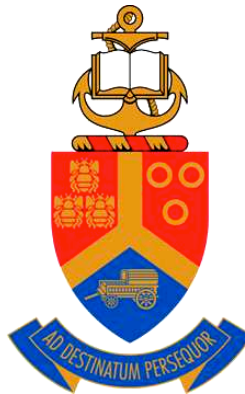


FEMALE CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGISTS' REFLECTIONS ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

Darrian Long

M.A. Research Psychology. B.A. Hons. Industrial Sociology



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Humanities' Faculty
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Abstract

This research is qualitatively aimed at investigating how female clinical psychologists reflect on the construction of gender in psychotherapy. The motivation behind such research was to investigate how gender influences the co-construction of reality within this space. Female clinical psychologists were interviewed due to the historical prejudice of the female gender in psychology. Where previous research has been directed towards patients' experiences of gender, this study aimed to understand the psychotherapist's understanding of it. Gender has been treated as static within psychology. In addition, feminist constructionist writers have argued for a more analytical engagement with gender in the field. This is important in the South African context, as previous research has indicated psychologist may be ill equipped in their training to deal with gender and gender-based violence.

This study is positioned from a social constructionist epistemology. It is concerned with constructions of gender through talk-as-interaction. It considers the usage of language as the vehicle of such construction. Therefore the method of analysis used here is conversational analysis, as to consider just how these psychologists construct gender. Hence, this research is of a descriptive nature. Some of the finding of this research indicate that gender is not only present in psychotherapy, but important in its work. Even though gender was difficult to describe outside of anatomical difference, these therapists indicated how it affected their therapeutic work. This was described through gendered projections and transference. These psychologists believed that their limited training affected their initial work with gender, often requiring them to learn about it in vivo.

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Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature:



Date:

07-08-2015

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background: Opening Pandora's box

Pandora, according to Von Fritz's (1948) account of ancient Greek mythology, was the first woman on earth. On her marriage to Prometheus she was presented with a box, and was instructed not to open it. Pandora's curiosity eventually got the better of her and she opened the box. The box contained a great evil that once the box was opened, spread across the earth. Pandora was distressed at what she had done and tried to close the box. Only then did she notice what was left at the bottom, the spirit of hope.

When considering the myth of Pandora it is easy to get entranced by its moral metaphor. It is a tale of caution. Yet, what if Pandora never opened the box? She would have never released its contents. She would have remained ever curious and without the realisation of hope for the future. In a similar vein, conducting research is like being Pandora. Curiosity and purpose lead many researchers to delve into the ways in which humans understand reality. In this process one may notice aspects about our lives that may be overwhelming and even terrifying. Yet, it is in such an endeavour that new discoveries and understandings may be realised. Part of social constructionism is to be analytical, and the researcher under this frame, conducts research critically. Hence, research can 'ruffle some feathers' (or can facilitate debate), but it can allow for some discovery that may change how we understand the world and ourselves.

When it comes to the role of gender in psychotherapy, much focus has been on the client's perception of the therapist's gender and the issue of sexual relations (Gehart & Lyle, 2001; Khan 2009). Where research has been directed at the psychologist's perception of the client, it has been statistical (Gehart & Lyle, 2001). More recently in the South African context, such research mostly focused on counselling psychology students' perceptions of gender within the field (Callaghan, 2006; Gehart

& Lyle, 2001; Hira, 2012). Yet this is a much deeper issue in psychology as can be seen through feminist writings.

Mary Gergen (2000), a well-noted feminist social constructionist writer, argues that psychology underestimates gender. More recently, authors such as Bohan (2013) call for more analytical discussions of gender in psychology. The seminal works of Irigaray (1993) describes that gender had, historically, its own relation in the conception of ‘madness’ and that it privileged the male sex over female sex. For Irigaray (1993), men were able to escape the idea of madness by allocating it “upon (a woman or) women” (p. 10), thus creating a gender hierarchy in psychology.

Although great strides have been made in the feminisation of psychology, Bohan (2013) argues that the history of sex differences, and their prescribed gender roles, is still seen as fundamental to human nature. It seems that the legacy of such discourses still operates within psychological understandings of human experience even today.

Gender is arguably, a construct; based in human activity, and given meaning through human interaction (Bohan, 2013). Even with the feminisation of the field, have female psychologists made sense of this particular legacy, considering their gender construction in psychology’s past?

Following this argument, gender seems to mediate the interactions between people, themselves and their social world (Gehart & Lyle, 2001). Gender, according to Gehart and Lyle (2001) and Bohan (2013) influences the meaning assigned to such interactions as it forms a crucial part of one’s identity. Moreover, people not only experience their lives in interaction, and specifically talk-in-interaction, but through identity—of which gender forms part (Gergen, M. & Davies, 2013; Schegloff, 2001). Hence, the work of psychology is to help people negotiate their struggles and the meaning assigned to it, in which gender is intrinsic (Gergen, M. & Davies, 2000; McLeod, 2005). Essential to this critique is the usage of language, as it is often through language that the subtleties of gender discourse are taught, reproduced, interacted and emphasised (Schegloff, 2001).

Where psychology does recognize the importance of gender, it is often from an

essentialist point of view. Here, gender is seen as part of the individual and not as a constructed reality (Bohan, 2013; Gergen, M. & Davies, 2013). This position reduces the efficacy of psychological treatment as it emphasizes gender as static, and by virtue, the gendered experiences of mental health as static (Bohan, 2013).

Furthermore, I will position this research as to include myself as the researcher. The reason for this inclusion is that part of this research was geared towards understanding gender construction as interaction. The interviews seen here are interactional and therefore it would be foolish to try and understand gender discourse without acknowledging this interaction. In keeping with the frame of social constructionism, I have structured this dissertation in a manner that works to show how gender is not only a socially constructed term, but that the discourses associated with it work to influence perception, interaction and even psychotherapy. Hence, the choice of literature, methodology, findings and discussion reported here aim to illustrate how gender is constructed in interaction.

1.2 Context, motivation and purpose

South African research appears to be limited on the topic gender in psychotherapy. Where there is substantial literature available, it is in the scope of counselling psychologists and their training (e.g., Callaghan, 2006; Graham & Langa 2010). Graham and Langa (2010) note a prevailing underdevelopment of critical gender training in psychology and specifically in clinical psychological work. Based on this point, I began to consider how clinical psychologists worked to better their skills with regard to gender, if at all. Therefore, this limitation in the South African milieu not only forms the first contextual marker, but one of the main reasons for this study.

In addition, there seems to be a social demand for understanding gender in South Africa as well. Gender plays an important role in gender-based violence, rape, homophobic attacks and intimate partner violence (Barkhuizens & Oven, 2012). All of these are seen as perversions of gender norms and fill the criteria for clinical pathology (Barkhuizens & Ovens, 2012). These are relevant issues of the current South African climate and it is often left to social science, specifically psychology, to make sense of them (Carrigall & Matzopolous, 2013).

Based on the discussion above, this research may provide a small, but vital role in understanding the role of gender in clinical psychotherapy, especially with women's role as psychologists in the field. Furthermore, Callaghan (2006) argues that as a country we need to produce more socially relevant psychologists in our context. This seems quite important based on the state of gender-based abuses that have become a prominent feature of our country (Barkhuizen & Ovens, 2013). Hence, if we can understand how clinicians understand gender within psychotherapy, we can be more conscious of the dynamic it brings. Secondly, even though this study is on a much smaller scale, it may give a little more insight into the training of such professionals and add to the education of more socially relevant psychotherapists. Hence, the central research question of this study is:

How do female clinical psychologists reflect on the construction of gender in psychotherapy?

1.3 Conceptualising gender

It may be of merit to facilitate a working definition of gender for this study (to be operationalized later in the methodology). Gender, has been studied from various frameworks, from the more rigid, positivist positions to that of heuristics (Gehart & Lyle, 2001). Where positivism may allow for a more categorical definition of gender, less rigid positions allow more debate on its conception (Lock & Strong, 2010). This study is held within a social constructionist frame.

Hence, gender will be understood as a social construct. To reiterate the definition given by Bohan (2013), gender is a construct that is based in, and draws meaning from human interaction, both contemporary and historically speaking. For the purposes of this study, the construct of gender will be defined as an atemporal and constructed category of human interaction (Gergen, M., 2000).

For Mary Gergen (2000) gender construction is ongoing and influences how we understand ourselves. What this argument alludes to, is that gender is not only a constructed category (developed through interaction), but also that it is something not static and is enacted. This particular notion argued here encapsulates that gender

is a social construction that works in interaction (co-construction) and influences our actions and understandings of ourselves—and our social world (Bohan. 2013; K. Gergen, 2000, Giddens, 1989). According to Lock and Strong (2010) M. Gergen moves to critically question gender, but not to deny it.

1.4 Thesis outline

From this point onwards the following chapters will not only introduce gender as part of an ongoing debate, but also endeavour to illustrate its subtle and explicit ways of influencing social discourse and practice—focussing on clinical psychotherapy.

- *Chapter 2* will consider the LITERATURE REVIEW. This includes seminal works from prominent authors within the field of gender. I draw on the works of feminist writers to illustrate how such constructions produce, institutionalise and perpetuate gender roles. This is accomplished through language as discourse.

This chapter will also consider the role of *social constructionism as a theoretical frame*, the *use of language as part of social construction*, the *definition of gender*, and the *historical emergence of gender as a construct*. In addition it will engage with *gender as a historical project*—especially within psychology, and gender’s possible role on the therapeutic space.

- *Chapter 3* will pay specific attention to research design. I discuss the METHODOLOGY and methods used under the theoretical frame of social constructionism. I went to interview three female clinical psychologists in Pretoria to participate in this study. They were gathered through snowballing.

In this chapter I outline the usage of conversation analysis as a way of analysing the data obtained from interviews.

- *Chapter 4* will focus on the ANALYSIS of data using conversation analysis to build phenomena and illustrate the findings.
- *Chapter 5* is the DISCUSSION chapter, which aims to open up debate on some of the phenomena presented in this study.
- *Chapter 6* is the CONCLUSION chapter and will summarise the main finding of this study, its limitation and future recommendations.



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Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Shall I compare thee to a specific gender? Thou art too muscular and with penis to be declared a woman!

-Ah, but what a piece of work is a man or will challenge all he knows and barter all that he owns to become one.

-Adapted from Shakespearean quotes.

When reading the above reworking of some of Shakespeare's more famous quotes one may think them peculiar adaptations, or even amusing. In a playful manner, these adaptations aim to bring critically into context the construction of gender. Under the social constructionist perspective gender is a co-constructed aspect of the social world (Gergen, M., 2000). Be that as it may, many pragmatists would argue that even when considering the concept of gender as socially constructed, the experience thereof is somewhat real (Giddens, 1993, Smit, 2006). Yet for M. Gergen (2000) social constructionism does not do away with gender and the experience of it, but critically analyses how it influences the understanding of our experiences. In a sense this chapter will endeavour to take a more critical look at gender within psychotherapy and how research and academic literature engage with it.

This study was directed toward understanding how female clinical psychologists reflect on the co-construction of gender in psychotherapy. As the theoretical frame is social constructionist, language thus plays a central role in this process. Moreover, one must endeavour to consider the concept of gender discourse in its historical progression, and in psychology. The reason for this is that gender, from the theoretical frame of this dissertation, is a construct that permeates the historical relations between women and men and how they have come to understand themselves (Fine, 2011; Jordanova, 1980; Khan, 2009). In fact, many of the sources consulted in this chapter consider the historical progression of gender and various

gender constructions and reconstructions (Gergen, M., 2000; Jordanova, 1980; Gehart & Lyle, 2001; Smit, 2006; Weaver-Hightower, 2003). For instance, Smit (2006) considers that gender discourses, by means of historical norms and practices, have shaped how masculinity and femininity relates to each other. He furthers this by noting how this often results in a gender hierarchy, especially within the field of psychology. I will expand on this point later in the chapter.

As a disclaimer, the literature reflected upon and utilised here will not deal with the construction of gender as a concept within the realm of psychology, but its history and discourse as well. This chapter considers the importance of gender construction to female clinical psychologists, especially with the rise of feminism within the profession. In addition, the discussion placed in this review will focus on the training of clinical psychologists in order to better understand some of the training issues relevant to the South African context. Lastly, focus will be given to some of the thematic issues that emerged during the course of my research. Such issues pertain to sexuality, culture and identity. In order to explore gender as socially constructed, the theoretical frame of my study is presented here.

Setting out the theoretical position of this research is important, as it will later guide the assertions made by this dissertation. In addition, the importance of language and its symbolic nature will be discussed. This is to substantiate the type of literature surveyed. Hence, with the theoretical frame of social constructionism, I aimed to investigate the constructions of gender within clinical psychotherapy. With this in mind, many of the works utilised here were sourced broadly from both the fields of psychology and sociology.

What is social constructionism?

Mary Gergen (2000) considers that within psychology, one has to take an analytical look at how concepts such as gender are conceived. Yet in order to do so, the frame of reference should allow for this process. Social constructionism, as the theoretical frame, seems most appropriate in doing so. The reason for this is two-fold. Firstly, this study was housed within certain assumptions proposed under social

constructionism. Secondly, the literature surveyed here was selected in such a way as to construct a critical understanding of gender in clinical psychology.

As highlighted in numerous places within this dissertation, social constructionism is not one particular philosophy or comprehension about the social world. Instead, it is an expansive theory that explores how people understand and make sense of their reality (Lock & Strong, 2010). Furthermore, for authors such as Kenneth Gergen (2000), Lock and Strong (2010), and McNamee and Shaver (1992) social constructionism is concerned with people's constructions of their reality and how they live out such constructions. Important to this process is language, but moreover the phenomenological understandings that embody such understandings about our experiences. Social constructionism is concerned with how people come to relate to their reality, and to each other. For Lock and Strong (2010), viewing prevailing discourses is an important element of social constructionism. It is through this that we can critically analyse how people come to understand their relational world in interaction.

However, authors such as Stam (2001) echo what both older and newer authors propose about social constructionism (see Burr, 1995; Gergen, K., 1985; Gergen, K., 2000; Long & Strong, 2010). In stating that social constructionism is, at the most general level, a string of positions that offer an understanding of human interaction. Hence, it can be "a movement and at other time a position, a theory, a theoretical orientation, an approach," and even a philosophy (Stam, 2001; p. 294). Effectively there is no one social constructionist position. For this study we consider it as our theoretical orientation. Hence, I draw on the works of Kenneth Gergen in order set the basic assumptions of social constructionism relevant for this dissertation.

Theoretical frame

Social constructionism is concerned with the way in which ordinary people come to understand and explain the world (Gergen, K., 1985). It is concerned with the common understanding of people's experiences and for K. Gergen (1985) there are certain tenets central to this paradigm. Social constructionism holds a relativist position and the key assumptions are:

- That our conception of what is knowledge should be critically evaluated (especially that which is viewed from the positivist-empiricist stance). In addition, that social interaction and its processes are the foundations of knowledge production. Therefore, such knowledge is constantly created and sustained.
- Furthermore, that knowledge produced in these processes is culturally and historically specific and should not be seen as static and common to all groupings of people.

Based on these assumptions, it would be folly to remove the researcher from this process, as my role was integral to the selected methodology and method used here. As this study is concerned with the co-construction of knowledge around gender, focussing on language as discourse, my own position as a gendered person was important. I self-identify as a male, and have access to knowledge specific to my gender which could have influenced such constructions (Tarrant, 2009). In addition, my proposed participants were psychologists that self-identified as female. My selection of such participants was to allow room for a discussion around gender in psychotherapy. Furthermore, I as the researcher have taken cognisance of my own gender and its interactive potential in co-construction of experience. I will endeavour to make reference to it throughout this dissertation, as part of a reflective stance.

Language as a tool of construction

Social constructionism is concerned with the importance of language in the construction of knowledge and understanding. I have included in this section an analytical discussion around language and how people construct and co-construct their experiences through it. Although the references used here are dated, it is important to note that discourse under social constructionism is an historical artefact and not just an element of modernity (Lock & Strong, 2010). Hence, older works allow for a richer discussion. In addition, it may be useful for this dissertation to consider more philosophical debates on language and discourse, as it may provide a more critical element to the discussion chapter seen later.

My position, and the position of this dissertation is ontologically socially constructionist. However, in defining the importance of language, it may be of worth

exploring different epistemological positions in doing so. The reasoning behind this is to illustrate how language can be used to construct people's understandings of reality.

For Giorgio Agamben (1998), a famous Italian philosopher, constructing reality requires the ability for discourse to have a sovereign grasp over what is perceived as reality. For Agamben, language becomes central to how people describe their world and their understandings of their experiences. It is not surprising then from this position that language plays a greater role in the creation and promulgation of certain discourse.

In illustrating Agamben's argument, Bondi and Burman (2001), note that in psychological literature women are perceived historically as deviants of masculine normatively. This can be seen in historical and in modern literature, where being female may greatly influence the diagnosis and treatment of certain behaviour. For example, suicide literature often associates parasuicide as more common with women than men as it is considered attention seeking, rather than intentional (Welch, 2001). This idea of women being more attention seeking is common with the prevailing discourses of the female gender form (Bondi & Burman, 2001). For Agamben (1998), such discourse may allow for human subjugation in society.

An interesting aspect that allows for such subjugation is language. As Agamben's (1998) work illustrates, language in itself has the sovereign ability to classify things and phenomena in the social world. Language, it seems, may work to shape our understandings and experiences (Lock & Strong, 2010). If we develop this further, it may be then that through language, people are not only gendered (as classification), but contribute to the process of gendering through their understandings of such classification. This process may even allow subcategories of construction that can attribute certain norms to certain gender roles, such as what is seen to be manly and effeminate (Giddens, 1993).

Maass, Salvi, Arcuri and Semin (1989), and later Wigboldus, Semin and Spears (2000), note that language construction and its utilisation can actively and subtly remove the objective quality of people's experiences. This is done through

progressive levels of abstraction where, in some cases, the connotative understanding supersedes, and even dwarfs, the denotative definition. For example, the connotation behind hysteria still alludes to women as being more pathologically temperamental by nature, even though a diagnostic definition may be less prejudiced (Bondi, 1997; Kahn, 2009, Martins, 1987). Following this logic, certain stereotypes remain active within discourses about gender in society and even psychology (Wigboldus, Semin & Spears, 2000).

Bondi and Burman (2001) argues that, through language, knowledge becomes gendered and that language is the way in which social understanding, or discourses behind gender construction become legitimised. More to point, Bondi and Burman argue that discourse can be taken up by either sex. However Giddens (1993) noted that feminine words and constructions are linked to less power and fragility, whereas masculine words and constructions are linked to more power and authority. However, this relation is done subtly.

Developing from this gendered power dynamic, Weaver-Hightower (2003) posits that this subtle quality of gender must remind the researcher to endeavour to understand power relations, and their relation to language to understand the complexities about gender discourse. Perceptively, gendered language structures could perpetuate hierarchical power differentials and may be indicative of patriarchal authority (Burman, 2005). This becomes important in psychotherapy as such power relations can influence the therapeutic relationship (Gehart & Lyle, 2001). Hence, many of the prevailing ideas around psychology and gender speak to the idea that psychotherapy, is by virtue of its historical progress, still patriarchal (Gehart & Lyle, 2001). Furthermore, that the conception of mental health may still privilege one sex over the other, and even down to the severity of experiences (Irigaray, 1993; Bondi & Burman, 2001). An example of this is evident in our diagnostic manuals such as the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). To expand on the earlier suicide example, male suicidal ideation and behaviour is seen as somewhat more serious than their female counterparts (Ribeiro, Bender, Nock, Rudd, Bryan, Lim, Baker, Knight, Gutierrez & Joiner, 2015). Even though this may be rationalised statically, and through case studies, one cannot deny that themes often associated with female suicidal ideations and behaviour are that of *manipulation*, or *borderline*

personality traits (Burman, 2005; Santrock, 2005; Smit, 2006). In this manner language not only construct the discourses prevalent in psychology, but genders them as well. Additionally, language and its authority may not only construct psychological discourse, but also creates a symbolic relation to our conceptions of gender and psychological behaviour.

Symbolic nature of gender and its impressions in psychotherapy

For Weaver-Hightower (2003), gender, in particular masculinity is understood and produced in action and activity. Simply put, you are a man because you act like one. It is through a symbolic system that gender subtly permeates social constructions, therefore informing perceptions in a manner which is systematically gendered (Bondi & Burman 2001; Gehart & Lyle, 2001). This argument reiterates Giddens' (1989) notion that there are certain symbolic components in gender that act as markers of identity and allow for patterned gender impressions and norms to exist. Hence, one's gender appears to inform the perception of one's identity. Why is this important to our discussion? Gathered from the literature seen here, gender seems to form part of identity. In addition, gender norms and discourses seem symbolically related to how people are perceived.

For Singh, Kumra and Vinnicombe (2002), gender lies in the impressions that exist between people. Impressions involve a process whereby individuals seek to somehow create a certain perception about themselves in relation to others. As K. Gergen (2000) would note, this impression management is co-constructed. The aim is then to portray a desirable public image of the self, based on the subtle interactions that one may perceive (Singh et al., 2002).

In a similar vein, one may argue that part of that portrayal is gender—and how one's gender is perceived (Singh et al, 2002). Authors such as Gehart and Lyle (2001) will argue that as much as a therapist reads his/her client, the client reads his/her therapist. Much of this interaction lies in the discourses symbolically associated with gender and the impression management thereof (Singh et al., 2002). For example, Deutsch (2007) argues that due to the fact that gender is so pervasive and at times so discrete, it is often difficult to be aware of it ubiquitously. This may especially be

true in practice and interaction with other gender forms. In fact, gender is often taken for granted and thus sets the limits of interaction in a discrete manner.

However, it is through the perception of such impressions, as seen by Singh et al (2002) that we interact with others. Part of this impression extends beyond the actions that people perform, to the way in which they say things (Singh et al., 2002). It is the position of this dissertation to explore the *way in which people say things*, through language, and how gender discourses influence the co-construction of reality, specifically within psychotherapy. It is with this in mind that we now turn to the literature reviewed.

2.1 Background and conceptualisation

As with all things historical, some occurrences are often subjugated, as to spare the larger cannon of history the responsibility to recognize other experience (Foucault, 1982). For Foucault (1982), one of the biggest issues of our social progression is the subjugation of certain knowledges. These knowledges fall at the mercy of overarching conceptions of the world, which then tend to produce a hierarchical understanding of history. In this manner much is lost, as history is told and “written by the victors” (Churchill, n.d.). Hence, it could be said that the history of gender is the history of patriarchy (Chodorow, 1999; Mynhardt, 2009; Purcell, 2005).

The following segment aims to extensively examine some of the prevailing literature on the construction of gender as both a concept and as discourse. It begins with some of the base literature on gender norms and discourse and then moves to a more critical discussion on gender as an historical project.

Defining and constructing gender

Within feminist writings, the matriarchs of our societies are the one’s charged with the reproduction of gender roles (Purcell, 2005). Chodorow (1999), in her analytical approach to mothering, speaks to this very same construction of identity by mothers within a family. In essence, mothers teach their daughters to be women and fathers teach their sons to be men. This process is done through gender roles and norms. For example women nurture and men provide (Irigaray, 1993).

In discussing these norms more comprehensively, Anthony Giddens (1993), a well-known social scientist, did a critical exposé on the concept of such gender construction. He presented an experiment whereby a newborn baby was introduced to a group of people in two sittings, once dressed as a boy and then as a girl. The baby, who was considered to be anatomically female, was addressed with various gender specific adjectives on each exposure. When the baby was dressed as a boy it was addressed with words such as “handsome” and “tough”, whilst as a girl words such as “dainty” and “sweet” were used (p, 166).

However, in this experiment Giddens was more concerned with the socialisation of gender in early childhood. For our purposes, such descriptions house historical discursive information about gender. In essence, such discourses carry, in language usage, the normative ideological understandings of gender norms (Wigboldus et al., 2000). In this manner, language is the way through which gender and gender norms are not only furthered, but also constructed. Gender normativity has a central position in the construction and co-construction of identity (Smit, 2006). Often identity plays an important role in how people come to understand themselves and their world (Chambers & Carver, 2008). As psychology works within the ways in which people understand themselves and their world, one cannot remove gender from this process (Smit, 2006).

