed their potentially socially unacceptable choice as child-centred by claiming that instead of being selfish they were making a sacrifice by *not* having children. In addition to avoiding being positioned as selfish, they countered negative attributions by positioning those who do have children as selfish for various reasons, such as having children for the "wrong" reasons or to meet one's own needs or failing to adequately think through the consequences of having children.

The second tactic (which I touched on in Chapter 10) was drawn on by young women who wished to forgo or postpone childbearing in order to pursue activities not associated with traditional renditions of femininity and the demands of motherhood and domesticity (e.g., Higher education, a career, or travel). According to Williams (1991), the conflict between the mandates of domesticity and the contradictory mandates of self-development in contemporary society poses a particular dilemma for women. On one hand, ideal femininity has traditionally been premised upon selflessness—in that domesticity is characterised by meeting the needs and interests of others first. However, by redefining what children need, female participants were able to represent their own needs or interests as congruent with those of the needs of the child. Younger women reconciled this quandary by drawing on the very same formulation that potentially positions them in a restrictive manner and so were able to perform appropriate femininity while at the same time resisting some of its demands (Lawler, 1999).The participants who used this tactic argued that the pursuit of their own needs or interests would ultimately benefit the child by, for example, raising prospective children's living standards or ensuring that the woman was fulfilled and therefore a better parent. Thus, using this particular discursive tactic allowed women to use an "identical formula [for] contrary objectives" (Foucault, 1990, p. 100 cited in Lawler 1999, p. 81) and so reconstruct, to some extent, what good parenting/motherhood entails.

The final tactic, which is perhaps beyond the scope of this thesis, also largely occurred amongst the group of younger participants, especially the women, who at times described a scenario of co-parenting based on fairness and gender equity. The child-centred script offered a powerful way of bolstering newer, more subversive gender positioning. Therefore, just as the rhetoric of children's needs could resource talk that supports traditional gender roles, it could also be mobilised in support of subversive gender roles. Hence, the child-centred script operated as a counter narrative to traditional gender scripts and was prominent in justifying parental role sharing. It resourced talk that advocates the importance of *both* mothering and fathering for appropriate child development. Drawn on in conjunction with the egalitarian gender script, participants constructed the input of *both* parents as crucial to optimal care-giving.

It is likely no coincidence that these tactics of resistance featured predominantly in the narratives of cohort 2, since the tendency for younger participants to deviate from the norm might reflect shifts gender norms and, concomitantly, ideas about men's and women's relationship to reproduction and parenting. However, though the child-centred script provided a formidable discursive tool with which to resist the norm, it may have limited efficacy, particularly with regard to the defence of progressive and egalitarian gender norms. As Andenæs (2005) argues, ideas about good parenting are often

> [i]nspired by the kind of developmental psychology that has constructed children as abstract individuals with universal needs, [so that] it is possible to turn one's gaze away from the actual conditions of those responsible for the children. It then becomes of minor interest who these people are, whether they are men or women, and what their life circumstances are (p. 214).

Hence, the potential drawback of utilising this particular tactic is that the needs of the child may take precedence over those of the parents, especially the mother, and, in turn, take priority over fairness and justice in relation to childrearing. It could easily be re-appropriated and mobilised toward conservative ends insofar as the focus is on what is best for children and *not* on gender equity and, therefore, may inadvertently be used to gloss over unfair allocation of parenting roles.

In a similar vein, Nentwich (2008) argues that equity may in fact extend *only* to women's and men's roles as parents, since what is challenged is what mothers and fathers *do* and not what they *are*. In other words, parenting remains a gendered endeavour and the demarcation between "mother" and "father" remains intact. This is reflected in the argument that children need "both parents". Therefore, although the gender hierarchy may be challenged and the gender binary blurred to some degree, "what is troubled is not the gender binary but its content" (Nentwich, 2008, p. 224). So, although mothers and fathers may perform the same tasks, men and women are still believed to be different entities and the unquestioned analogy of mothers with women and fathers with men remains. This shows the delicate balance between reifying and troubling gender (Nentwich, 2008). As Nentwich (2008) contends, the discursive work done by participants may either reify or trouble the norm. She states that it is "important not only to engage in alternative practices, but also to discursively subvert the heterosexual norm when accounting for or justifying a specific form of parenthood" (p. 211)—as I intimated earlier in the thesis. For instance, a stay-at-home father arguing that his wife has to work because he is unemployed reifies the norm of the heterosexual gender binary just like a lesbian mother who draws on a discourse of biological motherhood to explain why she stays at home with her child.

Butler (1990) argues that since resistance must always be articulated from within existing discourses, all gender performances bear the vestiges of heteronormativity and may inadvertently reinforce the heterosexual matrix, regardless of authorial intention. Yet, according to a Butlerian understanding of resistance and subversion, changes in gender roles are not a result of entirely novel ways of understanding gender, but rather arise as variations or improvisations of existing gender scripts. As a result, there are various—often competing and conflicting—ways of understanding gender roles available for narrators to re-cite according to their particular interactive narrative performance. Resistance is not a straightforward act, but a complex and incremental process (Gillespie, 1997). Thus, instances of contradiction and dissent represent the slow bending of gender norms (van Lenning, 2004).

4. REFLECTING ON THE RESEARCH: LIMITS OF THIS STUDY AND POSSIBILITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In closing, I reflect on the limits of this investigation and the possibilities for future explorations on the topic. Given the general lack of South African research on parenthood decision-making (Dyer *et al.*, 2008), future research on this topic is certainly warranted. As the focus of my qualitative study was quite narrow and so the sample is not representative of the general population. As I explained in Chapter 6, the purpose of this narrowed focus was to gain a deep and richer understanding in relation to a particular group. In addition, as I stated at the outset, my rationale for focusing on "White" Afrikaners, and especially men, was related to the fact that this group has generally been an invisible norm and therefore received little attention in reproductive research in general. However, it may be useful for future researchers to consider heterosexual people from other population groups and in other sectors of the population as well. In addition, future researchers might benefit from being aware of the degree to which parenthood is presupposed and taken for granted by heterosexuals; which, as I have discussed, created the silence in my own data. Researchers who take up this topic would do well to carefully consider ways of questioning participants in order to circumvent this silence. This might include overtly addressing the potential for participants to perceive the researcher as expecting a certain response from them.

On the subject of my own expectations, I have reflected on the way that, drawing on the dominant discourse of academic literature, policy and programming, I as researcher framed the topic as a matter of "choice", evoking the concepts of "decision-making" and "planning". However, in pointing out how this was incongruous with the participants own experiences and understandings and showing how they reframed the co-narrative, I may have created the impression that the way I framed the account is the "correct" narrative. However, this is not my intention. I am not suggesting that either way of understanding or going about the process of becoming a parent within the context of heterosexual coupledom is preferable (i.e., rational decision-making or "going with the flow"). However, what I have attempted to show is the effects of the prevailing narrative on this issue, chiefly how it allows for the persistence many of established norms that in turn serve to support the heterosexual matrix.

In this vein, researchers would benefit from reflecting on and taking cognisance of their own assumptions on the issue, and the ways that they frame it (Henwood *et al.,* 2008). In incorporating men into research on reproductive matters and including men in interventions in order to promote gender equity, it is essential that researchers recognise the largely taken for granted heteronormative bias which may lead to the reiteration in research of the construction of parenthood as a natural phase in the lifecycle of married, fertile heterosexuals. The durability of this assumption is attested to by the fact that many researchers, as well as their participants, take parenthood for granted and never stop to question the reasons for this choice, or investigate the initial undertaking of becoming a parent. Research that connects gender and various issues pertaining to parenthood

may well be enhanced by taking into consideration men's experiences, perspectives, motivations, and desires for conception and fatherhood.

TOPIC GUIDES AND VIGNETTES

COHORT 1 (Parents)

MAIN QUESTION:

<u>MEN:</u> I'm interested in your story about becoming a parent, especially about how you and your partner were each involved in the process and any decisions that it involved. Could you please tell me your story about becoming a parent? *[Vertel my asseblief jou storie omtrent ouers word. El wil ook graag hoor hoe jy en jou eggenoot elkeen betrokke by dié belsluite was?]*

<u>WOMEN:</u> I'm interested in your story about becoming a parent, especially about how you and your partner were each involved in the process and any decisions that it involved. Could you please tell me your story about becoming a parent and the role that your partner played/how your partner was involved in the process? *[Vertel my asseblief jou storie omtrent ouers word. El wil ook graag hoor hoe jy en jou eggenoot elkeen betrokke by dié belsluite was?]*

POSSIBLE FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS:

- Could you tell me about any discussions about having children that you might have had prior to becoming a parent? What sorts of things did you talk about?
- Could you tell me about any disagreements that you might have had? What sorts of things were these about? How did you resolve them?
- Could you tell me if either of you have more say in the discussions? Who/why?
- Could you tell me about why you (and partner) wanted to be a parent/to have a child?
- Please tell me a bit more about the timing of your 1st child. Subsequent births?
- Did you discuss parenting, i.e., how you'd each be involved in parenting your child? What are some of the things you spoke about?
- How did reality compare with your plans?
- How do you think you might change things if could do it over?
- Could you tell me about any thoughts or discussions of possibly not having children?
- How do you think your life might have been if you didn't have children?
- Could you tell me about anything that might have changed your mind about becoming a parent?

