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THE REPRODUCTIVE DECISION-MAKING OF LESBIAN WOMEN: A FEMINIST POSTSTRUCTURALIST ANALYSIS OF GENDERED DISCOURSES

by

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the reproductive decision-making of eight self-identified lesbian women in same-gendered relationships as it is interested in the ways in which they construct their reproductive decisions, particularly as it relates to their gender. Four open-ended, semi-structured, joint interviews were conducted with couples who have already made the decision to parent, thereby offering retrospective accounts. Interview transcriptions were analysed by employing thematic analysis underpinned by principles of Foucauldian discourse analysis and rooted in a feminist poststructuralist theory. Three discursive themes are identified in participants' accounts namely: 1) the discourse of heterosexual gender roles; 2) the discourse of heteronormative parenting; and 3) the counter-discourse of parental responsibility and the responsible parent. In a context where lesbian mothers' reproductive decisions are often called into question and where lesbian mothers' parental roles are constructed according to gender binaries, the study concludes that in exercising their limited agency within restrictive heteronormative discourse, participants made their reproductive decisions based on their ability to care for a child in terms of pragmatic factors, their capacity to meet the child's emotional needs and to protect them from potential "othering" by segments of the society. The findings of this study carry implications for addressing the marginalisation and stigmatisation of lesbian women who wish to become parents and raise their children without having to justify their decisions purely because of their sexual identity.

Key terms: Reproductive decision-making, same-gendered parenting, heteronormativity, lesbian motherhood, thematic discourse analysis, feminist poststructuralism, retrospective accounts, gender roles, othering.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

South Africa, similar to many other countries, can be described as profoundly pronatalist; the pervasive notion that parenthood and childbearing are incontrovertibly desired and socially valued (Meyers, 2001). Pronatalism has a particular influence on female gendered identity, since the valued female identity is enmeshed with notions of motherhood (Gillespie, 2003). This occurs through the belief that women are more nurturing than men, have a "maternal instinct", and that motherhood is one of the most important roles that women can assume (Letherby, 2002). The influence of pronatalist discourse on female subjectivity is, however, mediated by social signifiers such as "race", age, sexuality and socioeconomic status.

Institutionalised beliefs about what is considered a proper mother generally posit the ideal as a "white", economically privileged, heterosexually married woman and designate women who do not fall within such a description as unfit for motherhood (Morell, 2000). Pronatalist discourse, therefore, prescribes a normative context within which reproductive decision-making takes place. For individuals who conform to such a normative context, the decision to have children is generally taken for granted and is often not conceptualised as a deliberate choice; instead, it is regarded as a "natural" progression in the heterosexual life-course (Morison, 2011). When reproductive decision-making occurs outside of such a normative context (such as when same-gendered couples wish to conceive or adopt), social sanctions often problematise or constrain such decisions.

Pronatalist discourse, therefore, does not exclusively affect heterosexual individuals' parenthood decision-making. As Morell (2000) states "lesbian women are not necessarily immune from pronatalist pressures" (p. 315). The societal view of female gendered identity as fused with childbearing is one which both lesbian and bisexual women in same-gendered relationships are also exposed to. Potgieter (2003), in her research among South African lesbians, echoes this statement when reporting that participants in her study described having children as socially valued and important to their gendered identities. Of particular significance, women in same-gendered relationships face what Morell (2000) describes as a fundamental paradox of pronatalist discourse, in that despite associations of a "successful" female identity with that of being a mother, powerful beliefs exist about "who should become a mother and under what circumstances" (p. 315). It is this context of complex and

contradictory constructions of gendered, racialised and sexualised aspects of reproductive decision-making, which the current study wishes to explore.

In this chapter, I will discuss the research problem and research aims, outline the research objectives, provide a motivation for the research and, lastly, a broad overview of each of the chapters to follow.

1.2   Research Problem and Research Aims

Since female subjectivity - an individual's unique self-definition of her identity as a woman - her unique sense of what "makes" her a woman (Butler, 1999) - is generally constructed in relation to normative notions of motherhood and childbearing, as mentioned at the beginning of this section, it is deemed valuable to focus specifically on how gender is treated in the accounts of women in same-gendered relationships as such women are generally "othered" through prevailing heterosexual pronatalist discourses.

The aim of this study is to investigate reproductive decision-making among self-identified lesbian women in same-gendered relationships and to explore how they jointly construct meaning around reproductive decision-making, particularly with regard to their gender. Broadly, the study is informed by a desire to explore the reproductive decision-making of lesbian women as the primary focus of existing reproductive decision-making research relevant to the present study is typically on the steps lesbian couples take prior to having children, while often neglecting the meaning they attach to these parenting decisions. The data informing this study was collected by interviewing four same-gendered couples, consisting of eight women who self-identify as being lesbian. Thematic discourse analysis, grounded in feminist poststructuralist theory, was utilised to analyse the stories they told about becoming mothers, while at the same time remaining cognisant of prevailing gendered discourses.

1.3   Motivation

From a review of the literature, international research concerned with reproductive decision-making generally focuses on heterosexual individuals who are unable to have children, such as studies investigating involuntary infertility (Goldberg, Downing, & Richardson, 2009; Meng, Greene, & Turek, 2005; Redshaw, Hockley, & Davidson, 2007). More recently, the focus has also turned to childfree heterosexual individuals who challenge pronatalist discourses through voluntarily deciding not to have children (Gillespie, 2003;

Mollen, 2006; Terry & Braun, 2011). While very little South African research on reproductive decision-making exists, the few studies that do explore this have a similar focus on heterosexual samples, such as research by Dyer, Abrahams, Mokoena, and van der Spuy (2004) that investigates heterosexual South African men's experiences of couple infertility, and Morison's (2011) study of heterosexual Afrikaner men's involvement in reproductive decision-making. Further to this, a small body of emerging South African research focuses on the reproductive decisions of heterosexual HIV positive individuals (Cooper, Harries, Myer, Orner, & Bracken, 2007; Kaida et al., 2009; Laher et al., 2009). As such, the motivation for conducting this research is to address the lack of research investigating lesbian and bisexual individuals' reproductive decision-making, but more importantly, to better understand "non-normative" decision-making practices. Lubbe (2008a) maintains that research should recognise the ways in which family structure is changing in South Africa where gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals are increasingly deciding to become parents, despite a stereotypical view that they remain childless. It is possible that lesbian women wishing to have children engage with pronatalist discourse in varied and potentially different ways when compared to heterosexual individuals, particularly so since having children is not achieved easily in "non-traditional" ways such as in a same-gendered relationship. The implications of better understanding reproductive decision-making amongst these "non-normative" couples may assist in facilitating the emergence of counter-discourses to reduce marginalisation and stigma for such parents (Butler, 2009).

1.4 Chapter Outline

While this chapter, **Chapter 1**, serves as an introduction to the research problem and objectives, **Chapter 2** discusses the literature review. It first provides an overview of international research, by discussing the historical background of homosexual parenthood, with a particular focus on lesbian motherhood. The international review then turns to a discussion of existing literature that centres on the means through which lesbian-headed families are typically created and the decision-making processes lesbian women go through prior to becoming parents. Secondly, Chapter 2 provides an overview of existing South African literature on reproductive decision-making and highlights the marked absence in research that specifically focuses on lesbian women's reproductive decisions.