Gender is a concept that has been assigned a series of norms that define its construction (Chodorow, 1999; Gergen, M., 2000; Irigaray, 1993; Smit 2006). These norms are specific to a binary fashion of men as strong, stoic and as the providers, and women as weak, vulnerable, and as the nurturers in society (Jordanova, 1980; Khan, 2009). Hence, for the purposes of this paper, gender can be noted as a socially constructed artefact that fundamentally influences the patterns of social interaction (Gergen, M., 2000; Giddens, 1989; Jordanova, 1980). As a result of this influence, psychology, as both a profession and a discipline cannot be disconnected from such a construct, as gender permeates the very fibre of every human interaction and construction (Butler, 1990; Khan, 2009).

One cannot deny that psychology is a prominent contributor to the construction of knowledge (Gergen, M., 2000). In addition, it has a significant role in the creation,

promotion and maintenance of gender discourses (Gergen, M., 2000; Khan, 2009), which will be discussed later in this section. Yet, for now, we turn our gaze on more historical works to understand gender and gender discourses.

Gender as a historical project

It is a difficult task to trace the historical influences of gender as construct within psychotherapy. In fact, it would be fruitless to attempt any such discussion without acknowledging the more pragmatic approaches to the construct. For Jordanova (1980), the construction of discourse is part of the way in which humans classify their world, in order to make sense of it. Where skin texture and pigment have become markers of race, so too have reproductive organs of animals been linked to the concept of sex (or anatomical difference) (Martins, 1987). Sex as a construct, became the foundation for the construction of gender and gender norms (Butler, 1990).

Giddens (1989) critically exemplifies the construction of gender by noting the socially valued and normative practices that have been assigned to the different sexes historically. Giddens states that it is through clothes, play and most importantly language (as discourse) that gender it is socialised, emphasised and carried through history. Gender is engrained through rituals, customs, practices and discourse, and is therefore almost naturalised (Giddens, 1989, Jordanova, 1980; Delaney, 2004). For a simple illustration Giddens (1993), provides the following as an exemplar of such a practice:

If you walk into a toyshop, it is full of war toys for boys and domestic toys for girls, and it sums up society the way that is. This is the way children are being socialised: it's all right for boys to be taught to kill and hurt (p, 165).

If we expand on this, gender norms are used to teach people what is socially expected from them, and that certain relations are condoned and even expected from certain gender forms (Smit, 2006). In the above quote, boys are expected to be destructive, and for Gehart and Lyle (2001) this may later inform how they understand their experiences.

For Emily Martins (1987), in the western world gender has a particular history to it that worked to not only establish gender norms, but to construct identity in relation to

such norms. In this manner, gender becomes intrinsic to the conceptions of masculinity and femininity and the normative practices. Such conceptions draw on the progression of societies through history, from as early as hunter/gatherer societies to that of advanced civilizations.

Martins (1987) observed that throughout history a certain gender project exists that worked to subjugate one sex over the other. Jordanova (1980), exemplifies this debate by cataloguing how in western history women's reproductive capabilities, which were once revered, were later held as symbolic of nature. In this manner, and over time, discourses became enmeshed, and women were considered to be more emotional and unpredictable, whilst men were seen as more pragmatic. For Jordanova, this led to women and their bodies being the building blocks for femininity and labels such as irrational and temperamental, whereas men were considered more logical and rational.

Yet, Judith Butler provides an interesting point of departure from Martins and Jordanova. In her works entitled *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1990) critically evaluates the sex/gender relation and argues that gender should not be seen as simply derived from sex, as "do we not acquire our idea of sex from the very norms of gender?" (p.3). Butler proposes a startling idea that sex in itself is a scientific technique of classification and is a concept in itself. Furthermore, if sex is a concept and a social construct, it is effectively not real. Hence, if sex is not real, gender, which finds its relation in sex, cannot be real and vice-versa. As provocative as this may sound, gender, even from a social constructionist view, has implications in people's lives (Gergen, M., 2000; Lock & Strong, 2010).

According to Chambers and Carver (2008), Butler argues that gender emerges in performativity, and not just as normative action. We may refer back to Giddens (1989) here as social practice and interaction is important for genders promulgation. Gender, for Butler (1990) is enacted. Specifically, it is inscribed subtly in daily activities of speech, dress and people's interactions. Therefore, it can be argued that gender is part discourse, and part social interaction.

The importance of Butler to this review is to open up our discussion to the socially

constructed concept of gender. In fact, M. Gergen (2000), as noted earlier, is of the position that in psychology specifically, we need to be more critical of gender. As a well-known feminist and author she has challenged many conceptions of gender in psychology, especially the gendering of the body. For Lock and Strong (2010) M. Gergen is of the position that, as psychologists, we have to understand the importance of gender to the psychological endeavour. For these authors this is especially important when considering the prevailing discourses around gender that exist in psychology as such discourses may limit the narrative of people's understandings and their experiences. Hence, the position held by this research—following Gergen's argument—is “to question – but not to deny – all linguistic categories, and especially to resist the reification of universal, atemporal ones,” (Lock & Strong, 2010, p. 304), this includes gender.

M. Gergen (2000) notes the construct of gender as atemporal and constructed in human interaction. This is especially true in language and talk (Gergen, M. 2000; Lock & Strong, 2010). M. Gergen (2000) understood the construction of gender, as ongoing and as a manner in which humans understand their world. If this argument is to be followed and gender is not static, one could question the implications for institutions such as psychology. This is especially relevant to this discussion as so many of our diagnostic manuals utilise sex and gender categories less critically to inform diagnosis (Williams, 2011). Gender has very real implications for human behaviour and it is often left up to disciplines such as psychology to make sense of it (Barkhuizens & Ovens, 2012; Gergen, M., 2000). In the next section, this point will be examined through the lens of psychology's past.

2.2 Gender discourse in the development of psychotherapy: Women as pathology

The interaction between masculine identity and feminine identity is illustrated through a network of cultural and social discourse and practices known as patriarchy, or the rule of the 'father' (Hartmann, 1983; Kahn, 2009). These interactions create discourses that echo through time and influence more modern conceptions of identity as well (Kahn, 2009). According to the seminal works of Hartmann (1983), and later, through Chodorow (1999), patriarchal relations between men and women are established as a mechanism through which men (as a historical collective) could

exert their control over women and children in the form of ‘the family.’ As seen earlier, the family and one’s social networks are instrumental in the socialisation of gender roles and discourses

One may then ask, how does the above discussion on gender socialisation and control relate to psychology? Essentially, it sets a gender hierarchy in place that permeates every social sphere, including psychological thought and language (Butler, 1990; Smit, 2006). In fact, the psychoanalytic and behavioural models of human behaviour are richly patriarchal, as they stem from a European masculine view of the world (Smit, 2006). Even the likes of Freud have been accused of sexism. In his defence many authors have argued that his writings were housed within the discourse of his time (Cohler & Galatzer-Levy, 2008). Therefore, based on such issues, psychology, as a form of scientific discourse, appears to be grounded in patriarchal patterns and relations, which has resulted in gender. Such prejudices are created and located historically, but operate contemporarily as well for Smit (2006).

Patriarchal relations between men and women extend from pre-modern times and are maintained, even exemplified, through the enlightenment period, with the progression of society and science (Martin, 1987). Under patriarchal relations, women were, through patterns of older scientific discourse, understood as weaker and irrational (Martins, 1987). In furthering this point, Bernay and Canter (1986) argued that due to such discourses women have been more psychologically tied to perceptions of hysteria, and are primary candidates for numerous forms of psychosis. More recent authors such as Santrock (2005), Smit (2006), and Cohler and Galatzer-Levy (2008) acknowledge such prejudices as well.

With the historical emergences of the gender prejudice in scientific research, Irigaray (1993) argues that by the virtue of historical and scientific progression, men were able to escape the idea of insanity and could reassign it to/or “upon women” (p. 10), therefore creating a gender hierarchy in the construction of madness. Hence, Irigaray (1993) argues that each sex has its own relation to the conception of ‘madness,’ which works to the privilege of one sex over the other. Furthermore, in the construction of mental health in more modern terms, and the dialogue that associated with it, this hierarchy still seems to exist (Bohan; 2013; Smith, 2006).

Following from Irigaray's argument as noted above, Gergen and Davis (1997) consider that even psychological assessment served to reinforce patriarchal patterns of femininity to "enforce norms of female domesticity" (p.3). In essence, gender discourses have allowed for men to be seen as "well-adjusted" and rational beings while women were regarded as being "maladjusted" (p.3), where such arguments were based on female hormonal functioning.

Historically, women's uteri were blamed for many of the maladies associated with madness and, in extreme cases the removal of this organ and its associated parts were seen as a cure for certain psychological conditions such as hysteria (Martins, 1987). As barbaric as this sounds, the real issue lay in the fact that women's experiences were considered less important than men's (Martins, 1987). Therefore it was permissible to perform such extreme procedures on them, Even though this practice has been abolished, what concerns authors such as Gergen and Davies (1997) or even Smit (2006) is that the ideologies present during this period of social progression have remained insidiously within social and psychological discourses and are potentially even present today. Simply put, women may still be seen psychologically as more pathologically inclined.

Such discursive gender preconceptions of women have real implication in modern psychological practices. For example, Sprock, Blashfield and Smith (1990), and Klonsky, Jane, Turkheimer and Oltmanns (2002), and even as recently as Sansone and Sansone (2011) note that gender bias has led to women being frequently diagnosed with histrionic, borderline and dependant personality disorders. Conversely, men were diagnosed with more antisocial and compulsive personality disorders. In over two decades of research, such diagnoses are posited in the perception of gender prototypes. Even though their work is over twenty-years old, it appears that Sprock's et al., (1990) conception of gender prototypes in psychology is still valid. With such prototypes women are seen on a continuum of submission and emotional activity/reactivity, and men according to the more aggressive and limited emotional activity end of the spectrum.

Hence, it appears that gender prejudices still have a prominent position within psychology today. One may have thought that with the feminisation of the field in the late 1990s such prejudices would have been explored more. With this in mind we turn our gaze to the feminisation of psychotherapy.

The rise of feminism and the feminised male in therapy

In the 1970s psychology was very much a male dominated discipline, but with the inclusion of female participation. For Zanardi (1990), the movement to recognise more female participation in larger society meant a challenge for academia and psychology. Namely, it meant questioning the norm of women presenting, *the problem*, and the male therapist being the logical and rational facilitator of *the solution*. This transition was part of a continuing shift, which is still continuing today (Bohan, 2013).

Kahn (2009) illustrates the issue with female inclusion in society as a direct challenge to the masculine identity. With the feminisation of society we not only see more female representation in the workplace, but the acceptance of more subjugated forms of masculinity as well (Kahn, 2009). This results in the hegemonic masculine identity being threatened. The outward portrayal of this threat is often aggressive with an increase in sexually prejudicial acts by the hegemonic identity (Kahn, 2009; Milkman, 2013).

According to Kaplan, Winget, and Free (1990), by the late 20th century, a second more interesting movement occurs in disciplines such as psychology. Here patients were requesting to see more female therapists. Firstly, this was to avoid the pressure of sexist male views. Secondly, women were seeking a stronger, more functional role models to help them understand their unique experiences. In addition, Kaplan et al. (1990) makes an interesting claim, unlike the later view of Kahn (2009), that due to the acceptance of subjugated forms of masculinity under feminization we find more and more male therapists choosing feminised treatment options in the treatment of the patient's needs. Moreover, that female therapists then often choose masculinised treatment options, in comparison to their male counterparts, as to attain the authority assigned to masculinity (Kaplan et al., 1990; Gehart & Lyle, 2001). What is important to this research is the idea that female therapists needed to don a

masculinized stance to therapy in order to attain recognition as being knowledgeable practitioners (Kaplan et al., 1990).

The argument placed forth by authors such as Kaplan et al. (1990), speaks to a fascinating interaction. In some manner, gender discourse can be utilised as a tool in psychotherapy in addressing the needs of the client. This is quite a progressive idea. As noted earlier, Kahn's (2009) opposition to Kaplan and his associates' gender exchange claims, shows a potential abandoning of this idea in modern times. Therefore, a critical question at this point, and more in line with this research would be—*If so, then why not?* Based on the literature surveyed up to this point, if gender can be utilised in therapy in a constructive manner, then why have we not paid more attention to it in the clinical psychology stream?

Following from the preceding arguments given above, gender and psychology appear to have had an enmeshed history, which led to a convergence and the exchanging of gender roles in the later part of the 20th century. Yet, gender is still understood from an essentialist perspective within this field. For Bohan (2013), the essentialist stance on gender limits the usage of it in more critical ways and, therefore, limits the therapeutic engagement as well. Hence, it would be interesting to note what female psychologists make of this idea and whether or not they agree with Kaplan and his colleagues' claim of a gender role exchange. This may be a site for future research.

2.3 Constructing the therapeutic space

Constructing therapy

For dynamic and analytic theorists such as Malan (1976), Bowlby (1988), and even Winnicott (2005) psychotherapy is a relationship that is constructed through the interaction between the therapist and the client/ or patient. It can be physically housed within a space, but the relationship itself is dynamic and constantly evolving (Woolfe, Strawbridge & Dryden, 2010). The interaction that is required to facilitate this relationship can be seen as important to the constructionist process as seen by K. Gergen (2000), as it is the basis through which a person attempts to make sense of their life struggles.

For McNamee and Shawver (1992), psychotherapy under the assumptions of constructionism is not defined solely as a relationship guided to bring about change in a person's life. Instead, these authors perceived therapy as a dialogue or a conversation. Now this may seem very problematic to many schools of thought about psychotherapy, as some may even cringe at the idea of therapy being called a conversation. For example, the psychodynamic position considers it to be more of a relationship (McWilliams, 1999). However, social constructionism is particularly concerned with language and the construction of discourse. Hence considering psychotherapy as a conversation, is a prompt definition (Lock & Strong, 2010).

Based on the constructionist definition, therapy is therefore focused on the discourses that people use to make sense of their lives (Gergen, M., 2000; Lock & Strong, 2010). If gender is a social construct that operates through prominent discourses, then surely it could have a role in the therapeutic relationship (Lock & Strong, 2010)? Gender, through discourse, could be one of the elements people use to understand themselves and their relationships. For Gehart and Lyle (2001), this point is of quintessence as they argue that people come to understand their lives and difficulties from a gendered perspective.

Under social constructionism, language becomes the unit of meaning making essential to the process of psychotherapy (Lock & Strong, 2010). The discourses constructed in language, permeate social institutions and relations including the psychotherapy. Therefore, in arguing the essentialist position that gender is static is inherently problematic under social constructionism. This is because it is largely a discourse that influences the process of meaning making for people (Hibberd, 2005).

Social constructionism holds that there is no one reality (Hibberd, 2005). From this position, psychotherapy as social construction is not of the position of providing expert opinions, or techniques, or legitimacy of right and wrong ways of being (Hibberd, 2005). Rather it is concerned with the relative construction of reality in interactions between people (Lock & Strong, 2010). Psychotherapy, under social constructionism, should, therefore, adhere to one of the basic assumptions of this position, as seen earlier, namely that reality is co-constructed (Gergen, K., 1985; Hibberd, 2005; Lock & Strong, 2010).

Gender discourse in the therapeutic space

Research into gender and gender discourse at a global level has often been positioned from the client's perspective and a statistical perspective (Khan 2009; Smit, 2006). The focus is often placed on sex boundaries. An example of this is inappropriate sexual behaviour or sexual identity struggles in psychotherapy (Gehart & Lyle, 2001). In addition, where research was carried out from a qualitative perspective, it was based more on the client's perception of the therapist's gender (Gehart & Lyle, 2001). Hence, not much has been reported on the gender construction in the therapeutic space. Even though one cannot, whilst being ethically sound, actually observe the construction of gender *as interaction*, it may be of use to then investigate the psychotherapist's understandings about this interaction.

This investigation of the psychotherapist's interaction with the client, from a gendered stance, is an important issue for Gehart and Lyle (2001). For these authors, gender discourse influences the therapeutic process and its outcomes in subtle and direct ways. They emphasise the importance of gender discourses in therapy by arguing that, even in psychological practice today, gender norms set the parameters of interaction, as many clients "report that female therapists (are) easier to talk" to (Gehart & Lyle, 2001, p. 444). One of the more important findings reported later in my analysis and discussion chapters illustrates this position as the participants' reflections seem to allude to the subtle influence gender may have brought to their therapeutic encounters.

Even though Gehart and Lyle's research was conducted over a decade ago, some of their findings speak to elements that may still be important to note. Take, for instance, several of their interviewed participants who highlighted that male therapists were regarded to have more authority than female therapists. As one client said; "I know I respond to male therapists more seriously" (Gehart & Lyle, 2001, p. 448-9). Martins (1987) relates this to the idea that men are prescribed positions of authority and rationality, whereas women are often regarded as the nurturers or caregivers, thus reproducing such gendered norms, even in psychotherapy.

In claiming the importance of Gehart and Lyle's study, many of their findings have been cited in several new studies on gender in therapy. For example Johnson and

Caldwell (2011), found that gender is one of many elements present in a psychotherapeutic relationship. In addition, Blow, Timm, and Cox (2008) found that even though gender cannot alone influence the outcome of therapy, the therapist's own gender does have a part to play in psychotherapy.

Social constructions work in interaction; therapy and gender can be understood as social constructions themselves (Lock & Strong, 2010). Yet it is the language present in these interactions that works to not only use discourses needed for the affirmation of such constructions, but to create them as well (Lock & Strong, 2010; Wigboldus et al., 2000). As noted earlier, for Agamben (1998), language is a particular social institution that pre-exists its users and will continue to exist beyond the user. Language allows us to give meaning to our lives and is constantly evolving (Hibberd, 2006; Wigboldus et al., 2000). Hence, it is through language that we create our world and make sense of our experiences.

2.4 Gender in multicultural South Africa, its relevance in psychological training

South Africa is considered to be one of the more ethnically and culturally diverse countries in the world (Shafer, Boonzaier & Kiguwa, 2006). Therefore, any form of psychology would have to suit and adapt according to the requirements of such a land. For Jane Callaghan (2006), there is a “need to produce more ‘relevant’ forms of psychology” (p. 293), especially in our context. She argues this on the back of westernised discourses of psychology in a post-apartheid South Africa. Callaghan is of the view that we need to interrogate people's induction into professions through their education and training. Essentially, she notes that it is here, at the intersection of professionalism and training that room exists for the development of more incorporative forms of psychology.

Berman, Eyoh and Kymlicka (2004) and Eisenberg and Spinner-Halev (2005) place the argument that our diversity not only sets us apart from many other countries, but much has to be done to ensure its importance and continuation. As a result we have many ideals enshrined in our constitution to protect it (Barkhuizen & Ovens, 2012). These include cultural rights, religious rights, and even gender and sexual orientation

rights (Government Gazette, 2000). This has set our constitution apart from even more developed first world societies (Carrigall and Matzopolous, 2013).

However Shaver et al. (2006), argue with all the progressive steps taken to develop the South African way of life, especially post-apartheid. It is surprising to see how certain relational elements are still undervalued, gender being one of them. Within our context, many of these elements play out in very real ways. For example, the interaction between western and traditional healing, or even more tragically speaking the stoning to death of lesbians in less affluent areas of our country (Britton, 2006; Campbell-Hall, Petersen, Bhana, Mjadu, Hosegood & Flisher, 2010).

When considering gender, in many settings and organisations it is still conceptualised as a natural binary, often synonymous with sex (Smit, 2006). Even within places of higher education, gender and gender studies are often found in the corridors of the Humanities (Shafer et al., 2006). Here it is permissible to have critical debates on such topics, but in application it is still seen in an essentialist manner (Jacob, 1996; Shafer et al., 2006). This is quite interesting as other constructs such as race, and even sexuality to a degree, have been given more consideration, especially within psychology (Smit, 2006).

Moreover, as seen with the works of Langa and Graham (2010) the importance of power differentials and hierarchies from the South African perspective have a critical juncture with gender. Langa and Graham (2010) argue that we must be actively aware of how “gender politics play out in and affect our communities” (p. 188) and we have a responsibility to “critically examine” the ways in which this occurs.

For Barkhuizens and Ovens (2012) and Carrigall and Matzopolous (2013), gender is an important element in our context, especially due to the pathological abuses of gender norms that are prevalent from the South African perspective. Gender-based violence and interment partner violence have a great impact on the lives of many South Africans, often correlating heavily with later psychosocial problems (Barkhuizens & Ovens, 2012). Often it is left to psychology to make sense of such happenings. Ten years ago Callaghan (2006) argued that we are not producing adequately trained psychologists. If this is true even today, then our ability to

develop adequate interventions to address gender-based problems could be compromised.

For Callaghan (2006), when it comes to the training of psychologists, students are often surprised at the absence of gender awareness in psychotherapy. In many cases trainees in the psychological profession are ill resourced to challenge pervasive views of gender in the ‘expert’ theoretical framework of psychological discourse. If this is true, can we assume that such awareness comes with later work experience?

Graham and Langa (2010), and Hira (2012) take this notion forward and argued that when gender is taken up as an important element in the training of South African psychologists, it is often the more counselling psychologists that seem to critically engage with the topic. This point is of concern as the pathologies and perversions of gender norms that are often present in gender-based violence are essentially the work of clinical psychologists, who tend to work with the more perverse forms of human behaviour (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). This raises a secondary, but equally important, point of this research. Are clinical psychotherapists in South Africa adequately trained to deal with gender? Unfortunately, this is beyond the scope of this particular study, as we would need to evaluate every training programme in the South African context.

To be racist or sexist?

Based on our history as a nation, one could argue that a multicultural approach to psychological understanding of gender is required. McLeod (2004) notes that there have been a number of debates around psychology and race, culture and identity. Even though race, culture and identity are important, their study is often at the expense of gender as it is a seemingly arbitrary category.

Race is the main topic of discussion and influence in the South African context, where gender often takes the backburner (McLeod, 2004). Callaghan (2006) agrees that gender politics is often sidestepped in the face of a racially oppressed history of South Africa. As a result it is seen as a “secondary liberation” (Callaghan, 2006; p. 295) in the face of race. Under modern day South Africa race, culture and ethnicity are the new key subjugated knowledges, due to our turbulent past.

It is worth noting at this point that I am aware of the potential interactions of gender and race (and other related constructs such as sexuality), as in the South African perspective they too form exemplars of patriarchal discourse (McLeod, 2004). Yet, as I am only focusing on gender construction in this analysis, the primary focus will not be on such interplays—even though I do not deny their relevance. Furthermore, this research may help better articulate our knowledge by informing how we come to understand these intersections. Acknowledging this is very important in terms of the findings reported here as some of the emerging themes speak to these very intersections.

2.5 Summary and implications

The literature surveyed in this chapter focused on the construction of gender as both a concept and as discourse. This was done through the lens of social constructionism. It considered the importance of language to the production and promotion of gender discourse. This was particularly relevant when considering the way people might construct and put meaning to their experiences, especially in interaction. Furthermore, it considered the historical progress of gender discourse and its relation to psychology. Some of the aspects of interest are the potential usages of gender to the therapeutic endeavour and the relevance of gender to the development of socially relevant psychologists. Hence, the literature seen here aimed to construct gender in clinical psychotherapy according to the assumptions of social constructionism. This was to set the basis for the analysis and discussion that is to follow in *Chapter 4* and *Chapter 5*.

Chapter 3: Research Design

Umberto Eco (Bondanella, 2005) was of the opinion that in order for a paradigm to shift, certain fundamentals needed to be in place. One such fundamental was the notion that one had to be well versed in the foundations and tools of a paradigm in order to critique it and to prompt change. Although such an idea may be too deterministic in light of social constructionism, the essence of such knowledge is what is important for this dissertation. Hence, for clarification, in order to analytically comprehend the discourses that may be present in psychotherapy, one must not only be well versed in them, but also be able to recognise such discourses and use them. In this manner, one may then come to understand the role of gender in psychotherapy.

Following from the idea introduced by Eco, and adapted here, we turn to the usage of conversation analysis (CA as noted from here onwards). As a technique, it rigorously aims to not only analyse how gender is a co-constructed reality (Gergen, M., 2000; Hammersley, 2003), but also how it can be understood in psychotherapy. For MacLeod (2004, p. 169) “the usage of conversational analysis in therapy research makes intuitive sense” as therapy under the social constructionist paradigm is a conversation after all.