COHORT 2 (Childfree)

<u>Main question (generic):</u> I'd like to hear about your future plans concerning parenthood. *You may Start wherever you like, take the time you need. I'll listen first, I won't interrupt. I'll just take some notes in case I have any further questions for after you've finished telling me about it.*

<u>Possible follow up questions:</u>
- Could you tell me a bit more about why you do/don't want to become a father/mother?
    - How do you think others would respond to your decision? Is this an important factor to you? [childfree]
    - Are there any other motivations for your choice?
- How you think your life/one's life should be (ideally) when you decide to have your first child?
- And in terms of timing?
- How would you image your life if did/did not have a child? (positive & negative)
    - How might/does this affect your thinking about having children?
- Let's talk about your partner, is this something you should/would discuss with her/him?
    - How/when/where do you imagine the subject would be raised? By whom?
- What if you disagree? (See vignettes below)

---

1. LETTERS FROM *MEN'S HEALTH* MAGAZINE:

A.

I've decided not to have children, ever. When would be the best time to mention this to a woman I've just started dating?

Charles, Raleigh, NC

Girl Next Door answers:

Before the first time you have sex. It's at this point that she may see a future involving you and several little yous. When you tell her, she may try to convince herself that she can handle never becoming a mom (even if she's always wanted kids) -- or, worse, that she'll be able to change your mind over time. Both are equally bad news. Emphasize that your no-kids policy isn't up for debate. Ever consider a vasectomy? When the inevitable subject of birth control popped up, that would surely make your point.

Source:

http://www.menshealth.com/cda/advicedetail.do?site=MensHealth&channel=sex.relationships&conitem=5026851ef6e4b010VgnVCM100000cfe793cd_____&expertId=52e3b0a338243010VgnVCM100000cfe793cd_____#

B.

I've changed my mind about kids. How do I tell my wife I don't want any?

Thomas, Dayton, OH

Jimmy the Bartender answers:

Guy comes in here and orders a nice dark beer. Then, mid-pour, he changes his mind to half a shade lighter. Even though I'm thinking he's crazy, I dump out the good stuff, grab a new glass, and give the man his ladylike light beer. But your turnabout, Tommy boy, isn't the same as swapping the burger for the pastrami. You're telling your wife that one of the fundamental connections you two had before you were married no longer exists. I'm not saying you should change the way you feel, but you'd better not hem and haw, hoping she'll change her mind if you wait long enough. Tell her straight. Tell her now. This is so big she'll likely call it quits. If a woman wants kids, well, bud, she has every right to have them. With someone who wants to be a dad.

Source:

http://www.menshealth.com/cda/advicedetail.do?site=MensHealth&channel=guy.wisdom&conitem=3bd1f931d7cb9110VgnVCM20000012281eac_____&expertId=b15999edbbbd201099edbbbd2010cfe793cd_____#

1.1. What do you think about the question?
1.2. What would your response be (1) as the advice-giver AND/OR (2) as the man's partner?

2. ARTICLE FROM *MANWEES*[11] MAGAZINE:

STRY JULLE OOR BABAS KRY? *Manwees; 4 Februarie 2007 (*Deur Ilse Salzwedel)

Jy sien dit al: jou eie *mini-me* saam met wie jy kan rugby speel op die grasperk, of wat jy kan saamsleep viswaters toe. Net een probleem: jou vrou wil glad nie kinders hê nie, iets wat jy eers besef het toe die knoop al deurgehaak en stewig geknoop was.[*You see it all: your own mini-me with whom you can play rugby on the lawn, or drag with you to the fishing hole. Just one problem: your wife does not want children at all, something you only realised when the knot was already looped and tightly tied.*]

2. 1. What are your thoughts on this extract?

---

[11] This is the title of an Afrikaans men's magazine, which loosely translated means "being a man".

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

Symbol	Meaning
end of line **=**	Shows that the next person started talking over the first speaker/or interjected a comment
(.)	in middle of speaking indicates a speaker's brief space between spoken words
[pause]	Indicates a space longer than the brief space of a **(.)**
[laugh]	a short burst of laughter from the speaker
[laughter]	general laughter
(Word**?**)	Indicates that the word or phrase in parentheses sounds like what was heard, but not certain
...	At end of line means the person trailed off
[ ]	Indicate editing – clarification (what the speaker probably meant) or translation from Afrikaans to English
((text**))**	Additional comments from transcriber, e.g., context or intonation.
CAPITALS	Capitals mark speech that is obviously louder than surrounding speech (contrastive emphasis)
Jo: end line **[** Sam: **]** begin line	Indicates overlapping speech

Note: emboldened or underlined text is intended to draw the reader's attention to certain important words or phrases for analytic purposes (i.e., it does not indicate a transcription convention).

RHODES UNIVERSITY

Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

[Datum]

Navorsingsdeelnemers

Ek doen navorsing oor gesinsbeplanning as deel van die vereistes van 'n Ph.D graad in sielkunde by Rhodes Universiteit. Die fokus van die studie is op die keuse om 'n ouer te word. Dit wil sê, hoe dit gebeur het dat iemand kinders gehad het of nie, hoekom hul kinders in die eerste plek (nie) wou had (nie) en die verskillende besluite wat hul hieroor gemaak het.

Ek stel veral belang in die die man se betrokkenheid in die proses. mans is gewoonlik veronderstel is om belangeloos en onbetrokke in die proses te wees en dus word hul uitgelaat van sulke navorsing. Maar, ek glo dat mans betrokke *is* en dat ons die graad van hul betrokkenheid moet vasstel. Daarom, oorweeg ek dat mans in gesinsbeplanningsnavorsing ingesluit *moet* word. Ek wil graag uitvind oor mans se ondervindings en ook hul perspektiewe, gedagtes en gevoelens oor die onderwerp hoor. Ek stel ook belang in wat vouens oor dié saak te sê het.

Ek wil graag kort onderhoude met ouer mense (omtrent 40+ jaar oud) voer om uit te vra oor die redes waarom hul kinders gehad het (of nie), hoe hul en hul eggenoot elk in die verskillende besluite betrokke was, en hul eie ondervindings van die beplanningsproses. Ek wil weet hoe hulle as 'n eggenoot betrokke was. Deelnemers kan of ouers wees of "kinderloos" wees. Ek wil ook graag onderhoude met jonger vrouens en mans (+/- 21 – 30 jaar oud) voer om hul idees, opinies en gevoelens oor die saak te hoor.

Hierdie navorsingsprojek sal deelnemers 'n geleentheid gee om oor hul eie ondervindings en kwessies oor gesinsbeplanning te besin en op heirdie manier groter self-insig te kry. Mans in besonder sal waardevolle informasie bydra wat kan help om groter kennis omtrent die man se rol in gesinsbeplannings te verkry.

Ek sal u bydrae waardeer. Kontak my asseblief indien u verder inligting nodig het, van enigiemand weet wie sal wil deelneem, of as u self geintresseerd is om betrokke te raak (blaai asseblief om vir veredere besonderhede, vereistes en kontakbesonderhede). Hierdie navraag sal u nie verplig om deel te neem nie.

Groete

_____

Tracy Morison M.A. (Rhodes Universiteit)

BESONDERHERDE OMTRENT DIE PROJEK

Titel: *Choosing to parent: A discursive exploration of 'white' Afrikaans-speaking male's involvement in reproductive decisions*

Promoter: Prof. Catriona Macleod (Head of Department)
Bel: 046 603850/6038510   E-pos: c.macleod@ru.ac.za

Eties: Hierdie projek is deur die Sielkunde Department se *Etiese Komitee* goedgekeur asook die Rhodes Universiteit *Etiese Standaarde Komitee*. (Sien asseblief die aangehegde vorm vir verder inligting wat aan die deelnemers gekomunikeer sal word.)

VEREISTES VIR DEELNEMERS:
(1) Groep 1
- Afrikaans sprekende mense wie getroud/in 'n lank-termyn toegewyde verhouding is/was
- +/- 40 jaar oud of meer
- ouers (d.w.s. het kinders) **EN** 'nie-ouers' (m.a.w. het nie kinders nie/belsuit om nie kinders te hê nie)

(2) Groep 2
- Afrikaans sprekende
- 21 tot +/- 30 jaar oud
- 'nie-ouers' (m.a.w. het (nog) nooit kinders gehad nie)

NAVORSER SE KONTAKBESONDERHERDE:
Tracy Morison
Posbus 94
p/a Sielkunde Dept
Rhodes Universiteit
Grahamstown
6139
Bel: 123-4567890
E-pos: Ms.TracyMorison@email.address.com

Participation in research

As part of the requirements for a PhD in Psychology at Rhodes University, I am conducting research on family planning and decision-making. The focus of my project is on the initial decision/s to become a parent (i.e., desires, motivations and decisions around having a child or not). That is, how it came to be that an individual became a parent or remained "childfree".

I am especially interested in finding out about how men are involved. Men have not generally been considered in research of this kind. Researchers have assumed that men are typically disinterested and/or uninvolved in this process. However, men certainly are involved—but how so? This is the question I would like to answer. I believe that men *should* to be included in research on family planning.

I want to hear both men's perspectives, thoughts and feelings on the subject, as well as what women have to say. I intend to conduct interviews with people to find out more about their own experiences around having children (or not) and how they were involved in the process *as a partner/husband/wife*. I would like to hear from people who have had children as well as those who do not (for whatever reason). I'd also like to interview young people who have not had children to hear about ideas, opinions and feelings related to the decision to have a child.

This study will provide the participants with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and issues related to family planning and therefore to gain greater self-insight. Men in particular will be able to contribute valuable information that will help to gain greater knowledge about their role in family planning.

Please contact me for more information, if you know of someone who would like to take part or if you are interested in participating yourself (see overleaf for requirements and further details).

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Tracy Morison M.A. (Rhodes University)

WORKING TITLE: *Choosing to parent: A discursive exploration of 'white' Afrikaans-speaking male's involvement in reproductive decisions*

Supervisor: Prof. Catriona Macleod (Head of Department)
Tel: 046 603850/6038510   E-mail: c.macleod@ru.ac.za

Ethics: This project has been approved by the Psychology Department's *Ethics Committee* as well as the Rhodes University *Ethical Standards Committee*. (Please see attached form for information that will be relayed to the participants.)