Chapter 3 discusses Feminist Poststructuralist theory as the theoretical framework that informs both the research design and methodology. **Chapter 4** explores the implemented

research design and methodology, which involved a qualitative research approach of conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews with eight lesbian women. A thorough explanation is then provided for how their stories were analysed through implementing a unique amalgamation of thematic discourse analysis. This chapter also outlines the selection of participants, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

The findings of the research are presented in **Chapter 5** while bearing Chapter 2's literature review and Chapter 3's theory in mind, while **Chapter 6** focuses on a discussion of these findings. The discussion in Chapter 6 attempts to make holistic sense of the findings, while also expanding on the study's limitations and providing recommendations for future research endeavours.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the available literature on reproductive decision-making among women in same-gendered relationships by discussing both international and South African research on this topic. It first provides an overview of international research by discussing the historical background of homosexual parenthood, with a particular focus on lesbian motherhood, and reveals a dearth of information on this population within our current body of literature on reproductive decision-making. The international review then turns to a discussion on existing literature that centres on the means through which lesbian-headed families are typically created and the decision-making processes lesbian women go through prior to becoming parents, identifying the value of accounting for social considerations beyond the cost-benefit analysis typically used to analyse reproductive decision-making by using post-structuralist feminist theory. Secondly, this chapter provides an overview of existing South African research on reproductive decision-making and highlights the absence in research that specifically focuses on lesbian women's reproductive decisions. It further highlights the potential value such a study carries in providing data on a lesser researched but growing population using post-structuralist feminism to expand on theoretical contributions provided by cost-benefit analyses on reproductive decision-making by lesbian women.

2.2 International Literature on Same-Gendered Parenthood

2.2.1 Lesbian motherhood.

The historical background of homosexual parenting is rich and complex; however, for the purpose of this research and in the interest of covering the most important and relevant content, this chapter will only focus on research which relates particularly to lesbian motherhood.

The Women's Liberation movement (or second-wave feminism), as well as the Gay Liberation movement gained traction during the late 1960's, early 1970's, where women were encouraged to liberate themselves from patriarchal dominance in society (Freeman, 1973; Giardina, 2010) and individuals with non-normative sexual orientations rallied for equal legal rights and opportunities to those of heterosexuals (Morris, 2008). Golombock (2013) notes that,

in the 1970's (specifically in the United States), the courts typically awarded custody to heterosexual mothers in cases of divorce or separation from their male partners, but more often than not denied custody to lesbian mothers under such circumstances. This was due to the belief that growing up in a lesbian household would have dire social consequences for the children involved (i.e. being teased and rejected by peers) and more importantly, that their gender development would be negatively affected (i.e. that they would either have a skewed gender identity or that they would grow up to be homosexual). Under these circumstances, due to a notable lack of research at the time on the effects of growing up in a lesbian or gay parent household, judges were inclined to award custody to the father, who could provide the child with a "normal", heterosexual family environment (Golombock, 2013). The concept of "normality" which was invoked in such instances was considered problematic by a growing movement of post-structuralist feminist theorists who recognised the notion of normality as a socially constructed normative discourse, a co-created linguistically-mediated informal rule for social behaviour, which was discriminatory to homosexual women despite a lack of evidence suggesting them to be problematic or deficient as mothers (Atkins, 2007; Foucault, 1993).

Golombock (2013) explains that, in later years, extensive research (which included longitudinal studies) has shown that children from lesbian households are no more likely to be homosexual than children raised in a heterosexual household. These findings, however, were and are still disputed by those who believe that parenting should be reserved for heterosexual individuals given their resistance to shifting a heteronormative discourse despite evidence to the contrary of these socially constructed notions of what constitutes acceptable motherhood.

The suitability of women in same-gendered relationships to parent is often called into question, greatly because of society's focus on their sexuality and the inability to reconcile a so-called abnormal sexual orientation with the highly valued practice of parenting within the context of a heterosexual parenting unit. Lesbian women are more often expected to provide convincing arguments for their choice to parent, while heterosexual women's desire to parent is less likely to be called into question in such a manner (Pies, 1989). Further to this, Weston (2013) discusses that, often, when coming into contact with lesbian mothers, others typically assume that their identity as a mother implies heterosexuality. Boyd (2003, 2013) argues that lesbian motherhood could be considered a form of "transgressive motherhood", as it falls outside the bounds of the normative, essentialist maternal discourse that perpetuates the socially constructed notion that mothers should intrinsically be fundamentally heterosexual in

order to be suitable mothers (Foucault, 1993). In contemporary society, as was the case in the mid-70s, a commonly held belief is that a woman could be either a lesbian or a mother, but that she cannot be both (Golombok, 2013). During the same period, lesbian mother families were primarily comprised of women who had children through "heterosexual"[1] relationships and those who wished to become parents outside of a heterosexual relationship turned to donor insemination.

Advances in reproductive technology created new avenues through which almost anyone with a desire to parent could have children of their own. According to Dunne (2000), these technological advances, coupled with the realisation that sexual orientation no longer served as a barrier to parenthood, led to a so-called "gayby" boom; where a great many homosexuals in both an individual capacity and in the context of a couple, started having children. Women who wished to become parents through donor insemination were heavily criticised in general, as this was seen as an unnatural route to parenthood (Ombelet & Van Robays, 2010). Where lesbian women were concerned, it was seen as yet another unnatural avenue for individuals leading a so-called unnatural life, to become parents; undermining traditional notions of the concept of family (Donovan & Wilson, 2008; Dunne, 2000; Haimes & Weiner, 2000) and as stated by Dunne (2000), also undermining the heterosexual monopoly on reproduction.

Although much has changed in recent years with regard to the social acceptance of same-gendered parenting, much remains the same. Donovan and Wilson (2008) express that lesbian women's ability to parent is still called into question due to prevailing heterosexist assumptions about parenthood which suggest that only a heterosexual man may function as a paternal caregiver by encouraging independence and self-regulation, while only a heterosexual woman may function as a maternal figure by providing nurturance and affection. Almack (2006) explains that lesbian mothers may "be constrained by the obligations and expectations attached to motherhood and have to work harder than most to demonstrate that their child's welfare is not in jeopardy" (p. 7) by demonstrating that their homosexual orientation does not impede their ability to function effectively in a maternal capacity. Dunne (2000) argues further

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[1] The term "heterosexual" was placed in inverted commas to indicate that the mother was in a relationship with a man at the time of conception, while she did not necessarily identify as heterosexual herself. This meaning is conveyed throughout this study when speaking about lesbian women's previous relationships with men.

that the notion that gender and sexuality inform parental practices in any direct fashion is in itself a misplaced essentialist claim as parenting is a socially constructed concept rather than a purely biological behaviour. As such, Dunne (2000) contends that lesbian couples may be unfairly scrutinised as parents by society as deficient when parenting does not necessitate two people of different sexes. Much of the argument about two women raising a child is, according to Heimes and Weiner (2000), rooted in issues of conception and the negative perceptions held by many about the "unnatural" process of creating a family.

2.2.2 Creating a family: Deciding on the methods of conception.

The decision of women in same-gendered relationships to become parents often brings about questions concerning *why* they want to do so and *how* they expect to accomplish it. Even though these may seem like legitimate questions, they reflect the prominence of the pronatalist paradox in which lesbian (or bisexual women) find themselves and may moreover be seen, according to Pies (1989) as "homophobic and antagonistic attitudes" (p. 137). The question of *how* same-gendered couples will become parents is, however, of importance here. In contrast to most heterosexual couples, same-gendered couples who are considering parenthood must consider additional factors when deciding how their family will be created (Donovan & Wilson, 2008). Consequently, most research investigating reproductive decision-making among women in same-gendered relationships focus on practical aspects related to methods of conception, including aspects around the use of donor insemination (e.g., Almack, 2006; Chabot & Ames, 2004; Donovan & Wilson, 2008). Other facets of the decision-making process explored in previous research include decisions regarding who the biological mother will be (Chabot & Ames, 2004), issues around donor identity (Almack, 2006), and experiences at fertility treatment centres (Donovan & Wilson, 2008).

Almack (2006) explored some of the socio-legal discourses around donor- and self-insemination among twenty lesbian parent families in the United Kingdom. These women's accounts revealed the centrality of their concern over the needs of their children when deciding whether to make use of donor- or self-insemination. These concerns include the perceived need for a father, for stability and for their child/children to have access to information regarding their genetic origins. Almack's (2006) findings regarding these women's accounts show that the costs and benefits of each option were weighed up before couples came to a decision regarding which insemination route to take. According to Almack (2006), one of the main reasons for their careful consideration is based on the need to ensure that their decisions cannot

be seen, by any means, as irresponsible. In the same vein, Donovan and Wilson (2008), whose research will be discussed in greater detail further on in this chapter, highlight the prominence of discourses that are centred on the importance of genetic fatherhood in children's lives, in contexts where lesbian motherhood is called into question. "Within this context…the motives of lesbians who opt into parenthood are understood as morally suspect, selfish and not empathetic to children's potential feelings…" (p. 651). This statement sums up the perceived notion that lesbian mothers are insensitive to their children's so-called need to have insight into their biological father, as well as their children's feelings around being different to their peers from heterosexual families.