In addition, Westerman (2011) in his broadly analytical approach to CA has noted that it draws its ties from discourse analysis, psychology and social constructionism. In this manner, it positions itself as a methodology. For Westerman, the usefulness of such a methodology lies within analysing how health professionals *interact* with their clients, or patients. In such interactions, reality is co-constructed. Based on this understanding, the following research design was used to provide a consistent movement from our theoretical frame of social constructionism. This movement is in hope of exploring this *intuitive sense* that MacLeod (2004) speaks of in terms of CA. Hence, we turn to the research design and analysis as seen in this exposition.

3.1 Methodology and research design

3.1.1 Methodology

This study is of a qualitative nature and was situated within a social constructionist paradigm. As I was interested in the understanding of gender construction by female clinical psychologists, such a position made sense methodologically speaking. The meaning held in interaction is pivotal to social constructionism, as it concerns the epistemological truth-value of experience in the co-construction of understanding (Carter & Little, 2007; Harper & Thompson, 2012). This meant that, as a researcher, not only did I conduct the research on the basis of how my respondent viewed gender, but I was part of the co-construction of such views as well (Westerman, 2011).

Whilst meeting with my participants, I had often reflected on how differently each woman embodied gender. Furthermore, in this process many of my thoughts seemed to have influenced my interactions with them. Later in *Chapter 5*, I will draw on some of these experiences to illustrate my position in our interactions.

In continuation and conversely so, some of the more rigorous forms of CA would question the position of the researcher, especially in the capacity of self-reflection. For example, Westerman (2011) notes that methodology aims to investigate and identify those devices used by participants to make sense of their experiences. In this manner, it aims to be free from the influence of the researcher. Yet even Schegloff (1997), although broadly from the same position as Westerman, noted that the respondent could not exist alone in an interaction. As it stands, I was part of the interaction, and, hence, I too participated in the construction process. Thus making it a co-construction.

Following from the discrepancy of involving the influence of the researcher, it is worth noting that, in the traditional sense, the position seen here by Westerman (2011) is correct. Schegloff (1997) had noted that CA is best used on naturally occurring talk. However, I did not construct this research within a more traditional approach. I constructed this research on the basis that I would be part of the interaction, not just as a researcher, but as a participant as well. For Hutchby and

Wooffitt (2002), it is not that CA cannot be utilised on ‘structured talk’ (including open-ended interviews), rather that one should use it with caution. This is because it is often seen that one may find that such talk becomes monologic and not interactional, as the interviewee is the main focus of the interaction. However, as Whitehead (2011) recently noted, the use of CA in modern times has expanded beyond that of naturally occurring talk to other more nuanced usages. Hence, I acknowledge and respond to such a debate within the CA literature.

In reflection, I agree with the position raised by Hutchby and Wooffitt, as it is true that at many points during my interactions with the participants I allowed them to actively lead the talk. This in a sense mirrored the therapeutic relationship, where I was the therapist and the psychologists were the ‘client’. The implications of this, and probably a central weakness of this study, are that the normal turn taking sequence in talk is disrupted and elements such as power dynamics and defensiveness are limited. For Hutchby and Wooffitt (2002), the mechanical sequence of talk and the emerging dynamics is qualified through the taking of a turn, during talk, as an analytical unit. Hence, following this logic, what was at risk of being lost in my analysis is the actual influence of gender discourse, as understood by the participants.

However, one can compensate for this through “building a collection of instances” which works to infer the dynamics around the reality being co-constructed (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2002, p.187). Building collections in CA works to identify interesting phenomena in the interactions. In this manner, one can potentially isolate the presence of discourse and how it works to influence the way in which people construct their reality.

For Hutchby and Wooffitt, (2002) CA has three central components to it (as gathered from authors such as Schegloff, Heritage, and Jefferson). First, is to *identify and locate interesting phenomena or instances*. This is done through following the sequence of talk-in-interaction. Second, after collecting these instances one then *moves to describe such an instance in detail using the tools of CA*. Then the third and final step is to *return to the data to identify if other instances can be accounted for through the description*. This may seem a bit confusing to the reader, but the logic is

quite simple. One has to survey the data for interesting instances. Then one must take one segment pertaining to such instances and described it through CA. Finally, the description found must offer an explanation for the other instances identified. The aim of this exercise, according to Hutchby and Wooffitt (2002), is to produce a formal description for large collections of data. This is what makes for good CA, as one has to remain as true to that data (Schegloff, 1997).

From this position, one could argue for theory generation and generalisation, which goes against the central premises of social constructionism. Yet, these authors argue that the use of CA depends on the methodology. It is a descriptive and interpretive tool. However, it is the descriptive properties that are of importance to this study. Therefore, what will be analysed and discussed in this dissertation is more descriptive and less interpretive. In addition, what would have been otherwise considered as known as are “collections of instances” for the purpose of later analysis.

Social constructionism has no one school and it is concerned with human activities, and the meaning and understanding of social experience over time—specifically through language (Lock & Strong, 2010). From this stance, a central assumption is that gender is socially constructed, historical, and its meaning takes place in interaction (Gergen & Davies, 2013; Schegloff, 2001). This process is comprehensively embedded in sociocultural processes (such as talk and talk-in-interaction) and, as M. Gergen (2000) argues, cannot be objectively understood and experienced otherwise. It is another assumption of this position that the meaning and understanding made in interaction, would be useful in appreciating how female clinical psychologists construct the role of gender in clinical psychotherapy.

With these assumptions in mind, I consider that my position as a researcher had a significant part to play in the research process. I too helped construct the realities expressed by my participants through our interaction. With the use of CA, methodologically I was able to observe this process. This will be seen in several of the interactions reported here. Hence, the design, write up and analysis expressed in this dissertation is based on one of the central tenets of social constructionism. This tenet states that the understanding of reality and experience is co-constructed and

done in interaction (Gergen, K., 1985). In keeping with the central assumptions of social constructionism, this study is thus situated in a relativist ontology and a constructionist epistemology.

3.1.2 Research Design

This research was aimed at analytically examining the language used to describe the experience of gender by female clinical psychologists. It is, therefore, concerned with how female clinical psychologists reflect upon the construction of gender in psychotherapy, through language. Such an aim was designed to be consistent with social constructionism as one of its central tenets is the use of language, particularly language in interaction (Lock & Strong, 2010). Hence, the research design of this study was interview based with the usage of open-ended interview questions as a guide during the data collection process.

One of the main design issues of this study is the usage of CA on somewhat structured talk. It was, therefore, my attempt to limit this issue by using open-ended interviewing. Open-ended interviewing, while setting up a guide for the conversation, allowed the participants and myself the freedom to explore certain elements that emerged in the interaction (Patton, 2005). However, this does not mean that the findings are markers of an objective reality. This study acknowledges the relative nature of reality and truth. Hence, the findings are reported in relation to the methodological assumptions of this study and, therefore, no overarching claims will be made or insinuated (Westerman, 2011; Schegloff, 1997).

Another important rationale for the usage of open-ended interviewing is the importance of turn taking and the sequencing of talk for CA. Turn taking refers to the process in talk where people decide whose turn it is next to talk (Hammersley, 2003; Schegloff, 1997). McLeod (2011) simplifies John Heritage's approach to CA in that *turn taking*, in conjunction with the conversation sequence, is important to evaluate dynamics such as gender. This is because in gendered interactions, turn taking tends to be highly salient and has an influence over the interaction. For our purposes turn taking was important, as it allowed an exploration of my own understanding of gender as well. Furthermore, it alluded to the more subtle ways in which gender seemed to influence the interactions with my participants. In terms of sequencing of

talk, gender subtleties may then lend to inform the patterns of interaction between my participants and myself, and how they reflect on gender in psychotherapy (MacLeod, 2004). Although I acknowledge the limits of its use due to the use on interview data, turn taking did occur and certainly allowed for meaningful findings.

Another element that will be utilised conversationally is the *lexical choice*, or the different ways the participants chose to describe certain experiences or understanding, which seems to be informed by their gendered reality (MacLeod, 2004). Moreover, it appears that evaluating the *asymmetrical interaction* in our conversations seems to illustrate the very discourses that inform gender and gender performativity (Heritage, 2010). In this manner, CA has allowed me not only to track the structuring of talk in this exposition, but also how talk actively works to construct our understanding of our experiences through gender.

3.2 Participants

My participants were three registered female clinical psychologists, who have completed the necessary requirements, as stipulated by the Health Professional Council of South Africa (HPCSA). This included having had written and passed their board examinations. In addition, the participants were clinical psychologist, with the ability to supervise training psychologists (HPCSA, 2014). Participants were English speaking and were culturally and ethnically diverse.

I had gathered the participants of this study through snowballing sampling methods. For Noy (2008) this method involves the possible recruitment of people via existing participants' acquaintances as potential future participants. Yet, in this manner of further recruitment, I discovered a potential pitfall, as the acquaintances suggested had similar characteristics or views about the world as my initial participant. However, as this study is concerned with the co-construction of reality, such difficulties became of interest later in the analysis and were even useful in co-constructions (Lock & Strong, 2010; Noy, 2008).

Furthermore, I selected the participants of this study on the basis that they self identified as female and were willing to participate. Initially I had proposed that I would gather my participants for the Johannesburg and Pretoria areas. However, I

was only able to locate participants in the Pretoria area. This was due to time and other restraints; including difficulty finding participants willing to participate in the Johannesburg area.

Demographically speaking the participants were between the ages of 39 and 46-years-old. They all resided in the city of Pretoria and had been practicing for a number of years, the oldest of which has been practicing for 15 years. These participants have a range of experience that includes working with children, sexuality, culture and ethnicity, and gender. According to the racial demographics in the South African context, two identified as black and one as white. In addition, and within the parameters of my research, all three identified as heteronormatively female. Each participant gave consent and they have conceded to having their interviews be utilised for this dissertation.

The participants of the study were Lufuno*, a 39-year-old who self-identified as a woman of Tshivenda heritage. She works for a state hospital in Pretoria. Lufuno, works mostly with families and children, and presented herself as a very calm and well-rounded woman. She claimed that in her practise as a clinical psychologist she hardly considered gender, unless it is the point of psychotherapy.

Anna** is a 46-year-old, white Afrikaans psychologist in private practice. She began her career as an occupational therapist and has been working as a psychologist for 15 years. Anna noted that her traditionally Afrikaans cultural upbringing meant that gender was not much of an issue for her. Yet she did express that her own understandings of gender and that of her clients may differ at times.

Kelebogile*** is a 42-year-old woman of Setswana heritage. Like Lufuno, Kelebogile works in a state hospital. Part of her work entails the psychological understanding of identity, especially when considering her client base. According to Kelebogile, her work is of such a nature that exposing her client's demographic information would breach confidentiality and be unethical. She noted that she works with a very specific population group that have a highly conservative culture.

* Pseudonym

** Pseudonym

*** Pseudonym

3.3 Procedure and timeline

I had originally proposed that my participants would be gathered through a third party organisation to ensure no coercion and that participation was voluntary. The organisation I had suggested was the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG). This was to contact clinical psychologists from to their repository, for ease of access.

However, I found it much more practical and convenient to contact female psychologists directly, through their own private practices until I found one that was willing to participate and who could suggest other participants.

Once informed of the parameters of my study (See [Appendix A](#)) and consent was granted, each woman was invited to be part of the interview process. The interviews were conducted on an individual basis. These women were then invited to answer a few questions pertaining to my research topic such as, “could gender be useful in psychotherapy,” and “in your own words, what do you understand gender to be?” (see [Appendix C](#) for interview guide). Each interview lasted approximately an hour and took place at each woman’s practice. This was on the suggestion of my participants as it made it more convenient and comfortable for them. The data took one month to collect from the time of the approval of this study.

Data collection and interview

I then proceeded to collect my data through open-ended interviews, which were audio recorded, with the consent of each person (See [Appendix B](#)). The flexibility of open-ended interviewing provided my participants and me with the opportunity to expand on any point of interest without procedural limitations. This is one of the core strengths of this type of data collection as considered by Bhana and Kanjee (2001). The interview guide developed in my proposal served as a guide to the process and kept the interviews focussed. It should be noted here that my interview guide (See [Appendix C](#)) was informed by the research question and the literature review for this study.

One of the main reasons for the usage of audio recording was for the purpose of CA, where talk-in-interaction could be recorded and transcribed appropriately (Schegloff,

2001). For Schegloff (2001), it is important that any inferences made about talk-in-interaction should be data driven, where evidence for any assertion can be found in the utterances seen. However, another reason I had opted for audio recording each session was to allow myself the freedom to observe the participants' behaviour and mannerism, as well as my own.

Furthermore, in terms of reflexivity, I endeavoured to keep detailed field notes and reflection pieces noting my own understandings and feelings about research processes (Greenstein et al, 2003; Silverman, 2013). I found that keeping notes about my thoughts helped me make sense of the different influences in my interaction with my participants. These notes were made before and after each interview. This was to consider my own apprehensions, considerations and/or points of interest about each interview. In addition, under social constructionism reality is co-constructed, hence my experience was essential to the process.

Even though some may question the purpose of reflexivity with CA, I found that reflexivity was important for this study, as my own identification as a man provided insight on my gendered interaction. This was due to the fact that I was not just recording interactions between people, but involved in the process as well. Hence, Usher (1996) saw it as important to pay attention to such reflections as they add richness to any interaction. I consider this of importance as even as the researcher in this context I too participated in the co-construction of gender. Therefore, my field notes will be utilised where necessary to further analyse the data and the reported of the findings.

Once the data was collected it was then transcribed according to the principles of CA (Heritage, 2010). Namely, data was transcribed verbatim, including pauses, interjections, and various elements registered in speech. Next the data was coded using the CA symbols to represent the interactions as accurately as possible, including intonations, breaks in speak, register and speed (see [Appendix D](#) for the *Jefferson light* symbol key). This process is time consuming, because CA requires the data representation to be as true to the interaction as possible (Wooffitt, 2005).

3.4 Analysis

When considering the analysis it is important to analytically understand the role of gender discourse in this study. Gender discourse influences much of the interactions between the psychologist and the client (Blow, et al., 2008, Gehart & Lyle, 2001). As seen in the literature section, many of the norms that inform gender performativity find their origins in prominent gendered discourse. Discourse can be seen as the ideological coalescence of ideas, or statements that exist about human interaction (Lock & Strong 2010). They are often assigned to common language use in social practices and work to inform people about their social world (Lock & Strong, 2010). It is a way of thinking and being that is taught and emphasised through language and language construction (Schegloff, 2001).

As language is often the medium used to describe people's understanding of the social world, it too works to affirm and influence gender construction through discourse (Silverman, 2004). Hence, it would be of interest to note the kinds of gender discourse that occur in psychotherapy. This, however, was beyond the scope of this study. What was of importance in this study is talk-in-interaction. Furthermore, Schegloff (2001) noted that through talk-in-interaction one could study discourse in a rigorous and structured manner. This allowed for a process more grounded in evidence than that of more discursive departures. In this manner, I could track the construction of discourse in talk interactions, and more specifically the construction of gender discourses. As a result, this analysis was directed at the construction of gender through talk-in-interaction.

Conversation analysis was used to analyse the data, as it aims to uncover the constructed aspects of everyday life through talk-in-interaction (Lock & Strong, 2010, Jefferson, 2004). Harvey Sacks, Emmanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson developed a form of CA as a way to track talk-in-interaction. Conversation analysis use data driven evidence to make its assertions and not merely the epistemological assumptions of the theoretical framework (Wooffitt, 2005). In this way it differs from discourse analyses, as it is more focussed and does not speak to the umbrella notion of discourse (such as text, talk and so forth). Rather CA is focussed on talk as interaction (Wooffitt, 2005).

Since CA is laborious in its analysis, a subset of CA—*Jefferson light*—has been developed by Gail Jefferson. This is for a less rigorous engagement with data. Jefferson light has often been used in more structured talk—such as interviews. Hence the analysis of data followed Jefferson light CA (Silverman, 2004). Through this form of CA collections and evidence that emerged was utilised in describing and reporting on the findings of study. However, it is important to emphasise that the inferences about reality made here are relative and not for generalisation and theory generation.

For reiteration purposes, CA is a methodology of analysing discourse and has been often utilised to study naturally occurring talk—or talk, as it would happen in everyday life (Schegloff, 2001). In fact, many purists (as argued previously by Westerman, 2001) who practice CA, would strongly advise against the usage of it in more structured interactions. However, due to ethical concerns about researching human subjects, and more specifically client confidentiality, one cannot simply sit in on a therapy session for the purpose of researching gender in psychotherapy. For clarity purposes, this study is focused on the understanding of the clinical psychotherapist on gender within the psychotherapeutic relationship, and not on their client's experiences.

Silverman (2004) argues that CA can be utilised on structured talk as well, as it could still give a depth to the analysis, which would otherwise be lost with conventional qualitative analysis methods. Moreover, CA has the rigor of more positivist approaches in drawing evidence, but without losing the subjectivity that is vital in qualitative approaches (Rapley, 2010).

The principles of the analysis, as referred to earlier by Hutchby and Wooffitt (2002) are as follows:

- 1) **Locate potentially significant phenomena from the data (expanded upon in the procedure section below).**
- 2) **Analyse one such sequence using Jefferson light CA**
- 3) **Return to the collections gathered from the data to see if the analysis describes it as well.**

In this manner a set of collections pertaining to interesting phenomena around gender discourse were identified and are discussed in the discussion chapter.

Procedure

The analysis followed the basic principles of CA, as proposed by Hutchby and Wooffit (2002). These principles consider the building of collections that work to construct the phenomena of interest. However, in unpacking this process further, I consider Heritage's (2010) *method* in identifying potentially significant phenomena. The reason for this approach to the procedure is in keeping with Jefferson light, and to remain within the parameters of a dissertation of limited scope.

Heritage (2010) proposed three steps or levels of CA. These are the *sequence analysis*, the *identification of conversational practices*, and the *conversational organization* that these practices are seen or utilized in. These levels are used collectively to analyze a script. Heritage refers to these as the basic steps for carrying out CA. In this manner one can then set out locating significant data collections for analysis.

The first step in analysis was to transcribe the data and coordinate it according to the questions developed in the research guide. Once this task was completed, CA was used to illustrate the co-constructions of reality by means of the interactions between the psychologists and myself. In order to clarify this process I have noted the basic principles and their usage in CA in the segment below.

For Heritage (2010), one begins with the *sequence* of utterances, or the succession of speech in an interaction. For Schegloff (2007), this forms the basic or primary context for the interaction and sets the precedent. Heritage (2010) argues that when considering turn taking, the sequence will become important in understanding the construction of understanding within a particular interaction. This is because utterances and actions are to be understood in response to the previous interaction. For Heritage, this allows us to then inspect utterances successively. Let us consider this example posed by Heritage (2010, p. 4-5):

If Ann's turn in line 1 is treated as an invitation by a response that 'accepts' it:

1 Ann: Why don't you come and see me some[times].

2 Bar: [I would like to.

If, by contrast, Barbara had responded with an apology and an excuse:

1 Ann: Why don't you come and see me sometimes.

2 Bar: I'm sorry. I've been terribly tied up lately.

Then it would have been apparent that Barbara had understood Ann's initial utterance as a complaint rather than an invitation.

In this manner Heritage illustrates how CA works to contextualise talk-in-interaction by looking at the sequence of utterances.

Next we look at the *practice*, which refers to any feature or element of the sequence that has (Heritage, 2010, p. 6):

- a) A distinctive character.
- b) Specific locations within a turn or sequence.
- c) Is distinctive in its consequence for the nature or the meaning of the action that the turn implements.

For example (Heritage, 2010, p. 6):

- (a) The turn initially addresses terms designed to select a specific next speaker to respond

A: Gene, do you want another piece of cake?

- (b) (Here) elements of (the) question design...convey an expectation favouring a 'yes' or a 'no' answer. In the next case the word 'any' conveys an expectation tilted towards a 'no.'

Prof: Do you have any questions?

- (c) Oh-prefaced responses to questions primarily conveying that the question was inapposite or out of place

Ann: How are you feeling Joyce.=

Joy: Oh fi:ne.

In this manner, the analysis considers conversational practices used in the sequences to indicate how the interactions were constructed, especially when considering gender. Lastly Heritage (2010) considers the importance of the organization of conversation. Here CA works to locate, in interaction, organized groupings that center on the “fundamental” (p. 6) of the conversation, and that of social

organizations. These include the repair of systemic issues, such as misunderstandings in talk or hearing, and the practices associated with the “management of reference” (p. 7) to either person or other elements in the social world.

Organization broadly encompasses the social elements to interactions, including those related to solidarity, social affiliations, and identity. Hence, this form of analysis was well situated for the task of investigating the female clinical psychologists’ reflections on gender construction in psychotherapy. By combining these three levels of analysis, not only was I able to gain confirmation for the inferences made in this dissertation, but also how those inferences work to illustrate the subtle ways in which gender and gender discourse influence constructions of reality.

3.5 Ethics and limitations

The design of this study was such as to limit the vulnerability and potential harm to my participants. It was important that each respondent was clearly informed of her rights and that I, as the researcher, ensured their integrity, safety and anonymity (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2000).

For Orb et al. (2000), it is not only important to inform the respondent of their rights, but also to protect them from any adversity that may occur. For example, all of my participants had come to a comprehension of gender and its potential influences in psychotherapy only at the end of the interview. This often placed them in a space of deep reflection, or apprehension. At such a point, they may have felt uncomfortable with how they had responded to some of the questions seen in the interview guide. This could have firstly brought up an ethical dilemma of creating dissonance within my participants. Secondly, it could have brought in a procedural issue, as they may have wanted to withdraw from further participation. Their knowledge of respondent rights, as per informed consent, would have allowed for this potentiality. Fortunately, this was not the case.

In essence, ethical consideration is not merely for administrative purposes. It is an important guide to ensure that both the researcher and the participants are protected

and that research is conducted fairly and safely (Harper & Thompson, 2012; Orb et al., 2000).

In following the ethics guidelines for qualitative research, the interviews were only conducted once ethical clearance to the study was awarded from the University of Pretoria. Participants were informed of the nature and purpose of the study before consenting (See [Appendices A & B](#)). Each participant was informed that she could terminate the interview if she wished to. This right was without any consequence, and each person was free to withdraw herself and her participation at any point.

In addition, I had made each person aware of the procedure of data collection and recording, analysis and write-up, and possible publication of my findings. With regards to confidentiality, I assured them that all identifying information, interview transcripts and recordings would be kept confidential and stored under password protection. The data is to be stored at a secure location at the Department of Psychology, University of Pretoria for 15 years. If, for any reason, participation invoked any psychological distress, I took it upon myself to find free counselling for my participants.

The design of this study was to gain information on female clinical psychologists' reflections of gender construction in psychotherapy. It was by no means directed at the information and narratives of their clients. Each respondent was explicitly made aware of this so as to protect privacy of those under her treatment.

Chapter 4: Analysis

Introduction

For Karl Marx there exists the idea that “all that is solid melts into air” and “all that is holy is profane” (Berman, 1983, p. 13). Of course Marx was referring to the engine of capitalism and its relation to human activity. Yet, I find that this quote beautifully encapsulates the social constructionist perspective on reality. That which is perceived as real ‘*solid*’, can under this perspective, have multiple realities to it. Hence, the idea that reality is fixed, then in essence, ‘*melts into air*.’

Furthermore, with the use of CA, not only does this *melting* seem to occur, but also that which is considered *sanctified or sacred*—gender in this case—is made profane. What I mean by this sanctification is that in the literature, seen in *Chapter 2*, gender is seen as a natural fact under the essentialist view (Jordanova, 1980). Moreover, as a natural fact the conception of gender cannot be disputed, almost in the same way that religious facts cannot be debunked. Based on this kind of thinking, can it not be said that viewing gender as a fact makes it unchallengeable? Under social constructionism, gender as a fixed reality can be seen as erroneous. Gender, which has been portrayed as something natural and almost untouchable in essentialism, is a construct of social interaction under social constructionism.