REQUIREMENTS FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS:

(1) Group 1:
- Afrikaans speaking
- men and women who were/are married or in a long-term committed relationship
- +/- 40 years and older
- parents (i.e. have children) AND non-parents (i.e. do not/decided not to have children)

(2) Group 2
- Afrikaans speaking
- 21 to +/- 30 years of age
- 'non-parents' (i.e. have not had children)

RESEARCHER CONTACT DETAILS:

Please feel free to contact me for further information; you will be in no way obliged to participate if you do so.
Tracy Morison
P.O. Box
C/o Psychology Dept.
Rhodes University
Grahamstown
6139
Tel: 123-4567890
E-mail: Ms.TracyMorison@email.address.com

RHODES UNIVERSITY

Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

OOREENKOMS

TUSSEN
TRACY MORISON (NAVORSER)
EN
NAVORSINGSDEELNEMER

Ek gee hiermee my toestemming om deel te neem aan 'n narvorsingsprojek wat deur Tracy Morison onderneem word. Die projek fokus op mans se betrokkenheid by besluite rakende reproduksie (voortplanting) en gesinsbeplanning.

<u>Ek verstaan dat:</u>

- Die navorser die projek onderneem as deel van die vereistes van doktorale (PhD) navorsing in psigologie by die Rhodes Universiteit.

- Die narvorser belangstel in my ervaring van die gesinsbeplanningsproses (d.w.s., die besluite wat ek en my eggenote geneem het om kinders te hê of nie) en my rol in dié proses.

- Die navorser my versoek om aan 'n kort onderhoud deel te neem. Die navorser onderneem om die onderhoud te reël op 'n tyd wat ons albei pas en sal poog om nie die ooreengekome tyd te oorskrei nie.

- Alhoewel die navorser die onderhoude hoofsaaklik in Engels sal voer, ek toegelaat sal word om Afrikaans te praat.

- Die navorser nie van my sal verwag om oor aspekte van my lewe te praat wat my ongemaklik mag laat voel nie.

- Die navorser ook aan my die vryheid sal gee om self te besluit watter inligting ek bereid is om te verskaf.

- Die navorser aan my die geleentheid sal gee om aan te dui wanneer ek enige ongemak ervaar.

- Die navorser aan my die geleentheid sal gee om enige aspek van die navorsing waaroor ek besorgd is, te opper.

- Ek enige tyd aan die studie mag onttrek weens onvoorsiene omstandighede, probleme wat ek nie aan die begin van die projek voorsien het nie of enige ander oorweging/s.

- Inligting wat ek tydens die onderhoud verskaf het oor my lewe wel in die navorsingsverslag sal verskyn, maar dat die verslag so geformuleer sal word dat niemand my daarin sal herken nie. Ek besef dat ek my ware identiteit mag blootlê indien ek dit verkies (soos hieronder* aangedui) en dat die navorser my sal toelaat om my aanvanklike keuse later te verander of te herroep.

Geteken op: (datum)   deur   _____ (Deelnemer)

                                                       _____ (Navorser)

AGREEMENT

BETWEEN
TRACY MORISON (RESEARCHER)
AND
RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I agree to participate in the research project of Tracy Morison on parenthood decisions (reproductive decision making) and men's involvement in these decisions.

I understand that:

- The researcher is conducting the project as part of the requirements for a PhD degree at Rhodes University.

- The researcher is interested in experiences around planning to have children or not, especially in men's roles in family planning decision-making.

- My participation will involve taking part in 1 interview or group discussion arranged at a time convenient to us both. These will be conducted predominantly in English and will not exceed the time agreed upon by us.

- I may choose to talk about whichever aspects of my life I would like to disclose.

- I may express any concerns about my participation in the study to the researcher.

- I may freely withdraw from the study at any time in the event of unusual circumstances, concerns that I did not originally expect or other reasons.

- The research report may contain information about me from the interview, but it will be presented so that I will not be identifiable to others. However, I may choose to have my true identity revealed (indicate below*). If I choose to do so I may change my mind at a later date.

Signed on: (date)   by_____ (participant)

_____ (researcher)

REFERENCE LIST

AbouZahr, C. (1999). Some thoughts on ICPD+5. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization, 77*(9), 767 –770.

Agadjanian, V. (2002). Men's talk about "women's matters": Gender, communication, and contraception in urban Mozambique. *Gender & Society, 16*(2), 194 – 215.

Agadjanian, V. (2005). Fraught with ambivalence: Reproductive intentions and contraceptive choices in sub-Saharan fertility transition. *Population Research and Policy Review, 24*(6), 617 – 645.

Alan Guttmacher Institute, (2003a). *In their own right: Addressing the sexual and reproductive health needs of men worldwide*. New York & Washington: Alan Guttmacher Institute. Retrieved April 2007 from http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/itor_intl.pdf

Alan Guttmacher Institute (200b).*In their own right: Addressing the sexual and reproductive health needs of American men*. New York: Alan Guttmacher Institute. Retrieved April 2007 from http://www.guttmacher. org/pubs/us_men.pdf

Alan Guttmacher Institute (2004). *Sex, marriage and fathering: A profile of sub-Saharan African men.* New York & Washington: Alan Guttmacher Institute. Retrieved April 2007 from www.guttmacher.org

Agrillo, C., & Nellini, C. (2008). Childfree by choice: A review. *Journal of Cultural Geography, 25*(3), 347 – 363.

Almack, K. (2006). Seeking sperm: Accounts of lesbian couples' reproductive decision-making and understanding of the needs of the child. *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, *20*(1), 1–22.

Amoateng, A.Y. (2004). *The South African family: Continuity or change?* HSRC Ten Years of Democracy Seminar Series. Cape Town: HSRC Press. Retrieved December 2010 from www.hsrc.ac.za/Document-53.phtml

Andenæs, A. (2005). Neutral claims – Gendered meanings: Parenthood and developmental psychology in a modern welfare state. *Feminism & Psychology 15*(2), 209 – 226.

Anonymous (1995). Patriarchy is such a drag: The strategic possibilities of a postmodern account of gender. *Harvard Law Review*, *108*(8), 1973 – 2008.

Arendell, T. (1997). Reflections on the researcher-researched relationship: A woman interviewing men. *Qualitative Sociology, 20*(3), 341 – 368.

Baden, S., &Goetz, A.M. (1997). "Who needs [sex] when you can have [gender]? *Feminist Review*, *56,* 3 – 25.

Balmer, D.H., Gikundi, E., Kanyotu, M., & Waithaka, R. (1995).The negotiating strategies determining coitus in stable heterosexual relationships. *Health Transition Review, 5*, 85 – 95.

Bamberg, M. (1997).Positioning between structure and performance. *Journal of Narrative and Life History, 7*(1-4), 335 – 342.

Bamberg, M. (2004a). Positioning with Davie Hogan. Stories, tellings, and identities. In C. Daiute & C. Lightfoot (Eds.), *Narrative analysis: Studying the development of individuals in society* (pp. 135 – 158). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bamberg, M. (2004b). 'I know it may sound mean to say this, but we couldn't really care less about her anyway.' Form and functions of 'slut bashing' in male identity constructions in 15-Year-Olds.*Human Development, 47*(6), 331 – 353.

Bamberg, M. (2004c). Talk, small stories and adolescent identity. *Human Development*, *47*(6), 366 – 369.

Bamberg, M. (2004d).Narrative, discourse, and identities. In J. C. Meister, T. Kindt, W. Schernus, & M. Stein (Eds.), *Narratology beyond literary criticism* (pp. 213 – 237). Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Bamberg, M. (2006a). Stories: big or small – Why do we care? *Narrative Inquiry* 16(1):139–147.

Bamberg, M. (2006b). Biographic-narrative research, *quo Vadis*? A critical review of 'big stories' from the perspective of 'small stories'. In K. Milnes, C. Horrocks, N. Kelly, B. Roberts, & D. Robinson (Eds.), *Narrative, memory and knowledge: Representations, aesthetics and contexts* (pp. 1 – 17). Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield Press. Retrieved May 2009 from www.clarku.edu/~mbamberg/future_files/ Huddersfield_Paper.doc

Barbour, R. (2007). *Doing focus groups*. London: Sage.

Barclay, L., & Lupton, D. (1999). The experiences of new fatherhood: A socio-cultural analysis. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 29*(4), 1013 – 1020.

Barker, G., & Olukoya, P. (2007).Bringing men into the story. *Entrée Nous: The European Magazine for Sexual and Reproductive Health*, *66*, 8 – 9.

Barker, G., (2010).*What do men have to do with? Public policies to promote gender equality.* Men and gender equality project. Washington: International Centre for Research on Women. Retrieved December 2010 from www.icrw.org/publications/what-do-men-have-to-do-with-it

Bawah, A., Akweongo, A.P., Simmons, R., & Phillips, J.F. (1999). Women's fears and men's anxieties: The impact of family planning on gender relations in northern Ghana. *Studies in Family Planning, 30*(1), 54-66.

Becker, S. (1997). Couples and Reproductive Health: A Review of Couple Studies. *Studies in Family Planning, 27*(6), 291-306.

Becker, S. (1999). Measuring unmet need: Wives, husbands or couples? *International Family Planning Perspectives, 25*(4), 172 – 180.

Beegle, K., Frankenberg, E., & Thomas D. (2001).Bargaining power within couples and use of prenatal and delivery care in Indonesia. *Studies in Family Planning, 32*(2), 130-146.