Almack's (2006) research further found that the majority of couples who chose to make use of self-insemination (where the sperm-donor was known to them), chose this option to ensure that their children would have access to their genetic roots. This did not involve being raised by the biological father, or his involvement in the child's life, but merely involved creating an opportunity for future contact. The decision by some couples in Almack's research to exclude the biological father from the child's life explicitly, was made in order to provide a stable family unit for their child and to minimise the chance of disruption to their lives. This finding was reiterated in Donovan and Wilson's (2008) research. Other couples in Almack's (2006) research chose to self-inseminate, because of the opportunity for the parents to know with a degree of certainty that their child would potentially inherit genetic traits they value. Some couples in the research indicated that using a known donor whom they trusted would improve the certainty that he would keep to any negotiated agreements. Almack (2006) believes that this consideration also links with the parents' wish to provide stability for their child. Accordingly, the benefits of choosing donor insemination through donor clinics includes the rigorous screening process through which the sperm goes beforehand and the certainty this option offers that the donor does not have any sexually transmitted diseases or genetic conditions that could be passed on to the child. This study highlights another instance where the focus of the research is on couples' cost-benefit decision-making process.

Chabot and Ames (2004) explored the decision-making process of lesbian couples by conducting interviews with ten lesbian women who chose donor insemination as a means of conception. As a result, they were able to develop a decision-making model, which highlights the different types of decisions which were considered by the couples in their research. The model includes the following types of decisions: "1. Do we want to become parents?", "2.

Where do we access information and support?", "3. How will we become parents? (Donor insemination)", "4. Who will be the biological mother?", "5. How do we decide on a donor? (Unknown- or known donor)", "6. How do we incorporate inclusive language (i.e. the ways in which they speak about their family and the relationships therein)?" "7. How do we negotiate parenthood within the larger heterocentric context?" Their research shows that the decision-making process is not necessarily a linear one where pros and cons of parenthood are weighed up, but involves a range of complex decisions based on practical, social and emotional considerations.

Unlike some of the women in Almack's (2006) research who chose donor insemination from known donors, some lesbian mothers opt for unknown or anonymous donors. Donovan and Wilson (2008) conducted research on lesbian women residing in the United Kingdom who made use of medicalised donor insemination (DI) with unknown and anonymous donors, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the decision-making process involved in creating a family in this manner[2]. They considered these women's expectations of and experiences with clinics, in addition to the information they would consider sharing with their children regarding their conception and how their family was created. Although the chosen method of conception does not have a direct effect on family practices, Donovan and Wilson (2008) posit that the means of conception chosen could bring about a variety of circumstances from which family practices could stem, particularly, in their opinion, in the context of a lesbian couple where the decision to parent is made.

They concluded that women who chose donor insemination or self-insemination with an unknown donor only had to contend with negotiations around family practices within the context of their relationship (e.g. between the biological- and non-biological parent) and did not have to account for the role of a father (sperm-donor). Their decision to make use of medicalised DI stemmed from wanting to protect the central role of the two lesbian parents' relationship as the foundation of their constructed family. It is evident in their research that the decision-making process for the women in their study was a reflexive one, defined by shifts in the ways in which lesbian couples imagined and rehearsed their families and how they "reshaped and re-scripted in response to the actualities of organising its construction" (p. 662). Their stories around the construction of their families highlight how decisions (including the

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[2] Donovan and Wilson (2008) conducted their research at a time where those donating sperm for medicalised DI could remain anonymous.

aspects which informed these decisions, such as discussions and negotiations among couples, and their accessing of related community knowledge) were geared towards preserving the integrity of their family unit (see also Nordqvist, 2012). Donovan and Wilson (2008) discuss that this approach, paired with the fact that, at the time of the research, donors were lawfully permitted to remain anonymous, allowed these women to resist prevailing discourses that accentuate the significance of the influence that biological fathers supposedly have on the wellbeing of a child.

In Belgium, donor insemination by means of an anonymous donor implies that personal choice in the selection of a sperm donor is greatly restricted by legal protocols implemented by fertility institutions. This is according to a qualitative research study that was conducted by Ravelingien, Provoost, Wyverkens, Buysse, De Sutter, and Pennings (2014), who conducted an enquiry into how lesbian recipients of anonymous donor sperm in Belgium perceive and experience the selection thereof. Their research found that prospective lesbian recipients accepted this policy as an innate part of having the option to choose anonymous donor sperm and the consequent opportunity to conceive. Most participants in their research placed great trust in the standards upheld by hospitals' screening processes. Participants who expressed a desire to have more choice in the selection process, motivated this desire by stating that they wanted the option to select qualities that would be conducive to the health of their child and positively contribute to their family unit. This is in line with Almack's (2006) findings as discussed earlier, although sperm donation is only one of the means by which lesbian couples are able to have a family with adoption and surrogacy serving as alternative means of reproduction with unique considerations regarding reproductive decision-making.

2.2.3   Building a family: Adoption and surrogacy by lesbian couples.

In addition to assisted reproductive technologies such as donor insemination, many women in same-gendered relationships choose to adopt a child/children. In this regard, previous research has focused on challenges faced by women in same-gendered relationships - these include the legal requirement to adopt as a single or primary parent, the encouragement by some professionals in the adoption system to hide the nature of their relationship and the refusal of some adoption agencies to assist with the adoption (Goldberg et al., 2009).

According to Strah (2003), a large percentage of same-gendered couples consider surrogacy to be a viable means of conception. However, this is more often the case for men in

a same-gendered relationship than for women (Strah, 2003). Surrogacy is similar to donor insemination in that it involves a medical procedure using donated sperm. Often when surrogacy is chosen as the means of conception, the egg is donated while the baby undergoes its gestational period in the womb of an individual who will not be considered the child's legal parent. Even though it eliminates the factors that hamper adoption, surrogacy can be problematic because the egg donor or surrogate cannot remain anonymous (Lev, 2006; Patterson, 1994).

Both surrogacy and adoption can be costly and surrogacy, in particular, could be out of the financial reach of many same-gendered couples wishing to have a child (Barney, 2005; Lev, 2006; Rank, 2010). The studies reviewed thus far primarily focus on the practical component of conception in the decision-making process and do not necessarily consider aspects that occur prior to or separate from decisions regarding the method of conception. Chabot and Ames (2004) found that, in addition to decisions around the method of conception, lesbian couples' decision-making process include considering the emotional and material support that will be available to them as new mothers. They also consider the implications of motherhood for their lesbian identity, where opting to have children could render their lesbian identity less visible (Chabot & Ames, 2004). Integrating motherhood and a lesbian identity can be perceived as a challenge for lesbian women who do not want to assimilate with heteronormativity or consider a lesbian identity as incompatible with motherhood (Lewin, 1994; Touroni & Coyle, 2002). The impact of raising children in a heterosexist and homophobic world is also reported as influencing the likelihood of lesbian women opting to parent (Touroni & Coyle, 2002). Touroni and Coyle (2002) suggest that many lesbian mothers are deterred from motherhood due to healthcare professionals and agencies refusing them assistance and turning them away on the basis of heteronormative discourses about natural motherhood and the value of a mother-father couple.

2.2.4   Lesbian mothers: Being "good-enough" or "as-good-as".

Another factor influencing lesbian women's decision to have children include the perceived ability to be a good parent (Eisenberg, 2002; Wall, 2007). Lesbian women with high levels of internalised homophobia and associated internalised beliefs that lesbian women cannot be successful parents are less likely to express an intention to parent (Wall, 2007). Finally, a love for children and a desire for stability in their lives have also been cited as

informing the choice to parent (Gartrell et al., 1996; Pies, 1989); these motivations are also commonly cited by prospective heterosexual parents (Langdridge, Connolly, & Sheeran, 2000).