In this chapter we take on the task of analysing three categories, derived from the literature discussed in *Chapter 2*. These are the same categories that have informed the interview guide seen in [Appendix C](#). These a priori categories are the participants’ *personal understandings of gender*; how they *understand gender in psychotherapy*; and the *usefulness of gender to psychotherapy*.

In addition, and for the purpose of reiteration, it is important to highlight the steps taken from *Chapter 3* on the method of analysis seen in this chapter. First, it is important to remember that CA can be used for descriptive and interpretive analysis. However, under social constructionism, the aim is more to provide a description of people’s understanding of their reality. Therefore, the analysis will endeavour to

remain descriptive. Secondly, CA is concerned with the explanation of collections of phenomena discovered in the data. Once interesting instances have been located, CA is applied to describe one such an instance. This description is then compared with the rest of the collection to see if it is a truthful description of the phenomena.

In addition, Heritage's (2010) steps were applied, from data transcription to the application of Jefferson light CA (see [Appendix D](#) for glossary key). To reiterate, Heritage notes the importance of sequence, practice and organisation (see *Chapter 3*). In this manner I was able to not only identify the collections on noteworthy phenomena, but also analyse them according to the descriptions expressed by the participants. An important caveat must be given at this point. In CA when one speaks of collections, one does not infer themes. On the contrary, collections are the gathering of data that seems to express or describe a certain phenomena present in the data set. Hence, the term collection/s will be spoken from here on out. In addition, due to the guideline of CA, transcription is done in *Courier New* font with condensed margins. This means that the excerpts taken from the data take much space in analysis. However, where CA is not used I refer to the standard American Psychological Association 6th edition citation style.

4.1 Understanding gender and gender construction

Gender, as seen by this research, is a product of social co-construction, embedded in social, political, scientific and psychological activity, both historical and contemporary. Gender is considered as an atemporal construction of human activity for M. Gergen (2000). On this basis, she argues that critical psychological inquiry is not to deny or eliminate such constructions, but to question the type of reality it works to create in more analytical ways.

Gender, as discussed in *Chapter 2*, can be understood from an essentialist view where sex forms the physical basis for anatomical differences (Giddens, 1993; Shafer et al, 2006; Smit, 2006; Jacobs, 1996). Under this position, gender can often be seen to be synonymous with sex. For some feminist writers, under social constructionism, this view is static and flawed. Furthermore, it does not leave room for debate around gender as a construction and how it may influence people's lives (Butler, 1990; M. Gergen, 2000; Giddens, 1993).

For authors such as M. Gergen (2000), Giddens (1993), Martins (1987), Jordanova (1980), Chodorow (1999), and Smit (2006), gender is more than just a scientific categorisation. It is a construct of social interaction that works through human activity to influence how people function. It also helps them make sense of their experiential world. It has norms and valued practices that are normalised over time and have become a seemingly natural part of human activity. Thus, gender permeates various spheres of human activity. This process is insidious for Smit (2006), as, due to its social and historical progression practices, gender finds its way into the very fibres of interaction. In addition, it would appear from the literature that gender is not critically evaluated, as it is often seen as static and categorically. Most importantly for this analysis is that gender has a language to it that works to create and maintain discourses that may influence how reality is viewed.

From a more pragmatic and essentialist approach, sex and gender work as categories to help people to make sense of their world (Martin, 1987; Smit, 2006). In this manner gender could still be useful as a static element of anatomical difference as it would provide certainty. Scientific enquiry is based on providing proofs in order to not only make sense of phenomena, but also predict and maybe even to control them (Greenstein, 2003; Santrock, 2005). For Greenstein (2003), such proof enables a fair amount of certainty in the social world. This certainty enables us to explain phenomena.

However, what emerged in the analysis is a phenomena relating to how the participants of this study appeared to be uncertain in articulating their understandings of gender. This is of interest for two reasons. Firstly, there is an assumption in the literature that gender and its related discourses are seemingly natural. Hence, it would make sense that people would be able to, at the very least, describe it more solidly. Secondly, that even from an essentialist, categorical perspective gender seems to have a greater interactional quality not fully captured by such definitions.

Initially it appeared that each of the participants understood gender from the more essentialist position. In this manner, gender was seen as male and female due to anatomical differences. It should be noted here that two of the women interviewed

ventured to consider other understandings related to gender—which included norms and valued practices. However, one of them considered that such realities only mattered to her clients, as she was certain about what gender meant for her. For this participant gender was real and anatomical. However, as our interaction progressed, she too became doubtful of what gender actually meant.

Nevertheless, all three women had differing views on gender, even though they all held the same basis of gender as anatomical, over more analytical considerations. When explored further, it was revealed that within talk-as-interaction, gender as a scientific category, provided less certainty to the views of the participants.

It is needless to say that each woman interviewed expressed differing exposures to gender. However, two of the participants had encountered gender difficulties directly in psychotherapy. This steered our conversations in a more analytical direction. Of the two, only one considered gender analytically from the outset of the discussion. If we take for example, Lufuno noted gender as a category, a binary of male and female. She asserted that she does not consider gender as a significant dynamic in therapy, but that she sees “*patients,*” and that she “*would treat*” her “*female patients and...*” also her “*male patients,*” in a similar way. As Lufuno noted, “*for me it (gender) won’t have any influence, regardless.*”

Lufuno became a psychologist, because she wanted to assist children who had suffered from sexual abuse. What is interesting about Lufuno’s preceding arguments is that not only does she not consider gender to have any significant role in her work, but extends this notion to her own life. This was seen as our interaction continued. Lufuno noted that gender has no role in her life, yet she expresses many of her views in a gendered manner. Consider the following interaction as an example thereof. Please note that bolding is used to highlight certain important junctures in the interaction:

- Darrian:** If I, if I may ask, what do you understand gender to be?
- Lufuno:** Gender? In simple terms **it’s male and female.** And also, maybe how we relate to one another. I don’t know if I am answering your question.

Darrian: It does.
Do, do you think that it has a **role** in your
life?

Lufuno: I think in the **olden days**, maybe it did play a
role, but where I am sitting now, I feel that I
have as much opportunities as **other male
therapists out there**... So I don't necessarily
think that it plays a **role**.

As seen with the above communication, the manner in which Lufuno goes about expressing her understanding about gender, and its role in her life, seems to be directly linked to her understanding of gender and its relation to modern times. In this manner, she not only understands gender in binary as Jordanova (1980) noted, but also speaks to gender as something temporal. It was hard to ascertain what Lufuno meant with her expression of *role*, even with further prompting. However, she seems to be describing certain power dynamics that existed earlier within the profession of psychology, and related to gender as well. One could infer the meaning behind this as related to the gendered hierarchies spoken to and existing in feminist literature. Yet, that would extend beyond the descriptive intentions of this study.

This interaction is interesting in two ways. Firstly, Lufuno seems to construct her reflection on gender as an element that does not have a role in her life. This was in response to my own construction of gender, labelling it as a **role**. However, it appears in this interaction, my assertion that gender may have a role in her life is met with consideration on Lufuno's part. As a result, she endeavours to provide context to her explanation in the proceeding utterance.

Lufuno began by explaining that, in the past, gender may have had a role in her life, but that now it did not. What is noteworthy, if we follow the sequence of her last utterance, is how she seems to tie this past and present understanding to the idea of psychotherapy and the opportunities previously awarded to **male therapists**. This seems to be done in a manner to solidify her claim. What these opportunities are Lufuno never explains, and it would be improper to assume that this answer is related to the rise of feminism within psychology. Secondly, Lufuno's utterance seems to

challenge M. Gergen's (2000) conception of gender as atemporal, as gender and gender roles seem to change with time for Lufuno. It appears that, in the past, gender had more of a presence in psychology, awarding more opportunities to male therapists. Yet, Lufuno considers this not as prevalent today. It would appear that her description almost alludes to an idea that, with psychology, gender no longer privileges one sex over the other.

Anna seems to share the idea of gender as a binary, as expressed by Lufuno. She considered another type of gender construction as seen by her clients, but noted that this was not her view on the topic.

Anna: I know with the intersex debate it gets a bit complicated on what that (gender) would mean, but I think for me probably—myself, male/ female—and I think for clients, sometimes what it is, is their definition. How they would define themselves.

-Erm, I think for me it's quite straightforward. A woman is with a XX chromosome, for me. Probably the physical attribute of female hormones and sex hormones—and female breasts, all the—I think physically defined.

What is important to note here is that Anna alludes to the idea that gender can be defined in differing ways. These ways, as seen by her account, create a binary as well, most notably, her conception versus that of her clients. However, for Anna, as a self-proclaimed heterosexual female, gender is seen as *quite straightforward* and biological, defined by chromosomes, hormones and physicality. With Anna, just as with Lufuno, gender is considered more static in definition and is closely tied to the pragmatist position of a gender base drawn from anatomical differences.

However, when considering Kelebogile's understanding, a more curious element is introduced. Kelebogile, who initially wanted to be a teacher, explained that much of her work exposed her to gender in one way or another. From the onset of the interview, Kelebogile considered gender to be something more than just anatomical, but extended it to a social **role** as well. Kelebogile noted her understanding of gender as follows:

Darrian: Erm, so...in your own words, what would you say gender is?

Kelebogile: Gender? You know, *ignoring the biological*

component, it's more than that. Obviously, the biological component would be there, but it is how you—you, and how you view your **role** in society.

In her response, Kelebogile acknowledges that gender is both a social and biological creation. However, she aims to [*ignore*] *the biological component* and situates gender in society, as a role within it. Kelebogile describes gender as being more than biological. In addition, in the following utterance, she exemplifies her position, but with a contradiction in the expression of gender and how it may affect people's understanding of themselves.

Kelebogile: *There are some people who are women because of the biological component, but they are very masculine--and that they have got these feelings...that they maybe could have been different.*

In this utterance Kelebogile seems to be suggesting that when it comes to gender some people who are categorically female may come to be perceived as *very masculine* and, in this manner, *they could have been different*. To clarify this, it would appear that Kelebogile is expressing an understanding that a person becomes 'a woman' *because of the biological component*, but that this reality can be disrupted by *feelings* that are associated with masculinity. This creates a different experience of gender.

It may be that for Kelebogile, the social understanding of gender as biological is used to construct the idea of femininity and female gender roles. However, when feelings associated with masculinity enter the equation, we find that people's experiences of themselves differ. Support for this point may be seen in her own self-identification.

Note the following interaction about understanding her gender role:

Kelebogile: There are some people **who are women because of the biological component**, but they are **very masculine** and that they have got these feelings that they maybe could have been different and then they embrace that gender...**of how they see themselves.**

Darrian: And **how do you see yourself**, if I may ask, based on that?

Kelebogile: In terms of my role? **Very feminine**, you know?
Motherly, erm roles that are prescribed for me
as a woman—in society, by society. The way I
was raised. **The way I was socialised.**

If the sequence in the segment above is followed, Kelebogile provides an explanation for her understanding of gender and gender construction. She does this by unequivocally identifying herself as very feminine, and here her role is constructed around the identity of motherhood. However, Kelebogile works to create a further understanding in that not only is her own role “*very feminine*” and “*motherly*”, but that these are prescribed roles for “*a woman—in society, by society*”. In this manner, Kelebogile suggests that gender happens in social interaction through socialisation. This description seems to be in opposition to Anna and Lufuno’s understanding of gender as a binary categorisation.

From the simplistic textual analysis seen here, it would appear that these women are clear on what they understand gender to be. Categorically speaking, gender appears to be a dichotomous way of identifying sex differences. However, gender seems to have socially prescribed roles that may influence how people understand themselves. The analysis, at this point, seems to fairly correspond with the debates raised in the literature.

As noted earlier, with CA it is important to build collections of phenomena before applying a chosen CA method of analysis. As stated in *Chapter 3*, with planned interviewing one runs the risk of an extensive sequence, which often negates some CA principles. One such principle is that of turn taking. However, if the sequence enables one to gain support for interesting phenomena then it may circumscribe such a flaw. Let us consider the utterance expressed by Kelebogile seen earlier, but this time with the application of CA.

05:29–05:49

1 **Kelebogile:** There are some people **who—are women**, because
2 **of the biological componen[t**

3 **Darrian:** [Uh—ummm..

4 **Kelebogile:** but they are **very masculine** and that they have
5 got these—feelings that they er, maybe could

- 6 have been different and then they embrace that
7 gender[.
8 **Darrian:** [hmm]
9 **Kelebogile: Of how—how they see themselves.**

In this sequence we find that in line-1, Kelebogile begins by exploring the notion that some people are **women** due a biological component. I seem to support this construction with an affirmation in line-3. Therefore, agreeing with this construction. In addition, Kelebogile alludes to the constructed binary of femininity and masculinity by introducing a contradiction in line-4 with the utterance ‘but they are **very masculine.**’ Here, Kelebogile describes this biological binary, but appears to express a potential that there may not be a union between biology and behaviour. That even though you are biologically female, you may act very masculine. She supports this notion in line-5 with the utterance “these—feelings”, stressing that the qualifier to such a contradiction may lie in internal feelings of gender roles. Later in the sequence, once she’s explained how a person may embrace such a difference, I again appear to be in agreement with this particular understanding of gender. If we recall from the interactions and sequences explored earlier, all three women expressed that, for them, gender is male and female. Yet each, to a varying degree, seemed to give an indication that there may be more to the binary than just the biological construction. In this manner, the above CA sequence seems to give support for this understanding.

Social constructionism considers multiple conceptions of reality. Hence, it is important to consider those moments that are opposing as well (Hibberd, 2005). It would appear, that, from the interactions seen, that the women interviewed for this study acknowledge the differing realities to gender. Yet for them it seems to be more of a binary distinction; a categorical marker of anatomical difference that has certain expressions attached to it.

However, when applying CA to the analysis, a thought-provoking development takes place. Conversation analysis, as used in this dissertation, allowed for a more in-depth look at the data. In this manner a phenomenon related to an ambiguity in the understanding of gender emerged. This phenomenon brings to the fore a version of

reality that seems elementally more complex than a categorical binary, rather it raises a definitional issue. It would appear that CA exposes the difficulty it takes to describe and discuss gender. This is an important occurrence, as it speaks to how such phenomena are socially constructed. Furthermore, it also shows that in these constructions inconsistencies can arise. In the following section I explore elements of disconfirmation in the collections around a phenomenon as it adds a richer understanding to the analysis.

4.2 ‘All that is solid melts into air’

The uncertainty of gender

Conversation analysis employs the usage of *turn taking*, *repair*, the *sequencing of interaction* and *lexical choice* in illustrating how talk is structured in an interaction (Heritage, 2010). Schegloff (2007) and Heritage (2010) observed that, in the using of CA to illustrate how people construct the understandings of their experiences, one has to look at various aspects of talk. These aspects include the sequence of talk (the succession of utterances), practice (which speaks to distinction in the process of turn taking), and the organisation of the conversation. These concepts have been addressed in detail in the previous chapter. Yet, in this section, we consider Heritage’s steps, in addition to the overall collection building process as described by Wooffitt and Hutchby (2002).

As part of this analysis, we return to some of the utterances associated with the participants’ understandings of gender. In this segment I make reference to my own part in the interviews as to illustrate how insidious gender can be and how it possibly influenced these interactions. Let us return to my initial interaction with Lufuno;

03:00- 03:33

- 1 **Darrian:** If I, if I may ask—erm, what is your—‘ what do
2 you understand gender to be?
3 **Lufuno:** (0.1) Gender?
4 **Darrian:** Mhh...
5 **Lufuno:** (0.3) In simple terms it’s, erm, (amused sound)
6 **males and females.**
7 **Darrian:** Uh-huh...
8 **Lufuno:** and also, maybe how (0.1) we relate
9 to—‘ >one another<. I don’t know if I am
10 answering your question

- 11 **Darrian:** It doe[s (unclear utterance)
12 **Lufuno:** [so maybe you could explain what you
13 mean, because—`
14 **Darrian:** Well—erm, you actually answered my question.

Notice that I have transcribed the sequence of utterances verbatim to the interview. Although this does not structurally alter the transcription, by changing the interaction or context, it does add a richer dynamic to the sequence. Furthermore, by using Jefferson light, one is able to track the changes in speech and intonation. This enabled me to represent the interaction as truthfully as possible. In the sequence of utterances, seen here, the interaction seems to begin with gender as a distinctive point of the discussion. Even though this was the purpose of the interaction, as per the interview guide, it is the manner in which it is achieved that is of interest.

Notice how in line-1 I begin the sequence. The “**if I, if I may**” segment organization—although seemingly polite and coupled with the quick interval, around the term “**—erm**”—seems to construct hesitation from the onset. In reference to the question, the hesitation seems to be around the idea of gender. One can then see how Lufuno meets this hesitation with uncertainty around the question of gender as well. What follows is a repair in the interaction, calling for me to clarify. This can be evinced by Lufuno’s slight, but significant pause in line-3 just before her own questioning of gender as a topic. Almost as in an attempt to assert my own conviction and manage the repair I then indicate a short affirmation in “**Mhh...**”

From this point the communication seems to become more complex than just a mere question and answer interaction, as my intent was to begin a conversation with gender as the central topic.

In Lufuno’s turn there is an extensive pause in line-5 just before she adds to the process of creating clarity, but then fails to do so as signified by the interjection “**erm, (amused sound)**”. This sequence in totality seems to add more hesitation. At first, one may think that, based on my uncertainty in the interaction—and the call for repair by Lufuno—that the next step would be to affirm gender as the distinctive topic of the interaction. However, it appears that even then Lufuno

seems almost apprehensive in doing so, relying on an interjection and nervous amusement before proposing the binary of “**males and females**” as an answer in line-6. What seems to be created in this interaction is the idea that gender, although noted categorically, is something that is hesitantly spoken about in this interaction. It, therefore, creates uncertainty in the communication.

It would appear from this segment that the sequence and organisation on the interaction work to construct uncertainty around the topic of gender. There seems to be something about gender that I am aware of, but I do not say. Lufuno meets this unspoken issue; as she then tries to repair her own uncertainty by acknowledging gender more directly as *male and female*. However, this may be seen as an ineffective attempt as she seems nervously amused. It could be noted once again that I, as the first speaker, brought in hesitation to the interaction and that Lufuno, as the second speaker, was simply responding to it. However, this does not fully account for Lufuno’s nervous attempt at repair.

Further support for this unspoken issue on gender is found from line-7, as I employ a talk technique to acknowledge Lufuno’s repair, and to indicate that she could continue. It would appear that Lufuno is unclear as how to continue as she then says between lines-8 and 9 “**maybe how (0.1) we relate to—` >one another<**”. The placement of the lexicon *maybe* in this sequence followed by a brief, but significant pause just before the rest of the sequence provides support for the idea of ambivalence about gender. In this case, the uncertainty is related to what gender could specify as a relational concept. This is especially relevant when considering how Lufuno constructs the dichotomy of male and female as a way in which people relate to *one another*—increasing her rate of speech at this juncture.

Lufuno’s practice at this point seems to create the idea that gender provides relation between people, even though she appears uncertain about how it goes about doing so. In addition, the statement “I don’t know if I am answering your question” at the end of this utterance evinces the uncertainty in this interaction.

What seems quite apparent in this interaction is that gender, as the topic of discussion, is problematic and is not as clear as one may think. However, this is only one

interaction. In order to make more sense of this uncertainty around gender as topic, I went on to ask Lufuno about her understanding of gender in her own life. This interaction was markedly shorter than our previous one, but it was directed at understanding her views on gender relationally.

03:44-04:01

1 **Darrian:** Do you think it has a **role** in your life?

2 **Lufuno:** **Not necessarily.** I think in the (giggle)

3 (0.1) old, **olden days**, maybe it did play a

4 **role**, but—er where I am sitting now, I feel that

5 have as much opportunities as **other male**

6 **therapists out there...**

In line-1 I introduce the idea of gender as a role and work to construct this role in relation to Lufuno’s life. She responds to this question by creating a caveat in line-2, stating “**not necessarily**”, therefore adding to the description that gender may not necessarily have a role in her life. It would appear from this sequence that Lufuno does not regard gender as that important in her life. This is interesting, as she noted that gender was a manner in which people related to each other, but effectively limiting her part in this process. This sequence seems to create ambivalence around the idea of a gender role. As a result, Lufuno seems to endeavour towards separating herself from the association of a constructed gender role.

Furthermore, as Lufuno relates her understanding of gender roles, she describes it as something that had a greater bearing in the “**olden days**,” line 3. However, that may not be the case now. It would appear that I seem to accept this as there is no interjection or query at this juncture.

What is of further interest, in this utterance, is Lufuno’s lexical choice when comparing her opportunities. Consider her description of her experiences as compared to “**other male therapists**,” seen in lines-5 and 6. Although this was not part of the question posed to her, it would appear from this sequence that Lufuno cannot say for certain what gender is in her life. In addition, she can only make sense of gender through other capacities, such as her role as a therapist. She also relates her opportunities to other male therapists ‘out there,’ and not from her own working environment. This leaves one wondering about the men in her current environment.

Lufuno constructs her understanding of her experiences, firstly from a gendered identity, and then from a professional identity. One could speculate as to why she did this, especially as she chose to construct her experiences of gender in relation to her professional identity. This is as a psychologist and not other aspects of her identity or life. Even more curious is that I never attempted to find clarity at this point, and accepted her explanation. This is especially relevant based on the consideration that it was a loaded explanation. However, what is clear from this interaction is that gender seems to not only influence her understanding of herself as a therapist, but also the opportunities available to her.

Lufuno was not the only one to express the uncertainty around the definition and articulation of gender. In fact, all three participants were uncertain how to engage with the topic of gender. Anna could only make sense of it in relation to sexuality or relationships. She noted that gender “*is related to sexuality,*” but that it becomes “*awkward*” when dealing with the definition of gender. Furthermore, she does not “*know if it has to do with gender or sexuality*”. Conversation analysis was not employed at this point as the collection of data around the phenomena was encapsulated by the interaction with Lufuno.

In order to express her own understanding of gender, Kelebogile used culture as her reference point. She reflected on her understanding of gender based on her exposure to her own cultural normative experiences:

Kelebogile: *In a rural community...you are expected to be a woman and to behave in a certain way...to look in a certain way. To present yourself in a certain—certain things you can't do. You know? So that's how I see myself.*

Like being married in an African (tradition)—like if you are married you are a Makoti¹, there are certain things that you are expected to do.

In this explanation, Kelebogile tried to move away from the anatomical view of gender. It would appear that the only other way she could make sense of gender was through norms that were culturally situated. Such norms seem to be expected from a

¹ Makoti translates into wife or bride in isiZulu

woman, especially if she is a makoti—or at least according to Kelebogile’s understanding and descriptions.

Therefore, when considering the data at a superficial level of analysis, Anna saw gender as purely anatomical, Lufuno considered it as how people related to one another, and Kelebogile considered it as a way in which we come to understand our own identity. These were their subjective views. Yet CA allowed for a more detailed look at the data collections around this phenomenon of uncertainty. In this manner, it emerged that, when gender is spoken to directly, the reasoning behind its discourses seem to be unclear and difficult to make sense of for these women.

Uncertainty about the denotative and connotative meanings around gender, as noted in this section, was present in various places in all three interviews. In fact, Anna mentioned it immediately in our interaction. Directly after noting that the definition of gender and what its essentialist construction noted, Anna went on to ask me to define it. See the interaction below.

11:49–12:19

1 **Anna:** >Just on that, **what-is-the definition**-of °gender?

2 **Darrian:** Erm, what theoretically or according to-`

3 well it is from what I understand, from what I have

4 -read in the literature-erm, it’s the construction of

5 a set of identities or roles that are based up on

6 one’s **sex**. S[o-`

7 **Anna:** [So it is related to sexuality in-`

We pay special attention to turn taking here, as Anna seems to build a challenge in our interaction. Note once again how hesitation with my turn is brought into the interaction in line-1. We can see that Anna quickens her speech at the beginning of the sequence and employs a practice strategy to isolate gender. Here, “**what-is-the definition**,” is a clear move for clarification of the topic. Yet this practice, coupled with her increased rate at the beginning of the sequence and the softening of intonation at the end, seems to bring up hesitation in her turn. In this moment, we see how such hesitancy is related to the uncertainty in the understanding and articulation of gender.

