Men's pathways to parenthood: Silences and heterosexual gender norms.

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2 AUTHORS:

Tracy Morison
Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), …
11 PUBLICATIONS **7** CITATIONS

Catriona Ida Macleod
Rhodes University
58 PUBLICATIONS **209** CITATIONS

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Preface

This book is a product of several years of collaboration between Tracy and Catriona and is based on the findings of Tracy's doctoral research, which Catriona supervised. The original impetus for the study stems fundamentally from our personal and academic commitment to de-gendering and queering both heterosexuality and parenting. As feminist researchers who work in the broad area of sexualities and reproduction, we see the private, and often invisible, space of intimate relationships between women and men as unavoidably entwined with complex relations of power. We believe that it is imperative to interrogate the discourses of gender, heterosexuality, family and parenting in order to shine a light upon that which seems to be most natural in relation to becoming and being a parent and, ultimately, to facilitate more equitable partnerships between women and men.

We therefore begin this book by relinquishing 'the protective barriers of objectivity' (Etherington 2007: 599) and locating ourselves in our research as central figures who shape every aspect of it (Finlay 2003). This transparency is part of our feminist commitment to researcher reflexivity as an ongoing practice that occurs throughout our research practice from inception through to the writing up. We therefore share aspects of 'who we are' before beginning the research conversation. This kind of disclosure is not intended simply as a means of validating our account, but to help produce a rich and complex understanding that emphasises the provisionality and contingency of the knowledge produced, the ways that we as researchers are already positioned before embarking on the research (Pillow 2003). In continuing the practice of reflexivity throughout the book, we resist the urge to sanitise our account as we open our practice and processes to public scrutiny, and admit to its messiness, problems and pitfalls (Etherington 2007).

We recognise that who we are—especially in terms of our own intimate partnerships and reproductive choices—is integral to our work and has a bearing on the research that we present in this book. As women in committed intimate partnerships with men, our lives conform to varying degrees with the expectations dictated by conventional ideas of heterosexual coupledom. Tracy is in a domestic partnership and voluntarily childless, while Catriona is married with two children, whose births were 'planned' to coincide with sabbaticals. Catriona's life therefore fits more closely than Tracy's with the idealised heterosexual life trajectory (which we later discuss in terms of the canonical heterosexual couple narrative—see Chapter 3). Moreover, we not only simultaneously deconstruct and reproduce procreative heterosexuality (a term that we unpack later), but as middle class, English-speaking White[1] academics in post-apartheid South Africa we are also enmeshed in daily struggles of racialised and class-based relations.

We recognise that being like our participants (heterosexual, married, parent, middle class, White) or unlike them (unmarried, childless, English-speaking) allow particular ways of speaking and seeing and also potentially impede others. Later in the book, we engage in a more sustained critical reflection on our role as researchers in shaping the data that emerged from our study. As suggested by Pillow (2003), critical self-awareness and vigilance were built into our research practice through the documentation of activities, ideas and impressions in field notes and research journals; reflective note-taking in relation to tape recordings and transcripts; supervision sessions (where self, theory, method, analysis and process were discussed); and further reflexive discussions during the multiple revisions that went into writing this book and other articles (see Morison 2013; Morison & Macleod 2013a & 2013b). This helped to refine how we understood the project, as we discuss later, to take cognisance of the multiple, contradictory, and socially constructed, interactive and reflexive subjectivities we occupy in relation to our participants. In our analysis of these data we were also aware of how the narratives were formed as part of an interaction that we helped to shape and we highlight our own role in the generation of specific aspects of the data for our readers. In so doing, we intend for the readers to insert themselves in the active process of adjudging our vigilance and reflection in terms of self, other, context, process, assumptions and theory.

This research journey—the process of reading theory and literature, conducting the research, analysing screeds of data, writing, and rewriting—has involved an ever-evolving relationship between us the authors as our roles shifted from student/supervisor to full colleagues. We attribute the ongoing respectful and supportive relationship that we have enjoyed during this time, and our ongoing

Chapter 1: Our research: Initial questions and changing tack

A number of initial, somewhat undefined, questions occupied our minds as we embarked upon the study we report on in this book. How do men come to be parents? What social and interpersonal processes are involved? How does the 'decision' to become a parent unfold? Is becoming a father, in fact, a 'decision' at all, or a series of events? How are social norms implicated in the men's paths to parenthood? How is the heterosexual relationship within which most conceptions take place implicated in the pathway toward parenthood? What discussions do men hold with their partners? What gender relations feature in the discussions and negotiations?

With these early questions in mind, we started a process of reading in the area. Given the global focus on family planning and reproductive health, it was unsurprising that we found a relatively substantial amount of literature on contraceptive usage. We read, for example, that women hold a high level of contraceptive responsibility in many countries (Barker & Olukuya 2007),[2] including in South Africa (Department of Health 2007). In contrast, the research reported, male contraceptive use, and men's sharing of sexual and reproductive responsibilities and outcomes, remain a national and international challenge (Department of Health 2012a). Despite the abundance of this type of literature, what we found, however, is that there is limited research that speaks specifically to gender and the *pathways* to parenthood,[3] or what some researchers have called 'parenthood decision-making': that is, the processes of thinking or not thinking about, talking or not talking about, deciding or not deciding, and acting or not acting upon becoming a parent (this is confirmed by Rijken & Knijn (2009)).

At the same time, we were reading theory, specifically Judith Butler's performativity theory. It was in this difficult, iterative (and brain-hurting) activity of thinking through theory in relation to formulating our research questions and in relation to the literature that we began to frame our approach to this research: an approach to gender that addresses how gender norms operate. For this, we utilised Butler's theoretical notion of performativity, which is a useful framework for exploring the processes of gender construction and gender normalisation. We supplemented it with the notion of performance and insights from the narrative-discursive method (see more detail later in this chapter and in Chapter 2).

With this as background, we thus formulated the following research questions: What discursive resources do White Afrikaans-speaking people re-cite when speaking about past or anticipated parenthood decisions and men's involvement therein? (See our rationale for using White Afrikaans people as participants later in this chapter). 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?

After the long process of proposal writing and ethical clearance, we set out into the field to interview Afrikaans-speaking heterosexual men and women. We asked them to tell us their stories about becoming a parent, especially about how they and their partner were involved in the process and in any decisions. We asked women to specifically concentrate on the role that their male partner played.

As our research progressed, however, it became apparent that answering our initial questions was not as straightforward as simply asking our participants about their 'parenthood choices' and stories related to the personal and interpersonal processes they went through in thinking through, talking about, and actively becoming a parent. What struck us most as we went through the process of collecting and analysing the data was how participants experienced difficulty talking about their 'decision-making' processes in relation to having children and especially male involvement in 'family planning' or reproductive 'decisions'. Direct answers to the question of how men become fathers, how they engage in a process of negotiating with their partners around having children or thinking and deciding about their parental status, remained elusive. As we show in this book, the issue of becoming a heterosexual parent was not especially 'storyworthy' for them; it was really a 'non-topic'. Though most or our participants were or wanted to be parents, we were asking them to tell us a story that bore little or no relevance to their lives: an account, for the most part, centred on characters who are largely rational, autonomous and reflexive, who deliberated, planned, and chose more or less actively.

This meant that the participants really had no response to our questions about becoming a parent; not as we had put it to them in any case. As we reviewed the data we had collected, we increasingly noted that participants were largely silent in relation to our questions and were telling us different, seemingly unrelated stories. We started to understand the reasons for this apparent silence as we 'listened' *for* and *to* it, and this will become clearer to readers throughout the remainder of the book. What this meant for us during the earlier stages of the research, and later for our analytic strategy, as we started to try to make sense of what our participants were—and often were not—telling us, was that we had to pursue that which 'goes without saying'. We had to listen for what was often unvoiced in the interview, because it was so obvious and taken for granted by the participant.

Quite unknown to us at the outset, our participants' difficulty in answering our questions ultimately proved very useful in highlighting exactly the gendered and social norms in which we were interested. In this chapter, we outline the journey we undertook from initial formulation of the research questions to changing tack, and answering different questions to the ones we initially anticipated. We discuss how we arrived at our initial research rationale, by examining some pertinent literature. We describe our study, including the participants and how the methodology that we employed enables the analysis of social, cultural and normative processes. We outline how we understood our participants' bewilderment at our questions about the planning, choices or decisions related to their pathways to parenthood. We discuss what we refer to as our 'unusual conversational move' (borrowing the term used by Reynolds and Taylor (2004: 203), which we explain below) and how it created interactional trouble for the participants. This trouble, as we shall show, led to what Liza Mazzei (2003) calls 'veiled silences' in which participants attend to a different question than the one being asked. It was this very process that highlighted the key normative regulatory framework that we discuss in this book, what we have called procreative heteronormativity.