Evidently, the studies that are reviewed here are generally modelled on a view of decision-making as involving a cost-benefit analysis and implying a fixed and linear process of maximising gains while minimising potential risks and losses through which most lesbian women proceed before arriving at their decision. Wall (2007) concludes her study by stating that lesbian women's evaluation of the potential impact of motherhood influences their decision-making process, "with those perceiving greater benefits and lower costs, being more likely to plan a family" (p. 71). Even though parenthood is a more deliberate choice in the case of same-gendered couples, their decision to become parents should not be reduced to a mere linear process of weighing up the pros and cons thereof. Their reproductive decisions are very much socially embedded and reliant on what is possible within their given discursive context (which will be elaborated upon in the section on the chosen theoretical framework). Only a handful of studies could be identified that consider the decision-making process more broadly than the cost-benefit view, specifically in relation to lesbian women's experiences. Mezey (2012) examined how lesbians and gay men decide to become parents or to remain childfree. She found that their decisions are shaped by several factors, which include their intimate partner relationships, work-related issues, personal considerations and the availability of support networks while aspects such as gender, sexuality, "race" and class further influence the role of these factors on the parenting decision-making process (Mezey, 2012).

This study, therefore, attempts to address a gap in the current literature on reproductive decision-making by lesbian mothers by moving away from such a focus on perceived costs and benefits and supplement the cost-benefit perspective with deeper consideration of the socially embedded character of reproductive decision-making for lesbian couples by employing post-structuralist feminist theory as a point of departure. The rationale for this undertaking is rooted in a review of the international literature on this topic which indicates that research around reproductive decision-making regarding women in same-gendered relationships has tended to focus more pertinently on the practical component of conception and disregard the decisions prior to or separate from choosing the method of conception. Only a handful of studies focus on lesbian women's decision-making processes more broadly by accounting for broader socio-political aspects of their decision-making. In considering the importance of contextual factors

on reproductive decision-making, the following section reviews literature on this topic within the South African context in which this study was conducted.

2.3 South African Literature on Same-Gendered Parenthood

In 1996, South Africa became the first country in the world to include "sexual orientation" as part of their Constitution's equality provision, thereby protecting the rights of people with sexual orientations outside of the heterosexual norm (Cock, 2005). Furthermore, it became the first, and currently the only African country to have legalised same-sex marriage (Ntlama, 2010). Despite these progressive strides towards abolishing discrimination against alternative sexual orientations, homosexuality remains stigmatised and homophobia remains rife within South Africa, with recent instances of corrective rape and homophobic violence providing an indication thereof (Gouws, 2015; Phiri, 2015; Qambela, 2015; Sandfort, Frazer, Matebeni, Reddy & Southey-Swartz, 2015; Smilth, 2015). While no South African studies were identified with a specific focus on lesbian, gay or bisexual individuals' reproductive decision-making, a small number of studies explore different aspects of same-gendered parenthood, particularly in lesbian-headed households.

As mentioned earlier, women in same-gendered relationships' desire to parent is more likely to be called into question than that of women in heterosexual relationships (Pies, 1989). According to Distiller (2011), a belief persists that homosexual parents are somehow able to transmit their homosexuality to their children; this, of course, is seen as problematic because it supposedly leads to more homosexuals being "produced". This relates to the reasons why the children of same-gendered parents have to deal with disclosing the status of their family structure and why they only do so when certain conditions are met (Kruger, 2011; Lubbe, 2008b); the children of heterosexual parents are not usually required to defend or explain why they have both a father and a mother.

Lubbe's (2008b) research focuses on the experiences of South African children growing up in lesbian-headed families. Her research explores a sample of children's awareness of the various views held in society of lesbian-headed families. These include prejudiced views and resultant discriminatory behaviour, versus open-mindedness and acceptance. Her research also explores disclosure of their family status to others, where she found that children's contentment with and acceptance of their family structure, in relation to external factors such as social acceptability played a role in their willingness to disclose their family status (Lubbe, 2008b).

Research by Kruger (2011) also explores disclosure of family status by adolescents who were raised in same-gendered families. Her findings suggest that disclosure depends on adolescents' experiences and followed only when a close relationship with someone was established, if they were certain they shared common ground with the individual they were disclosing to (such as someone who had a similar family arrangement), and whether they perceived disclosure to be a necessary step (for example, being directly asked about their family structure). Lubbe (2008b) and Kruger's (2011) studies highlight how being raised in a same-gendered household is also "othered", not only by parties external to the family, but also by the children's perceived need to decide when and to whom they will disclose the "otherness" of their family.

While Lubbe (2008b) and Kruger's (2011) research centre on the children of same-gendered parents' willingness to disclose their family structure, Distiller (2011) focuses on her own experiences as a co-parent in a lesbian relationship within the post-apartheid South African context. She argues that lesbian-headed family structures are often constructed as "other" by both anti-homosexual groups, and surprisingly in much of lesbian-affirmative literature. While anti-homosexual groups deem such a family structure unnatural, much of lesbian-affirmative literature reflects a belief that there are fundamental differences between men and women, where being a lesbian is regarded as "intrinsically revolutionary" (Distiller, 2011, p. 2). Lesbian women, and bisexual women too, for that matter, are regarded as "revolutionary" in the sense that their particular orientations challenge dominant discourses around gender and sexuality by not adhering, in either case, to the criteria of so-called "normal" heterosexuality.

Distiller (2011) further maintains that homophobia is sanctioned by the state in South Africa and that the dominant discourse in the country constructs homosexuality as "…'unAfrican', [and as] a 'Western' import or disease (Distiller, 2011, p. 4)." Such views illegitimatise the family structure of same-gendered families and consequently the importance of protecting such families in the same manner one would expect so-called "normal" heterosexual families to be protected. She discusses her own experience of being discriminated against by a hospital that refused to facilitate her son's birth, despite such a refusal (based on a patient's sexual preference) being unconstitutional within South Africa. The Constitution, albeit fundamental to upholding the rights and humanity of South African citizens, does not guarantee that all South Africans, or even the state itself, will agree on or uphold what is written within it (Distiller, 2011).

On the other hand, Distiller (2011) maintains that, although differences may exist between heterosexual and homosexual parenting (i.e. modes of conception and assigned gender roles), lesbian (or bisexual) parents are not necessarily more revolutionary than their heterosexual counterparts, since "the daily routines associated with raising children feel very, very ordinary, if no less challenging for being shared by most people on the planet" (p. 2).

In summary, the review of South African literature indicates that while there is increased recognition that family structures in South Africa are changing, research exploring decision-making processes around having children is limited. As was discussed in Chapter 1, existing South African studies focus on the treatment-seeking behaviour of heterosexual South African men who suffer from couple infertility (Dyer, Abrahams, Mokoena, & van der Spuy, 2004) as well as heterosexual Afrikaner males' involvement in reproductive decision-making (Morison, 2011). These studies focus exclusively on the decision-making processes and experiences of heterosexual men, while the experiences of heterosexual women and that of lesbian-, gay- and bisexual individuals remain unexplored. South African research regarding same-gendered families, such as the studies by Lubbe (2008b) and Kruger (2011), provide insight into the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered households, but do not explore the decision-making processes the parents went through in deciding to have children. Distiller (2011) relates some of her own experiences of being discriminated against for being a lesbian co-parent and discusses the view that homophobia remains sanctioned within South Africa. Although her research does not directly relate to her parental decision-making processes, it does give insight into some of the factors that could potentially have an impact on such decisions within the South African context. From the review, it appears that there is a need for research, in both the international and South African context, to investigate reproductive decision-making among lesbian individuals and a need to address the impact of the stigma attached to being a parent in a same-gendered relationship by focussing on the social construction of motherhood. In attempting to better understand the socio-cultural and historico-linguistic elements of reproductive decision-making, a post-structuralist feminist theoretical framework appears most appropriate as is discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: FEMINIST POSTSTRUCTURALISM

3.1 Introduction

A feminist poststructuralist framework informs the proposed research. According to Willig (2008), a selected discursive analysis method has to be contextualised by making clear its theoretical claims about the nature of discourse and the manner in which it aids in the creation of social realities. In order to contextualise and locate feminist poststructuralism within a broader framework, I set out to describe both structuralism and poststructuralism by discussing some important contributors to each, and to expand on feminist poststructuralism in order to contextualise the view taken on the subjective experience of lesbian women's reproductive decisions in conjunction with their partners.