Directly after I answer her question, she moves to affirm her position that it is related sexuality in line-7, and almost as a statement of fact. She used the word ‘**sex**’ at the end of my as a vantage point to give weight to her understanding, hence challenging my definition. Also note that I defined it in accordance to sex and not sexuality. This may have been an attempt by her to gain leverage, or to solidify the concept in her mind. These turns are important as I brought pre-existing expertise on gender to this interaction, expertise that may have challenged her experience. Hence, this kind of challenge is reasonable. However, exploring her reasons behind this move is speculative at best as we did not explore it in the data.

We can gather from the descriptions given in this collection that gender is a difficult construct to makes sense of. Where in the previous collection the biological definition gave some certainty to the concept, in this collection such certainty was wavered. It would appear from such sequences that the social construction of gender not only happens in interaction, but in intersection with other constructs as well. In this section, the collection of data from the participants seem to work to disconfirm the idea that gender finds its basis in the anatomical binary. Rather it seems to be a set of social norms, discourses and practices enmeshed with other such construction. From the analysis seen here, it would appear that gender exists and intersects relative to a set of social constructions and discourses that include sexuality, culture and the like.

In the following section, we take our analysis a little further in reviewing a collection that speaks directly to the co-construction of gender. In following the progression of the analysis thus far, we have considered different descriptions of gender. First it was described as categorical and of a binary nature. The participants related to this with certainty. Next, that certainty became uncertainty once gender was deconstructed, especially when considering the specific discourses related to it. The following section, therefore, builds on this by illustrating just how, even with such an inconsistency, people still may practice gender in interaction—gendered discourse appears to assist in this process.

4.3 Costume makes the clown

The co-construction of gender

Kelebogile was of the opinion that, when considering gender, we should try to ignore the biological aspect of it, as she believed that the prescribed role of gender was more of interest. Kelebogile often made reference to gender roles throughout her interview. Much of what she said was aligned with the literature, especially the works of Giddens (1989), Jordanova (1980) and Butler (1990). Although having no formal exposure to gender theory, Kelebogile considered how gender came to influence her understanding of her life experiences. When I asked Kelebogile about how she understood gender in her own life this was her response:

05:52-06:12

- 1 Darrian: Erm—and **how do you see yourself**, if I may
 2 ask?
 3 °based on that.
 4 Kelebogile: **In terms of my role?**
 5 Darrian: **Mhh...**
 6 Kelebogile: **very feminin[e]**, you know?
 7 Darrian: [hmm
 8 Kelebogile **Motherly**, erm **roles that are prescribed [for**
 9 Darrian: [pre
 10 -scri[bed?
 11 Kelebogile: [me as a woman—in society, by society.
 12 by the way I was raised. **The way I was**
 13 **socialised**

The value of this interaction does not necessarily draw its importance from the sequence of talk-in-interaction, but rather the organisation of this interaction. For instance, in line-4, Kelebogile responds to my question by defining her position through a clarifying question. She brings into her turn the idea of an identity role. Hence, she constructing the interaction on the basis of her understanding, but leaves room for repair in case she assumed the sequence incorrectly.

I affirm that our understanding is in alignment (with the usage of “**Mhh...**” in line-5 as an acceptance). Therefore, allowing for her to expand on her position. Kelebogile considers herself to be “**very feminine**,” as seen in line-6. Here a very curious

juncture occurs. I move to align with this idea, placing an overlapping utterance of affirmation in line-7. This occurs just before Kelebogile finishes her turn. It would appear from this lexical description that I agree that she is very feminine which she equates to being “**motherly**” in line-8.

What is quite curious about this intersection is that not only were we constructing a discussion about gender, but also participating in the co-construction of gender in vivo. This may be marked by my perception of Kelebogile as *very feminine*. However, in this sequence the discourses associated with femininity and mothering seem to be aligned in our construction of Kelebogile’s gender enactment.

In line-8, Kelebogile works to contextualise her understanding of her role by noting that it is something that is socially prescribed. This causes a rupture in the interaction as seen between lines-7, 8 and 9 as I request clarity on this description. This repair is accepted, which is evinced by there being no pause in talk and a move to clarify by Kelebogile. In her description she moves to define herself and other women according to this role. Here she advocates that there are certain roles that are prescribed in society, and by society to socialise people into gender forms.

Another such instance of gender roles construction occurred between Anna and myself. In this interaction we were exploring what she considered gender to be as an experience. Note the follow sequence:

15:03-15:19

1 **Anna:** So my sense is also that I often feel vulnerable,

2 because I am a °woman. I don’t know how many **men**

3 **feel vulnerable** and **don’t say it**. [But it’s just

4 **Darrian:** [ya-`

5 this thing of, erm, we are more vulnerable as

6 women, I think.

7 **Darrian:** I think vulnerability plays a very big part in the

8 norming process. Erm, for instance my view is that

9 we taught a lot of that as well

10 **Anna:** But we are physically more, physically weaker.

11 We haven’t got as much muscle[–mass.

12 **Darrian:** [amused sound

When exploring this interaction one could simply read it as a woman describing her understanding of her own gender. However, when we apply CA to the text we can track just how gender discourses are employed and affirmed, thus constructing gender and the understanding of gender in interaction.

In line-1 Anna introduces the *practice* of this sequence as *vulnerability*. There is an emphasis on the word “**vul**nerable,” and, in this manner, she constructs her sense of self as feeling vulnerable. However, what is interesting is that she equates this through the lexical choice of “**because**” she is “a woman” in line-2. Anna continues by expressing the thought that she is unsure if “**men feel vulnerable**”, but “**don’t say it**”. This lexical device works to construct the notion that men may, in fact, feel vulnerable at times, but do not speak about it. A juncture occurs in line-4, as I affirm this point with a “**Ya-ʌ**”. Here there seems to be a very interesting co-construction of gender in an essentialist view, and pertaining to men and women. As according to the literature noted in *Chapter 2*, there are certain discourses related to gender norms, which consider men as less likely to express their own feelings of vulnerability.

Vulnerability, according to such discourse, is something akin to femininity and often discouraged in masculinity. Where women are vulnerable, men are strong (Martins, 1987). Furthermore, another discourse around masculinity is that men do not talk about their vulnerabilities (Martins, 1987). I seem to agree with this point and work to make sense of it later between lines 7-9. Yet Anna considers that her mere identity as a woman creates vulnerability. This is interesting when considering how Kelebogile also spoke to the default discourses assigned to women in society.

5 Kelebogile: **very feminin[e]**, you know?

6 Darrian: [hmm]

7 Kelebogile: **Motherly**, erm **roles that are prescribed**

In her case, Kelebogile seems very feminine and part of that femininity was the idea of being motherly. This formed part of her identity and how she endeavours to be perceived.

Something worth noting when looking at the interaction with Anna is that I seem to make an attempt to limit the gravity of her claim regarding female vulnerability. I employ a lexicon strategy in my utterance (see lines 7-9) to normalise the feelings expressed by her. Here I assign the experience of vulnerability to the process of norming and social teaching. As CA requires us to draw inferences from the data, we cannot directly say what this attempt is for, although we can speculate. One possibility is that, as with the idea of white privilege, in gender there is male privilege. Male privilege speaks to the idea that men will, by default of the identity, have a better standing in social interaction (Irigaray, 1993). They will have better access to resources, more rights and be socially safer (Irigaray, 1993). In fact, in the earlier segment, Lufuno noted this with relation to her understanding of gender roles. She claimed that men previously held more opportunities than women did.

If we follow this possible reasoning, what is it about Anna's statement that created such a response in me? The answer may lie in the last part of our interaction. In line-10, Anna rebuts my claim, noting that women are physically weaker than men. The way she structures this utterance speaks directly to the discourses around femininity and the essentialist views on gender. She begins with "but" as an emphasised preposition and introduces a counter position, housed within the gender discourse of female "weak(ness)". What this seems to descriptively translate into is that "we," as women "are physically...weak." What follows in line -2 is that this point appears to amuse me. Although it may stand to reason that as the researcher, I am fairly well aware of prevailing gender discourse, and found this point noteworthy. However, it is the *amusement* that is of interest, as it could speak to a speculative power dynamic at play (Irigaray, 1993). This point will be expanded upon later with the discussion in *Chapter 5*.

In essence, vulnerability and weakness are quite symbolic with gender discourse, as noted in the literature. It, therefore, appears that Anna wishes to firmly illustrate this point. Once again, we see how gender subtly influences the interactions seen here. It may be that Anna is expressing one of the main ways in which gender and gender discourse work to construct identity, and how, in interaction those constructions gain value. In this manner, it appears that, theoretically, gender discourse informs these women on how to behave. Such behaviour is socially acceptable and, in order to be

accepted in society, they have to behave in accordance to the prevailing discourse. Hence, using CA on such interactions, work to illustrate how we co-constructed the understanding of gender in the participants' experiences.

4.4 “Don’t think of a pink elephant”

Gender in therapy

The literature explored in *Chapter 2* is vital to the analysis seen in this section. I had previously mentioned that the literature review was constructed in particular manner. The aim behind this was not just to define gender as a product of social interaction. Rather, my aim was to illustrate how gender discourses are part of the legacy of psychology. This section aims to consider how the women interviewed for this study came to construct their understanding of gender in psychotherapy in our interaction. A phenomenon that arose in the collection seen here, relates to that of *being perceived as a gendered person*. These participants have described issues pertaining to transference and projections, as part of this phenomenon. Hence, this section is divided into two parts, the first regarding transference and the second regarding projections.

During the course of this research, gender discourses seemed to be tied to the perception of gender as well. As the participants noted, many of their clients would express views about their life difficulties from a gendered perspective. In addition, it was noted that gendered perceptions influenced their view of their clients as well. For example, Kelebogile described a hypothetical situation regarding a potential female client, but through discourses related the feminine decorum of being “a lady”. As indicated in *Chapter 2*, such ‘perceptions’ are essential to the gendering process. In this description, she tried to explain just how gender worked to influence people’s perceptions, especially in therapy. Our collection around this phenomenon begins as follows.

Kelebogile: *How a lady is supposed to be? Like decently, you know. I suppose that’s the stereotype. If a man sits in a certain way, sits like that! You know. (This was a gesture to my slouch). It’s okay. But a woman who just plonks herself and sits, for me it’s not okay... it will influence how I interact with them. Because they would want to be treated in a certain way.*

Here Kelebogile is describing the construction of a *lady*, and that a lady is supposed to be perceived as decent. This is in response to a question I posed to her earlier about what she considers the term gender to mean. In addition, it was directly after she introduced it in a description of her perceptions of a client. This particular discourse seems to inform such a perception of women as she then said that “*If man sits in a certain way, sits like that! You know. It’s okay.*” In this moment she was making reference as to how I was sitting, with my legs apart. In this interaction Kelebogile noted that this was fine for men, but she implied that a woman who is decent would not sit in such a fashion.

Furthermore, she articulated that she would not accept such behaviour in her mind, as “most probably, it would raise an eyebrow for” her, especially if a woman acted this way. What is interesting is that Kelebogile seemed aware of how such discourse informs stereotypes about people. In fact, she was open enough to acknowledge that such perceptions would influence how she interacts with her patients. With this in mind, perceptions seem to aid the construction of gender. This may be due to them being informed by certain discourses around gendered behaviour. As the literature would suggest, such perceptions subtly influence interaction. On this note, let us now turn to markers of gender perceptions in therapy. In doing so we consider the subtle constructions of gender, through transference, followed by the more blatant constructions, as seen through projections. Concepts such as projections and transference are psychological terms introduced by these women as a way of describing their experience of gender. Hence, the exploration that is to follow. It should be noted that both these terms suggest unconscious motivations or difficulties. However, it is the content of such elements that are of interest. This is especially relevant to the concept of projection, as it speaks to an underlying dynamic that is projected onto an appropriate object (Santrock, 2007).

4.4.1 Gender as transference

Austrian physician Joseph Breuer first observed the concept of *transference* in his hypnosis-based treatment of the famous Anna O (Rutan, Stone & Shay, 2014). He considered that psychological symptoms were associated with memories that were either forgotten or repressed (Rutan et al., 2014). In Anna O’s case, he considered

these to be memories related to her father which led to erotic feelings towards Breuer and the development of a phantom pregnancy—of which Breuer was the father (Greerardyn, 1994). As a term, transference refers to the unconscious redirection of unresolved feelings towards a psychologically appropriate object (Santrock, 2013). Dynamically speaking it is a phenomenon that occurs in such a way as to replay needs that were unfulfilled in past relationships on current relationships (Greerardyn, 1994).

This subsection aims to investigate how gender is brought into psychotherapy, especially through the concept of transference. Furthermore, this transference is perceived and understood by the participants. This collection works to describe gender perception as a particular phenomenon defined by the participants. However, one of the participants gives a differing account, which will be explored later in this chapter. The use of sequencing and organisation of talk is important in this section, as it will allow us to understand how these women create their understanding of gender.

Let us commence with an utterance that Anna noted during her interview process. In this utterance she expressed her understanding of how gender influenced the therapeutic interaction. Like Kelebogile's usage of culture to articulate her views, Anna used race as a way of speaking about gender. In this context, Anna described an understanding of gender as something that could actively evoke feelings of performativity. She shared with me an interaction she had with a client she saw in therapy. In this interaction, 'race' became a central issue that worked to construct their experience of each other. This construction of reality left Anna in an ambivalent space, questioning her own identity and her ability to perform as a therapist.

Anna: [w]ith race for example; where sometimes I feel, "do I need to make more of an effort." Erm, once there was a client that said to me that he didn't want to go to other therapists because they were all white and they don't understand him. But then I thought, 'but I'm also white.' So I didn't know exactly what to make of that, **but I became very aware of my whiteness.** And how he can just dismiss other white people.

Darrian: Maybe there is something specific about your
"whiteness"?

Anna: Ja, well that's what I mean. So in that context my
whiteness became such an issue for me that I felt
that 'now I had to perform in a different way.' And
I think with a-if **there's a gender related thing I
also would have that feeling that I would have to be
a bit more empathic or a bit...**Show that I am-'
overcompensation of-

In this interaction, even without the application of CA, there is an important process evident. Anna argues that in a session with this client, she had experienced the influence of race discourse and the effect it had on her. The client's expression of white therapists being unable to understand his difficulty may have spoken to racial discourse that had influenced his experiences.

Although Anna's example speaks to race, she unequivocally ties it to gender by noting that "*if there's a gender related thing I also would have that feeling that I would have to be a bit more empathic*". Anna seems to be of the mindset that gender discourses may be just as counter-transferential as racial ones. Therefore, this creates a feeling in her that she had to "*perform in a different way*". In this scenario, she claims that she may have been even more empathic. If gender discourses can be as influential as racial discourses, then it would be folly to not pay attention to them in the therapeutic context. This is especially relevant when transference is involved. Let us use CA on the following interaction to illustrate this phenomenon.

17:01-18:07.

1 **Darrian:** Looking at gender in psychotherapy, erm, I
2 know
3 that you did say that **you think that gender**
4 **might be important**, but do you think that it
5 could be **useful in a sense?** (0.1) When working
6 with any client?
7 **Anna:** (0.7) (deep breath) Ja, I mean-if people
8 project things or there's **transference** you can
9 use it, and there's probably **different**

- 10 **transference** if there's a **man or a woman**.
- 11 **Darrian:** **Hmm...** (Acknowledgement)
- 12 **Anna:** (0.2) Erm, and if there are specific
- 13 projections—"you don't understand, **because you**
- 14 **are a woman**, or you ↑do understand **because**
- 15 **you're are a woman**," (0.1) then one can work
- 16 with that.
- 17 **Darrian:** **hmmm...**
- 18 **Anna:** ↑So I think, I think it is a **useful tool**
- 19 (0,2)to think about it. (sigh) If this client
- 20 was a ↑man would he be different.
- 21 **Darrian:** **hmm...hmm.**

Elementally speaking, this interaction is quite clear when considering the sequence of the discussion. Here I utilise several lexical strategies to set up the context of the interaction. This is apparent from line-1 to line-6. I construct the conversation as to indicate the usefulness of gender in therapy as the main focus of the interaction. Furthermore, I set out creating the agenda of gender being important by mentioning that Anna had, in a previous interaction, noted it as well. In this manner, I had worked to constructs the interaction as to direct Anna to speak only of gender in psychotherapy. Anna complies, which is evinced by her adhering to the topic, and her attending to the question. This is seen between lines-7 and 10 and then again between lines-12 and 16. Finally, in line-18 Anna notes gender as "**a useful tool**." Yet, this is in relation to the idea of transference and projection, as they are perceived in therapy.

In the creation of this idea, Anna sequentially organises her argument as to distinctively create such a claim. In this manner CA illustrates to us just how Anna constructs her understanding of gender as transference. With the elevation in her tone (line 18), the phrase "↑So I think" not only gives ownership to the opinion expressed, but also indicates importance. This expression, in combination with the preceding sequence, constructs an opined belief held by Anna. Her perception is that gendered transferences (and projections) could be useful in the therapeutic interaction.

On further analysis using CA, it is curious that in line 7 there is a seven second delay by Anna before responding, followed by a deep inhalation of breath. This may imply that she was thoughtful about the question and did not want to acquiescently agree to it. Such an assumption draws evidence from the placement of her proposition of gender being a useful tool, only after a lengthy process of constructing her understanding. It is in the manner that Anna organises her explanation, which is of interest, especially seen between lines 7 and 9. Here Anna notes that people who come into therapy project certain things onto that interaction. Part of such an interaction produces the notion of “**transference**.” In addition, such a process is potentially “**different**”, especially if it is “**man or a woman**,” doing it. In this sequence, Anna organises her understanding as such to create the notion that gender can form part of the transference network present in therapy. Furthermore, that such a process depends on the gender type that brings it.

It would appear that Anna acknowledges that gender enters the therapeutic interaction, as noted by Weaver-Hightower (2003). Furthermore, gender’s position in psychotherapy lies within projections and transference. In addition, such projections and transferences will be different depending on whether the person is “a man or a woman”, adhering to the binary. Within this interaction, affirmation to Anna’s claim can be found in my acknowledgement seen in line-11

For Anna, it appears that the influence of gender can be found in the transference interaction. This, however, cannot be confirmed by her interaction with me, even though I acknowledged her claim. Yet, we do find support for this claim within Kelebogile’s articulation of gender as transference. This was when she explained how she understood a client/patient’s request to see a psychologist of a specific gender.

Kelebogile: *Countertransference, immediately. You know, I immediately know—it immediately impacts on the therapeutic relationship... I would still sit with them, but in most cases I wouldn’t try to work around them working with me. I would still try and let them realise that gender is not an issue, but I will still refer him, because I wouldn’t want my feelings to be part of the session.*

It would appear then that these two women are in agreement that gender has a place in psychotherapy. In addition, that it is often present within the transference networks.

In this manner gender appears to “*immediately impact...the therapeutic relationship*,” as Kelebogile believes. However, Lufuno, who firmly saw gender as biological noted that it did not influence her interaction with her clients, but recognised that other therapists may find it important.

Lufuno: *I would say it depends on therapists, but if I have to speak for myself, when I sit with a person or with a patient in therapy I don't see gender, I see patients and how I would treat my female patients and would also treat my male patients. So for me it won't have any influence, regardless.*

Lufuno did not consider gender as being represented in a transference relationship. She explained that she did not “*see gender, I (she) see(saw) patients*” and how she intended to treat her “*female patients and (is how she) would also treat (her) male patients*”. Lufuno held a firm belief that gender had no influence over her work as a therapist. This account, when compared to the phenomenon of gendered transference, is disconfirmatory in nature. As it is different to the phenomenon seen in the collection presented here. However, I wish to note here that Lufuno did change her mind at the end of our interview as she noted that, “*as much as you are in 2014, gender issues are still very much alive and they will always play a role in our therapeutic processes.*” This acknowledgement seems to be due to our interaction on gender as a topic of discussion.

One could question why someone like Lufuno would consider this change in her position post our discussion. In the literature Smit (2006) noted that gender is and that it can both overtly and covertly influence people's behaviour. In addition, it permeates every interaction at some level. However, it would be unfair to note that Lufuno was the only one who had a change in her views around gender. In fact, all three women noted that gender has been under-recognised in their clinical psychology training and that it could be better utilised within psychotherapy.

4.4.2 Gender discourses as projections

A *projection* is a defensive strategy by the ego/or self to protect the person from psychological dissonance (Freud, A., 1992; McWilliams, 1994; Santrock, 2013). Under psychoanalysis it is described as one of the more common forms of defensive maneuvers by the ego to deal with anxiety (Freud, A., 1992; McWilliams, 1994;

Santrock, 2013). Projection entails the process of ascribing our own undesired qualities and placing them on others (Freud, A., 1992; Barlow & Durand, 2011). In this manner, it allows the self to express the unwanted feeling about oneself in a way that one does not immediately recognize, therefore reducing the difficulty or anxiety associated with such an expression (Freud, A.,1992; Barlow & Durand, 2011; Santrock, 2013). This definition expresses a direct maneuver by an individual to convey an uncomfortable feeling or aspect about himself or herself, but in a manner that allows their self-conception to remain intact.

In considering the usage of gender projections we return to the interaction between Anna and myself. However, focus is now placed on lines 11-20. This is to illustrate how gender discourses seem to directly influence the therapeutic interaction. Once again we utilise CA, with specific attention paid to the sequence, practice and organization of talk, illustrating how gender influences the co-construction of reality.

17:33-18:07

- 11 **Anna:** (0.2) Erm, and if there are **specific**
12 **projections**—“you don’t understand, **because you**
13 **are a woman**, or you ↑do understand, **because**
14 **you’re are a woman**,”(0.1) then one can work
15 with that.
16 **Darrian:** hmmm...
17 **Anna:** ↑So I think, I think it is a **useful tool**
18 **(0,2)**to think about it. **(sigh)** If this client
19 was a ↑man **he would be different**.
20 **Darrian:** hmm...hmm.

In trying to make sense of gender’s role in the therapeutic process, Anna utilises gender discourse as psychological projections. In line-12 she uses the practice of distinguishing the character of these “specific projections” and specifying them according to discourses associated with femininity. This can be seen with “you don’t understand, **because you are a woman**, or you ↑do understand, **because you are a woman**.” Anna does not explore what this discourse is in detail, but she does seem to link understanding and non-understanding to one’s identity as a woman. Anna reflected on this as part of her interactions with her clients. Thus, she creates a space in therapy where gender is not

only present in transference, but also that such discourses influence the interaction through projections. Enough so, Anna claims to be able to work with it.

In our interaction I seem to acknowledge the construction of gender norms, as part of transference, and gender discourse, as projections. In fact, later in this interaction, I posed a question to Anna noting that “*if I came in feeling depressed, because I don’t feel like a man,*” how would she address it. Her response was the following:

Anna: I think I would address it like everything else; every other problem. To really understand what they are experiencing, and maybe see if I can assist. And perhaps I would make more of an effort to really show them that I am open and not biased.

On its own, this response seems fair enough. However, in relation to this idea of projecting gender discourses, it would appear that she would have to make more of an effort not to come across as prejudiced. This difficulty seems directly related to the “*non-understanding,*” due to Anna being a woman. In this instance the reality of gender discourse in interactions become apparent. This can further be seen between lines 17-20.

17:50-18:07

17 Anna: ↑So I think, I think it is a **useful tool**
18 (0,2)to think about it. **(sigh)** If this client
19 was a ↑man **he would be different.**
20 Darrian: **hmm...hmm.**

Here the sequences and organisation of talk worked to provide affirmation of Anna’s previous utterance. In line-18 we observe a short pause before Anna uses the lexical device of “to think about it,” thus illustrating her own process of reflection. This pause, when coupled with her “**(sigh)**”, just before her practise of distinguishing her reflection (of a man being different to her as a woman) seems to create an interesting consideration about gender. Namely, that gender can be seen as “a **useful tool.**” Thus Anna’s organising of her utterance is such as to create an understanding that gender can be an important and useful element to the therapeutic endeavour. This is acknowledged in my closing utterance at the end of the interaction, where the double “**hmm...**” seems to emphasise this agreement.