Benhabib, S. (1994).From identity politics to social feminism: A plea for the nineties. *Philosophy of Education.* Retrieved on 6 June 2008 from http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/eps/PES-Yearbook/94_docs/BENHABIB.HTM.

Benhabib, S. (1995).Feminism and postmodernism. In S. Benhabib, L. Nicholson, & N. Fraser (Eds.) *Feminist contentions: A philosophical exchange*, (pp. 17 – 34). London: Routledge.

Berer, M. (1996).Men. *Reproductive Health Matters, 4*(7), 7 – 10.

Bergnéhr, D. (2007). Love and family: Discussions between Swedish men and women concerning the transition to parenthood. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *8*(1). Retrieved June 20, 2007, from www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/1-07/07-1-23- e.htm

Berkowitz, D., & Marsiglio, W. (2008). Gay men: Negotiating procreative, father, and family identities. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 69*(May), 366–381.

Biddlecom, A.E., & Fapohunda, B.M. (1998).*Covert contraceptive use: Prevalence, motivations, and consequences.* Policy Research Division Working Paper No. 108, New York: Population Council.

Bird, C.M. (2005). How I stopped dreading and learned to love transcription. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *11*(2), 226 – 248.

Blanc, A.K. (2001). The effect of power in sexual relationships on sexual and reproductive health: An examination of the evidence. *Studies in Family Planning, 32*(3), 189-213.

Bordo, S. (1992).Review: Postmodern subjects, postmodern bodies. *Feminist Studies*, *18*(1), 159-175.

Boucher, G. (2006). The politics of performativity: A critique of Judith Butler. *Parehesia, 1*, 112-141.

Brandth, B., & Kvande, E. (1998). Masculinity and child care: The reconstruction of fathering. *The Sociological Review, 46*(2), 293 – 313.

Braun, V. (2000a).Conceptualising the body. *Feminism and Psychology, 10*(4), 511 – 518.

Braun, V. (2000b).Heteromormativity in focus group research. *Feminism& Psychology, 10*(1), 133 – 140.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006).Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77 – 101. Retrieved March 2009, from http://science.uwe.ac.uk/psychology/DrVictoria Clarkefiles/ThematicAnalysis%20.pdf.

Brickell, C. (2005). Masculinities, performativity, and subversion: A sociological reappraisal. *Men and Masculinities, 8*(1), 24 – 43.

Brown, J.A., & Feree, M.M. (2005). Close your eyes and think of England: Pronatalism in the British print media, *Gender and Society, 19*(1), 5 – 24.

Browner, C.H. (2005).Some unexpected consequences of implementing gender "neutral" reproductive programs and policies. *Women & International Development*, Working Paper #284. East Lansing: Michigan State University. Retrieved July 2010 from http://www.isp.msu.edu/wid/

Bryson, V. (1999). "Patriarchy": A concept too useful to lose. *Contemporary Politics. 5*(4), 311-324.

Butler, J. (1990a). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity.* London: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1990b). Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory. In S. Case (Ed.), *Performing feminisms: Feminist critical theory and theatre* (pp. 270 - 281). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Butler, J. (1991). Imitation and gender insubordination. In D. Fuss (ed.) *inside/out: Lesbian theories, gay theories* (pp. 13-31). New York: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1993a). *Bodies that matter*: On the discursive limits of "sex". London: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1993b). *Extracts from Gender as performance: An interview with Judith Butler* [online].Retrieved August 2008 from http://www.theory.org.uk/but-int1.htm.

Butler J., (1995).For a careful reading. In S. Benhabib, L. Nicholson & N. Fraser (Eds.) *Feminist contentions: A philosophical exchange*, (pp. 127 – 144). London: Routledge.

Butler J. (1999).*Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity* (10th Ed.). London: Routledge.

Butler, J. (2002). Is kinship always already heterosexual? *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies 13*(1), 14 – 44.

Butler, J. (2007). Imitation and gender subordination. In S. Siedman & J. Weeks (Eds.), *The New Social Theory reader* (pp. 333 – 344). Routledge: London & New York.

Byrne, A. (2000). Singular identities: Managing stigma, resisting voices. *Women's Studies Review, 7*, 13–24.

Byrne, B. (2003). Reciting the self: Narrative representations of the self in qualitative interviews. *Feminist Theory*, *4*(1), 29 – 49.

Campbell, J., & Harbord, J. (1999.) Playing it again: Reiteration, recitation or circularity? In V. Bell (Ed.), *Performativity and belonging* (pp. 229 – 240). London, Thousand Oaks (California), New Delhi: Sage.

Carmichael, G.A., & Whittaker, A. (2007). Choice and circumstance: Qualitative insights into contemporary childlessness in Australia. *European Journal of Population, 23*, 111 – 143.

Chambers, S., & Carver, T. (2008)*Judith Butler and political theory: Troubling politics.* New York: Routledge.

Chandler, M., Teucher, U., & Lalonde, C. (2004). Culture, continuity, and the limits of narrativity: A comparison of self-narratives of Native and Non-native youth. In C. Daiute & C. Lightfoot (Eds.), *Narrative analysis: Studying the development of individuals in society* (pp. 245 – 265). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Chapagain, M. (2006). Conjugal power relations and couples' participation in reproductive health decision-making: Exploring the links in Nepal. *Gender, Technology and Development, 10*(2), 159 - 189.

Castle, S., Konaté, M.K., Ulin, P.R., & Martin, S. (1999). A qualitative study of clandestine contraceptive use in Mali. *Studies in Family Planning,* 30(3), 321 – 248.

Connell, R.W. (1983). *Which way is up? Essays on sex, class and culture.* Sydney, Australia: Allen and Unwin.

Connell, R.W. (1987). *Gender and power*. Sydney, Australia: Allen and Unwin.

Connell, R.W. (1995). *Masculinities.* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J.W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender Society 19*(6), 829 – 859.

Cooper, D. Harries, J., Myer, L., Orner, P., Bracken, H., & Zweigenthal, V. (2007). ''Life is still going on'': Reproductive intentions among HIV-positive women and men in South Africa. *Social Science & Medicine, 65*(2)*, 274–283.

Cooper, D., Morroni, C., Orner, P., Moodley, J., Harries, J., Cullingworth, L., & Hoffmann, M. (2004). Ten years of democracy in South Africa: Documenting change in reproductive policy and status. *Reproductive Health Matters,12*(24), 70 – 85.

Corcoran, C., & Hardy, D.R. (2005).Seroprevalence of rubella antibodies among antenatal patients in the Western Cape. *South African Medical Journal, 95*(9), 688-690.

Cornwall, A. (2007). Taking chances, making choices: The tactical dimensions of "reproductive strategies" in southwestern Nigeria. *Medical Anthropology*, *26*, 229 – 254.

Cornwall, A., & Esplen, E. (2010). Women's empowerment: What do men have to do with it? *Contestations: Dialogues on Women's Empowerment*, 3. Retrieved October 2010 from www.contestations.net

Corrêa, S., & Reichmann, R.L. (Eds.) (1994).*Population and reproductive rights: Feminist perspectives from the South.* London: Zed Books.

Crossley, M.L. (2003). Formulating narrative psychology: The limitations of contemporary narrative psychology. *Narrative Inquiry, 13*(2), 287 – 300.

Cunningham, H. (2003). Children's changing lives from 1800 to 2000. In J. Maybin, & M. Woodhead (Eds.), *Childhoods in context* (pp. 81 - 119). London: Wiley and Sons/Open University Press.

Daniels, C. R. (2001). Between fathers and foetuses: The social construction of male reproduction and the politics of fetal harm. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 22*(3), 479-616.

Datta, K. (2007). "In the eyes of a child, a father is everything": Changing constructions of fatherhood in urban Botswana? *Women's Studies International Forum, 30*(2), 97 – 113.

Davies, B., & Harré, R. (1990).Positioning: The discursive construction of selves. J*ournal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 20*(1), 43 – 63.

Day Sclater, S. (2003). What is the subject? *Narrative Inquiry, 13*(2), 317 – 330.

Delphy, C. (1993). Rethinking sex and gender. *Women's Studies International Forum, 16*(1), 1 – 9.

Denis, P., & Ntsimane, R. (2006). Absent fathers: Why do men not feature in stories of families affected of HIV/AIDS in KwaZulu-Natal? R. Morrell & L. Richter (Eds.), *Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 237 - 249)*.* Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Denzin, N.K. (2001). The reflexive interview and a performative social science. *Qualitative Research, 1*(1), 23-46.

Department of Health (1998).*South Africa Demographic and Health Survey*. Retrieved July 2007 from http://www.doh.gov.za/facts/index.html

Dermott, E. (2008). Intimate fatherhood: A sociological analysis. London: Routledge.

De Ollos, I. Y., & Kapinus, C. A. (2002). Aging childless individuals and couples: Suggestions for new directions in research. *Sociological Inquiry, 72*(1), 72 – 80.

DeRose, L., Dodoo, F.N., &. Patel, V. (2002). Fertility desires and perceptions of power in reproductive conflict in Ghana. *Gender & Society, 16*(1), 53-73.

Dixon, J.A., & Wetherell, M. (2004). On discourse and dirty nappies: Gender, the division of labour and the social psychology of distributive justice. *Theory and Psychology*, *14*(2), 167–189.

Dixon-Mueller, R. (1993). The sexuality connection in reproductive health. *Studies in Family Planning, 24*(5), 269 – 282.

Donovan, C. (2000). Who needs a father? Negotiating biological fatherhood in British lesbian families using self-insemination. *Sexualities, 3*(2), 149–164.

Dow Magnus, K. (2006). The unaccountable subject: Judith Butler and the social conditions of intersubjective agency. *Hypatia, 21*(2), 81 – 103.