The research literature that informed our rationale

At the outset of the project, we had some initial ideas about trying to understand gender power relations in reproductive decision-making, specifically decisions around having children or family formation, among healthy, 'normal', heterosexual people (see later discussion on the rationale for our focus on White heterosexual Afrikaans people). The only times that we encountered researchers explicitly considering gender and parenthood decisions/paths were in circumstances that require overt deliberation or that deviate from the heteronormative ideal in some way. Thus, there is research on infertility and the use of new reproductive technologies (NRTs) like in vitro fertilisation (IVF) treatment,[4] and on reproduction in the context of potentially transferable congenital conditions and especially HIV.[5] There is also some research on the pathways to parenthood of lesbians[6] and gay men.[7] In addition, researchers have considered those who conceive as teenagers.[8] And finally, there is also a body of work on people who opt out of parenthood and remain 'childfree'.[9]

The common trend, therefore, is to study those who do not closely adhere to the 'gold standard' of parenthood, namely able-bodied, middle-class, White, married/partnered heterosexuality (Riggs 2007). Thus, having children goes unquestioned among those who are 'old enough', married, able-bodied and healthy (especially HIV negative), economically stable. In contrast, we know that parenthood is questioned for lesbians and gay men, as well as those who are teen-aged, 'too old', unmarried or single, HIV-positive, poor, or who have a physical or intellectual disability. Race has also been a factor in assessing people's reproductive decisions in the past (Kruger 2006; Morell 2000). These individuals fall outside of the heteronormative ideal, because they have to make an overt choice to have children or they deviate from the normative life path expected of most heterosexual adults.

In contrast, there is far less research that explicitly considers how ordinary heterosexual people go about deciding to have children and especially how this unfolds within the context of heterosexual coupledom (Rijken & Knijn 2009). Research also does not usually consider why these people want to have children. Indeed, Dyer and colleagues note the lack of research on 'parenthood motives' in South Africa (Dyer et al. 2008: 352). A reason for this gap, Finnish researcher Eija Sevón (2005) maintains, is that 'parents are seldom asked to explain their choice *to have* children, in contradistinction to those who cannot or do not want to have children' (2005: 463, emphasis added). As a result, there are only very few studies on the parenthood decision-making experiences of heterosexual women who have no

problems conceiving and do so at the 'right' time and under the ideal conditions. Sevón's (2005) own study of heterosexual women's stories of their motherhood decision-making is one of the few exceptions. There are even fewer studies that consider fertile, heterosexual men, especially before their partners become pregnant (Peterson & Jenni 2005).

Most of what we know about people's parenthood 'decision-making' and motives has been gleaned indirectly from related studies. For instance, qualitative research on fertility and infertility with women has shed light on women's motivations for parenthood (Dyer et al. 2008). Work using transition theory on the 'transition to motherhood/fatherhood' might also hold some relevance (Draper 2003). Similarly, research that investigates younger men's anticipation of fatherhood or early fatherhood experiences might also indirectly shed light on men's parenthood decisions. (This work is discussed further below). With the exception of this handful of studies, it is fair to say that fertile heterosexual people, and especially men, appear to be the invisible norm in research that focuses explicitly on pathways to parenthood. As a result, we know relatively little about heterosexual men's pathways to parenthood—that is, the process by which they come to be fathers—and how this process is negotiated along with female partners.

When we look more broadly at reproductive research conducted with heterosexuals, we see that past research has provided some insight into female-male non/negotiation specifically in relation to heterosex and contraception, and minimally in terms of reproductive 'decision-making'. This literature tends to highlight three broad trends: men dominating the process, men deferring to women, or men collaborating with women, each of which we will refer to briefly below. For the most part, this research, while relevant, does not shed much light on thoughts, talk and actions about parenthood (parenthood 'choices' or 'decision-making'), but rather gives some indication of some of the more general gender-relational dynamics involved in (hereto)sexual and reproductive partnerships.

Research on gender and reproductive decision-making

Within the first of the three trends referred to above, men dominating decision-making, researchers have highlighted how reproductive 'choices' within heterosexual partnerships are socioculturally defined and mediated through localised patriarchal power relations, so that a woman's ability to exercise her own choices, and even to express her preferences or opinions, can be severely curtailed. There is abundant and rich research in South Africa dealing with the negotiation of heterosex. This research, while not always speaking directly to reproductive decision-making, sheds light on the role of gender in heterosexuality. The profusion of research on sexual practices has occurred largely in response to the rising HIV pandemic. It has produced much evidence of gender power dynamics in female-male negotiations of heterosex (Shefer & Foster 2009) and, in particular, the centrality of men's dominance in these negotiations. In sexual and reproductive heterosexual relations, men frequently dictate the terms of the relationship and (directly or indirectly) dominate decision-making.[10] Many studies show that male control often proceeds through the use of violence, coercion or threats. There is a substantial body of South African research on gender dynamics in violent or coercive sexual relationships, showing how this constrains women's sexual and reproductive choices.[11] Research also points to the lack of communication between women and men in heterosexual negotiations (Shefer & Foster 2009).

While acknowledging the trends shown in this research, there is a move locally and abroad to take women's agency more seriously. In South Africa, this is notable in the work of Tamara Shefer and colleagues.[12] This is in line with international trends in feminist research, as exemplified in the work of Rosalind Gill and colleagues. For example, Throsby and Gill (2004) criticise research that concentrates on the negative effects that men have on women's sexual and reproductive choices and in this way, perhaps inadvertently, characterises men as power-hungry or cruel. They contend that this sort of research focus is politically reductive, because it fails to capture the full picture of gender relations, including the negative effects that these also hold for particular men.

The second research trend referred to above concerns men's deference to women, specifically in relation to reproductive matters. Research indicates that male deference, and the form that this takes, is related to the ways in which men justify and make sense of female responsibility for reproductive matters. Women's autonomy can be limited when male passivity is justified by the

common construction of reproduction as a 'women's issue' as opposed to a woman's right. In this process, men may also retain dominance and exert their influence passively and indirectly, as a number of local and international studies show.[13] As a result, women remain answerable to men and may find themselves caught between the ability to control their fertility and their partner's potential disapproval, which sometimes entails violence or abandonment (Elfstrom & Stephenson 2012; Markens et al. 2003).

In the third research trend, researchers explore joint decision-making and participants' reports that reproductive decisions are arrived at by mutual consensus. Researchers note that simply taking a mutual decision does not equate to egalitarian decision-making, which is relatively less common. The latter is shown to occur in relation to more progressive constructions of reproductive choice in terms of women's rights and bodily autonomy, which increases the likelihood of women's preferences and needs being considered. In contrast, despite professing to collectively deciding, studies also indicate that some men prefer to be involved in decision-making in order to retain control of choices and/or that women often adjust their own preferences or defer to their partners' wishes.[14]

The research that we have discussed so far deals with the negotiations and power dynamics of sexual and reproductive heterosexual partnerships, and the ways in which men are involved in decision-making: actively or passively, authoritatively or equitably. It is not, as we have mentioned, directly concerned with the processes of thinking or not thinking about, talking or not talking about, deciding or not deciding, and acting or not acting upon becoming a parent, much less men's role in these processes. As far as our own research interest was concerned, therefore, we also cast our attention wider, and turned to the growing body of fatherhood research.

Research on fatherhood

The topic of fatherhood has received increasing attention in recent years in South Africa, both in the popular and academic press. It features strongly in the work on boys and men that explores the social construction of heterosexual masculinities.[15] These studies are important, because they address the previous dearth of South African research, especially work that addresses the topic from a gendered perspective. They also usefully incorporate men's own experiences, until now largely undocumented (Richter 2009; Swartz & Bhana 2009).

The increased attention to fatherhood in South African research has notably been spurred by the advocacy-based work of The Fatherhood Project. The project was started by the Human Sciences Research Council's (HSRC) (now defunct) Child, Youth and Family Development research programme in 2003 (Richter 2004). A notable research output from the project was the landmark text *Baba: Men and fatherhood in South Africa* in 2006. The work contained in this text sheds light on some of the social and cultural meanings attached to fatherhood in South Africa, locating it among the various contextual issues—such as poverty, divorce, violence, HIV and systems of migrant labour—that shape parenting practices. An important contribution of this work is its illumination of the connections between gender constructions and men's ideas about and aspirations toward fatherhood.