In considering what emerges in this segment it would appear that, once again, gender permeates the therapeutic interaction for these women. Gender seems to work in relation to the construction and performance of a perceived identity. Furthermore, gender discourses, that are associated with such views, can be present in therapy, and seem to create counter-transferential feelings within the psychologist. If we consider this in light of the literature, it would appear that Kaplan et al. (1990)'s position of gender being useful in therapy was, in fact, confirmed. In addition, it appears that gender projections can also be utilised in constructive ways as well. As Lufuno notes:

Let's say I am with a patient and that patient is a male patient. If for example, the person says, "my wife will not understand. She's a woman" For me—already it's feedback, because I am also a woman. So he is giving me feedback that you won't understand either.

Here Lufuno alludes to a claim specific to woman not understanding men. Such a claim is informed by the discourses surrounding male and female interaction. For Lufuno this seems to be directly related to her identity as a female. She considers the notion of a patient bringing the idea that his "**wife will not understand**" on the grounds that she is a woman, indirectly asserting that as a female therapist Lufuno will also struggle to understand him.

Lufuno articulated that this projection, in itself, works on the gender discourse about female inferiority. Which could be related to the process of socialisation. This may be based on the client's own transference. Such a projection could in turn bring counter-transference in the therapist, based on her perception of it.

How Anna came to make sense of such projections was to utilise them thematically, in structuring the therapeutic interaction. This seems to be the view of Kelebogile as well, as she noted that "*some clients are not even aware of what their challenge is*". In addition, that these projections are "*quite fascinating and also a bit sad, because you know what the person's struggle is... and if they feel judged or if they feel they are not safe to tell you, then...they won't come*" out and say it. This articulation seems to rely on the empathy of a therapist who not only understands the difficulty faced by the patient/client, but also how vulnerability influences the interaction. Kelebogile believe that this is why the "*reframing process*" is a "*tricky*" one.

Let us look at another interaction in order to try and bring to light the complexity of synthesising a life problem with that of gender discourse present in therapy.

12:17-12:28

- 1 **Lufuno** It's just that, that is **how he has been socialised**—`
2 That **women are inferior to men**.
3 **Darrrian** (thoughtful sound)
4 **Lufuno** (0.1) Hence they will not understand, but if it was
5 **with another man he would not make a similar comment**
6 **Darrrian** Yes, [yes I see what you are saying
7 **Lufuno** [hmmm...

If we consider the basis to this projection, as articulated by Lufuno, the discourses pertaining to gender are part socialisation. The literature noted in *Chapter 2* acknowledges this as well. Let us then consider how Lufuno structures her understanding. In line-1 she seems to move to create sympathy and understanding as related to this hypothetical patient. Lufuno creates the impression, in the structuring of her sequence, that the patient is not solely responsible for his beliefs, but that the accountability lay in “**how he has been socialised**.” In line-2 the issue is expressed through the discourse “**woman are inferior to men**.” I met this claim with a thoughtful sound. Lufuno paused slightly as to allow a turn. However, I did not take up the turn, which indicated that she could continue. Lufuno then worked to use the preposition “but” to introduce a new clause or marker to the turn, constructing the notion that “**with another man he would not make a similar comment**.” I seem to accept this proposal in line-6.

It would appear from this interaction that Lufuno is trying to illustrate just how gender discourses influence the understanding of reality, even in therapy. Even so, for Lufuno, who presents herself to be more gender neutral, such discourse seems to influence how she perceives her clients and how she perceives herself as a therapist. This process unequivocally illustrates just how gender permeates the therapeutic context. In fact, it appears from the analysis seen in this section that these women inadvertently are aware of gender discourse and how it seems to shape the therapeutic encounter. Yet, for them it is understood as transference and projections, which could be useful in psychotherapy.

4.5 The therapeutic use of gender

As previously mentioned, the literature states that clients tend to “report that female therapists (are) easier to talk” to (Gehart & Lyle, 2001, p. 444). This of course speaks directly to the gendered idea that women are much more nurturing and comforting than men are (Gehart & Lyle, 2001), and that this role supposedly occurs naturally (Irigaray, 1993). However, what is interesting from the discussion seen in *Chapter 2* was the idea that male therapists seem to be adopting more feminine gender roles in order to foster better relationships with their clients. In this manner, it appears that not only are gender discourses quite present in therapy, as explicated earlier in this chapter, but that they could prove purposeful in such an interaction.

Gender seems to permeate the therapeutic alliance in various ways. Some aspects reported in this study were at intersection with identity, culture and sexuality. However, in addressing the psychotherapeutic use of gender, as raised in the literature, it is important to explore how the women interviewed in this study come to understand how gender subtly or overtly influences therapy.

In this section, I begin with a CA interaction. In this case, the sequence that builds this collection will be spoken to later in this segment. In this piece we find the introduction of several concepts that speak to an interesting phenomenon. In conducting CA on this communication, we discover how gender emerges in the therapeutic interaction. It would appear from the description seen below that gender is not only present in psychotherapy, but it seems to play out in the therapeutic interaction perceptually and as part of identity. Gender’s presence seems too valuable to the therapeutic process. Consider the following response by Anna to the question of whether gender could be seen as a useful tool.

- 6 **Anna:** (0.7) (deep breath) Ja, I mean-if people
7 project things or there’s **transference** you can
8 use it, and there’s probably **different**
9 **transference** if there’s a **man or a woman.**
10 **Darrian:** **Hmm...** (Acknowledgement)
11 **Anna:** (0.2) Erm, and if there are specific
12 projections—“you don’t understand, **because you**
13 **are a woman,** or you do understand **because**
14 **you are a woman,**” (0.1) then one can work
15 with that.

When reading this interaction, one can see how gender influences her understanding of psychotherapy and how psychotherapy influences understandings of gender. From lines 6-9 Anna takes a deep breath before acknowledging the gender interaction in therapy. Here she speaks to both the projections (which are the more direct aspects of gender) and the transference (which can be considered the more subtle interactions of gender). Let us consider how she constructed this sequence. It appears that when she has to engage with such a construct, in therapy, it seems to produce intensity—which is evinced by the lengthy pause and exhalation. Furthermore, this intensity seems to be related to the type of projections and transference, which Anna related to gender (lines 8-9). In addition, her construction draws specifically on her theoretical conception of gender, relating that projections and transference would be different with men and women. This reality seems to be accepted in the interaction, as seen in line-10, with my acknowledgment.

Anna seems to be positioning a claim around gender discourses. This can be seen from line 11-15. She seems to relate therapeutic *understanding* as potentially best occurring within relation to gender discourse. More explicitly, “you don’t understand, **because you are a woman,** or you **↑do understand because you’re are a woman.**” It is important to note that here Anna considers that such gender discourses, and both its overt and covert elements, can be useful in therapy. This is expressed at the end of her turn in line-15.

When relating this CA interaction back to the collections of data around the subtle and explicit influences of gender, it would appear that all three participants acknowledge such a reality. Kelebogile describes this phenomenon as well in the following statement:

*Kelebogile: If it’s somebody who is congruent and you can see **that it is their true belief**; that if they saw a **male psychologist they would get help**—because their problem is such that it **would only be understood by a male psychologist**. I can work with that.*

In her own words, Kelebogile seems to describe similar gender relations present in therapy as Anna does, and claims that these can be useful to work with in therapy.

Kelebogile noted that sometimes gender not only influences her perception of her clients, but also that it helps her understand them more empathically. In our

interaction, she acknowledged that sometimes a client with gender-based difficulty would often draw on masculine and feminine discourse in order to express their life problem. As she noted that gender discourse could influence how you “*experience your problems and...how you view yourself—how you view your own identity.*” In addition, she noted the following:

Kelebogile: *Most people...are not even aware of what their challenge is. So if you have a therapist who is not aware of the role—the gender role in therapy, or the identity role and how it impacts on somebody’s function, **then it is a problem.** So **this** is actually the **real place** where such people can **be facilitated to understand themselves better.***

It would appear from the above proposition stated by Kelebogile, that most people who go for therapy are unaware of their struggle, especially when it is gender related. It then appears that it is the therapist’s responsibility to help garner the process of awareness. However, if the therapist is unaware of this, as Kelebogile believes, “**then it is a problem**”. Kelebogile describes and constructs “**this** (which is therapy)” as the actual or “**real place**” where such awareness “**can be facilitated**” for people “**to understand themselves better**”.

Lufuno echoed such a sentiment. However, she also acknowledged that it depends more on the type of therapist. This is because the manner in which the client/patient constructs reality may influence how the therapist understands herself in the interaction as well:

Lufuno: *it depends on the kind of a therapist you are, maybe I could talk from my previous experiences with male patients erm—of course, sometimes a man can be very defensive from **African cultures.***

It’s difficult for men to respect a woman for what they are, regardless of your position in the society, you will always be a woman. So sometimes when they position therapy they are not sure if the problems will be solved or if they will get joy from therapy with you, because you are a female.

In this description Lufuno clearly indicated that in the African culture, gender discourses about women have long positioned them as less respected. Such an influence on therapy may prove a challenge for an interaction based on the point that “**you are a female.**” Like with Kelebogile and Anna, Lufuno noted that such information is important for therapy. Gender, from such descriptions, seems to help

the therapist with the ability to consider certain issues that may be important for the alliance. Anna and Kelebogile describe this in terms of transference and projections specific to gender.

It appears from the sentiment seen here, that the women interviewed in this study consider gender not only to be present, but useful in therapy. Gender discourse seems to work, not only in people's constructed understandings of themselves, but also how they approach the therapeutic space. This process seems to be done in interaction, as argued by the participants of this study. It would appear that gender becomes an important aspect of addressing the client's difficulties.

However, one can then wonder how these women had come to consider the importance of gender in such interactions. This is especially relevant as they all claim that they never received formal training on the matter. This is explored the next chapter. I opted not to apply CA to this finding as the questions posed at this point in the interview guide required descriptive responses that were not necessarily informed by discourses around gender.

4.6 Summary of analysis

In this chapter we analysed three categories based a priori classifications from the literature. Namely, the *personal understandings of gender*; *understanding gender in psychotherapy*; and the *usefulness of gender to psychotherapeutic endeavour*. The analysis not only revealed just how talk is interactional, but through the usage of CA we were able to illustrate just how the women interviewed in this study understood gender, its place in therapy and its usefulness to therapeutic work. What we found is that these women consider gender to be based within the anatomical differences between males and female. In addition, when considering gender outside of this primary base, it was found that it is a difficult concept to understand. These psychologists had to consider gender in relation to other social discourse to make sense of it. These discourses were that of sexuality and culture. Lastly, it was found that gender does enter the therapeutic space in the form of transference and projections. Each psychologist noted that the presence of gender in this manner as useful to process. The next chapter aims to makes sense of these findings within relation to the literature seen and the scope of this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

*Shall I compare thee to a specific gender;
thou art more muscular and with penis to be a woman.
Ah! But...
what a piece of work is a man who forsakes all he knows
and barterers all that he owns to become one!*

The aim of the above Shakespearian adaptation, although amusing, is to irreverently consider gender. Gender is a concept that is difficult to definitively define, as noted in the literature review chapter. Definitions range from the more essentialist view to that of the more critical. Gender, as seen through the lens of social constructionism is a product of social interaction (Gergen, M., 2000). It is a construct that is created, defined and legitimised in relation to people and their actions (Giddens, 1989). It is, for all intents and purposes, a co-constructed element of people's interaction (Hibberd, 2005).

There are certain discourses associated with, and particular to gender which may in turn mediate people's experiences (Goergaca & Avidi, 2012; Giddens, 1989; Hibberd, 2005). For Hira (2012) and Jordanova (1980), such discourses revolve around conceptions of femininity and masculinity. As the literature covered in this dissertation noted, these discourses may influence how people come to understand and construct their realities. For M. Gergen (2000), gender has a role in such constructions. Furthermore, when considering psychotherapy, the psychologist has to be actively aware of gender. As noted earlier, the goal is, therefore, not to supplant or interrogate the role of such discourses, but to critically evaluate them. This is particularly pertinent when considering gender's place within psychology (Gergen, M. 2000).

Following on this critical evaluation, under social constructionism, what conversation analysis (CA) allows for is a descriptive manner of analysis. This could allow for theory generation. However, social constructionism does not propose theory generation, neither does this dissertation. Instead, it aims to engender

analytical discussion on gender's role in psychotherapy. Furthermore, the discussion that is to follow does not aim to make any universal claims about the conception of gender as a construct. Nor does this research aim to represent the views of a homogenous group of people. Rather, it aims to illustrate how gender influences the process of constructing understanding. Essentially, this research hoped to set a basis for a larger study into the construction of gender in the therapeutic space. Therefore another central caveat posed here, is that the reflections seen here are specific to the women interviewed and are not representative of South African psychology or training in this context. Hence, such a caveat opens up room for later research.

The literature reviewed in this dissertation aimed to illustrate gender as a social construct. It discussed how such a social construct is created in interaction, given meaning through language and, over time, creates discourse through practice. In addition, the literature highlighted how intimately gender and gender discourse is tied to the progression of clinical psychology. The purpose of the literature review was to set the stage for investigating how female clinical psychologists understand gender in psychotherapy.

The analysis seen in *Chapter 4* used CA as a method of building descriptions of phenomena that will be discussed here in *Chapter 5*. In discussing these phenomena, I aim to answer the research question posed by this study; *How do female clinical psychologist reflect on the construction of gender in psychotherapy?*

Even though the purpose of this discussion is not to make interpretations, its central aim is to describe the reality around gender's role in the therapeutic space, as seen by these women. What this allows for is a base point for future research; to move away from the conception of gender as static, to something atemporal as M. Gergen notes (2000). In this manner, and through these descriptions, gender then may be understood as being more than just categorical, as something that actively shapes the therapeutic relationship in interaction. In addition, it also allowed me to stay closer to the data. In this manner the conversations could be understood in their own right, and to discover something new without the need to confirm a hypothesis.

If we understand how gender is constructed in psychotherapy, it may allow us the space to rethink how we consider it. In addition, it may then set the tone for future research and training in clinical psychology in the South African context. Hence, in this discussion I will first consider these female psychologists' personal understandings of gender. Secondly, I consider how these women understand gender in psychotherapy. Thirdly, I move to discuss the usefulness of gender to psychotherapy, and lastly the training of clinical psychologists. It is important to consider, as part of this discussion, my own reflections. Although CA does not recommend the usage of such a stance (as noted in Forrester, 1999), under social constructionism my own thoughts, awareness, dissonances and beliefs are important to the co-construction of reality (Hibberd, 2005). Hence, my own reflection adds richness to the discussion that contributes positively to the realities described by the participants.

5.1 “All that is solid melts into air”

Understanding gender as a binary

The women of this study understood gender anatomically and as a binary. This finding corresponds with the literature discussed in *Chapter 2*. Several authors, such as Giddens (1989), Butler (1990), Jordanova (1980), and Chodorow (1999), in some of the seminal works on gender note this as a common conceptual basis. However, what these writers argue for is that this binary results in certain norms that work to construct and affirm gender as a ‘natural’ state of human interaction. Such a binary is not only anatomical, but social as well. Giddens (1989) directly associates the gender binary as being driven by certain discourses around masculinity and femininity—especially those associated with the perception of others.

Jordanova (1980) and Martins (1987), noted that gender operates and asserts itself in interaction. However, Martins (1987) believed this to be done through discourses related to science and categorisation. Over time, such discourses became associated with gender roles in society. For example, men are physically stronger than women; hence their role was that of the protector. This is something that Anna considered factual, as she described gender on this anatomical basis. Furthermore, she associated

it with a sense of vulnerability that seemed to tie in with this perceived nature of gender.

What was particularly remarkable about Anna's understanding of the female gender is that she associated it with vulnerability and weakness, but physically so. What she may have been unaware of, at the time, was that this is a type of discourse very much related to prevailing discourses around femininity (Hira, 2012; Martins, 1987). Moreover, Martins (1987) explains that such a description of physical weakness has over time and, through the process of abstraction, become part of the construction of the female identity. Femininity as an identity has been associated with language such as being dainty, fragile, and vulnerable (Giddens, 1989). What is of further interest is that such language is often associated with what it is to be a *lady*, a concept that Kelebogile considers important in her construction of a woman. Conversation analysis allowed me to track just how such discourses inform the perceptions of gender form these women.

Earlier, in the analysis chapter, Anna's description of women as physically weaker was a construction built in a very interesting manner. She began with comparing men and women in a binary fashion. This was followed by an emphasis that women, as a collective, were physically weaker than men. Anna constructed a view on reality that considered femininity as categorically vulnerable and weak. When referring to this part of analysis, her sequence worked to create a view of Anna as vulnerable, because she is a woman anatomically. We could draw speculations as to what this physical vulnerability means, but this is beyond the scope of CA. Conversation Analysis requires evidence to be drawn from the data.

However, in my reflection, I believe that there is something to infer from this moment shared with Anna. Drawing from my field notes, in this particular interaction, as seen in the analysis, I attempted to normalise Anna's claim. This was potentially due to my own discomfort around this idea of a gendered weakness and vulnerability raised by Anna. Some authors may argue that my amusement during this interaction, coupled with the attempt to normalise the idea of vulnerability, could be seen as my male privilege (Digby, 2013). This privilege may have prevented me from fully being aware of the understanding expressed in this interaction. This is

something I now consider post data analysis. For Digby (2013), men doing research on women need to be aware of their own privilege. Yet, this is something I could only fully appreciate after the fact.

On the other hand, the descriptive reality constructed in such an interaction positioned Anna as weaker than me by mere virtue of my maleness. In my own reflections I remember that this point bothered me, as I took it as a projection of Anna's own sense of safety with me. It may have been that in this interaction, she could have been describing herself as weaker than men anatomically and, by virtue, weaker than me. In this way Anna shifted the discussion, and, in a manner, dissolved my view of gender as being socialised. The reason for this is due to the reality of gender being tied to anatomical sex.

Lufuno's understanding of gender as a binary categorisation was similar to Anna's. She considered it to be firmly a product of sex difference, from the essentialist position. Conversely, it appeared in later discussion that such a view changed for Lufuno, as she recognised the potential importance of gender and its influence on people's experiences. However, Kelebogile gave an explanation for such a gender construction, similar to my own view of gender as socially constructed. She identified herself as feminine, and that her role was constructed around the identity of motherhood.

Feminine roles, for Kelebogile are prescribed for woman in society and by society. Such a description corresponds with the prevailing feminist literatures available on the topic of gender. In this manner, Kelebogile expresses that gender happens in social interaction through socialisation. Hence, not only illustrating one pivotal aspect on social constructionism as activity (Gergen, K., 2000), but also affirming M. Gergen's (2000) position of gender being atemporal. In this explanation, Kelebogile tried to move away from the anatomical and biological view of gender.

It may be said that Kelebogile's view is considerably different to that of Anna and Lufuno, but in essence she had expressed a similar basis for gender as a binary. Yet, what is interesting about her position is that she attempted to directly engage with some of the discourses associated with gender. What Kelebogile adds to this

discussion is the complexity of gender, once we move away from the essentialist view. Such difficulty in understanding gender is important in this process as it speaks to the subtle ways in which gender operates in our interactions (Smit, 2006). As the literature reviewed noted, and depending on the position held, gender has various definitions and operations in people's lives. Some consider it static and unequivocally tied to biological sex, whereas some are a bit more analytical and consider it a social construction and not just a scientific reality (Smit, 2006). For Anna and Lufuno, gender has a firmer base in the biological and anatomical difference, whereas Kelebogile has expressed a view more in line with the constructionist position.

5.2 What is in a name? The illusiveness of gender

Various authors discussed in *Chapter 2* speak to the idea that gender is both seen and unseen. It is both covert and overt. Yet, what is it about gender that it is able to be present and permeate social interaction so seamlessly? Whilst, at the same time, being so obvious. For authors such as Martins (1987), gender has, through human and scientific progress, become part of the fabric of social interaction. It is virtually natural. Feminist authors such as Judith Butler (1990) argued against this idea as they consider gender to be a social construct.

However, from the literature consulted, it would appear that the essentialist position seems to be the most widely accepted conception of gender. That gender and sex are of a binary nature. Furthermore, that the anatomical differences inform both these constructs. As the literature states, such gender perceptions work to inform how people go about constructing their experiences of reality (Smit, 2006). These norms and valued practices seem to be informed by, and continued through, constructed gender discourse.

A noteworthy finding emerges from the analysis. It would appear that gender, as a concept, seems to be illusive to the women interviewed. When I asked the participants about their own understanding of gender, what I found was a phenomenon related to the social definition of gender. This phenomenon seemed to solidify itself through the process of doing CA. Conversation analysis notes that phenomena derived from the data are built up from sets or collections (Heritage,

2010). These collections work to describe the phenomena. However, when I started to analyse the data and collections around these women's understandings of gender, I found that there was much ambivalence towards the term. At first I thought this to be insignificant, but then I noticed that each interaction held the same difficulty in articulating what exactly gender was understood to be, especially when moving beyond the essentialist view.

In a literature search, I found limited information on the practice of talking about gender. McIlvenny (2002) in a book titled *Talking Gender and Sexuality*, articulated that in the practice of talk, gender is a certain construct that appears to be difficult to speak directly to. In his understanding of talk, specific to gender, McIlvenny suggests that talk is but only the vehicle through which gendered behaviours and practices are displayed. Essentially, "one talks the way one does because one is a man" (McIlvenny, 2000, p.2). Talk has certain linguistic properties that gender discourses operate through to illustrate how one is then perceived. However, for McIlvenny (2002) and later Guzzetti, Young, Gritsavage, Fyfe and Hardenbrook (2013), talking about gender in a direct manner is difficult, as most people cannot fathom it as separate from the essentialist sex difference position. What we can gather from such discussions on gender is that gender is difficult to talk about, even though it is an aspect that is closely tied to how we perceive others and ourselves. Based on this understanding, we might be able to be sympathetic to the difficulty for these women in articulating gender as a construct.

Furthermore, it would then appear, based on the descriptions given by these psychologists, that gender is both a constructed reality and something essentialist. It is both physical and conceptual. It is both clear and unclear. Additionally, as a concept, it is difficult to describe outside of an essentialist position. For Weaver-Hightower (2003) and Martins (1987), gender exists in such a manner that it is both a subtle influence in social activity and a seemingly natural symbol of anatomical difference. However, what was described, in the interactions with these women, was more about the inability to express an understanding of gender beyond anatomical difference. For example, in the analysis section, Anna asked me to give her a definition of gender in our interaction. When I applied CA to this particular interaction, not only did the analysis illustrate the uncertainty expressed around

gender, but ambivalence to the term as well. In retrospect I considered that this ambivalence was constructed more on my part as the researcher. Gender appears to be something abstract, yet at the same time, it is something physical—male and female as expressed by Lufuno. Anna, who was willing to acknowledge that for her patients gender may be more fluidly constructed, did not acknowledge this for herself. She saw it as something more simplistic and categorical. As seen in our interaction, she asked for a definition that superficially spoke to uncertainty. Yet, with CA, it became more of a challenge to my conception. Even after my explanation Anna decided that it was a concept best understood when *related to sex and sexuality*.

Anna was not the only one to do so. Both Lufuno and Kelebogile struggled in articulating a description of gender. Lufuno found it difficult to describe gender apart from the essentialist view of male and female. Yet, she also considered it to be a means of relating to one another. In furthering our discussion, I must note that, in this interaction, even I found it difficult to discuss gender openly. Reflectively, I had constantly considered the role of gender in my interactions with these women. My thoughts on gender often influenced how I began our interactions, thus adding to the ambivalence. As seen with Lufuno, I introduced ambiguity in our discussion of gender from the beginning. This could have been due to my own bias and previous knowledge on the topic, but this was shown not to be the only reality present in this encounter.

In our interaction, Lufuno's hesitation became noticeable in how she went about constructing gender as male and female. She was nervously amused when talking about it. She seemed to have built on my ambivalence and introduced her own uncertainty. In this manner she tentatively expressed gender as a way in which people relate to each other. Why this is of importance, is that later she reverted back to the description that gender is categorical. It would appear that Lufuno was trying to express something about gender that extended beyond that of the binary essentialist position, yet struggled to do so. This was evinced by her nervous hesitation in our interaction. What this hesitancy around gender is about is never spoken to. Instead what we gathered from CA was that, in this interaction, talking

about gender was difficult and it produced ambivalence and uncertainty that often called for clarity.