Draper, J. (2003). Men's passage to fatherhood: An analysis of the contemporary relevance of transition theory. *Nursing Inquiry, 10*(1), 66 – 78.

Dudgeon, M.R., & Inhorn, M.C. (2003). Gender, masculinity, and reproduction: Anthropological perspectives. *International Journal of Men's Health, 2*(1), 31–56.

Dunkle, K.L., Jewkes, R., Nduna, M., Jama, N., Levin, J., Sikweyiya, Y., & Koss, M.P. (2007). Transactional sex with casual and main partners among South African men in the rural Eastern Cape: Prevalence, predictors, and associations with gender-based violence. *Social Science and Medicine, 65*, 1235 – 1248.

Dyer, S.J., Abrahams, N., Mokoena, N.E., & van der Spuy, Z.M. (2004). "You are a man because you have children": Experiences, reproductive health knowledge and treatment seeking behaviour of men suffering from couple infertility in South Africa. *Human Reproduction, 9*(4), 960-967.

Dyer, S.J., Mokoena, N.E., Maritz, J., & van der Spuy, Z.M. (2008). Motives for parenthood among couples attending a level 3 infertility clinic in the public health sector in South Africa. *Human Reproduction, 23*(2), 352 – 357. Retrieved August 2010 from http://humrep.oxfordjournals.org

Eagar, D. (2006). Linda Richter and Robert Morrell (Eds.). Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa. Cape Town. HSRC Press. 2006.*African Sociological Review, 10*(2), 178 – 180.

Edley, N. (2001). Analysing masculinity: Interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor, & S.J. Yates (Eds.), *Discourse as data: A guide for analysis*(pp. 189 - 228) London: Sage/The Open University.

Edley, N., & Wetherell, M. (1999).Imagined futures: Young men's talk about fatherhood and domestic life. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 38,* 181 – 194.

Ellis, H., & Meyer, J. (Eds.) (2009).*Masculinity and the Other: Historical perspectives.* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Emmett, T., Richcter, L., Makiwane, M., du Toit, R., Brookes, H., Potgeiter, C., Altman, M., & Makhura, P. (2004).*The Status of the Youth Report 2003*. Johannesburg: Usombomvu Youth Fund.

Etherington, K. (2007). Ethical research in reflexive relationships. *Qualitative Inquiry, 13*(5), 599 – 616.

Ertürk, Y. (2004). Considering the role of men in gender agenda setting: Conceptual and policy issues. *Feminist Review, 78*(1), 3-28.

Ezeh, A.C., (1993). The influence of spouses over each other's contraceptive attitudes in Ghana. *Studies in Family Planning, 24*(3), 163 – 174.

Felluga, D. (2006). "Modules on Butler: On performativity." *Introductory guide to critical theory.* Retrieved May 2008.http://www.cla.purdue.edu/academic/engl/theory/genderandsex/modules/ butlergendersex.html

Fennell, J. (2006). *"It happened one night": The sexual context of fertility decision-making*. Presented at the Population Association of America, 2006 Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, California, March 30 - April 1, 2006. [32] Retrieved June 2009 from: http://www.popline.org/docs/1745/316987.html

Figueroa-Perea, J. (2003). A gendered perspective on men's reproductive health, *International Journal of Men's Health*, *2*(2), 111 - 130.

Finlay, L. (2002). "Outing" the researcher: The provenance, process, and practice of reflexivity. *Qualitative Health Research*, *12*(4), 531 - 545.

Finlay, L. (2006). 'Rigour', 'ethical integrity' or 'artistry'? Reflexively reviewing criteria for evaluating qualitative research. *The British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *69*(7), 319-326

Finn, M., & Henwood, K. (2009).Exploring masculinities within men's identificatory imaginings of first-time fatherhood. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *48*(2), 547 – 562.

Folgerø, T. (2008). Queer nuclear families? Reproducing and transgressing heteronormativity. *Journal of Homosexuality, 54*(1), 124 – 149.

Freeman, M. (1999).Culture, narrative, and the poetic construction of selfhood. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology, 12*(2), 99 – 116.

Freeman, M. (2003). Identity and difference in narrative inquiry: A commentary on the articles by Erica Burman, Michelle Crossley, Ian Parker, and Shelley Sclater. *Narrative Inquiry, 13*(2), 331–346.

Frosh, S. (1999). What is outside discourse? *Psychoanalytic Studies,1*(4), 381–390.

Gardiner, J.K. (2002).*Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory: New Directions.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Gergen, M. (2001).*Feminist reconstructions in psychology: narrative, gender and performance.* London: Sage.

Gergen, M. (2004).Once upon a time. A narratologist's tale. In C. Daiute & C. Lightfoot (Eds.), *Narrative analysis : Studying the development of individuals in society (*pp. 267 –   285).Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Gergen, M.M., & Gergen, K.J. (2006).Narratives in action. *Narrative Inquiry, 16*(1), 112 - 121.

Gill, R. (2008).Culture and subjectivity in neoliberal and postfeminist times. *Subjectivity, 25*(1), 432 - 445.

Gillespie, R. (2000). Disbelief, disregard and deviance: Discourses of voluntary childlessness. *Women's Studies International Forum, 23*(2), 223–234.

Gillespie, R. (2003). Childfree and feminine: Understanding the gender identity of voluntarily childless women. *Gender & Society, 17*(1), 122 – 136.

Gipson, J.D., & Hindin, M.J. (2006). *Inconsistencies in qualitative and quantitative reports of fertility preferences among couples in rural Bangladesh*. Presented at the Population Association of America, 2006 Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, California, March 30 - April 1, 2006. [159] Retrieved April 2007 from http://paa2006.princeton.edu/download.aspx?submissionId=60019

Gipson, J.D., & Hindin, M.J. (2007). "Marriage means having children and forming your family, so what is the need of discussion?" Communication and negotiation of childbearing preferences among Bangladeshi couples. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, *9*(2), 185 – 198.

Goffman, E. (1963). Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Greene, M. (2002).*Lessons and future programmatic directions for involving men in reproductive health.* (Report No. WHO/FCH/RHR/02.3). Geneva: World Health Organization.

Greene, M.E., &. Biddlecom, A.E. (2000). Absent and problematic men: Demographic accounts of male reproductive roles. *Population and Development Review, 26*(1), 81-115.

Greene, M.E., Mehta, M.E., Pulerwitz, J., Wulf, D., Bankole A., & Singh, S. (2006). *Involving men in reproductive health: Contributions to development.* Background paper to the report *Public choices, private decisions: Sexual and reproductive health and the Millennium Development Goals*. Millennium Project. Retrieved March 2007 from http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/Greene_et_al-final.pdf

Greig, A., Peacock, D., Jewkes, R., & Msimang, S. (2008). Gender and AIDS: Time to Act. *AIDS*, *Supp2*, S35 – S43.

Grosz, E. (1994). *Volatile bodies: Toward a corporeal feminism*. St Leonard's, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin.

Guttmacher, S., Kapadia, F., Te Water Naude, J., & de Pinho, H. (1998). Abortion reform in South Africa: A case study of the 1996 Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act. *International Family Planning Perspectives*, *24*(4), 191 – 194.

Haelyon, H. (2006). "Longing for a child": Perceptions of motherhood among Israeli-Jewish women undergoing in vitro fertilization treatments. *NASHIM: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues, 12*, 177 – 202.

Harré, R., & van Langenhove, L. (1999). Positioning and personhood. In R. Harré & L. van Langenhove (Eds.). *Positioning theory: Moral contexts of intentional action* (pp. 32 – 52). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Harvey, S.M., Beckman, L.J., Browner, C.H., & Sherman, C.A. (2002). Relationship power, decision-making and sexual relations: An exploratory study with couples of Mexican origin. *The Journal of Sex Research, 39*(4), 284 - 291.

Hearn, J. (1996). "Is masculinity dead?" A critical account of the concept of masculinity/masculinities. In M. Mac an Ghaill (Ed.), *Understanding Masculinities: Social Relations and Cultural Arenas* (pp. 202–17). Milton Keynes, U.K.: Open University Press.

Hearn, J. (1997). The implications of critical studies on men. The implications of critical studies on men. *NORA: Nordic Journal of Women's Studies, 5*(1), 48–60.

Hearn, J. (2004). From hegemonic masculinity to the hegemony of men. *Feminist Theory, 5*(1), 49 – 72.

Hearn, J. (2006). From masculinities back to men: Tracing diverse psychological, social and political threads. *The Psychology of Women Section Review*, *8*(1), 38 – 52.

Helzner, J.F. (1996). Men's involvement in family planning. *Reproductive Health Matters, 4*(7), 146 - 153.

Henwood, K., & Procter, J. (2003). The 'good father': Reading men's accounts of paternal involvement during the transition to first-time fatherhood. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 42,* 335 - 337.

Henwood, K., (2008). Risk, framing and everyday life: Epistemological and methodological reflections from three socio-cultural projects. *Health, Risk & Society,10*(5), 421 – 438.

Hey, V. (2006). The politics of performative resignification: Translating Judith Butler's theoretical discourse and its potential for a sociology of education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 27*(4), 439 - 457.

Hird, M.J. (2000). Gender's nature: Intersexuality, transsexualism and the "sex"/"gender" binary. *Feminist Theory, 1*(3), 347 - 346.

Hoffman, L.W., & Hoffman, M.L. (1979).The value of children to parents. In J.T. Fawcett (Ed.), *Psychological perspectives on population*. New York: Basic Books.

Hoga, L.A.K, Alcântara, A.C., & de Lima, V. M. (2001). Adult male involvement in reproductive health: An ethnographic study in a community of San Paulo City, Brazil. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, *12*(2), 107-114.