As far as decisions about fatherhood go, there is some indication that dominant constructions of fatherhood and manhood not only shape men's parenting practices, but also their parenthood decisions. For instance, for many South Africans in the country, a father's ability to provide materially for his children is central to constructions of fatherhood and impact on both fatherhood practices as well as reproductive decisions (Richter, 2009). Many men who cannot afford to provide for their progeny may choose not to be present or actively involved in their children's lives once the children are born.[16] Others might delay having children in the first place or have fewer children.[17] Significantly, however, the inability to provide financially for children does not necessarily stop men from having children, since being able to reproduce also has a strong social significance. Such work points to the meanings that fatherhood bears—as a marker of adulthood, gendered normality, or virility, for example (Morrell, 2006).

As it stands, research on fatherhood, both in South Africa and abroad, generally does not consider the issue that we wished to explore, namely, the process of becoming a father or not, in the sense of the decisions, thoughts, actions, talk and experiences that lead up to first-time fatherhood (whether biological or adoptive), or alternatively to child-freedom. The (mostly international) work that does exist concentrates, for the most part, either on how young men envision fatherhood[18] or on

fathers-to-be in relation to their transition to fatherhood.[19] The latter usually looks at men from the beginning of the partner's pregnancy through to the first few months after the birth. This literature is framed by transition theory and considers fatherhood as a major life transition (in relation to issues such as role changes, emotional adjustment, stress and support), usually in the couple context (Draper 2003; Peterson & Jenni 2005). Attention is mostly paid to the impact of this transition on men and their female partners, to men's experiences and understandings of fatherhood as a major life event.[20]

The most obvious limitation of the transition to fatherhood research is that it does not necessarily give us a sense of the process leading up to first-time fatherhood. For instance, we do not know much, as Rijken and Knijn (2009) point out, about 'how much thought they [men] gave it, if they consciously weighed costs and rewards, what dilemmas they have faced and how they deliberate to reach a decision' (2009: 766).

In addition, there is some variation in the extent to which researchers problematize the normality of fatherhood as a stage in the heterosexual life course. While some researchers treat fatherhood as a normal developmental stage,[21] others do question and problematize such entrenched assumptions about parenthood.[22]

Limitations aside, these studies on fatherhood do shed some light on the topic in which we are interested. Overall, such studies show that many heterosexual young men value and aspire to have children, and that they may be more invested in fathering than is commonly believed. The majority of men in these studies expect or want to be fathers. Some male participants have attributed their desire to the anticipated emotional rewards of having children (Thompson & Lee 2011), though most have difficulty in explaining their motivations and aspirations for fatherhood. Significantly, qualitative findings show that the answers that are commonly given relate to a view of fatherhood as inevitable, as a 'natural progression' (Lupton & Barclay 1997: 119) or as central to constructions of masculinity (Morrell 2007) and men's 'relationship to the gender order' (Henwood & Procter 2003: 341). Such findings strongly suggest that parenthood is not only viewed as an essential characteristic of mature adulthood, but is also an expected, even prescribed, stage in the heterosexual life course.

Therefore, the studies that we have outlined provided us with some insights, but we were still left with many questions. As a result, we chose to focus explicitly on pathway/s to parenthood both in relation to men's thoughts and aspirations toward fatherhood, as well as the process by which they may become fathers for the first time within the heterosexual-couple context. This involves a range of decisions, including whether to have children or not, when to do so, under what conditions, as well as preferences and ideals about the number of children and family composition. Therefore, in many ways, our research sought to deal with issues of heterosexual couples' planning, choices, and decisions related to parenthood—which we frequently capture under the term 'parenthood decision-making'—and, in particular, male roles and participation in these.

Our study: White heterosexual men's paths to parenthood in South Africa

The literature discussed above forms the background against which we conducted our study on men's roles and involvement in heterosexual pathways to parenthood. Our focus on heterosexuality was an attempt to foreground dominant subjectivities that frequently remain uninterrogated. We wanted to draw attention to the 'gold standard' of parenthood (Riggs 2007). For those closest to the ideal, parenthood is an unquestioned right and having children is considered to be obviously desired and expected. We chose to home in on a particular social group in South Africa that have historically occupied a privileged social space: White heterosexual Afrikaans-speakers. We elaborate on our reasons for this choice in more detail a little later in this chapter, and also in Chapter 3.

Drawing on narrative-discursive methodology and Butlerian theory (which are explained in more depth in Chapter 2), we posed the research questions outlined at the beginning of this chapter. We wish to highlight three things at this stage: (1) our use of narrative-discursive methodology that enables a focus on social, cultural and normative processes; (2) our decision to foreground the invisible norm which, we argue, has implications for those who do not fit this profile; and (3) our decision to interview both men and women concerning men's pathways to parenthood.

Analysing social, cultural and normative processes

Readers will note that in posing questions in the way that we did, we foregrounded our focus on such things as 'discursive resources', 'gendered scripts', 'narratives', 'positions' and 'troubling', rather than, say, men's experiences or men's actions. We were interested in the gendered constructions and associated power relationships surrounding men and their pathways to parenthood. The narrative-discursive method that we used calls attention to the ways in which accounts of the (non)decision-making around parenthood are simultaneously resourced and constrained by larger sociocultural meanings, as well as how the speakers engage in reflexive work while giving an account of these life processes.

The notion of a 'discursive resource' is defined as 'a set of meanings that exist prior to an instance of talk and [are] detectable within it' (Reynolds et al. 2007: 335). It is common to a number of critical discursive psychological narrative analyses (Bamberg 2004), and follows the basic assumption of discursive psychology that talk is constitutive (that is, that it constructs rather than reflects reality). The notion of a discursive resource thus refers to prevailing sociocultural understandings (sets of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements, and so forth) present in society's language practices and in the particular context in which a narrative is situated (Taylor & Littleton 2006).

Within a narrative-discursive approach, individuals are seen as employing established and intelligible discursive resources available to them within a culture to produce stories of an event, person, or experience (Smith & Sparkes 2008; Taylor 2006). In drawing upon particular discursive resources, the narrator creates a localised, contextual narrative (Taylor 2006) that becomes personalised by the unique circumstances of a particular life (Smith & Sparkes 2008). In addition to the key conceptual tools of discursive resources, we utilised the notions of scripts, canonical narratives, subject positions and troubling and repair. These are explained further in Chapter 3.

A focus on normative subjectivities

Given our interest in cultural gender scripts and power relations, our decision to focus on White Afrikaans-speaking people was strategic in the sense of turning the spotlight on the intersecting identity markers of heterosexuality, middle-class status, and 'Whiteliness'[23] as the invisible norms against which marginalised groups are frequently inadvertently or purposefully judged. For instance, our interest in focusing on White people emerges from the observation that much of the reproductive research in South Africa tends to focus on Black people, often in combination with economic disadvantage. It has been argued that this focus incorporates the majority of the South African population (Swartz and Bhana 2009), and the underlying rationale might be to give voice to those who tend to be marginalised in mainstream society. It is equally important, however, to ensure that the norms that underpin 'Whiteness' or 'Whiteliness' (as we prefer to call it) do not remain invisible and uninterrogated at the same time. Indeed, scholars like Melissa Steyn (2004) stress the importance of not only problematizing 'Whiteness'—especially in a context of sociopolitical transformation as in South Africa—but also to 'particularize specific Whitenesses' (2004: 145) and to focus on 'local inflections of Whiteness' (2004: 146). This involves attending to the politics of location: the ways in which various intersections of power operate upon social subjects within a particular context, including the gendered dynamics that operate within Whiteliness (Steyn 2004; see also Steyn & Van Zyl 2009).