However, Lufuno expressed later that she believed that gender may have had a significant role in the past, but not where her own life is concerned at present. The manner in which she described this was through indirectly speaking to historical discourses around gender practices that privileged one over the other. Irigaray (1993) spoke to such discourse as well. Historically speaking, gender discourses, and practices informed by discourse, allowed for gender preconceptions to develop. This privileged the male sex over the female sex. This legacy for Bohan (2013) is present even today, in various fields including psychology. However it would appear from Lufuno's description that gender is practically seen as male and female. Historically though it was more influential, especially in psychology. Lufuno did not offer any further explanation as to how this change occurred.

With Kelebogile, gender was better described through discourses related to culture and markers of identity. She associated it with conceptions of femininity and being lady-like and cultural. Kelebogile seemed to describe gender as part of cultural expectations of women. This understanding is not uncommon in the literature around gender. Many feminist writers have articulated that in patriarchal cultural systems gender becomes a marker of socialisation (Chodorow, 1999; McIvenny, 2002). In this manner people are taught how to act and behave (Chodorow, 1999). Such socialisation for Giddens (1989) happens through the use of discourse. Kelebogile's description spoke to this process directly. In her conception of African culture, the discourse of being a good makoti (or wife) is housed within constructions of gender specific to this culture. In addition, for Kelebogile there are certain roles prescribed for a woman in order to attain the title of being a good makoti.

What is curious is that these women consider gender to be categorical, yet when asked to describe their understandings of such categories they find it difficult to articulate their conceptions beyond this. They seem to rely on discourse that intersect with gender to solidify it, but, when speaking directly to it, the concept 'melts into air'. This may be due to various reasons that seem to include limited exposure and education on the topic. However, Kelebogile seems more gender aware. Even though

this is explored in more detail later, Kelebogile expressed awareness that gender is more constructed in interaction, not just with people, but with knowledge as well. We had been discussing her understanding of being a woman and I asked Kelebogile what kind of makoti she considered herself to be. This was her response:

“Western-ish...you are expected to play a certain role—supposing there is a certain function and you are expected to go there...and cook. I believe that the end product is that at the end of the day they want food. It doesn’t mean that I have to be there and cook...So if I have the means, so that I would still give them food, but I’d rather hire a catering company to take care of that and then I would go and help when I can...cook big pots and then you are a good makoti”

Kelebogile seems to be of the opinion that the discourse of being a good makoti is associated with certain gender roles. In this case, that means cooking at a function and feeding people. Yet, she sees this role in a flexible manner, and describes herself as ‘western-ish’. When I asked her how she was able to do this she said the following:

“...because I am a psychologist, it influences your attitude towards which roles you do, (and) which roles you don’t. It somehow—actually helps you like—obviously I am not the same type of woman that I was before I became a psychologist. Now I am the type of woman that I want to be. It’s almost like I have found this space that tells me that it’s okay to be who you want to be in your role as a woman...”

Kelebogile noted that being a psychologist has allowed her to critically evaluate the role of gender in her life. In addition, the gender discourses applicable to her own conception of being a woman. This seems to give her the ability to negotiate such discourse as she claims to be able to remain a good makoti, whilst still being able to define her own role as a woman. As interesting as this description is, a full analysis of it requires us to delve into the intersections of culture and gender. This is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Such intersections may be forwarded to future research on the topic. What we can take from this is that, even though Kelebogile was unable to articulate her understanding of gender beyond that of culture, she was able to engage with it more analytically.

In this description, Kelebogile was able to discuss the construction of gender and how it could be seen as a product of interaction. Such a description moves away from

the essentialist position to that of the feminist social constructionist position. This can be seen with writers such as Simone De Beauvoir. De Beauvoir (1997) is of the belief that a woman is able to take on any gendered role in society as long as she is free to make such a choice. She then is able to construct that role to suit her own desires. In this manner, Kelebogile seems to be able to do just that through her exposure to psychology. Hence, it appears from Kelebogile's view that psychology can allow for a more analytical engagement in relation to constructions such as gender. This may be a site for future research.

5.3 Gender is not gender that alters when alteration find

Constructing gender through enactment and vulnerability

The departure point of this subsection is to bring into the discussion the importance of the essentialist position in the construction of gender. What was found in the interactions with the participants was the fact that, in each interview, gender enactment was present. This enactment was not only present, but also perceived. Gender appeared to influence our interactions in both subtle and obvious ways. Moreover, even when I was aware of gender from a constructionist perspective, I still worked to co-construct the experience of gender from an essentialist, discursive manner. Added to this element was Kelebogile's own knowledge of gender and the choice to embody it in a manner best suited to her. This was based on her conception of what it meant to be a woman. Hence, it would appear that even when there is a conceptual challenge to gender and gendered discourse, it still seems to influence behaviour in very specific ways.

In the previous subsection, Kelebogile noted that she had a choice as in how to embody her gender role. Her understanding was on the basis that her own exposure to psychology has allowed her the opportunity to embody certain aspects of a feminine identity. This, of course, has numerous implications for future feminist research into embodiment. However, this dissertation aims to focus on the co-construction of gender in interaction and through talk. This does not mean that I am disregarding Kelebogile's description. Rather what I consider important for this research is how she went about describing it.

In the analysis chapter, Kelebogile spoke to the discourses present in being a traditional makoti and her role as a westernised makoti (using her own terms). In this manner, our interaction was based within such a construction. With this description, Kelebogile seemed to consider herself as very feminine. I affirmed this understanding, which was based on my perceptions of her. I draw evidence for this position from my field notes. I considered her to be a soft spoken, dainty, eloquent and lady-like. When I interviewed her, she was neatly dressed and pristine, and I was quite taken in by her. Kelebogile's voice was soothing and calm and the way she held herself was very nurturing. Hence, when she described herself as very feminine and mothering, I agreed with her, as I perceived her as such. Chodorow (1999) was of the opinion that, in the process of socialisation, women are taught to mother and to be mothers. This process is not a natural one, but a socialised one. Kelebogile seemed to be of a similar opinion as she described her role as motherly, but that was the way she was raised and taught to be in society. This is her construction of such a role, and her understanding. Yet what is of interest, and what CA allowed for, is the consideration of just how our interaction co-constructed such a reality.

Our discussion was on gender and Kelebogile's choice of gender role in this communication. However, it is within this interaction, that the co-construction occurs around discourses of culture and gender. Earlier in this particular interaction, Kelebogile spoke about what she considered lady-like behaviour and her role as a 'western-ish' makoti. I went onto ask how she saw herself in this manner. Kelebogile expressed herself as very feminine and equated it to a role associated with motherliness. I firmly agreed with this description and when considering the elements described in my field notes on this interaction, this seemed to be informed by my perception of her during our interaction. Therefore, McIlvenny (2002) may have been correct in his view that talk is the conduit through which gender can be expressed and enacted.

Hence, it can be argued that in our interaction, gender could be experience and co-constructed through talk. This is not the only example of such an occurrence. Anna articulated a similar view. This was seen with her description of women being more vulnerable than men.

Anna constructed herself as being more vulnerable when compared to a man. She substantiated this vulnerability as a consequence of her being a woman. This construct is fascinating as she intertwined gender identity with gendered discourse in describing her understanding and construction of womanhood. Furthermore, she tentatively acknowledged that men may feel vulnerability, but might not speak of it as openly as women do. I acknowledged this point and tried to bring in the role of socialisation. In the analysis section, Anna departed from this possibility and steered the description back to the essentialist position. In the end, Anna attributed weakness and vulnerability, which are discursively associated with femininity (Jordanova, 1980), as due to physical differences. As with Kelebogile, this was Anna's construction of gender and the enactment of gender norms, even after she was made aware of the process of socialization through our interaction.

Yet, what is more complicated, and of significance is the process of co-construction of gender in this interaction. To add more context to the interaction, Anna and I were discussing the work of a clinical psychologist working privately and, that as a woman, she sometimes felt unsafe. This was especially relevant for male clients. At that moment, I felt very unsure about myself as I too was male, and I was also unknown to her. I was, for all intents and purposes, uneasy.

If we consider gender as projections and transference (as seen in the following subsections), then this moment is of clear importance. In our interaction Anna created a feeling in me that I was potentially a threat, by means of the reality she constructed. This process happened through the wording she used. Yet when we look at the interaction itself, Anna also considered that men could feel this particular vulnerability as well, but that she was uncertain as to how this happens. I agreed with her that this may be the case and worked to explain how men are taught to deal with vulnerability. When combining CA with my own field notes, I was able to track this process. Due to the feeling evoked in me at that moment, I felt the need to communicate that she was correct that men can also feel vulnerable, but are socialised not to talk of it.

There seems to be a differing of opinions expressed here. Both Anna and I seem to be considering gender from differing perspectives. Speculatively speaking, some

authors may argue that the amusement at the end of our interaction, coupled with my attempt to normalise the idea of vulnerability in my turn, could be seen as an attempt to equalise the experience of gender (McIlvenny, 2002). This could speak to my own knowledge, as even though I try to equalise this conception of vulnerability, my amusement may inappropriately belittle Anna's description. In this case, such vulnerability is associated with physicality. For Anna, vulnerability is specifically associated with the discourse of a woman being less muscular. From this interaction, I understood her point, but considered it irreverently, whereas she considered it factual.

In this interaction there seemed to be an attempt made to equalise female and male vulnerability, beyond that of the essentialist position. I may have agreed with this, as that was my intention, but at the expense of Anna's understanding. This could be explained by a male privilege, and may have prevented me from fully being aware of the understanding expressed by Anna. However, my amusement was on the basis of how muscle mass has become synonymous with masculinity, and that I agreed with this description.

Furthermore, my own physicality is nothing akin to the norms of masculine discourse. I am tall with very little muscle mass and hardly an archetypal male. This is my perception of myself. In her description, Anna equates vulnerability to muscle mass. Hence, by her account, I am vulnerable as well. Nevertheless, some would argue that I am equating my experience to Anna's; after all I am still a man, and men have certain privileges in society. Such privilege would always set them above women in social interaction, due to historical processes (Martins, 1978; McIlvenny, 2002). In addition, my education privileges me, as I believed my position to be the correct one. When considering this, and that of gender discourse, it could be argued that I took my position and imposed it on Anna. Conversation analysis with regards to this interaction seems to support this consideration as I did move to weight my position. However, Anna firmly countermanded my claim by explaining that anatomical differences are the deciding factor of vulnerability.

5.4 Gender in therapy: Transference and projections

Another phenomenon that arose in the collection analysed here relates to the process of *being perceived as a gendered person*. Issues concerning transference and projection have been described as part of this phenomenon. Hence, this section is divided into two parts: the first regarding transference and the second regarding projections. In beginning this subsection, I would like to draw attention back to one of the central assumptions of this research project. It is the position of this research that gender subtly and overtly influences how social interactions are constructed and perceived. Moreover, within the therapeutic alliance, gender, as seen from the descriptions proposed here, may influence the psychotherapist's construction of the client/patient. This construction seems to occur through the process of perception. For authors such as Follette, Naugle and Callaghan (1996) and Smit (2006) such perceptions influence the therapeutic process.

In continuation, for Follette et al., (1996) the language used by the psychologist to verbally construct the therapeutic frame ultimately influences and affects the way in which the therapeutic interaction takes place. Of course, this may sound like common sense, but if we consider it, as M. Gergen (2000) suggests, then gender is effectively and critically important to the therapeutic process. Hence, it cannot be viewed merely as a nominal or categorical difference, but as an active contributor to the co-construction of therapy. For Follette et al., (1996) how the therapist verbally shapes the therapeutic frame could influence the patient's/client's perception and, hence, an interaction based on this process will follow. In this subsection these psychologists directly spoke to how gender enters therapy in distinctive ways (as projections), but also in elusive ways (as transference). This is very interesting, as even though these women found it difficult to express gender beyond that of the essentialist view, they seem aware, albeit superficially, of its discursive role in therapy.

However, what is important for us to note is the limit of these women's understanding of gender due to what they describe as a lack of education. As Kelebogile expressed, she feared that she harmed to her patients because of her limited knowledge of the subject. Hence, if psychotherapy relies on the

psychotherapist's presence to the client's/patient's need (Malan, 1976), then it would follow that without awareness of the importance of gender and its discourse—in how people describe their lives and experiences—such a process is limited.

If we follow this description of limited knowledge on gender, placed forth by these women, then it would be sufficient to say that the gender struggle within the field is still relevant. Hence, the conception of gender in psychology appears to be more than just a bias, as seen by authors such as Santrock (2005), Smith (2006), and Cohler and Galatzer-Levy (2008). In addition, reducing this influence in psychology to the idea of a bias, is problematic to say the least. That is because such a reduction does not account for the perceived reality of gender and how people construct their worldviews through it. It would appear that the arguments presented by Bernay and Canter (1986), though their research is dated, seem to have understood gender much more analytically. For these authors, gender discourse has long been tied intimately to the emergence and progression of psychology over time. Discourses of gender have been associated with many perceptions of psychosis. Most importantly, gender discourses have been used categorically in the diagnosis, intervention and treatment of psychopathology (Cohler & Galatzer-Levy, 2008).

In addition, discourses regarding concepts such as irrationality and emotionality, or dependency and reactivity, and even dramatic outburst are easily tied to female behaviour (Giddens, 1989; Williams, 2011). Conversely, discourses regarding aggression, defiance, dominance, and lack of empathy and emotions are closely tied to male behaviour (Irigaray, 1993; Smit, 2006). What is quite interesting is that, in the process of socialization, such discourses are praised and affirmed in the relations between people (Irigaray, 1993). Men seem to be raised not to be emotionally sensitive or empathic, whereas women are. Yet, in psychological formulation, these discourses form the basis for the emergence of several personality disorders that are intrinsically gendered—such as histrionic personas, borderline personas, antisocial personas, and narcissistic personas (McWilliam, 2011).

In coalescence of the argument given here on gender's influence on psychotherapy, it would appear that the perception of gender (which can inform one's clinical judgment) forms the basis for diagnostic potential. In psychotherapy, perceptions

influence how the psychologist understands the client/patient. The women interviewed in this study also expressed this in the analysis section, as all three drew on perceptions of gender norms to express their understanding of gender, especially in their own lives. Hence when moving to the therapeutic space, it cannot be difficult to believe that such a process occurs within this space.

According to the descriptions given by Anna, Kelebogile and Lufuno, gender has a place in psychotherapy. Furthermore, within the therapeutic encounter, gender is often seen in the projections and transference present in therapy.

5.4.1 Gender as Projection

Although classic definitions of projections consider to be a subtle process, as the feeling is hardly directly expressed—what was notable in this study was that all three of the women regarded it as the direct manner in which gender is introduced into therapy. This is done through the actual construction of the projection. In the analysis chapter, Anna expresses just how the construction of a projection can introduce difficult feelings that are housed within gender constructs.

In our interaction Anna constructed an explanation about gender projections. In this construction, gendered projections consider the therapist's ability to understand a patient's relational world as a product of gendered discourse. In this manner, a female psychologist could either understand or not understand a client's perceptions as a result of being a woman. Lufuno described a similar interaction with a male client who indirectly projected his insecurities around her capacity to help him. He did this through direct usage of gendered discourse. Lufuno would not understand his difficulty, just like his wife could not, because she is a woman. As noted in the analysis, gender discourses appear to be present in therapy. They seem to foster counter-transferential feelings within the psychologist. Such counter-transference could stifle the therapeutic alliance for Callaghan et al., (1996) especially if the therapist is unaware of it.

Furthermore, Lufuno went on to suggest that the kind of gender discourse that seems to be present in these projections perpetuate the ideology that women are *less able*

than men. Lufuno, in her construction of her understanding of gendered projections, inadvertently alludes to the an idea that even with the feminisation of psychology, men still have more standing than women do. Lufuno's construction centres on a perception that people have been socialised into understanding women as inferior to men. This perception follows on her explanation about the male client, comparing her to his wife, with an insinuation that a male therapist would serve to understand him better. Evidence for this idea is seen in Lufuno's statement that "*with another man he would not make a similar comment*".

It would appear from Lufuno's description that authors such as Milkman (2013), and later Witz (2013), had reason to believe that, even with the progress of society certain discourses pertaining to gender remain. Three decades ago Milkman (2013) noted that, even with feminisation of workspaces, men still have the privilege to doubt the ability of women to be competent.

In exploring projected gendered idea of incompetency, Gehart and Lyle (2001) claim that, in some situations, female psychologists, in order to be taken more seriously by male patients, would have to adopt more masculine gender roles. It would appear that from a feminist perspective such a description brings into therapy a complex set of gendered projections. These projections are entrenched in discourse that perpetuates gender prejudice. Where research indicates that psychology has been superficially seen as female dominated, there still seems to be gender discrimination that continues to haunt the field (Bohan, 2013). As noted in the literature, for Bohan (2013) the gendered partiality of psychology's past still is present in much of its work today. Based on both Anna and Lufuno's descriptions, this may very well be the case.

Some may argue that such a position, as seen by Bohan (2013), speaks to the profession as a field and not to psychotherapy directly. Yet, the therapeutic encounter is where such interactions take place. Based on the interactions reported here by both Lufuno and Anna, and with the usage of CA, the gendered discourses present in this setting seem to directly influence therapeutic encounters. However, such an exploration moves beyond the scope of this research. Although it makes for interesting discussion around the feminisation of psychology, it may be useful to consider this as a departure point for future research. Instead, let us consider what

these psychologists have said about the introduction of gender as projections into the psychotherapeutic process.

As Anna, Kelebogile and Lufuno noted in their respective interviews, through these types of projections, the psychologist could then take therapy to a deeper level. Gendered projections seem useful for these psychologists, and as Kelebogile noted, it allows the psychologist to gather themes that may help explain the client's/patient's understanding of reality. Such understandings allow for the psychologist to effectively formulate the reality experienced and constructed by the client or patient. Such projections seem to provide rich information that could help in psychological interventions as well. Hence, and based on this discussion, it appears that gender can directly enter therapy through projections. In that manner, it can become a useful tool to the therapeutic endeavour.

5.4.2 Gender as Transference

When considering the use of CA, not only are we privy to the structuring of talk, but also how we structure our understandings of reality based on talk (MacLeod, 2004). In a way CA allows one to consider the way in which discourses influence how we shape our perceptions of reality. Conversation analysis seems to have the ability to analyse talk to such an extent as to build collections pertaining to both the more obvious processes in talk and the subtler ones. Following on this, transference by definition, speaks to the hidden purposes in behaviour, as it deals with the unconscious needs of a person (Freud, A., 1992; Malan, 1976; Santrock, 2013). Hence, if there were a manner in which gender was unconsciously present in psychotherapy, it would be through transference.

Kelebogile seemed to consider transference as the more subtle way in which gender operates in psychotherapy. She noted that when a client/patient brings a gendered scenario into therapy, it immediately stirs counter-transference in the therapist. What is meant by counter-transference is the feeling that the client brings out in the therapist (Council, 2014; Malan, 1976). Such may be seen with Lufuno's earlier description of the patient that projected his insecurity regarding her ability to understand him, because she is female. In this manner the therapist may experience

feelings about her own ability based on such a projection. This, in turn, may affect the relationship (Malan, 1976). In understanding this collection, we should acknowledge Anna's articulation of feeling the need to be more empathic to her one client, based on his projection of race into the therapeutic milieu. Her "*whiteness became such an issue for*" her that she had to "*perform in a different way.*" In a similar fashion she felt that "*if there's a gender related thing*" she would have the feeling that she "*would have to be a bit more empathic*".

In her description, Anna notes that as with race she would feel inclined to perform in a different way, and that she would feel the need to be more empathic. She mentioned this in line with a comparison of a gender projection as akin to a racial one. This is an example of the counter-transferential ability of gender to produce feelings in the therapist towards the patient, but in a subtler way. These feelings could be likened to that of inadequacy. Therefore, such feelings may then inform behaviour and engender a need for the therapist to compensate.

Further evidence for this phenomenon lay in an interaction between Anna and myself. We had worked to construct an experience of psychotherapy where gender influenced the interaction. Furthermore, that transference would be different depending on the type of gender presented. Weaver-Hightower (2003) and Gehart and Lyle (2001) were of the opinion that gender influences the therapeutic milieu. Through CA, not only could we see how it does, in the form of gender projections, but how those in turn engender transference feelings within therapist. Furthermore, that such projections and transferences could be different depending on the gender. For Kelebogile, it is important to be aware of such elements in psychotherapy as they "*immediately impact...the therapeutic relationship.*" Therefore, how do we go about doing this? The answer may lie in education and training of psychologists.

In the history of the concept, transference was first seen as hampering the therapeutic encounter, but later conceptions regarded as the most important part in understanding and analysing the patient (Levy & Scala, 2012; Malan, 1976). This is because, as a therapeutic tool, it can create an anxiety rich environment that could bring unresolved needs to the fore in the form of defensive maneuvers (Malan, 1976). However, transference can be dangerous to therapy, especially when the therapist is

unfamiliar or insecure to its presence and his/her reaction to it (Levy & Scala, 2012). Nevertheless, for an experienced therapist, it can be used as a tool to explore deeper, more unresolved feelings (Levy & Scala, 2012). Hence, the further training of psychologists on the basis of gender's influence on the therapeutic encounter may enable them with the ability to use it constructively.

Based on the findings seen in our analysis it would appear that all three of these women saw the influence that gender could have on the therapeutic encounter, both directly and indirectly. However, it is important to note that this understanding was of differing degrees for each. Where Kelebogile was more orientated to the importance of gender in psychotherapy, Lufuno was not as ardent. Anna, on the other hand, acknowledged the usefulness of gender to the psychotherapeutic endeavour. Nonetheless, what this discussion does allow for is a glimpse into the potential of further research on this topic as the collections seen here seems to unequivocally support the presence of gender in psychotherapy.

It is worth remembering that these women saw gender primarily as biological differences, even though two of them made sense of it through other constructions such as race, culture and sexuality. If we consider the essentialist position of gender as something natural, then why would two of these women, with no other gender exposure, consider it more analytically as M. Gergen (2000) suggests? It appears that through their experience of gender in therapy, they may have come to question it as a social construction without even being knowledgeable of social constructionism. Furthermore, and as noted in the analysis section, each experienced a change in the perception of it towards the end of the interview process. This finding may suggest that, through being made aware of gender, as a social construction, their individual understandings were adapted. Therefore, this adaption may have opened them up to considering other realities to gender. This brings us to the last part of our discussion, namely the training of clinical psychologists in the South African context.

5.5 Training

I begin by reflecting on Gehart and Lyle's (2001) consideration that gender is not only present in therapy, but that it can be a useful part of the interaction. I consider

this reflection as important, as all three participants of this study express a similar view in some way or another. For example, Kelebogile described her own training in our interview. Although she seemed to have had the most experience when dealing with gender in therapy, she felt quite apprehensive about her training. She reflected that it had ill-equipped her for the reality of psychotherapeutic work around gender, especially when starting out.

Kelebogile: *I might have caused harm to some people, because of my lack of knowledge. It's sad, but it is not something I can correct myself, but if I can make it better for other people who are still learning to become therapists, to make them aware the gender issues.*

Kelebogile's words encapsulated both the reflections of Anna and Lufuno. It appears that they all felt that their training from undergraduate to postgraduate studies was significantly limited with regards to gender. All three of them had to compensate for this in later practice by further reading, supervision or personal experience. Callaghan (2006) claimed that, in training of psychologists, the absence of gender awareness in psychotherapy is quite pronounced. This claim seems true when considering what these women are saying. In many ways the psychological profession seems ill resourced to challenge pervasive views of gender in psychological discourse. When asked about their training from undergraduate to postgraduate studies, none of these women had received any training on the topic of gender within psychotherapy.

Yet, the most appropriate question to pose at this juncture is why is gender not a relevant issue? Based on the descriptions seen here, gender is a concept that has fallaciously been considered as natural, and, as with race, it needs to be analytically examined and considered in training contexts. Anna described the need to compensate her empathic ability when it came to gender. Even more so, Kelebogile felt that she might have done more harm starting out as a psychologist, because her training considered gender as a categorical element and not a relational one.

For Callaghan (2006), when training psychologists in the South African context, gender awareness in psychotherapy is important. Firstly, as its absence is quite evident, and secondly, it intersects with various other socially relevant concepts such

as culture, ethnicity and even religious practices. Based on this assertion and the analysis seen in *Chapter 4*, these women describe their clinical psychology training as limited, especially when challenging pervasive views of gender in psychological discourse. Although this cannot be used as an extrapolative claim to the training of clinical psychologists in our context, it does give weight to the works of Callaghan and M. Gergen.