Hollway, W., & Jefferson, T. (2000).Biography, anxiety and the experience of locality. In P. Chamberlayne, J. Bornat, & T. Wengraf (Eds.) *The turn to biographical methods in social science: Comparative issues and examples* (pp. 167 - 180). London: Routledge.

Hood-Williams, J., & Cealy Harrison, W. (1998).Trouble with gender. *The Sociological Review, 46*(1), 73 – 94.

Hussain, S. (2003). Gender and reproductive behaviour: The role of men. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies, 10*(1), 45 – 76.

Ipas. (2009). *Exploring men's roles in women's decisions to end pregnancies. A literature review with suggestions for action*. Chapel Hill, NC: Ipas.

Jenks, C. (1996). Childhood. London: Routledge.

Jewkes, R., & Abrahams, N. (2002). The epidemiology of rape and sexual coercion in South Africa: An overview. *Social Science & Medicine, 55*, 1231 – 1244.

Jewkes, R., Sikweyiya, Y., Morrell, R., & Dunkle, K. (2009).*Understanding men's health and use of violence: Interface of rape and HIV in South Africa*. Technical Report. Medical Research Council, Pretoria.

Johnson, S.D., & Williams, L.B. (2005). Deference, denial, and exclusion: Men talk about contraception and unintended pregnancy. *International Journal of Men's Health, 4*(3),223 – 242.

Kaufman, C.E. (2000). Reproductive control in apartheid South Africa, *Population Studies, 54*(1), 105 – 114.

Kelly, K. (1999). From encounter to text: Collecting data for interpretive research. In M. Terre Blanche & K. Durrheim (Eds.), *Research in practice. Applied methods for the social sciences* (pp. 379 – 397). Cape Town: UCT Press.

Kendall, S. (2007). Father as breadwinner, mother as worker: Gendered positions in feminist and traditional discourses of work and family. And Tannen, S. Kendall, & C. Gordon (Eds.), *Family talk: Discourse and identity in four American families* (pp. 123 - 164). Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

Kiguwa, P. (2006). Narratives of gender and identity constructs. In T. Shefer, F. Boonzaier, & P. Kiguwa (Eds.), *The gender of psychology* (pp. 12-28). Cape Town: Juta and Company Limited.

Korobov, N. (2001). Reconciling theory with method: From conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis to positioning analysis. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 2*(3). Retrieved August 2008 from http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/906 /1981

Kraus, W. (2006).The narrative negotiation of identity and belonging. *Narrative Inquiry 16*(1), 103 – 111.

Kvale, S. (2007).Doing interviews. London: Sage.

Langellier, K.M. (1989). Personal narrative: Perspectives on theory and research. *Text and Performance Quarterly, 9*(4), 243 – 276.

Langellier, K.M. (1999). Personal narrative, performance, performativity: Two or three things I know for sure. *Text and Performance Quarterly, 19*, 125 – 144.

Langellier, K.M. (2001). You're marked: Breast cancer, tattoo and the narrative performance of identity. In J. Brockmeier, & D.A. Carbaugh (Eds.), *Narrative and identity: Studies in autobiography, self and culture* (pp. 145 - 186). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Langellier, K., & Peterson, E.E. (2004).*Storytelling in daily life: Performing narrative.* Philadelphia (PA): Temple University Press.

Langellier, K.M. & Peterson, E.E. (2006).Shifting contexts in personal narrative performance. In D.S. Madison & J. Hamera (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of performance studies* (pp. 106 – 123). New York & London: Sage.

LaRossa, R. (1997).*The modernization of fatherhood: A social and political history*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lasee, A., & Becker, S. (1997). Husband-wife communication about family planning and contraceptive use in Kenya. *International Family Planning Perspectives, 23*, 15 – 20 & 33.

Lawler, S. (1999). Children need but mothers only want: The power of "needs talk" in the constitution of childhood. In J. Seymour, & P. Bagguley (Eds.), *Relating intimacies: Power and resistance* (pp. 64 – 88).Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan.

Lee, C., & Gramotnev, H. (2006). Motherhood plans among young Australian women: Who wants children these days? *Journal of Health Psychology, 11*(1), 5 – 20.

Lessa, I. (2006). Discursive struggles with social welfare: Restaging teen motherhood. *British Journal of Social Work, 36*(2), 283 – 298.

Letherby, G. (1999). 'Other than mother and mothers as others: The experience of motherhood and non-motherhood in relation to 'infertility' and 'involuntary childlessness'. *Women's Studies International Forum, 22*(3), 359 – 372.

Letherby, G. (2002). Childless and bereft? Stereotypes and realities in relation to 'voluntary' and 'involuntary' childlessness and womanhood. *Sociological Inquiry*, *72*(1), 7 – 20.

Liefbroer, A.C. (2005). The impact of perceived costs and rewards of childbearing on entry into parenthood: Evidence from a panel study. *European Journal of Population, 21*(4), 367 – 391.

Lisle, D. (1999).Gender at a distance. *International Feminist Journal of Politics, 1*(1), 66 - 88.

Lloyd, M. (1999).Performativity, parody, politics. *Theory, Culture & Society, 16*(2), 195 - 213.

Lubbe, C. (2007). Mothers, fathers, or parents: Same-gendered families in South Africa. *South African Journal of Psychology, 37*(2), 260-283.

Lunnenborg, P.W. (1999). The chosen lives of childfree men. Westport, Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey.

Lupton, D., & Barclay, L. (1997).*Constructing fatherhood: Discourses and experiences.* London: Sage.

Mac an Ghaill, M. (Ed.) (1996). *Understanding masculinities: Social relations and cultural arenas*. Buckingham & Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Macleod, C. (1999). The use and value of a pilot study. In M. Terre Blanche & K. Durrheim (Eds.), *Research in Practice: Applied methods for the social sciences*(pp. 298 – 299). Cape Town: UCT Press.

Macleod, C. (2001). Teenage motherhood and the regulation of mothering in the scientific literature: The South African example. *Feminism and Psychology, 11*(4)*,* 493 – 511.

Macleod, C. (2002). Deconstructive discourse analysis: Extending the methodological conversation*. South African Journal of Psychology, 32*(1), 17 – 25.

Macleod, C. (2003). The conjugalisation of reproduction in South African teenage pregnancy literature. *Psychology in Society, 29*, 23 – 37.

Macleod, C. (2006). Radical plural feminisms and emancipatory practice in post-apartheid South Africa. *Theory& Psychology, 16*(3), 367 – 389.

Macleod, C. (2007). The risk of phallocentrism in masculinities studies: How a revision of the concept of patriarchy may help. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 32*(1), 41 – 60*.*

Macleod, C., & Bhatia, S. (2008). Postcolonialism and psychology. In C. Willig, & W. Stainton-Rogers (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research in psychology* (pp. 263-279). London: Sage.

Macleod, C., & Durrheim, K. (2002).Racializing teenage pregnancy: "Culture" and "tradition" in South African literature. *Ethnic& Racial Studies, 25*(5), 778 – 801.

Maharaj, P., & Cleland, J. (2005) Women on top: The relative influence of wives and husbands on contraceptive use in KwaZulu-Natal. *Women & Health, 41*(2), 31 – 41.

Mallon, G.P. (2004). *Gay men choosing parenthood*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Markens, S., Browner, C. H., & Preloran, H. M. (2003). 'I'm not the one they're sticking the needle into' Latino couples, fetal diagnosis, and the discourse of reproductive rights. *Gender & Society, 17*(3), 426 – 481.

Marsiglio, W. (1993).Adolescent males' orientation toward paternity and contraception. *Family Planning Perspectives, 25*, 22 – 31.

Marsiglio, W. (1995). Fathers' diverse life course patterns and roles: Theory and social interventions. In W. Marsiglio (Ed.).*Fatherhood: Contemporary theory, research, and social policy* (pp. 78 – 101). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Marsiglio, W. (1998).Procreative Man. New York: New York University Press.

Marsiglio, W. (2003).Making males mindful of their sexual and procreative identities: Using self-narratives in field settings. *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, *35*(5), 229 – 233.

Marsiglio, W., & Cohan, M. (2000). Conceptualizing father involvement and paternal influence: Sociological and qualitative themes. *Marriage and Family Review, 29*(2/3), 75 – 95.

Marsiglio, W., Hutchinson, S., & Cohan, M. (2000).Envisioning fatherhood: A social psychological perspective on young men without kids. *Family Relations, 49*(2), 133 – 142.

Marsiglio, W., Hutchinson, S., & Cohan M. (2001). Young men's procreative identity: Becoming aware, being aware, and being responsible. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 63*(February), 123 – 135.

Mankayi, N. (2009). Military men and sexual practices: Discourses of 'othering' in safer sex in the light of HIV/AIDS. *Journal des Aspects Sociaux du VIH/SIDA, 6*(1), 33 – 41.

Mantell, J.E., Dworkin, S.L., Exner, T.M., Hoffman, S., Smit, J.A., & Susser, I. (2006). The promises and limitations of female-initiated methods of HIV/STI protection. *Social Science & Medicine, 63,* 1998 – 2009.

Maxwell, J.A., & Miller, B.A. (2008). Categorising and connecting strategies in qualitative analysis. In S.N. Hesse-Biber, & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Handbook of Emergent Methods* (pp. 461 – 478). New York: Guilford Press.

Mazzei, L. (2003).Inhabited silences: In pursuit of a muffled subtext. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *9*(3), 355 – 368.

Mazzei, L. (2004). Silent listenings: Deconstructive practices in discourse-based research. *Educational Researcher*, *33*(2), 26 – 34.

Mazzei, L. (2008). Silence speaks: Whiteness revealed in the absence of voice. *Teaching and Teacher Education,* 24, 1125 – 1136.