Thus, the rationale for our research is not simply to attend to an under-researched area, but to understand the narratives produced by people who occupy a historically dominant position in South Africa, and the relations of power to which these narratives and the discursive resources they draw on alert us. Despite being a minority group in South Africa,[24] White Afrikaans-speakers as a group have historically enjoyed privileged social status in this country under the White minority government. Indeed, as Steyn (2009: 150) argues, 'the apartheid system was put in place in their name.' During this time,

> [d]eeply encoded patterns of paternalism and prejudice [were] an essential part of the Afrikaner nationalist tradition. Notions of superiority, exclusivity and hierarchy…existed as more or less conscious "habits of mind". Together they comprise[d] a folkloric amalgam of popular beliefs and traditions in which the idea of human difference appear[ed] as part of the natural order of things. (Dubow 1992: 210)

Ideas of difference in the logic of apartheid were not only centred on race, but also deeply gendered. White Afrikaans men enjoyed privileged social positions based on norms of unequal, authoritarian relationships with White women and children, as well as Black people in general (Morrell 2006). Men were seen as the head of the household, which generally included not only the wife and children but also domestic workers and labourers. This position was bolstered by the rhetoric of 'family values' based, to a large extent, on conservative Christian ideology. This position enshrined the male-headed household as the God-ordained cornerstone of Afrikanerdom (Du Pisani 2001; Steyn 2004).

The end of apartheid represented a major break in terms of Afrikanerdom (Steyn 2004). The transition to democracy, the formulation of a sleigh of new legislation and policy, the demise of the National Party (that had been the ruling party in the apartheid government), and the changed nature of public debate presented a personal and social challenge to many White Afrikaners. Affirmative Action, employment equity and Black Economic Empowerment, in particular, shifted the ground for many economically active people, specifically White males (Conway 2008). As with other groupings of people, White Afrikaans citizens in general had to adjust to social changes that were complex, at times contradictory, and that challenged the hegemony of Afrikaans 'culture'.

Within the broader context of socio-political change in post-democratic South Africa, gender equity has taken central stage alongside debates concerning issues relating to such things as race, sexual orientation, poverty and service delivery struggles, health and HIV. Accordingly, the power that was rooted in traditional conceptions of male selfhood was challenged, giving rise both to a reassertion of these traditional conceptions and to new and contested discourses of manhood and changes to the role of men in families (Morrell 2006). As a result, 'Afrikaner masculinity no longer prescribes ideals of masculinity to South African society at large, to white men in general, or even to Afrikaans-speaking white men' (Du Pisani 2001: 172).

In terms of sexuality, the power relations in the broader sociopolitical arena—and the discursive resources that underpin these–have implications for the roles that women and men play in families and family formation. This is evident in struggles by lesbians, gay men, and bisexual people (LGB) for civil rights, including those pertaining to marriage and parenthood. Heteronormative social arrangements have been questioned and, once again, these disputes have been reported on extensively in the media (Morison & Reddy 2013). Yet, despite de jure recognition of such rights, heterosexuality remains normalised, with same-sex relationships being ignored or denied at a social and institutional level or, worse, leading to violence as in the example of 'corrective rape' (Mkhize et al. 2010).

The participants in our study all reflected at some stage on the nature of White Afrikaans 'culture', and most of them on the changes White Afrikaans-speakers have undergone. Since the participants had volunteered for a study about Afrikaans people, being an Afrikaner was a prior position that they had to negotiate in their talk. There were several negative depictions of Afrikaans culture in which Afrikaners commonly featured as highly traditional, rigid, conservative and religious. For instance, one of the younger participants described the Afrikaans culture as closed-minded, describing this mindset as the 'box of Afrikanerness' (Jakobus). Another said, 'Afrikaners are sort of more traditionalist, more conservative, whereas maybe English, so to speak, is a bit more open' (Riaan). Participants also emphasised changes in cultural norms. They often depicted Afrikaans culture as in flux and stressed generational differences, distinguishing between 'traditional' Afrikaners and contemporary Afrikaans culture, as indicated in the extract below in which Jakobus speculated that older White Afrikaans-speakers and men might be unwilling to talk about the interview topic.

Extract 1

Jakobus: 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… I'd really like to let a child grow up with the same values and morals that I grew up with, to become the person that I am, or am going to be. My parents actually grew up in an Afrikaans background, a huge Afrikaans background [...] It was heavily dominated by a Dutch Reformed influence, a Calvinist background and all this stuff. When they had me and my brother, Davie, we were literally taken away from all that and we were in a certain sense we were made to consider our own viewpoints of the world. They promoted that, encouraged that. […] Um, my parents, I don't know how they got to be how they are, but my grandparents are, especially on my mother's side, regte *egte Boeremense*

[genuine Boer people]. You ask my grandfather something like that [the question posed in the research interview] and he'll show you the door. The thing is with us, we were exposed to a more liberal attitude and to be open-minded about things, and to go out of your comfort zone, you know? Don't just stick with the box and the tradition of being Afrikaans…I respect other cultures and I try to understand them, you know. **[M2]**[25]

In this extract, the speaker draws attention to generational differences. He distinguishes the generation of Afrikaners represented by his grandparents from his parents and his own generation. His grandparents are referred to as 'real' Afrikaners or 'Boere'—a term that was frequently associated with traditional and conservative Afrikaans-speakers—while his parents are portrayed as providing a liberal upbringing, which means going 'out of your comfort zone', and respecting 'other cultures'.

The inclusion of women in the study

So, if our focus is on White Afrikaans-speaking men and their pathways to parenthood, why interview women as well as men? What would women have to say about this topic? Our decision must be seen, perhaps paradoxically, in light of debates about how men are to be included in research on reproductive matters and the associated concern with not eclipsing women's needs or detracting from the aim of empowering women. Reproductive research was, for a long time, characterised by a women-focus. In family planning research—the dominant approach to reproductive research until the early 1990s—the focus was on increasing female contraceptive usage. This was facilitated by a narrow view of reproduction as a biological phenomenon almost entirely devoid of any cultural and sociopolitical dimensions. This narrow understanding, however, has broadened in recent times, driven by various social issues, to a view in which reproduction is seen as embedded in the social, cultural, economic and sexual context. A consequence of this broadened view has been the inclusion of men in reproductive research and the emergence of a new paradigm in which reproductive issues are now generally framed, namely, the reproductive rights framework (Mundigo 2000).

The debate on incorporating men into reproductive research was initially informed by the concern that men play a crucial, but sometimes restrictive role, in women's reproductive health (Blanc 2001; Greene & Biddlecom 2000). Thus, the issue of how to incorporate men into research on reproduction came to be a thorny one, precisely because women's (reproductive) autonomy is potentially at stake (Berer 1996; Ertürk 2004). A tension is evident in the literature between involving men with the ultimate aim of women's empowerment versus involving men in recognition of men 'in their own right'.

Recent research that has focussed on men 'in their own right' has considered men as partners who may potentially be constructively involved in women's health and as beneficiaries of reproductive health services with their own reproductive needs and concerns. This shift is represented by two major trends in sexual and reproductive health research, Men as Partners and Male Equality approaches. Both are located within the reproductive health paradigm that is generally used to study and implement interventions related to sex and reproduction.

The Men as Partners framework is underpinned by a commitment to gender equity and women's empowerment and aims to engage men in women's sexual and reproductive health by addressing them as partners, both in the sense of being women's intimate partners as well as in collaborating with women. In South Africa, this approach can be seen in the work of Dean Peacock and colleagues (for example, Peacock & Levack 2004; Stern et al. 2009) which deals largely with the intersection of violence and sexual and reproductive health—especially HIV—as well as in interventions such as the Men in Maternity intervention (Mullick et al. 2005). On the other hand, the Male Equity approach attempts to take a broader view of men's roles, 'beyond their roles as women's partners' (Alan Guttmacher Institute 2003a: 4) and, frequently, 'in their own right' (Alan Guttmacher Institute 2003a & 2003b). 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).

Though there is general consensus among gender scholars that attention to men is needed, feminists have also cautioned against the focus on men to the extent that women's interests are sidelined and gender equity becomes only a vague and superficial research rationale (Cornwall & Esplen

2010). The concern is that as the equity agenda is marginalised, so too are the actual women whose potential losses in relation to reproduction are often significantly greater than those of men (Berer 1996; Ertürk 2004). A middle-ground position that attempts to address these concerns is found in the gendered and relational approach, which we adopt as a broad framework in which to study men's practices (and which dovetails with the Butlerian theoretical approach we take).

The gendered and relational approach to studying men's practices moves beyond the consideration of men's participation in the sexual and reproductive health of women, to a view of men 'as actors with sexuality, health, reproductive, and concrete needs…[who are] considered in their interaction with women' (Figueroa-Perea 2003: 114). The understanding of gender as relational that is apparent in this view usefully incorporates both 'masculinities and femininities, women and men, the relations between them, and the structural context that reinforces and creates these power relations' (Barker et al. 2010: 10).