For Callaghan (2006) and M. Gergen (2000), gender is relevant to psychotherapeutic work. Callaghan goes as far as to note that in our context, we need to produce critically thinking psychologists, especially when it comes to gender. Moreover, from the experiences described by the women in this study, it appears that Graham and Langa's (2010) study on gender in psychology degrees gives further weight to the position raised here. Based on their research, it would appear that, out of all the psychology degrees offered in our context, it is only the counselling based psychotherapy training that focuses on gender as a relational dynamic. Such a claim may be countered when doing a study such as ours on a larger scale. Hence, the importance of future research into psychological training programmes.

Anna constructed her experience of therapy based on her understanding of herself as a woman. Yet, as a woman, she was unfamiliar with the understanding of being biologically one sex, but feeling like another. Yet, For Eisenberg and Spinner-Halev (2005), people tend to be heteronormatively aware of the world. What this means is that people have a tendency to interpret the world not only from their own subjective perceptions, but also from the pervasive heteronormative discourses available to them. This was seen with all three psychologists interviewed here. They broadly conceptualised gender from an essentialist position. However, Anna recognised how this limited her understanding of her client's experience and, in this awareness, she moved to better her skills.

However, that is not to say that all three women were in unison on the importance of gender to their own work. In actuality, Lufuno described herself as someone who was not overly concerned with the importance of gender. She recognised it as important to the client/patient. In addition, that it may be important in terms of projective quality in the therapeutic session, but that it did not necessarily influence

her interaction with her clients/patients. This is an important description under the social constructionist frame as it is concerned with how people go about making sense of their reality. For Lufuno, gender is important, but it does not affect her work in direct ways.

Essentially, what was seen in this study was that these women described how their limited exposure to gender might have set them at a disadvantage in their work as psychologists. Even though this cannot be seen as grounds to critique the training of clinical psychologist on a whole, it does raise pertinent questions about our training context and adds weight to studies that have been done regarding such training. Hence, it opens up the field for further research on the structuring of clinical psychology courses at university level with regards to gender. Be that as it may, it is hard to fathom that gender would not have been covered in their training, and, if so to what extent.

Based on the discussion seen here, gender was explored in the training of these women, but it was limited to its diagnostic value. According to descriptions seen in this study, gender had a DSM diagnostic value in the training of these clinical psychologists. Anna explained that such diagnostic criteria were gender stratified, as symptoms akin to dependency, dramatics, emotionality (common in personality structures such as borderline, histrionic, and dependant) were more commonly seen with women. Furthermore, antisocial traits were commonly associated with men. This description coincides with the literature, namely the gender discursive bias seen in diagnosis and the historical legacy of psychology (Bohan, 2013). However, these women noted that it would be beneficial to have more exposure to gender, not just diagnostically but relationally as well. They noted the discrepancy in how, in our context, race and ethnicity were emphasised in their training, but not gender. Let us revisit the following description by Kelebogile.

Kelebogile: *You don't meet it (gender) anywhere until you qualify. And then when you qualify, you are faced with someone who has got a gender issue. And they don't know how to deal with it. Now you are also dealing with it, you are also learning with them, as you also don't know how to tackle it. So if it is part of training, you know like they do with cultural issues—they are part of training. Why not the gender issues then?*

Kelebogile seems to encapsulate the central concern for these women and what the therapists learns about gender difficulties, in vivo, with his/her client. In this view, the

clinical psychologist, as the expert, is less able to work with gender-based difficulty. From this segment it is clear to see that Kelebogile considers that part of clinical psychological training should be focused on gender. Lufuno expanded on this conception by noting the importance of gender-based violence that, in the South African context and how psychologists are important in intervention work regarding such work. This again brings to the fore Barkhuizens and Ovens' (2012) study on the relevance of psychology in understanding gender-based violence in the South African context. Hence, it would appear that as per the descriptions of these women gender is (to paraphrase Lufuno) alive in the South African context.

Furthermore, in South Africa violence against women, sexual abuse and domestic violence seem to have a similar pattern of men being the aggravator of violence and women being the victim (Barkhuizens and Ovens, 2012). Although this is not just an issue specific to South Africa, Anna consider it important due to the types of client referred to her and based on her knowledge of how women are reportedly treated in our context. For example, the Noord Street taxi rank incident where a woman was sexually assaulted due her being perceived as indecently dressed. Moreover, the literature covered in this study, argues that it is in the realm of social sciences—especially psychology—to give plausible accounts for such happenings (Barkhuizens & Ovens, 2012). Hence, it seems important to produce more relevant clinical psychologists (Callaghan, 2010) who are aware of gender critically (Gergen, M., 2000). Essentially, as Lufuno suggests, the training of students in clinical psychology should focus on gender “as it would actually benefit the student” to be aware of it.

5.6 Summary of discussion

This chapter has discussed some of the findings that have emerged in this study. These included firstly, the ambiguity of defining and talking about gender. Secondly, the role and usage of gender with in therapeutic space—especially through psychological concepts, such as projection and transference. Lastly, it considered the South African context and the training of the women interviewed for this study. The next chapter moves to summarise the finding in concluding this study and suggest areas for future research.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

FUTURE RESEARCH, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

*All the world's a stage.
And all the men and women
merely players.*

As therapists we are often required to reflect, especially at the end of things. Before I embark on concluding this dissertation, I must reflect on the fact that working with gender is difficult. I cannot deny that doing justice to the gender debate within psychology is a monumental task. It is a task that requires ongoing research and deliberation. As I noted in the beginning of this research, this dissertation explores a small, but necessary dynamic in understanding the role of gender in clinical psychotherapy.

In summation, the aim of this study was concerned with how female clinical psychologists reflect on the construction within psychotherapy. In doing so, I constructed this dissertation in such a way as to consider gender as a product of social construction.

Mary Gergen (2000) considered gender construction as atemporal and ongoing. Gender norms and discourses assist in how we shape our conceptions of the self, our world and our relation to the world. For Butler (1990), gender is something enacted. Yet under social constructionism such an enactment is not done in isolation, but in interaction. As gender discourses are instrumental in this process, as seen in *Chapter 2*, this study aimed to explore the construction of gender in psychotherapy through such discourses. Hence, it is co-constructed through language. In order to do so, I employed the frame of social constructionism.

Social constructionism, as a frame to this research considers the importance of discourse. In addition, it considers the importance of the language of discourse and how a phenomenon is embodied through language and linguistic devices. In this

manner, people work in interaction to construct meaning and their relation to their world. For authors such as Lock and Strong (2010), and Stam (2001), there is no one social constructionist position. Instead, it can be a movement, and an approach. At other times, it can be an orientation or a theory. Yet effectively, as seen by this dissertation, it is a set of positions that allow for a certain understanding of the world. Ideally, social constructionism is concerned with how people explain and construct their understanding of their experiences (Stam, 2001).

Under this theoretical frame I utilise conversation analysis as the method of analysis. Now, one may question why I have not used of discourse analysis. After all, I was concerned with the use of discourse in the process of gender construction in psychotherapy. Even though I explore this in detail earlier in this dissertation, in summary conversation analysis looks at the ‘how’ of construction (MacLeod, 2004). Furthermore, it considers how this ‘how’ takes place in interaction. Specifically, this method of analysis allowed for answering the main research question posed by the study. That question was, *How do female clinical psychologists reflect on the construction of gender in psychotherapy?*

In answering the research question, we re-explore the *analysis* and *discussion* as seen in this dissertation. Part of this summary will consider some of the limitations of this research and possible future research within the field of gender in psychology in the South African context.

6.1 Gender: Essentialist and socially constructed

When considering the understanding of gender as per the views of the women interviewed in this study, two main descriptions emerged. Firstly, these psychologist all understood gender from the essentialist perspective. Secondly, how socialisation was important in constructing such understanding of gender.

Under the essentialist position, gender is derived from the anatomical difference between men and women. This finding is illustrative of what feminist authors such as Jordanova (1980), and Martins (1987) have noted. As Lufuno clearly articulated in her interview, gender is seen as the biological difference between men and women.

On this basis, the construction of gender is not only categorical, but made factual as well. For example, Anna understood women by mere virtue of the biological distinction not only physically weaker, but categorically so. As the literature noted, these categorical distinctions are informed by and inform discourse of gender in a reciprocal manner (Smit, 2006). The reality that is constructed from this is that to be feminine is to be dainty, weaker, more vulnerable, fragile and emotional. These descriptions work to linguistically inform the perception and construction of women, and form the basis from which social etiquette is considered. If you recall, Kelebogile noted this directly as what it means to be lady-like. In essence, there are certain behavioural forms that stem from the gender binary.

Gender seems to inform the perception of people by these psychologists and, in turn it attributes to the overall impression of the client/patient. As noted earlier a large component of psychotherapy is the clinical impression of a patient or client by the psychologist. Hence, based on what the participants said, gender seems to influence this clinical impression. For example, Anna believes women to be more vulnerable than men, and that if men are vulnerable it is something that is not as commonly seen. Interestingly enough, if you are seen as differing from the normative gendered descriptions, then it is something noteworthy as well. However, Kelebogile described an idea that once you are perceived to be uncharacteristic of your gender form, then you are something of interest. Hence, it would appear that, based on the anatomical difference, gender is described as a real anatomical distinction for these women. Such a description is synonymous with sex. Furthermore, there are certain linguistic descriptions that inform one of the perceptions of gender and gender embodiment. Essentially, women are lady-like and men are not.

However, such a binary is not only biological, but social as well. Effectively, CA enables us to consider this reality. If we move on from the essentialist position described above, it is difficult, at this point, to understand just how discourse enables the construction of gender. Although all three participants considered gender to be based in anatomical difference, what emerged in the data was the importance of *socialisation*. For Kelebogile, gender roles are socialised in society, by society. There seem to be certain discourses that inform us of our role in society. For example, Lufuno found it hard to discuss gender in her own life, but was able to negotiate

through social descriptions of gender (informed by gender discourses) how psychotherapy is affected. Fundamentally, how she would not be able to understand a male client, because she is a woman.

All three women expressed views about this phenomenon to varying degrees. Anna felt that her position as a woman would ultimately influence how her client or patient would relate to her. The basic premise for such descriptions was that the social discourse related to femininity could influence the therapeutic relationship. Furthermore, conversation analysis assisted in illustrating how such discourses not only influence how these psychologists perceive their patients or clients. It also illustrated the use of gender discourse to inform their impressions, and how they came to see themselves as women in society. What this finding clearly reveals is that gender does enter therapy as Gehart and Lyle (2001) suggest. This happens through the process of perception and reactions based on such perceptions. Hence, this is a point of departure for future research as it opens up different avenues for discussion. These include whether the clinical psychologist reacts differently to different perceptions of gender, which Kelebogile alludes to in her expression of lady-like etiquette.

What is of further interest is how social understanding of gender norms and gender roles interact with psychology. Kelebogile expressed an idea that, through being exposed to psychology, she was enabled to embody a form of femininity that best suited her. In essence, her work as a psychotherapist had allowed her descriptions of herself as a western Makoti. In addition, she could be a good wife and motherly, but maintain a reality where she did not have to be confined to the norms of domesticity. Lufuno expressed a similar view that she was able to escape the historical prejudice that favoured male therapists over female therapists, and that she has equal opportunities in the field. Her exposure to psychotherapy seems to have transcended the prejudices seen in the literature with regards to the feminisation of the profession. This was a phenomenon that emerged during the course of the research. What it allows for are new areas of research when considering gender, embodiment and one's exposure to psychology. There might be something in the process of becoming and being a psychologist that allows the women to challenge the norms of gender and how they construct their own gender forms in interaction.

Even though this finding of gender as descriptively essentialist is noteworthy, the nature of this study limits this view. Social constructionism is concerned with how people understand their experiences and not about theory generation. Even though the number of participants limits this study, some of the data would allow for the basis of theory building. The frame does not allow for this. Furthermore, the use of CA in combination with social constructionism meant that the data was analysed descriptively. Hence, the findings are of a descriptive nature. However, these descriptions on gender in psychotherapy are still of merit as they allow for new avenues for future research. Based on this limitation an interpretative study such as interpretive phenomenology may be of merit in future research.

Another notable finding was that, with a social constructionist ontology, the claims were relativist, with multiple realities to the experience of gender. The participants not only illustrated such realities (gender as anatomical and as a product of socialisation), but also allowed me into their worldviews where seemingly contradictory realities co-existed. From a *realist* ontology, it would have been difficult to discover or understand this. Hence, with the constructionist view on epistemology, that knowledge is co-constructed, I was able to consider the multiple truths that unfolded in these interviews that multiple realities could be constructed simultaneously.

6.2 Difficulty of unpacking gender

One of the more interesting findings that emerged was the difficulty in describing gender as a concept. As a concept, gender itself seemed to be difficult to define. Each participant struggled to find the words to explain gender and their understanding of its underlying logic. What was discovered was that there was much ambivalence around the term in the interactions between the women and myself in this study.

Authors such as McIlvenny (2002) noted that, when talking about gender it is often difficult for people to clearly articulate what is meant by it. Gender seems to be an illusive concept outside of sex difference. Furthermore, that talk, in itself, is a conduit through which gender is performed and co-constructed. This idea poses a noteworthy idea when considering gender. The literature consulted about this

phenomenon explained that, when one removes gender from basis, most people could not begin to comprehend what it is or what function it serves (Martins, 1987). This idea, when one consults the findings of this study, poses a juncture for future research on the topic of talk and gender. However, what was of particular interest is that gender, as a construct, seems to rely on other constructs (such as sexuality and culture) to solidify its basis. Evidence for such a finding lay in the descriptions given by each of the participants of this study.

When talking gender and describing it as a concept, each woman explored the understanding of gender through other social constructs. Such intersections allowed for each of the participants to move beyond the difficulty of expressing accurately the essence of gender. In doing so, they came to express their own understanding of gender. For Anna, gender was best understood through sexuality and the interplay between anatomical sex difference, sexuality and identity. Lufuno held firmly to the anatomic differences of the essentialist position. Kelebogile considered culture and cultural normative practices as the best way to describe her views of gender and gendered discourse. With the use of CA, not only was I able to see the ambivalence around gender, but also how each participant came to construct gender in her own life. For example, Anna even asked me for a definition of gender to help her understand it better, yet still kept to her own understanding of gender being related to sexuality.

The phenomenon raised here by this finding is by no account aiming to vilify gender and gender interactions with other constructs. Such a finding suggests that, when analysed rigorously, gender is something that is difficult to view in isolation. Based on the descriptions seen here, it has an intimate relationship with other concepts that influence identity formation. These include culture and sexuality. Hence, if concepts such as culture and sexuality are important to psychology, especially in the South African context, why then should gender be seen any differently? Again this is a site for future research.

Another limitation of this study is that intersections between race, culture, sexuality and identity have not been adequately explored with relation to gender. This was not the aim of this study. It is important to state this as a shortcoming as the findings

suggest that such intersections give gender a specific meaning within the South African context. For example, Kelebogile considers herself a western makoti and constructs her self view and view of reality from such a position. This example illustrates that in contemporary South Africa, general assumptions about concepts such as gender, culture and sexuality cannot be taken at face value. Such concepts work to conceptualise these psychologists' understanding of gender and their own identity as female clinical psychologists. Yet, to help contextualise the reason for this perceivable shortcoming is to create a descriptive base for future research. Due to the separating of gender as a concept, and the analytical engagement as seen through CA, we are then able to see that gender is intrinsically tied to and given meaning by other concepts of the social world.

6.3 Gender in psychotherapy

The research question posed by this study was how female clinical psychologists reflected on the constructions of gender in psychotherapy. In order to address this, we were required to consider their own understandings of gender—and its relation to their own lives. Theoretically speaking, their understandings of gender would inform their perceptions of it in others (Smit, 2006). In addressing this idea, one of the main findings of this study was the notion that, not only is gender present in psychotherapy, but it is active as well. One aspect described by these psychologists was the idea that gender is perceived. Furthermore, in its perception, it influences the psychologist's clinical impression of the client/patient. However, there is a more complex manner in which gender seems to be actively part of psychotherapy. This was seen in the analysis and discussion sections, as gender being both explicitly and implicitly brought into the therapeutic interaction. This was done through the therapeutic concepts of transference and projection. Such dynamics appear to be different for different genders. Hence, future research could consider male versus female clinical psychotherapists' views on gender.

All three women understood that gender could be seen in therapy through various manners. Normally, gender could be a direct aspect of psychotherapy, especially when that is the focus of therapy or part of the referral process. To refer back to the literature, gender permeates every aspect of social interaction (Smit, 2006). Often this is done through subtle and unconscious mechanisms present in the interaction.

Based on the descriptions by the women in this study, and through the usage of CA, the gendered discourses appear to be present and directly influence the therapeutic encounter. As both Anna and Kelebogile noted, gender seems to be part of the process of constructing the therapeutic encounter. This occurs from the moment the person enters the room and is perceived by these women. Furthermore, through the choice of language used and the manner in which talk is constructed in psychotherapy, gender discourses are part of the description of the encounter. In relation to the descriptions expressed by these women, clients or patients may project gender related difficulties onto the therapist and into therapy as well. Lufuno experienced this with the client who projected a view of women as unable to understand men and their experiences due to gender differences.

Following on such projections, transference feelings related to gender are engendered. Through CA we were able to see just how counter transference feelings towards a patient or client influenced the actions of these women. An example of this was Anna's reflections on how she may potentially feel the need to compensate in her interaction with a client. Furthermore, that this process may be different for the different genders.

When considering this finding, we can see that these women have come to see how gender may influence their interactions with their patients. The manner in which they understand this in psychotherapy is through mechanisms such as projections and transference. Such a description in itself is worthy of further study as these women believe that moments such as these—where the therapist perceives gendered projections and transferences—are not only important but also usable in therapy. This opens up the idea, that gender, is potentially a useful tool in psychotherapy.

6.4 Training

When understanding the potential usefulness of gender in psychology, it was important to explore these psychologists' views of their training. In terms of the training of these clinical psychologists, none of them had training in gender within the therapeutic context. This finding seems to give weight to the literature available in the South African context. The literature reviewed in *Chapter 2*, and then later in

the discussion chapter, indicated that gender is often side-lined in favour of ethnicity, race, and even sexuality (Callaghan, 2006). What these women report is a feeling that they were ill equipped to deal with gender in the therapeutic setting. Some authors, such as Callaghan (2006), considered this one of the central limitations of producing socially relevant psychologists in the South African contexts.

All three women interviewed in this study believed that gender education might have bettered their earlier experiences of working as a psychologist. Kelebogile was of the opinion that she may have caused harm to her patients due to her limited knowledge. The idea behind this conception was that as the professional and expert in psychotherapy, a psychologist should not be learning about gender in vivo, but should at least have a base to work from.

Furthermore, these women described the idea that, where gender was taught, it was housed within the biological definition of gender and diagnosis. Such training was limited to diagnostic manuals such as the DSM. These women believed that such a limitation meant that in the training of clinical psychologists, people enter the workplace with a lack of experience that limits their effectiveness. They described their own experience as one where they had learnt about gender through later experiences.

What concerns women like Lufuno and Kelebogile is that, in the South African context, gender based violence and violence against women are of real concern. In their view, the training of more socially relevant psychologists needs to include gender. It would appear that all three women came to the realisation that gender was of importance in psychotherapeutic training. Not only does it allow one to engage with the ways in which people construct their view and experiences, but it better equips clinical psychotherapists to best meet the needs of the South African population. Based on these findings, it may be of work investigating whether gender is part of psychological training in postgraduate studies, especially at the Masters' level.

Even though this study was limited in its orientation, approach and frame, as well as the limited number of psychologists interviewed it does raise some important

questions. One such question is whether training programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate level adequately expose students and potential psychotherapists to the concept of gender. What this question implies is that there is a potential need to review gender in psychology training. In addition, it perhaps suggests that psychology, through omission of gender studies, could perpetuate the gender prejudice of which psychology as a discipline has been historically guilty of.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A

Information sheet



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities

Department of Psychology

Dear Participant.

I am presently enrolled as Masters student in Clinical Psychology at the University of the Pretoria. Part of my course requirements is to conduct research for degree completion purposes. This research will be directed at clinical psychologists' understanding of gender and its influence in therapy.

I will be conducting qualitative research, which will entail interviewing three female participants on their understanding of gender and its role in psychotherapy. The interviews will be approximately one hour long, on a one-on-one basis and will require participants to answer a set of questions around the topic of gender.

Please note that participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you may retract your participation (including date) from the study at any time. This will not be held against you in any manner. In addition, confidentiality of the participants will be ensured and a confidentiality agreement is required to be signed before the interview may commence. Please be advised that for quality purposes the interview will be recorded. All identifying information, interview transcripts and recordings will be kept confidential, with the usage of pseudonyms where applicable. The interviews will be kept safe under password protection software with researcher, which only he and his supervisor will have access to. Data will be stored at a secure location at the Department of Psychology, University of Pretoria.

Analysis and write-up of findings are to be reported in a mini-dissertation and may lead to possible academic publications or conference presentations. If for any reason participation invokes any psychological distress, free counselling will be provided.

Your assistance would be greatly appreciated.

If you have any further enquiries, do not hesitate to contact me, or my supervisor.

Darrian Long- 073 087 47 48 or alternatively at darrianlong@gmail.com

Adri Prinsloo- 072 123 9927 or alternatively at adri.prinsloo@up.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Darrian Long.



APPENDIX B

Informed Consent

Faculty of Humanities
Department of Psychology

Participant Consent on Interview

I _____, the undersigned, have read the information sheet and have understood that the research project involves the participation of clinical psychologist registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa. I understand that participation in the study will not advantage or disadvantage me in any way. I understand that confidentiality is guaranteed and I have a right to not answer any questions that I feel uncomfortable with, and to withdraw from the study at any time. I understand that the researcher can make use of direct quote where necessary. I also understand that participation will require an hour-long interview at a location most suitable and convenient to both researcher and participant. I furthermore understand that this is a research study and results will be reported in a mini dissertation and that it may also be published as an academic article or presented at a conference.

I hereby concede to participation in this study.

Signature: _____.

Date: _____

Participant Consent for Interview Audio Recording

I _____, the undersigned, grant permission for this interview to be audio recorded. I understand that the contents of the tapes will be transcribed for the purpose of further analysis and that my identity will be protected, access to recordings will be restricted for research use only and the these recordings will be stored in a secure location at the Department of Psychology, University of Pretoria for 15 years.

Signed: _____.

Date: _____.



APPENDIX C

Interview guide

Faculty of Humanities

Department of Psychology

Demographic Information

- Age (in years) ____
- What were your initial reasons for becoming a psychologist?
- What type of psychologist are you?

Personal understanding of gender and gender construction

- In your own words what do you understand gender to be?
- What is your understanding of gender in your life?

Gender in therapy

- What place does gender have in psychotherapy for you?
- How do you experience your own gender in therapy?
- What role does your client's gender play in therapy?
- What kind of influence do you consider gender to have on the therapeutic relationship?
- In what way may gender be important or unimportant to the therapeutic relationship?

Use of gender in therapy

- Could gender be useful in therapy?
- How would you deal with a gender-based problem?

Training

- Did you have any exposure to gender training at university?
- If so, was this part of psychology?
- Was there any training in addressing gender-based issues?
- In what regard may gender be important in the training of psychologist?
- How do you understand the conception of gender in manuals such as the DSM?
- Do you have any concluding remarks on the gender/therapy intersection?



APPENDIX D

Jefferson light Glossary Key:

- [Indicates point of overlap in current speaker's speech.
-] Indicates where overlap ends.
- (.) Brief interval. Timed at times (0.2) for longer pause.
- = indicative of no break in speech.
- <> Utterance has slowed down, in comparison to rest of talk.
- >< Utterance has sped up, in comparison to rest of talk.
- (Underline)–Emphasis placed here.
- Sudden cut-off of speech.
- Short interval.
- : Separation and emphasis given here.
- ° Softer than surrounding speech.
- ↑ Increase in tone/pitch.
- ↓ Decrease in tone/pitch.
- Underlining describes emphasis