Mbweza, E., Norr, K.F., & McElmurry, B. (2008). Couple decision making and use of cultural scripts in Malawi. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship, 40*(1), 12–19.

McIlvenny, P. (2002). Critical reflections on performativity and the "un/doing" of gender and sexuality in talk. In P. McIlvenny (Ed.), *Talking gender and sexuality* (pp. 111-150). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

McMahon, A. (1993). Male readings of feminist theory: The psychologization of sexual politics in the masculinity literature. *Theory and Society 22*(5), 675 – 695.

McNay, L. (1999). Subject, psyche and agency: The work of Judith Butler. *Theory, Culture & Society, 16*(2), 175 - 193.

Meyer, A. (2007). The moral rhetoric of childhood. *Childhood,* 14(1), 85 – 104.

Meyers, D.T. (2001). The rush to motherhood: Pronatalist discourse and women's autonomy. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *26*(3), 735-773.

Mkhize, N. (2004). Who is a father? *Children FIRST, 8*(54), 16 – 20.

Mollen, D. (2006). Voluntarily childfree women: Experiences and counselling considerations. *Journal of Mental Health Counselling, 28*(3), 269 – 284.

Moloney, M., & Fenstermaker, S. (2002). Performance and accomplishment: Reconciling feminist conceptions of gender. In S. Fenstermaker & C. West (eds.) *Doing gender, doing difference: Inequality, power, and institutional change* (pp. 189 – 204)*.* London: Routledge.

Morell, C., (2000). Saying no: Women's experiences of reproductive refusal. *Feminism& Psychology, 10*(3), 313 – 322.

Morrell, R. (1998). Of boys and men: Masculinity and gender in southern African studies. *Journal of Southern African Studies, 24*(4), 605 – 629.

Morrell, R. (2001). *Changing Men in South Africa.* Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.

Morrell, R. (2005). Youth, fathers and masculinity in South Africa today. *Agenda, Special Focus on Gender, Culture and Rights*, 84 – 87.

Morrell, R. (2006). Fathers, fatherhood and masculinity in South Africa. In R. Morrell, & L. Richter (Eds.), *Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 13 – 25). Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Morrell, R., & Richter, L. (2006).Introduction. In R. Morrell, & L. Richter (Eds.).*Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa* (pp. 1 – 13). Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Mostert, N. (1992). *Frontiers: The epic of South Africa's creation and the tragedy of the Xhosa people*. New York: Knopff.

Moultrie, T.A. (2001). *Racism and reproduction: The institutional effects of apartheid on the South African fertility decline.* Paper presented at the XXIV IUSSP General Population Conference Salvador, Brazil. Retrieved October 2010 from http://212.95.240.146/Brazil2001/s10/S19_03_Moultrie.pdf

Mullick, S., Kunene, B., & Wanjiru (2005).Involving men in maternity care: Health service delivery issues. *Agenda*, *Special Focus on Gender, Culture and Rights* (Special issue), 124 – 135.

Mumby, D.K. (1993). *Narrative and social control: Critical perspectives.* Newbury Park (California): Sage.

Mundigo, A.I. (2000). The role of men post-Cairo era. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, *2*(3), 323 – 337.

Nauk, B. (2007). Value of children and the framing of fertility: Results from a cross-cultural comparative survey in 10 societies. *European Sociological Review, 23*(5), 615 – 629.

Nauk, B., & Klaus, D. (2007). The varying value of children empirical results from eleven societies in Asia, Africa and Europe. *Current Sociology, 55*(4), 487 – 503.

Ndinda, C., Uzodike, U., Chimbwete, C., Pool, R., & Microbicide Development Programme (2007). Gender relations in the context of HIV/AIDS in rural South Africa. *AIDS Care, 19*(7), 844 – 849.

Nentwich, J. C. (2008). New fathers and mothers as gender troublemakers? Exploring discursive constructions of heterosexual parenthood and their subversive potential. *Feminism & Psychology, 18*(2), 207 – 230.

Nicholson, L. (1994). Interpreting gender. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 20*(1), 79 – 105.

Nicholson, L. (1995). Introduction. In S. Benhabib, L. Nicholson, & N. Fraser (Eds.), *Feminist contentions: A philosophical exchange* (pp. 1 – 17). London: Routledge.

Nyanzi, S., Nyanzi, B., & Kalina, B. (2005)."Abortion? That's for women!" Narratives and experiences of commercial motorbike riders in Western Uganda. *African Journal of Reproductive Health, 9*(1), 142 – 161.

Nystrom, D. (2002). The perils of masculinities studies. *Iris: A Journal about Women, Spring*, 41 – 44.

Ochs, E. (1997). Narrative. In T. van Dijk (Ed.), Discourse as Structure and Process (pp. 185 – 207). London: Sage.

Ogunjuyigbe, P.O., Ojofeitimi, E.O., & Liasu, A. (2009). Spousal communication, changes in partner attitude, and contraceptive use among the Yorubas of southwest Nigeria. *Indian Journal of Community Medicine*, *34*(2), 112 – 116.

Oladedji, D. (2008). Gender roles and norms factors influencing reproductive behavior among couples in Ibadan, Nigeria. *Anthropologist, 10*(2), 133 – 138.

Olunje, M.N. (2009). *South Africa*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications.

Palamuleni, M., Kalule-Sabiti, I., & Makiwane, M. (2007).Fertility and childbearing in South Africa. In A.Y. Amoateng, & T.B. Heaton (Eds.), *Families and Households in Post Apartheid South Africa: Socio-demographic Perspectives* (pp. 113 – 133)*.* Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Park, K. (2002). Stigma management among the voluntarily childless. *Sociological Perspectives*, *45*(1), 21– 45.

Parker, I. (2005).*Qualitative psychology: Introducing radical research*. New York: Open University Press.

Pascoe, C.J. (2005). 'Dude, you're a fag': Adolescent masculinity and the fag discourse. *Sexualities, 8*(3), 329 – 346.

Peacock, D., &Levack, A. (2004). The Men as Partners program in South Africa: Reaching men to end gender-based violence and promote sexual and reproductive health. *International Journal of Men's Health, 3*(3), 173 – 188.

Peterson, A. (2003). Research on men and masculinities: Some implications of recent theory for future work. *Men and Masculinities, 6*(1), 54 – 69.

Peterson, A., & Jenni, C.B. (2003). Men's experience of making the decision to have their first child: A phenomenological analysis. *The Family Journal: Counselling and Therapy for Couples and Families, 11*(4), 353-363.

Peterson, E.E., & Langellier, K.M. (2006). The performance turn in narrative studies. *Narrative Inquiry, 6*(1), 173 – 180.

Pilgrim, A.N. (2001).Performance and the performative. *Body & Society, 7*(4), 87 – 96.

Pillow, W.S. (2003).Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, *16*(2), 175 – 196.

Rabun, C., & Oswald, R.F. (2009). Upholding and expanding the normal family: Future fatherhood through the eyes of gay male emerging adults. *Fathering*, *7*(3), 269 – 285.

Ramazanoglu, C. (1992). What can you do with a man? Feminism and the critical appraisal of masculinity. *Women's Studies International Forum, 15*(3), 339 – 350.

Randall , S., & Koppenhaver, T. (2004). Qualitative data in demography: The sound of silence and other problems. *Demographic Research,11*(3), 57 – 94. Retrieved November 2010 from www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol11/3/

Ratcliffe, A.A., Hill, A.G., Dibba, M., & Walraven, G. (2001).The Ignored Role of Men in Fertility Awareness and Regulation in Africa. *African Journal of Reproductive Health, 5*(1), 13 – 19.

Reddy, V. (2004). Troubling genders, subverting identities: Interview with Judith Butler. *Agenda, 62*, 115-123.

Remennick, L. (2000). Childless in the land of imperative motherhood: Stigma and coping among infertile Israeli women. *Sex Roles, 43*(11/12), 821 – 841.

Reynolds, J., & Taylor, S. (2004). Narrating singleness: Life stories and deficit identities. *Narrative Inquiry, 15*(2), 197 – 251.

Reynolds, J., Wetherell, M., & Taylor, S. (2007). Choice and chance: Negotiating agency in narratives of singleness, *The Sociological Review*, *55*(2), 331 – 351.

Richter, L. (2004). *The Fatherhood Project: Final Report to the Ford Foundation.* Retrieved March 2007 from http://www.hsrc.ac.za/RPP-Fatherhood-8.phtml

Richter, L. (2009). Foreword. In S. Swartz, & A. Bhana, *Teenage Tata: Voices of young fathers in South Africa* (pp. vii – viii). Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Riessman, C. K. (2000). Stigma and everyday resistance practices: Childless women in south India. *Gender and Society, 14*(1), 111 – 135.

Riessman, C. K. (2002a). Analysis of personal narratives. In J. F. Gubrium, & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context and method* (pp. 695 – 710). London & New York: Sage.

Riessman, C. K. (2002b). Positioning gender identity in narratives of infertility: South Indian women's lives in context. In M. C. Inhorn, & F. van Balen (Eds.), *Infertility around the globe: New thinking on childlessness, gender, and reproductive technologies* (pp. 152 – 170). California, USA: University of California Press.

Riessman, C. K. (2003). Performing identities in illness narrative: Masculinity and multiple sclerosis. *Qualitative Research, 3*(1), 5 – 33.

Riley, S.C.E. (2003). The management of the traditional male role: A discourse analysis of the constructions and functions of provision. *Journal of Gender Studies, 12*(2), 99 – 113.