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. Our inclusion of women in the study was thus in recognition of the warning by some scholars (for example, Macleod 2007; Peterson 2003) that a focus on men or overemphasis on masculinity can serve to obscure the female signifier and can lead to inadequate theorising of gender as a relational concept. Constructions of heterosexual men's pathways to parenthood only make sense and are understandable in relation to women's pathways to parenthood. As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) state, when discussing this tendency in some work on masculinities,

> [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. (2005: 848)

Thus the inclusion of both women and men in the interviews about male involvement in parenthood decision-making was an important part of our research design. Often researchers include men in studies of women's sexual and reproductive issues, but this was reversed in our study. We included women as men's partners. Following a gendered and relational perspective, the research study considers the 'nature and dynamics of the gendered politics of reproduction' (Browner 2005: 1), specifically in relation to becoming a parent for the first time. We were interested in hearing how women's accounts resonated with the stories that men told us. We asked older women about their experiences in relation to the ways that their partners had been a part of their pathways to parenthood. We also spoke to younger women, with a view to seeing whether and how their accounts might differ from older women's in terms of how they understand men's roles in the process of becoming a parent for the first time and their expectations of their partner's participation in this process.

The participants

Tracy conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with two cohorts of participants about prospective or past pathways to parenthood. The interviews with all of the participants consisted of loosely structured, open-ended questions, with a main generic question and follow-up questions (see Appendix 1). The interviews took place in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. Most were conducted in a small university town where the majority of the 23 White Afrikaans-speaking participants resided at the time. All the participants were middle class[26] and identified as heterosexual. This group of 23 was comprised of 11 women and 12 men, further differentiated on the basis of two age cohorts, as discussed further below (a summary table of demographic details appears in Appendix 2).

Cohort One: Parents

The first cohort was a group of older people who were recruited by word of mouth and with the assistance of the minister of one of the local Afrikaans churches. All of the people who volunteered have children and, at that time, were aged between 39–59 years (with an average age of 46.7 years). These older participants were asked to give retrospective accounts of their experiences of deciding to become

a parent within a heterosexual union, focusing specifically on men's roles in these decisions. Consequently, we required each of the older participants to be a member of a long-standing monogamous couple. However, the participants were not, for reasons of confidentiality, partners from the same couple. Most of the participants were married to the partner with whom they had first had children. The exceptions were: Stefanus (divorced), Esmé (remarried), and Annelie (widowed). Furthermore, all of the participants were parents, though we had been open to including childfree (or voluntarily 'childless') participants, and the majority had two or more children. Ilze (aged 50) was unique in that she only had one child. Parents of two included Susan (aged 51), André (aged 42), Gerhardt (aged 46), Thys (aged 41), Maria (aged 39), Lettie (aged 53) and Stephanus (aged 59). Esmé (aged 53) had three children, who were born during her first marriage. Finally, Annelie (aged 49) and Koos (aged 48) each had four children.

In terms of socioeconomic status of this cohort, eight of the 12 hold tertiary qualifications—four of the women (Maria, Esmé, Lettie, Ilze) and four of the men (André, Koos, Gerhardt, Thys)—and at the time of interviewing, most were formally employed and/or had partners who worked. Susan was working as a senior clerk. Two of the older participants were self-employed. André, an Organisational Psychology graduate, was doing human resources on a consultancy basis in addition to full-time cattle farming. Two of the participants were working in administrative roles: Annelie as a legal administrator and Maria as an administrator and trainer for a consultancy firm. Three of the participants were working in the education sector at the time. Esmé had been an educator and school principal for several years and at the time of the study had moved into a high-level administrative role. Thys was still working as a teacher. Gerhardt was also working at a school, but as an IT technician.

There were four participants who were not formally employed. Stephanus had retired from his full-time occupation as a church minister and at the time was acting as a caretaker of a local church. Koos had also retired, but was running a business that he had recently started. Two of the women had foregone formal employment to care full-time for their children. Ilze had started a business when her child became a teenager, and was still running it at the time of being interviewed. Lettie, on the other hand, had never worked outside the home and described herself as a 'home-maker'. She had completed a bachelor's degree when her children were in high school, but had not sought formal employment.

Cohort Two: Non-parents/Childfree

The members of the second cohort were younger-ranging in age from 21 to 32 years, with an average age of 24 years. They were also recruited by word of mouth, with some assistance from the chair of the university's Afrikaans society in accessing Afrikaans first-language students. In terms of their reproductive status, none of these participants had children; instead, having children was a future possibility and we asked them to tell us anticipated or prospective narratives about their ideas and plans in relation to parenthood, and specifically their views of male involvement in this process. About half of the male participants in this group expressed a definite desire to have children, though most assumed that fatherhood was inevitable. All of the women wanted to have children, except Petro who said that she wished to pursue a career instead of motherhood. So, those who claimed to be undecided or ambivalent (that is, had some reservations or conditions) were mostly men. Franco, in particular, was reluctant to have children at all. In addition to being 'non-parents', none of the participants identified themselves as married or in life-partnerships at the time of interviewing, although just over half were in romantic partnerships, five described themselves as 'dating' and one (Johannes) reported being 'engaged'. The remaining five described themselves as 'single'.

As regards the socioeconomic status of the group, all—with the exception of salesperson Johannes—held, or were in the process of obtaining, a tertiary qualification at the time of interviewing. This is unsurprising, given the location of the study. Six of the participants were still studying: Anel (aged 21), Mariska (aged 25) and Riaan (also 25 years old) were all postgraduate students. Dalena (aged 21) and Jakobus (aged 21) were completing bachelor degrees, in science and humanities respectively. Elize (aged 22) was working full-time as an office administrator and studying part-time. Franco and Petro (both aged 32) had both qualified as psychologists. Franco is a clinical psychologist and Petro's focus is on children. Wouter (aged 28) also worked in the mental health sector at that time, completing his

mandatory year of community service as part of his training as a medical doctor. Dawid (aged 32), an academic, was a lecturing in the humanities faculty at the university at that time.

The stories that these participants told were based on their imagined futures. This meant that they were not constrained by the 'reality factor' (Langellier 1999: 128) in the same way as their older counterparts in Cohort One. These participants could conceivably tell stories in whatever ways they wished. What was interesting, as we elaborate on in the discussion of our findings, was that these young people framed their stories in very similar ways to their older counterparts. They did so even when it meant casting themselves in a potentially negative light, by challenging or contradicting the researcher or deviating from apparently dominant narratives about reproductive decision-making and planning.

Questioning the invisible and unquestioned norm: Our 'unusual conversational move'

When we initially embarked upon our research, as we have mentioned, we focused on planning, choices, and decisions related to parenthood, inviting people to tell us their stories about their 'reproductive choices' and 'family planning'. We anticipated a degree of difficulty in participants' talking about their past and, especially, future pathways to parenthood, mostly because the topic was personal in nature and because we imagined that younger people, especially males, might not have given it much thought. We were, however, surprised by how bewildered our participants seemed by our questions, especially by the bewilderment of older participants and how frequently they seemed to discuss tangential topics like stories about pregnancies and labour or their parenting practices. The field notes written up by Tracy, who conducted the interviews, are full of reflections and observations that pointed 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 'vanselfsprekend' [self-explanatory], nothing to discuss! (Field notes, 2008)*

As Tracy's notes indicate, the narratives were framed by the lack of 'storyworthiness' of the topic. Becoming a first-time parent was framed as a non-issue and a non-choice, an imperative even, among married heterosexual people. As Koos commented, parenthood 'is natural, so there's no decision'. The participants were inclined to skirt around the questions about pathways to parenthood, making a straightforward answer about the processes involved difficult.

We became increasingly aware that this topic was troublesome for the participants through a few specific moments in which some of the participants voiced their bewilderment, asked for clarification or challenged the questions put to them. In the latter instance some people, like Ilze, stated outright that planning was not how things happened in reality and/or not the ideal, as quoted below. We provide two examples of such instances. Ilze's quote shows a moment of both confusion and direct dissent. Elias's quote clearly expresses confusion and he explicitly states how difficult the questions were for him to answer.

Extract 2

Ilze: 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. [Laugh].