3.2 Structuralism

West (2007) discusses structuralism and poststructuralism as emerging in the twentieth century alongside Hegelianism (the view that only that which is rational, is real), Marxism (an epistemology that places focus on both class relations and societal conflict and their function in social transformation), Sartrean existentialism (a view of human life that posits existence before essence in the suggestion that freedom of choice and action are the basis of human subjectivity and distinguish human beings from other species and objects based on humans existing as "beings of becoming") and phenomenology (the view that intentionality lies at the core of an experience and the prioritisation of experience of an object from an individual perspective) as a collective criticism of the epistemological premise of positivism. Positivism is underpinned by the view that a linear relationship exists between the world and the ways in which individuals are able to perceive and understand it (Willig, 2008). According to Atkins (2007), this linear relationship implies that the objective status of phenomena is identical to our perception of them. It is, from this perspective, therefore possible to objectively study and report on phenomena, objects or events and to provide an accurate reflection of reality. Willig (2008) explains that hardly any scientist still subscribes to this epistemology, given the recognised view that our perceptions and understanding of the world are both subjective and limited. There is, however, debate around the extent to which we are able to access objective truth, with some subscribing to extreme relativism (the belief that truth and knowledge is always relative), naïve realism (the belief that it is possible to access the truth about reality),

and other viewpoints somewhere in between these, such as critical realism (it is possible to have epistemic access to objective reality, but simultaneously reality cannot be reduced to epistemology as the resources offered by language provide a medium of accessing reality, but also co-construct this reality through linguistic resources) and social constructionism (a view that our reality is predominantly constructed through language, history and culture) (Siegel, 2005; Willig, 2008). Essentially, an examination of this spectrum of epistemological viewpoints indicates that each differs according to the location of what constitutes true and valid knowledge with positivist claims and naïve realism locating truth and meaning in external reality while social constructionism locates truth and meaning in the shared (socio-cultural) and individual subjective reality of humanity. It is the latter end of the epistemological spectrum that endorses the predominance of socio-political and subjective elements that allow for the co-creation of a linguistically mediated, historically contingent reality that is endorsed in this research study.

3.2.1 De Saussure's structural linguistics.

De Saussure (1959) takes an alternate approach by focussing on the centrality of language in knowledge creation. According to West (2007), Ferdinand de Saussure's structural linguistics made a prominent contribution to the structuralist approach through its focus on language rather than the act of speaking. He distinguishes between language and speech: While he believes that language is a system of signs comprised of words and meanings that are independent of an individual's speech ("speech acts"), speech obtains its meaning from language (de Saussure, 1959). As such, de Saussure argues that it is not the act of speaking that imbues language with its meaning but rather that linguistic resources serve as parameters for human thought and are more primordial than the thoughts expressed by the speaker (Lundy, 2013). Therefore, language serves as a historically contingent system of meaning which both makes possible and essentially limits the thoughts of any speaker (de Saussure, 1959; Seigel, 2005).

Furthermore, de Saussure (1959) contributes to structuralism by making the argument for a synchronic, rather than a diachronic approach to language. While a diachronic approach to language advocates the study of changes in language over time and is valuable in attending to shifts in how linguistic resources and rules are shifted, it does not offer insights into the operation of the current system of meaning employed in a particular context (West, 2007).

Therefore, the diachronic approach serves to retrospectively review alterations in the meanings of words in a purely descriptive manner but cannot makes sense of the causes of such shifts because the function of signs, symbols and words in their current context remains unexplored (Lundy, 2013).

To address this gap, de Saussure (1959) argues that language must be explained through synchronic means. This approach considers that the meaning and function of language do not rely on its origins or the manner in which it developed, but rather on what is known about the current system of signs and meanings. The meaning of a sign is derived from an understanding of the relationship between the "signifier" and the "signified", where the signifier is represented by a sound or set of written characters and the signified carries across the intended meaning or concept of the signifier (de Saussure, 1959; West, 2007). De Saussure (1959) emphasises that this relationship does not imply that signifiers necessarily have meaning, as is evident in the existence of multiple different languages. Meaning is rather derived from language as a whole and relies on the contrasting relationships between the elements that make up a language, rather than single words in themselves. Given variations between languages, different conceptual boundaries may be drawn within each, which often result in incomplete or flawed meanings being brought across during translations (Lundy, 2013). Therefore, de Saussure (1959), through the use of structural linguistics, explains that individuals do not create meaning solely through the act of speaking but also draw on meaning created before the word was uttered as such meaning is located in the signified and not only the signifier.

It was consequently argued during the 1960's that "social and cultural phenomena should be treated neither as the intentional products of human subjects nor as the unintentional by-products of history, but rather as structured systems of elements with specific and irreducible rules of combination and transformation" (West, 2007; p. 166). In doing so, structuralists aimed to turn their efforts into a scientific endeavour through deriving meaning from basic elements of subjective human activity, but differ from the dominant tradition of science in attempting to show that a system (language) is greater than the sum of its parts (signs/words) as meaning cannot be located in a single factor such as signifier or signified, but rather is resultant from the interaction between them within a particular context.

3.3   Poststructuralism

Where structuralism focussed on deriving meaning from basic elements of subjective human activity, poststructuralism is concerned with the ways in which language constructs social reality (Lundy, 2013; Seigel, 2005). Where the subject of consciousness' intentions to language formed the basis of enquiry in structuralism, according to Willig (2009), poststructuralists came to recognise language for its productive potential.

3.3.1 Derrida's differance.

Poststructuralism developed as a critique of the limitations of structuralism and Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) is a prominent figure in its development. West (2007) discusses Derrida's dissatisfaction with Western philosophy and its apparent uncritical approach to the understanding of language and meaning. Derrida's most renowned contribution to the understanding of language is the method of "deconstruction", which refers to the strategies employed to uncover the hidden meanings/tacit assumptions contained in philosophical texts (Derrida, 1972). He criticises Western philosophy's "logocentrism" (the association of truth with what is verbalised), for example, Husserl's view that language merely serves as a medium for conveying meaning through "the meaning-giving acts [speaking] of a subject of consciousness [a person]" (West, 2007; p. 179). He further critiques Husserl for his "phonocentrism" [the belief that speech provides a more transparent account of meaning than accounts provided through writing] (Derrida, 1973). Derrida's (1973) critique centres on Husserl's apparent neglect of the importance of the signifier (as discussed by de Saussure) in thought. Derrida believes that writing makes it apparent that meaning is fluid and generated by "deferrance" (which he defines as the temporally extended system of oppositions between signifiers" (West, 2007; p. 181). This is because text may take on various meanings, depending on the reader (interpreter) and the multiple contexts in which it may be interpreted. Derrida (1972) radicalises de Saussure's structural linguistics by emphasising the fundamental role of the signifier in meaning and the many potential meanings it may contain from one context to another. In doing so, Derrida (1973) goes beyond the quasi-transcendental nature of the signified - the belief that the signifier has some form of universal meaning - and suggests instead that its signified meaning may vary from one person to the next. While de Saussure views language and meaning as a relatively stable differential system of oppositions, Derrida (1972) argues that such a view reduces any account of representation to mere "presence", as Derrida (1972, 1973) suggests that the signified does not possess a limited meaning but rather

can mean anything based solely on the function between speakers. His view is thus a radicalisation of the synchronic approach to language proposed by de Saussure as he relocates the meaning of every phrase and word to subjective intention, not only intersubjective function (West, 2007). He expanded on the concept of "difference" as discussed by de Saussure through the development of, perhaps his most well-known neologism, *"différance", w*ith the aim of "disrupt[ing] the metaphysics of presence. It ["difference"] does so by reminding us that the recognition of sameness and difference involved in all aspects of representation cannot itself be temporally present. Representation is never sheer presence or immediacy, since it always involves both the recognition of 'difference' [different personal interpretations] and a temporal 'deferral' " [different contextual interpretations] (West, 2007; p. 180). This expansion on the variation of meaning suggested by Derrida (1972) suggests that the truth and meaning of language are rooted predominantly in subjective intention and interpretation giving it greater malleability of meaning. It is precisely this malleability of meaning in language that Foucault argues provides language with influence that can be manipulated and exerted on subjective existence.