Rijken, A.J., & Knijn, T. (2009).Couples' decisions to have a first child: Comparing pathways to early and late parenthood. *Demographic Research, 21*(26), 765 – 802. Retrieved October 2010 from www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol21/26/

Robb, M. (2001).Men talking about fatherhood: Discourse and identities. In M. Robb, S. Barrett, & A. Rogers (Eds.), *Communication, relationships and care: A reader* (pp. 121 – 130). London: Routledge.

Robinson, J.A. (2003). Children's rights in the South African Constitution. *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal/Potchefstroomse Elektroniese Regsblad, 6*(1), 1 – 57. Retrieved August 2010 from www.puk.ac.za /opencms/export/PUK/html/fakulteite/regte/.../03jarobi.pdf

Robinson, V. (2003). Radical revisionings?: The theorizing of masculinity and (radical) feminist theory. *Women's Studies International Forum, 26*(2), 129 – 137.

Rosina, A., & Testa, M.A. (2009). Couples' first child intentions and disagreement: An analysis of the Italian case. *European Journal of Population, 25*(4), 487 – 502.

Rottach, E., Schuler, S., & Hardee, K. (2009).*Gender perspectives improve reproductive health outcomes: New evidence*. Washington: Population Reference Bureau. Retrieved September 2010 from http://www.igwg. org/igwg_media/genderperspectives.pdf

Rowlands, I., & Lee, C. (2006). Choosing to have children or choosing to be childfree: Australian students' attitudes towards the decisions of heterosexual and lesbian women*. Australian Psychologist, 41*(1), 55 – 59.

Roy, K. M. (2006). Father Stories. A life course examination of paternal identity among low-income African American men. *Journal of Family Studies, 27*(1), 31 – 54.

Ryan-Flood, R. (2005). Contested heteronormativities: Discourses of fatherhood among lesbian parents in Sweden and Ireland. *Sexualities, 8*(2), 189–204.

Salih, S. (2002).*Judith Butler.* London: Routledge.

Salih, S. (2003).Judith Butler and the ethics of "difficulty". *Critical Quarterly, 45*(3), 42 – 51.

Salih, S. (2007).On Judith Butler and performativity. In K. Lovaas, & M. M. Jenkins (Eds.), *Sexualities & communication in everyday life: A reader* (pp. 55-68). London & New York: Sage Publications Inc.

Sands, R.G., & Roer-Strier, D., (2006).Using data triangulation of mother-daughter interviews to enhance research about families. *Qualitative Social Work, 5*(2), 237 – 260.

Schuler, S.R., Hashemi, S.M., & Jenkins, A.H. (1995). Bangladesh's family planning success story: A gender perspective. *International Family Planning Perspectives, 21*(4), 132 – 166.

Segal, L. (1993). Changing men: Masculinities in context. *Theory and Society, 22*(5), 625 – 641.

Sevón, E. (2005). Timing motherhood: Experiencing and narrating the choice to become a mother. *Feminism &Psychology, 15*(4), 461 – 482.

Sharan, M., & Valente, T. (2002). Spousal communication and family planning adoption: Effects of a radio drama serial in Nepal. *International Family Planning Perspectives, 28*(1), 16 – 25.

Sherman, J.S. (1991). Effect of age on male fertility. *Seminars in Reproductive Endocrinology, 9*(3), 241 - 248.

Smart, C., & Neil, B. (1999). 'I hadn't really thought about it': New identities/new fatherhoods. In. J. Seymour & P. Bagguley (Eds.), *Relating intimacies: Power and resistance* (pp. 118 – 141). Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan.

Smith, B., & Sparkes, A.C. (2008). Contrasting perspectives on narrating selves and identities: An invitation to dialogue. *Qualitative Research, 8*(5), 5 – 35.

Smith, B. (2007). The state of the art in narrative inquiry. Some reflections. *Narrative Inquiry 7*(2), 39 – 398.

Smith, L, (2004). Do you want to have kids? *Men's Health*, *19*(7), 108, 112, 114.

Speer, S.A. (2001). Reconsidering the concept of hegemonic masculinity: Discursive psychology, conversation analysis, and participants' orientations. *Feminism& Psychology, 11*(1), 107 – 135.

Speer, S.A. (2005). *Gender talk: Feminism, discourse and conversation analysis*. London: Routledge.

Speer, S.A., & Potter, J. (2002). From performatives to practices: Judith Butler, discursive psychology and the management of heterosexist talk. In P. McIlvenny (Ed.), *Talking gender and sexuality* (pp. 151 – 180). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Statssa (2001).*The Republic of South Africa 2001 census*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa. Retrieved August 2010 from http://www.statssa.gov.za/census01/html/default.asp

Stassa (2009).*Marriages and divorces, 2009*. Retrieved December 2010 from http://www.statssa.gov.za/ publications/statsdownload.asp?PPN=P0307&SCH=4820

Strauber, B. (2009). *Expert report 1: Transitions into parenthood*. Family Platform. Retrieved September 2010 from http://www.familyplatform.eu

Stern, O., Peacock, D., & Alexander, H. (2009). *Working with men and boys: Emerging strategies from across Africa to address Gender-based Violence and HIV/AIDS.* Sonke Gender Justice Network and the MenEngage Network. Retrieved August 2010 from http://www.engagingmen.net/resource/working-men-and-boys-emerging-strategies-across-africa-address-gender-based-violence-and-hi

Sturnberg, P., & Hubley, J. (2004).Evaluating men's involvement as a strategy in sexual and reproductive health promotion. *Health Promotion International, 19*(3), 389 – 396.

Swartz, S., & Bhana, A. (2009).*Teenage Tata: Voices of young fathers in South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Taylor, S. (2005a). Self-narration as rehearsal: A discursive approach to the narrative formation of identity. *Narrative Inquiry, 15*(1), 45 – 50.

Taylor, S. (2005b). Identity trouble and place of residence in women's life narratives. In N. Kelly, D. Robinson, C. Horrocks, & B. Roberts (Eds.), *Narrative, memory and everyday life* (pp.97–106). Huddersfield: The University of Huddersfield.

Taylor, S. (2006). Narrative as construction and discursive resource. *Narrative Inquiry, 6*(1), 94 – 102.

Taylor, S., & Littleton, K. (2006). Biographies in talk: A narrative-discursive research approach. *Qualitative Sociology Review, II*(1), 22 – 38.

Terre Blanche, M., & Durrheim, K. (1999).Social constructionist methods. In M. Terre Blanche, & K. Durrheim (Eds.), *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences* (pp. 147 - 177). Cape Town: UCT Press.

Throsby, K., & Gill, R. (2004)."It's different for men" Masculinity and IVF. *Men and Masculinities, 6*(4), 330 – 348.

Van Langenhove, L., & Harré, R. (1999).Introducing positioning theory. In R. Harré, & L. Van Langenhove (Eds.), *Positioning theory: Moral contexts of intentional interaction* (pp. 14-31). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Van Lenning, A. (2004). The body as crowbar: Transcending or stretching sex? *Feminist Theory, 5*(1), 25 – 47.

Varga, C.A. (2001). The forgotten fifty percent: A review of sexual and reproductive health research and programs focused on boys and young men in sub-Saharan Africa. *African Journal of Reproductive Health, 5*(3), 175 – 195.

Vincent, L.D. (2000).Bread and honour: White working class women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s. *Journal of Southern African Studies, 26*(1), 61 – 78.

Wager, M. (2000.)Childless by choice? Ambivalence and feminine identity. *Feminism& Psychology, 10*(3), 389 – 395.

Warner, S. (1996). Special women, special places: Women in high security mental hospitals. In E. Burman (Ed.).*Psychology discourse practice: From regulation to resistance* (pp. 96 – 113).London: Taylor & Francis.

Watson, C. (2007). Small stories, positioning analysis, and the doing of professional identities in learning to teach. *Narrative Inquiry, 17*(2), 371 – 389.

Wetherell, M. (1998). Positioning and interpretative repertoires: Conversation analysis and post-structuralism in dialogue. *Discourse & Society, 9*(3), 387 – 412.

Wetherell, M., & Edley, N. (1999).Negotiating hegemonic masculinity: Imaginary positions and psycho-discursive practices. *Feminism and Psychology, 9(3),* 335 – 356.

White, V., Greene, M., & Murphy, E. (2004). *Men and Reproductive Health Programmes: Influencing Gender Norms.* Washington D.C.: The Synergy Project/Social & Scientific Systems, Inc.

Wiegman, R. (2001). Object lessons: Men, masculinity, and the sign women. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 26*(2) 355 – 388.

Williams, J. (1991). Gender wars: Selfless women in the republic of choice. *New York University Law Review, 66*, 1559 – 1634.

Wolff, B., Blanc, A.K., & Ssekamatte-Ssebuliba, J. (2000).The role of couple negotiation in unmet need for contraception and the decision to stop childbearing in Uganda. *Studies in Family Planning, 31*(2), 124 – 137.

Wood K., & Jewkes, R. (1997) Violence, rape and sexual coercion: Everyday love in a South African township. *Gender and Development 5,* 41 – 46.

Woodhead, M. (1997).Psychology and the cultural construction of children's needs. In A. James & A. Prout (Eds.), *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: Contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood* (pp. 63 – 84). London & New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Yadav, K., Singh, B., & Goswami, K., (2010). Agreement and concordance regarding reproductive intentions and contraception between husbands and wives in rural Ballabgarh, India. *Indian Journal of Community Medicine, 35*(1), 19 – 23.

Zecchi, B. (2005). All about mothers: Pronatalist discourses in contemporary Spanish cinema. *College Literature*, *32*(1),146 – 164.

Zelizer, V.A. (1985). Pricing the priceless child: The changing value of children. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press.

Zuberi, T., Sibanda, A., & Udjo, E., (Eds.) (2005).*The Demography of South Africa*. M.E. Sharpe Inc.: New York & London.