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. **[F1]**

Extract 3

> **Elias**: Jis [gee], that's a difficult one. Why did I want to have children? I think [pause] jislaaik![27] [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 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. **[M1]**

In these extracts, we see how Ilze and Elias struggle to respond to the demands of the interview. Ilze asks, 'but what story?', implying that there is no story to tell, which she reiterates more directly at the end, stating that there is 'nothing to talk about'. Elias's response is slightly more subtle. He pauses, laughs, confesses to having difficulties, and uses slang ('jis', 'jislaaik') to indicate surprise. Instances like these, along with our general reflections on the interviews, helped us to see that our participants did not necessarily understand the topic in the same way that we as researchers did. Before data analysis even began, it was obvious to us that our participants were quiet on the topic of male involvement in reproductive decision-making. Our participants might have been speaking a lot to us, but they were not actually saying much about what we wanted to know, namely, the story of how they came to be a parent or how they imagined this process would occur. Thus, the answer to our central research question (How do participants explain or envisage male involvement in decisions or processes related to becoming a parent?) seemed to remain elusive to some extent. As we progressed with the research, we became increasingly aware that participants' silence on the topic had little to do with resistance or indifference, but rather had to do with the taken-for-granted nature of parenthood for married heterosexual adults. In the extracts above, Ilze indicates that 'it just happened', 'we don't even think about it'; she also alludes to social expectations in the form of 'it comes from generation to generation.' Elias, in searching for an answer, eventually settles on 'the need' to parent. We slowly began to see that such sidelining of 'deciding' and 'planning' in the interviews and their alternate construal of parenthood as a non-choice disguised their inability to discuss the issue at hand. Significantly, sidelining and reframing reinforced procreative heteronormativity (a key theme that will be developed in this book).

With these insights in mind, we turned to alternative ways to understand what we had achieved in our research. We came to see that what we produced in the interviews were 'veiled silences' (see discussion below). We came to understand the participants' bewilderment as related to an unusual conversational move on our part as researchers.

An unusual conversational move occurs when someone questions something that is generally taken for granted, in our case, asking people to account for and give reasons for the desires, preferences and/or behaviour of married heterosexual people in relation to their pathways to parenthood. This is quite obvious in Ilze's response ('Ja, but what STORY, what do you mean by "STORY"?') as well as Elias's flustered reply cited above. By asking our participants to talk to us about male involvement in reproductive decision-making, we were questioning the unquestioned—and possibly even unquestionable—norm. Although we had not set out to ask difficult questions, we soon recognised the usefulness of our unusual conversational move in highlighting the exact issue we sought to investigate (namely, gender in relation to male involvement in reproductive decision-making). We thus saw that our unusual conversation move was, in fact, very useful, in that it highlighted the unspoken norm (the normality of biological parenthood for married heterosexual couples, that is, procreative heteronormativity), by showing up the lapses or 'blind spots' which indicate generally unacknowledged concerns and activities.

Our unusual conversational move presented trouble for the participants for three main reasons: (1) creating the impression that we expected the participants to have meaningfully reflected upon their (future or past) pathway to parenthood; (2) the perception that men should, or were expected to, be active in reproductive matters; and, finally, (3) our (inadvertent) framing of our research within the language of choice.

The first source of trouble was created by asking 'normal' heterosexual people to tell us their story about their (past or imagined) pathway to parenthood. Not only are enquiries about 'normal', taken-for-granted behaviour like procreation potentially confusing or intrusive, as discussed, but it was also clear that people had not reflected on this. As researchers Taylor and Littleton (2006) point out, people who volunteer to take part in interviews may feel pressure to be amenable participants and to provide the interviewer with useful information. It can therefore be potentially problematic not to have

anything to contribute. The answers, like those above, are just as much an indication of the lengths that people went to in order to provide answers and not to leave Tracy with literal silences. Of course, we must also consider that not answering (remaining literally silent) would potentially make the participants appear foolish, especially since they were asked these questions by experts, lending the impression that there ought to be an answer and/or one that they had thought about.

Similarly, it may have been awkward for participants to be asked about 'male involvement'. They may have felt that this was the norm or the researchers' expectation and they could potentially be seen in a bad light. This might have been exacerbated by changing expectations of fathers in recent years, particularly as the construction of the 'new' hands-on father has become more prominent and men have increasingly been encouraged to take part in family, domestic and reproductive issues (Henwood & Procter 2003; Morrell 2006; Prinsloo 2006; Viljoen 2011). Responding to a young, educated female may have made men, and their female partners, feel uneasy for admitting that this was not the case in their own lives, or not what they think would be the ideal.

The final source of trouble for participants was our framing on the study in terms of choice, as we have already discussed to some extent. Our information letter and consent documents described the study as related to 'family planning' and 'reproductive decision-making', for example. This clearly draws on a way of thinking about having children that emphasises rational choice and has connotations of responsible citizenship and parenthood. This way of understanding and speaking about potential parenthood is commonly accepted in reproductive health planning and programming and academic research. It can be thought of as a professional discourse, one which may not correspond very well to 'real life'.

This language of choice acted as a constraint on how our participants could tell their stories. It seemed to be difficult for participants to tell their stories about pathways to parenthood using the language of choice, and especially one in which men were involved in 'decision-making'. This was especially troublesome for older participants who had to try to reconcile their own experiences—in most cases of a passive process of 'going with the flow'—with the idea of parenthood as an active choice, which may have appeared to have been supported by the researchers.

Rather than remaining literally silent, participants responded to the trouble invoked by our unusual conversational move in such a way as to cover over the fact that they had nothing to directly contribute to the topic. They changed the subject (redirected) or changed the terms of the interview conversation from choice (reframed) in such a way that it was not immediately apparent that there are in fact gaps or silences in the data: it does not speak to the question/s that was/were presented to the participants.

Veiled silences

Our inability to obtain a real hold on our participants' understandings of men's roles and participation in parenthood decisions was not because participants did not literally speak. Indeed, the interviewees spent a great deal of time speaking about topics that were peripherally related to men's pathways to parenthood. So, the silence that we speak of does not refer to actual silences. Rather, we have drawn on Lisa Mazzei's work around silence (as we have also outlined in an earlier article (Morison & Macleod 2013b)). Mazzei (2007) takes a deconstructionist approach to argue against a binary view of speech as the counterpart of silence. Rather, she theorises 'speech on a continuum between that which is voiced literally, and that which is voiced silently or metaphorically' (2007: 634). Therefore, silences can be literal, in the sense of absence of speech, or metaphoric, in the sense that participants speak in such a way that sidesteps the real issue or avoids the question. Thus, Mazzei (2007: 363) understands 'acts of avoidance, denial, deflection, reframing and intellectualizing…[as] neither inaction nor passivity but rather *a silence that [speaks] without speaking*' (our emphasis).

Silences, according to Mazzei (2003), may occur in qualitative data for various reasons. They may be intentional or related to the fear of offending; they may also be a result of the lack of awareness of one's privilege (she herself concentrates on racial privilege). She also identifies a kind of silence that we found useful for our analysis, namely, 'veiled silences'. This kind of silence occurs when participants attend 'to a different question, not the specific one offered by [the researcher] to generate discussion [so that] the answers that were given were silences' (Mazzei 2003: 365). What is voiced silently or

metaphorically, then, has to be listened to and analysed in relation to what is voiced literally. Significantly, these silences 'serve as hints toward concerns and activities that are generally unacknowledged (that are taken for granted), which require a different kind of listening on the part of the researcher' (Poland & Pederson 1998: 306). Mazzei (2007) argues that in listening to silence it is important to attend to 'the returns, the interruptions, the resistances, the denials, the subtle eliding of text' (2007: 363). Our task thus became how to analyse speaking silence.

This involved, in addition to our performativity/performance analysis (discussed in more detail in Chapter 2), utilising three analytical tools. Firstly, we needed to reflect on how veiled silences were potentially ruptured but then smoothed over by our overtly questioning the accepted and taken-for-granted norm. Secondly, a significant aspect of listening for these silences involves researcher reflexivity and an awareness of the researcher's own part in generating and perpetuating silences (we discuss researcher reflexivity in general later in this work.) Finally, we analysed how the discursive actions of redirecting and reframing the issue of 'male involvement', as well as decision-making itself, allowed respondents to sidestep the issue of men's roles in the process of becoming a parent and to (re)claim power by introducing topics that they deemed relevant and offering positive positions.[28] Mazzei argues that '[a]nswering a question other than the one posed…results in a deflection that, although often not intentional, is purposeful nonetheless' (Mazzei 2004: 30). Our task thus became to understand what kinds of purposes, or what norms, the deflection into other topics served. In such instances, participants' speaking serves as 'noise' that 'veils', or masks, their inability or unwillingness to talk about a (potentially sensitive) topic. Talk about unrelated or peripheral topics can be theorised as 'noise', but important noise that, when analysed in relation to the 'veiled silence', can reveal the operation of specific power relations. As we shall show in this book, participants' construal of childbearing as a non-choice disguised their inability to discuss the issue at hand and, significantly, supported procreative heteronormativity.