3.3.2 Foucault's discourse.

It is through the work of Michel Foucault (1926-1984) that Derrida's views are brought from language into the broader social structure. Foucault viewed the identity of the "self" as a historically dependent product of discourse as opposed to being self-determined (Foucault, 1993; Townsend, 2013). He defines discourse as co-created meaning, influenced through dialogue and the socio-historical context in which dialogue takes place. All aspects of thought and interactions with others are enmeshed with discourse, given its role in shaping the conceptual framework that informs the ways in which we engage in and view the world (Parker, 1994 in Townsend 2013; p.13). It can, therefore, be argued that our behaviour is unwittingly regulated to adhere to normalised ways of being in the world, which are constructed through concepts such as sexuality and gender (Andrews, 2004; Parker, 1994, Tamboukou, 1999). Foucault, therefore, views "all individual thought and action [a]s prescribed by subliminal and shared discursive ideas which permeate our life worlds" (Townsend, 2013; p. 13).

Foucault carries forward Derrida's post-structuralist linguistics in his argument that linguistically mediated discourses inform social practices and so ways of "languaging" translate into ways of living (Brown, 2000; Dews, 1989). As such, Foucault regards language as possessing power in its potential to influence the actions of human beings through the

construction of informal rules of behaviour or norms which form a basis of behaviour in a particular socio-political context (Foucault, 1986; McGushin, 2005). On the basis of this understanding, Foucault (1993) proposes that language possesses a capacity for subjectification in that language both defines a person's subjectivity but also exerts influence to subjectify individuals and create docile bodies with the intention of reproducing the prevailing linguistically-mediated discourse.

Such power, for Foucault, may be used constructively by promoting freedom and human interest, but more often than not has been used destructively by narrowing possibilities of human living by marginalising and stigmatising those who do not subject themselves to prevailing normative discourses (Dews, 1989; Foucault, 1993). In such cases, those who do not subscribe to the politics of a dominant discourse are considered inferior, diseased or otherwise deficient and so condemned to forms of intensive regulation in order to ensure that they abide by the normative discourse (Brown, 2000; Foucault, 1986). It is this oppressive potential of discourse that Foucault remarks is commonly directed towards constructs of gender and sexuality in particular (Atkins, 2007; Baliber, 1994; Brown, 2000).

When considering the operation of power, Foucault conceives of linguistic discourses as exerting power not on individual subjects, but rather on the actions (thoughts and behaviours) of those subjects (Baliber, 1994; Foucault, 1993; McGushin, 2005). Implicit in this view is a nuanced conception of power as a dual-process of influence in which actions are influenced directly by the discourse and also by the subject's thoughts that are mediated by the discourse, which gives the appearance of agency and freedom (Foucault, 1993). However, while Foucault argues that all forms of discursive social regulation are mediated by three principal "technologies of the power", namely; productive technologies which generate meaning such as the suggestion that heterosexuality and patriarchy are normative and preferred, signifying technologies which symbolise meaning such as social messages indicating male superiority and preference of heterosexuality, and technologies of domination which exert force to regulate bodies to act in accordance with a prevailing discourse such as preferential hiring and religious acceptance according to gender (women as subservient, lower earners) and sexuality (with homosexuality considered a sin), he contends that a fourth operates in discourses concerning sexuality (Baliber, 1994; Foucault, 1986; Seigel, 2005). Foucault refers to this fourth technology as a technology of the self as it refers to one's capacity for self-definition and self-regulation which may collude with prevailing discourses, such as that of

hetero-patriarchal discourse mentioned above, or potentially operate partly in resistance to them (Baliber, 2000; Foucault, 1993). It is within this technology of the self that Foucault locates limited agency which has been an influential tradition carried forward in feminist poststructuralism (Dews, 1989).

3.4   Feminist Poststructuralism

This feminist poststructuralist framework is apposite to the poststructuralist views expressed by Foucault and Derrida as it is rooted within a social constructionist ontology that considers reality as predominantly constructed through language (Willig, 2008). Within this worldview, reproductive decisions and practices are seen as enmeshed in hetero-patriarchal discourses or modes of being that suggest male dominance and heterosexuality are the "normal" or preferred way of life (Macleod & Durrheim, 2002; Peterson, 2003). Such a framework is critical of models of decision-making that assume a rational subject, where individual agency is emphasised and decision-making is regarded as proceeding through a process of cost-benefit analysis as such a view overlooks the role of historically-contingent socio-political discourses about normativity in regulating actions of gender, sexuality and reproduction. This purely rational conceptualisation overlooks the role of context in thoughts and behaviours of people and is limited as it cannot account for cultural and historical variations in practices, and therefore omits crucial elements of subjectivity in decision-making. By rejecting the rational appraisal model and using Foucault's notion of discourse as a point of departure, feminist poststructuralist theory emphasises the socially embedded character of decision-making as an action by a subject or between subjects, and considers individuals' accounts of their choices and practices as shaped by their discursive context (Weedon, 1987). In this research, a poststructuralist framework allowed for the exploration of a dimension of reproductive decision-making not accounted for by cost-benefit decision-making process.

Another key feature of a feminist poststructuralist framework is that subjectivities are seen as constructed through performances of cultural scripts rather than as fixed, enduring or stable. Feminist poststructuralist theory emphasises the artificiality of naturalised categories of identity. Our identities, gendered and otherwise, have no internal "core"; instead, they are brought into being through the practices that construct it (Bordo, 1992). Henriques et al. (1984) states that "the subject itself is the effect of a production, caught in the mutually constitutive web of social practices, discourses and subjectivity; its reality is the tissue of social relations" (p. 117). Davies (1991) argues that, if this is the case, our existence is constituted by the ways

in which we and others speak about us within the boundaries of available discourses, and we are then rendered without fundamental essence. Consequently, Davies (1991) argues that we are multiple beings (rather than unitary ones,) in that the elements that constitute our "essential selves" (p. 42) are contingent upon prevailing discourses and the subject positions they make available. As such, agency from a feminist poststructural perspective differs from agency in Humanism where it is viewed as synonymous with personal freedom or individual autonomy.

Butler (1990), focusing her argument on gendered identities, theorises the performativity of gender as "the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (p. 33). The powerful appeal of gender as a stable, seamless identity lies in its repetitive performance over time, to create the illusion of a coherent category (Butler, 1990). The performativity of gender relies on citing past practices, conventions and norms of what it means to be male or female (Butler, 1993). These citational practices - "bodily gestures, movements and enactments of various kinds" - work together to achieve what is regarded as an appropriate gendered identity (Butler, 1988, p. 519).

Drawing on Foucault's (1993) notion of the restrictive effects of discourse, poststructuralist theory posits that identity categories such as gender and sexuality are constrained by the normative nature of discursive resources available to the subject. Identity categories are curtailed by the discursive frame in which they are enacted; identity "scripts" are "always already determined within this regulatory frame, and the subject has a limited number of 'costumes' from which to make a constrained choice of gender style" (Salih, 2007, p. 56). When drawing on Foucauldian notions of discourse, it could be said that the types of social realities that validate existing power relations and social structures are privileged by dominant discourses (Willig, 2008). The enactment of norms regarding what is considered an appropriate or viable identity corresponds with cultural discourses that constitute and regulate the ideal (Butler, 1990).