The role of procreative heteronormativity in making the topic troublesome

The main argument that we develop in this book is that a complex array of discursive resources centred on procreative heteronormativity underpins men's and women's (non)engagement with the topic of their pathways to parenthood. As will be seen throughout the text, an assumption of procreation and biological parenthood as an expected part of heterosexual adulthood was evident in participants' talk. Having children was seen as a normative stage in the natural progression of heterosexual life, a progression that does not bear questioning or reflection. This is evident in the following statements made by two of the participants in the study.

Extract 4
Koos: 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. **[M1]**

Extract 5
Esmé: 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? **[F1]**

Koos's comments recall those made by the Bangladeshi participant in Gipson and Hindin's (2007) study, '[m]arriage means having children and forming your family, so what is the need of discussion?' (2007: 196). Here we see how Koos and Esmé both describe having children, or 'starting a family', as part of a normative chain of events that is determined by the normal (heterosexual) life course. Parenthood is rendered as a stage that is expected to happen after a couple is married and, as Esme's quotation clearly shows, it was depicted largely as a matter of timing; a question of 'When and how and where?' The issue of whether to have children, and why, was not up for discussion. The normality of parenthood, as described by Koos and Esmé, makes it a non-choice for heterosexual people. Choice, it would seem, centres on deviating from this expected norm by delaying reproduction or deciding not to become a parent.

As seen throughout this book, there are two dominant discursive and social power relations that play a role in ensuring that the norm of having children remains invisible and unquestioned:

heteronormativity and pronatalism. The first of these, heteronormativity, refers to the privileging of heterosexual relationships and identities based upon the assumption of female-male desire as natural and normal. Heterosexuality therefore becomes the default: the norm and ubiquitous expectation (Chambers & Carver 2008). Generally speaking, heterosexuals do not have to account for their sexuality or desires. Social expectations in terms of a range of behaviours, styles of interaction, living arrangements, and preference in terms of sexual partner are underpinned by an expectation of heterosexuality. It is only when people step outside of the norm of heterosexuality that they have to start accounting for their actions or choices, for example gay men and lesbians who wish to become parents (Alldred 1996).

'Heteronormative practices and assumptions are manifest in diverse ways according to the cultural context in which they occur' (Ryan-Flood 2005: 201). They are interwoven in overt and subtle ways into virtually every facet of life, from legislation governing partnerships and practices in the workplace to depictions of family life in the media, historical accounts and novels. The 'automatic childbearing' script, in which having children is seen as natural progression in an adult's life (see our later in-depth description of this script), is underpinned by the assumption of a heterosexual union (or heteronormativity).

The second discursive and social power relation that plays a role in obscuring the assumed normality of parenthood for heterosexuals is pronatalism. Pronatalism entails the

> …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. (Heitlinger 1991:344–345)

Pronatalism thus refers to discursive and social processes operating at sociocultural, interpersonal and individual levels in which children and reproduction are valorised. These processes include drawing on religious or nationalist discourses, marginalising those who fail to have children, attaching value to children and constructing sexuality and gender in particular ways. We touch on these issues in more detail later in this book. For now it serves to say that, ultimately, pronatalist discourses render parenthood as something incontrovertibly valuable and desirable, for whatever reason (Meyers 2001).[29]

So, although parenthood may be increasingly surrounded by highly voluntaristic rhetoric—especially in industrialised and Westernised settings—the effects of pronatalist discourses means that parenthood 'choices' are seldom as autonomous as what they could be (Meyers 2001). This is because the effects of pronatalist discourses not only foreground the attractions of parenthood, but also obscures its costs and, as Meyers (2001) argues 'where there is only one real option and no genuine choice there is no autonomy' (2001: 753). As a result, parenthood is the obvious choice and the default option. Therefore, when it comes to parenthood decisions, 'nonchalance seems to be the rule [and] most people presume that children are necessary to personal fulfilment and never consider not having children' (Meyers 2001: 746).

These two power relations—heteronormativity and pronatalism—form part of the 'grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, gender, and desires are naturalized' (Butler 1990: 151), what Judith Butler calls the heterosexual matrix. Within the heterosexual matrix, gender is understood in a binary way, as either female or male. In addition, gender is also seen as complementary: a woman is what a man is not. Because a woman is distinct from a man, her desire is for a man, and vice versa (Prassad 2012).

This way of thinking normalises and naturalises everything associated with heterosexuality. It promotes compulsory heterosexuality, the process through which heterosexuality is reinforced through multiple everyday interactions and structural features. This reinforcement occurs to the extent that heterosexuality appears as the natural outcome of human development, and other sexualities are rendered invisible, exotic or deviant.

The culmination of the heterosexual matrix is procreation. Having children represents adherence to the expected heteronormative life course in which a man and a woman desire each other,

form a partnership, usually through marriage, and then procreate. It reinforces and draws from gendered scripts in which women and men are expected to desire particular things (each other, children) and to act in particular ways (sexually, as mother/father). Procreation signifies, in this rendition, the fulfilment of heterosexual coupledom.

These power relations, heteronormativity and pronatalism, combine to form what we call 'procreative heteronormativity': a powerful intersection of social and cultural injunctions and norms. Procreative heteronormativity refers to the pervasive taken-for-granted belief in the normality and naturalness of parenthood as a natural consequence of being a heterosexual woman or man. Based on this view, it is assumed that the normal life path will involve meeting and marrying someone of the 'opposite sex' and producing biological offspring. So, as mentioned earlier, the closer one is to the 'gold standard' of normality (which is the case for our participants, being middle class and White), the more natural and obvious parenthood becomes, to the extent that it is taken for granted (Morison & Reddy 2013; Riggs 2007).

Changing tack and tackling different questions

As we went through the transcripts of the interviews and engaged in the long, complex process of analysis, we realised that it was precisely procreative heteronormativity that was central to the stories that people told us and that promoted the veiled silences we witnessed concerning pathways to parenthood. We realised that we could not answer, at least not directly, the question of how White Afrikaans people speak *about* past or anticipated paths to parenthood and male involvement in decisions related to reproduction and parenthood. But what we could discuss, and what in the end is probably more illuminating about gendered power relations that are enacted among White Afrikaans-speaking heterosexual people, is how they speak *around* past and anticipated parenthood 'decisions'.

And so, our analysis homed in on the discursive resources White Afrikaans-speakers re-cite when *avoiding* speaking about past or anticipated parenthood decisions. We examined the gendered scripts drawn on by participants in talking about peripheral topics and how these were implicated in gender power relations. We analysed the positions participants adopted within their narratives that created 'noise' around the central issue, and how these positions were troubled by the unusual conversational move that we inadvertently introduced into the interview conversation.

What emerged was a clear picture of how procreative heteronormativity operates. Through the repeated process of refining our analytical work, we saw, in sharp relief, the functioning of the regulatory framework of procreative heteronormativity within the context of our participants' lives. We noted how the various discursive resources drawn on by our participants knitted together to form a powerful intersection of social and cultural injunctions and norms. This regulatory grid of intelligibility that frames heterosexual people's lives in subtle but powerful ways emerged in the analysis of our material and is presented in summary in the final chapter of this book.

Before we get to that, we provide some background to the study in the following chapter in order to inform the ensuing discussion of the various components of procreative heteronormativity as evidenced in our study. There we describe the theoretical basis of our research, methodological developments and the key analytical concepts and tools of our performative-performance method of analysis, including that of researcher reflexivity. In the subsequent chapters (3 to 6) we present the various discursive resources that make up the grid of procreative heteronormativity. We begin by showing how the assumption of automatic childbearing for married heterosexual couples made it difficult for participants to answer questions about parenthood decisions and to explicate their rationale for wanting to be a parent. We concentrate on the ways that the participants attempted to discursively 'save face' in relation to the (perceived) researcher expectations. We highlight the rhetorical strategies that participants utilised, in particular the deployment of a 'romance and love' script, the 'canonical couple' narrative and a 'sacralised child' script. We also highlight the centrality of the construction of the sacralised child—a contemporary class-based construction of childhood in which children are invested with religious and sentimental meaning in such a way that renders them priceless and their needs paramount (see Zelizer 1985).

We then go on to show how participants filled the silence that our unusual conversational move created and justified the construction of heterosexual parenthood as a non-topic. We show how in

doing so they defended the norm of automatic childbearing, by constructing it as an imperative. Parenthood was glorified through portraying it as a utopia that involves the noble sacrifice of parents in which the positives of parenthood outweigh its negatives. We demonstrate how this construction was drawn on to reinforce procreative heterosexuality and to denigrate non-reproduction in such a way that disciplines and discourages non-reproduction. This construction allowed those who forgo parenthood to be positioned as selfish, psychologically damaged or deficient. Thus, within 'normal' circumstances, childbearing was featured as a given in heterosexual unions and an inevitable outcome of marriage in particular. We show how marriage was viewed as the foundation for procreative heterosexuality, in which children benefit from the input of the 'father-mother' dyad. Finally, we show how the script that 'children need both parents' is translated into one in which fathers' matchless contribution to children's development through, in particular, the provision of a male role model, is emphasised. In the closing chapter, we draw together these various strands to show how they work together, creating a powerful regulatory system of procreative heteronormativity in which becoming a parent is a non-issue for those who occupy normalised, racial, heterosexual, age, health, ability and class status. We show also how these norms were resisted and how such resistance potentially creates new possibilities for parenthood. We end with a discussion of the implications of our findings beyond the study and the writing of this book.

[1] We employ apartheid-generated terms to describe 'race' of necessity in this book, but readers will notice that such descriptors are capitalised. Our intention in doing so is to indicate the artificiality of such terms and, in doing so, to acknowledge the linkage of these constructions to the apartheid system of racial classification. Our use of this apartheid-generated terminology should therefore not be taken as an endorsement of these classifications.

[2] Women are accountable for over 74 per cent of all contraceptive use (globally) in spite of the progress made in encouraging men to use male contraceptive methods (Barker & Olukuya 2007). In South Africa, according to the latest Demographic Health Survey, the uptake of formal contraception among women is relatively high, with a rate of 65 per cent amongst sexually active women (this varies according to ethnicity/race, age and level of education) (South African Demographic and Health Survey 2003).

[3] We use the metaphor of a pathway, because it allows for the possibility that having children might not be connected to a rational, conscious decision, or to one deliberate choice. We acknowledge—and our research confirmed this—that having children is most often not linked to a rational or straightforward process: people often take a wait-and-see approach, leave things to chance, delay childbearing (sometimes until they can no longer biologically conceive), are coerced into sex, and so on. We therefore also do not use this metaphor in the sense of a developmental transition, assuming that 'normal' heterosexual people will invariably reach the parenthood life stage. The term also describes the means by which people come to be parents (i.e., conceiving their 'own' biological child, adoption, surrogacy, donor insemination, fostering etc.), and it is therefore often used in relation to parenthood among lesbians and gay men. Our main intention in using this term, however, is to highlight that becoming a parent may involve a broader process, without active or obvious decision-making at all.

[4] See, e.g., Dyer et al. (2004); Dyer et al. (2008); Ha'elyon (2006); Letherby (1999 & 2002); Remennick (2000); Throsby & Gill (2004).

[5] See, e.g., Cooper et al. (2007); Cooper et al. (2009); Daniels (2001); Laher et al. (2009).

[6] See Almack (2006); Distiller (2013); Donovan (2000); Lubbe (2007a & 2007b); Lubbe (2008a & 2008b); Ryan-Flood (2005); Swain & Frizelle (2013).

[7] See, e.g., Berkowitz & Marsiglio (2008); Mallon (2004); Murphy (2013); Rabun & Oswald (2009). See also Biblarz & Savci (2010) for a recent review of the international research. For a South African perspective, see Lubbe & Marnell's (2013) recent edited volume; to date, the first book of its kind.

[8] See review of South African research on teenage pregnancy in Macleod & Tracey (2010).

[9] Agrillo & Nellini (2008) and Blackstone & Stewart (2012) provide recent overviews of this work.

[10] See, e.g., Cooper et al. (2007); Kaufman et al. (2008); Ndinda et al. (2007); Rottach et al. (2009); Shefer (2009); Shefer & Mankayi (2007). For research further afield, see Chapagain (2006); Hoga et al. (2001); Hussain (2003).

[11] Some more recent examples include Dunkle et al. (2004); Dunkle et al. (2007); Jewkes & Abrahams (2002); Jewkes et al. (2009); Peacock et al. (2009); Wood et al. 2008.

[12] See, for example, Shefer (2004); Shefer et al. (2012); Shefer & Strebel (2012).

[13] See, e.g., Dyer et al. (2004); Hoga et al. (2001); Mankayi (2009); Nyanzi et al. (2005).

[14] See Biddlecom & Fapohunda (1998); DeRose, et al. (2002); Hussain (2003); Markens et al. (2003).

[15] Shefer et al. (2010). See also, for example, Clowes et al. (2013); Engle (1997); Hendricks et al. (2010); Langa (2010); Madhavan et al. (2008); Mkhize (2004); Morrell (2005, 2006, & 2007); Morrell et al. (2012); Morrell et al. (2003); Ratele et al. (2012); Richter et al. (2010); Swartz & Bhana (2009); Swartz et al. (2013).

[16] Datta (2007); Mfecane (2008); Morrell (2006), Ramphele (2002); Richter et al. (2010); Shefer et al. (2010).

[17] Eddy et al. (2013); Chapagain (2006); Morrell (2006); Roy (2006).

[18] See, e.g., Edley & Wetherell (1999); Marsiglio (1993); Marsiglio & Cohan (2000); Marsiglio et al. (2000); Marsiglio et al. (2001); Morrell (2007); Thompson & Lee (2011).

[19] As explained in Note 2 above, our use the idea of pathways to parenthood is not used in this sense; rather we wish to indicate a process approach to considering first-time parenthood. See, e.g., Barclay & Lupton (1999); Finn & Henwood (2009); Henwood & Proctor (2003); Lupton & Barclay (1997).

[20] Johnson & Williams (2005); Strauber (2009); Throsby & Gill (2004).

[21] For example, Marsiglio et al. (2001) understand parenthood as a 'transition from an adolescent to an adult identity' (2001: 129).

[22] See, e.g., work by Lupton and Barclay (1997); Henwood & Proctor (2003); and Finn & Henwood (2009).

[23] In this book we prefer to use Paul Taylor's notion of whiteliness (cited in Vice 2010) instead of the more common term 'Whiteness'. Paul Taylor (cited in Vice 2010) coined this term to refer to 'a social location of structural privilege in the right kind of racialized society as well as the occupation of the epistemic position of seeing the world "Whitely"' (2010: 326). The latter refers to the privileging of a certain, unremarkable worldview that is

based on the universalised and normalised privileging of White bodies and associated ways of being. As we understand it, this is not unlike the usage of 'Whiteness' in critical work, where the term is usually intended to refer to the location of structural advantage, a standpoint that may be taken, and a set of unmarked or unnamed cultural practices (Van der Watt 2001). Used in this sense, Whiteness (like femininity or masculinity) is recited or enacted, potentially by anyone. Nevertheless, we feel that the term Whiteness lends itself to reification and thus being (mistakenly) read as the state of being White in a way that ties race to a material reality. In contrast, the term 'Whiteliness' more easily captures the idea of a state of being (like haughtiness, or loneliness) that is not necessarily tied to the body.

[24] While nationally Afrikaans is the third most commonly spoken language in the country, White Afrikaans-speakers make up only 4.28% of the total population. In the Makana district where the study was conducted, the most recent census at the time recorded only 1,319 White Afrikaans-speakers in a population of 74,544 (Statssa 2001).

[25] Participant codes are provided with extracts to give demographic details: M denotes Male, while F denotes Female; 1 stands for Cohort 1 (older participants) and 2 stands for Cohort 2 (younger participants).

[26] This was determined by occupation and educational background

[27] 'Jis' (and variants 'jissie' or 'jislaaik') is slang equivalent to 'gee' or 'gosh'. Though of Afrikaans origin, the words are used ubiquitously by other South African language groups.

[28] These tools are also discussed our earlier article (Morison & Macleod 2013b).

[29] See Chapter 4 for further discussion of pronatalism and how it operated in the participants' accounts.