This regulatory power of discourse has the implication that individuals are not able to take on any identity of their choosing since Butler (1999) emphasises that "to enter into the repetitive practices of this terrain of signification is not a choice" (p. 189). Discourse, in making available certain discursive resources, poses constraints on what is intelligible and possible to a subject. For example, by framing reproductive decision-making as an exclusively heterosexual action, a prevailing hetero-patriarchal discourse may limit the capacity of lesbian

female couples to define their subjective identities by implying that they may not move away from the notion of the child having a "father" and a "mother" rather than introducing the possibility of two "mothers". Willig (2008) states that "[t]hese constructions in turn make available certain ways-of-seeing the world and certain ways-of-being in the world" (p. 113). Constructed subject positions in turn influence both subjectivity and experience. This approach to identity construction is valuable in the proposed study since it allows for the exploration of how categories of identity (such as gender, sexuality, or parenting status) are continuously negotiated in relation to the discursive context in which an individual exists and allow for a broader exploration of reproductive decision-making by investigating the participants' negotiation of their subjective identities with the discursive resources prominent in their socio-historical contexts.

It is important to note that Butler (1990) uses the notion of gender-as-performative in a linguistic and sociological sense, not a dramaturgical one. She bases her gender-as-performativity thesis on Austin's (1976; 1979) conceptualisation of utterances as performing certain actions, not as indicative of a role that is taken on or acted out. However, several theorists have extended her work to develop the notion of performance more fully, which is largely neglected in Butler's work. Morison (2011), for example, uses both a performative *and* performance focus in her analysis of discourse, attending not only to the influence of wider discursive contexts, but also to the processes that are involved in a more conscious and immediate enactment of identity. The analytical focus of this research included such a dual focus, where both notions of performativity or what can be described as the macro-context of discourse, as well as notions of performance, or what can be termed the micro-context of discourse, were attended to in exploring reproductive decision-making by lesbian couples.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1   Introduction

This chapter builds on the theoretical framework as set out in the previous chapter, through discussing the methodology employed in the study under discussion. Once the study's research question has been highlighted, the chapter will turn to an overview of some of the most significant features of qualitative research, followed by an exploration of the employed research design (i.e. sample selection by means of purposive sampling, the participant recruitment process, data collection through the use of joint interviews to obtain the accounts of eight lesbian mothers' reproductive decision-making, the transcription process that was followed, as well as power relations in interviews). Next, I outline the data analysis methodology which involved thematic discourse analysis, and discuss the research quality from a qualitative research perspective. I end this chapter off by discussing ethical considerations and, by extension, the importance of reflexivity in research such as is considered here, as well as the conceived limitations of my research.

4.2   Construction of Research Methodology

A feminist poststructuralist theoretical paradigm was employed to guide this study, as discussed in Chapter 3. A paradigm can be defined as a conceptual framework (Willig, 2008), which outlines the nature of research enquiry, and consists of three elements, namely; epistemology, ontology and methodology. I discuss these by drawing on explications provided by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006) and Willig (2008):

- **Epistemology**: According to Willig (2008) epistemology is concerned with *what* can be known, and *how* one can obtain knowledge. It further requires an understanding of the validity, reliability, and scope of acquired knowledge. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006) further maintain that an epistemology informs a study's methodology. A social constructionist epistemology underpins this study.

- **Ontology**: A study's ontology also informs its methodology (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006), and according to Willig (2008), it is concerned with the nature of reality (i.e. the assumptions that can be made about the world). Willig (2008) further discusses that ontological positions can be described as "relativist" or "realist" to

varying degrees. On the one end of the continuum, a relativist ontology assumes that knowledge is subjective, that meaning is subject to interpretation and influenced by power relations; this study assumes a relativist ontology. On the other end, a realist ontology prescribes that a stable external reality exists and that phenomena may be attributed to cause-and-effect relationships (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006; Willig, 2008), which is not relevant to my research.

- **Methodology**: A methodology provides research parameters for the ways in which knowledge can be acquired based on a researcher's views about the nature and scope of knowledge (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006; Willig, 2008). This study employed qualitative methods throughout the entire research process, which I will detail throughout this chapter.

In summary of the above, my research on the topic of reproductive decision-making among lesbian women is underpinned and guided by a social constructionist epistemology and ontology theoretically linked to feminist poststructuralism, and qualitative methodology. The sections that follow will explore the construction of my employed research methodology in greater detail.

4.2.1 Research question.

The study's aim is to investigate reproductive decision-making among self-identified lesbian women in same-gendered relationships and is guided by one key research question:

(i) How do lesbian women construct meaning around reproductive decision-making, particularly as it relates to their gender?

The research question was constructed to address the study's identified research problem; i.e. to contribute to the expanding literature concerning lesbian motherhood in an attempt to enhance the understanding of how self-identified lesbian women in same-gendered relationships account for their reproductive choices. Female subjectivity is typically constructed in relation to normative notions of motherhood and childbearing (see Chapter 2, Literature Review), which consequently informs the decision to focus on the treatment of gender in the accounts provided by the lesbian couples who participated in this research. This endeavour will serve to highlight and deconstruct dominant gendered discourses that inform prevailing (mis)understandings and preconceptions around lesbian motherhood.

4.2.2   Qualitative research.

Based on the nature of the proposed research enquiry, the study follows a qualitative research approach. Qualitative studies are reflexive in nature and focus on individuals' experiences, as well as how they construct meaning from these experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Snape & Spencer, 2003; Willig, 2008). Within the context of qualitative research, language is seen as constructive and, as such, does not merely mirror reality (Willig, 2008). In broad terms, this study's interest lies in uncovering prevailing gendered discourses pertaining to the construction of meaning by lesbian women as they make reproductive decisions. Although epistemological differences may exist between qualitative methodologies, qualitative researchers share similar concerns (Willig 2008). Here I will highlight the key characteristics of qualitative research with the purpose of highlighting the research parameters and considerations of this study:

- Qualitative research is concerned with **understanding meaning**, rather than predicting outcomes; i.e. gaining an understanding of the different ways in which people experience and make sense of the world (Willig, 2008). While quantitative researchers tend to be more concerned with uncovering and explaining linear cause-and-effect relationships and exploring predefined variables, qualitative researchers want to gain a holistic understanding of the meanings their research participants attribute to their experiences (Durrheim, 2006; Snape & Spencer, 2003; Willig, 2008).
- Qualitative researchers attempt to limit imposing their preconceived ideas and meanings onto their findings through exploring meaning attributed to phenomena through **open enquiry**, as opposed to inquiring to test theoretically deduced hypotheses (Durrheim, 2006; Willig, 2008). In this sense, qualitative research is **inductive** in nature (Durrheim, 2006).
- Qualitative researchers engage with their research participants in **natural settings** (i.e. in open, complex systems that are characterised by their continuous change due to the interactions of all parties participating in the setting), rather than controlled environments characteristic of quantitative research (Durrheim, 2006; Snape & Spencer, 2003; Willig, 2008).

The research design, as is discussed below, was constructed by taking the purpose of this study into account, in conjunction with the appropriately selected theoretical, epistemological, ontological and methodological underpinnings.

4.3   Research Design

There is no *one* way of conducting qualitative research, and unlike quantitative research designs which are usually fixed from the outset, qualitative research designs provide a framework for the planning and conducting of research, thereby allowing for greater flexibility and reflexivity on the part of the researcher (Flick, 2007; Maxwell, 2005). A qualitative research design is influenced by multiple factors (Flick, 2007; Snape & Spencer, 2003), including:

- **Establishing an area of research interest:** In this case, the constructions of reproductive decision-making of lesbian women in same-gendered relationships.

- **The theory underpinning the research:** As set out here in Chapter 3.

- **Method selection:** In this case, qualitative methods such as using an interview guide with open-ended questions, used during joint, semi-structured interviews.

- **The availability of resources**, such as the time and funding required to complete the research: This factor was not a major consideration in this study.

These factors further impact on the practical research steps available to the researcher. Practical research steps refer to the ways in which research questions are phrased, how sampling is done, whether the research needs to be generalisable, the types of research quality assurances required and the intended audience. Bearing the influencing factors in mind assisted me in delineating the scope of the study to obtain relevant results, and in gauging the study duration and the type of resources that would be required to complete the inquiry (Flick, 2007).

The research design employed in this particular study will be discussed by highlighting the abovementioned components. A discussion of the sampling process (purposive- and snowball sampling) will be followed by a description of the methods employed to collect (in-depth, joint interviews) and process data (in the form of transcriptions). It should be noted that, although the research design process is discussed in a particular sequence, data collection and data analysis in the context of qualitative research, specifically when implementing discourse analysis, cannot be separated, as analysis typically starts as soon as the researcher engages with their participants (data collection) (Gibbs, 2007); meaning is constructed in the context of the interview itself, not only between the interviewees, but also as a result of the presence of the

researcher (Willig, 2008). Figure 4.1 below provides a visual overview of the research design employed in this study, as a summary of the points discussed earlier in this chapter:
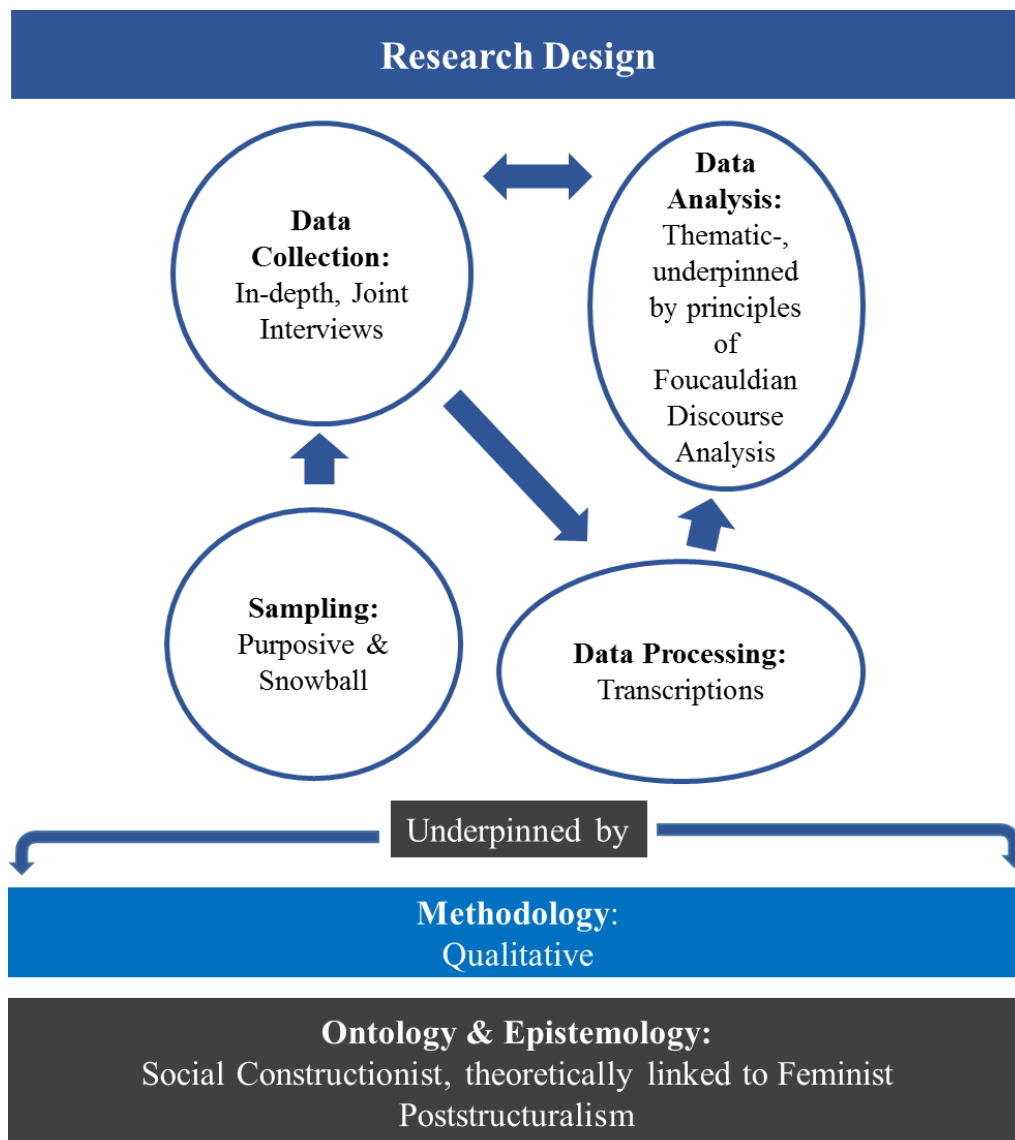
Figure 4.1: Research design employed in the present study.

4.4   Sampling of Participants

I selected research participants by making use of purposive sampling (otherwise referred to as judgement sampling), a method of non-probability convenience sampling in which participants are selected based on their ability to meet specific criteria (Bernard, 2000; Marshal, 1996; Willig, 2008). Additionally, I made use of snowball sampling, a method of non-probability sampling where research participants were asked for potential participant referrals. This sampling method is particularly useful when attempting to recruit participants from

minority groups or hidden populations (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003). I recruited participants through personal networks by forwarding an advert of the study to family, friends and colleagues to distribute to their networks, through posting the advert on Facebook to be viewed and shared by my online network (and beyond), and through advertising the study to online lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) parenting support forums.

The research question defined the selection criteria, i.e. participants had to include **women who self-identify as lesbian**, who were in a **same-gendered relationship** and who were **already parents, or in the process of becoming parents** at the time of the research. The individuals who responded to my request for research participants, and who eventually participated in the study, all met the specified selection criteria. Eight self-identified lesbian women (four same-gendered couples) agreed to participate in the research.

According to Pharr (1988) and Christina (1997), the classification of an individual as lesbian, bisexual or gay is problematic because these definitions often classify individuals based on dichotomies of sexual orientation. These categories are not flexible and do not take into account the changes that may occur during an individual's lifetime (Bradford, 2004; Bostwick & Hequembourg, 2013). In order to accommodate the complex nature of sexual preference, as well as to ensure that no discrimination would take place during participant selection, **self-identification** according to a particular sexual orientation was of importance. Considering the small representation of bisexual women in research related to reproductive decision-making (and research in general, according to Bostwick and Hequembourg, (2013)), it was my initial intention to include women who self-identify as bisexual (in the context of a same-gendered relationship), in addition to self-identifying lesbian women. Therefore, participants had to self-identify as having either a lesbian or bisexual sexual orientation. In general, women are considered bisexual if they are currently (or were at any stage of their lives) attracted to both males and females (Weinberg, Williams & Pryor, 1994). Ochs (2007) extends this description to transcend the gender binary, through defining bisexuality as attraction to *more than one* gender. The attraction to a member of the same or of the opposite sex does not need to occur concurrently, and the individual may be attracted to only one gender for a prolonged period. Women are usually considered lesbian if they have an erotic or affective attraction to other women only (Brannon, 2002).

Although the study was open to the inclusion of both lesbian and bisexual women, only women who self-identify as being lesbian responded to my recruitment endeavours. Therefore,

only the accounts of lesbian women were included in the research and analysis. A review of literature was undertaken in an attempt to gain a better understanding of why this was the case. Bostwick and Hequembourg (2013), in an article based on their vast experience with gender research, maintain that recruiting bisexuals to participate in research may often prove difficult. Researchers often, as their first point of departure, approach LGBT communities to seek bisexual participants, however, individuals identifying as bisexual reportedly often feel excluded from LGBT communities at large and choose not to participate in related gatherings. They further advise that researchers who approach LGBT communities to reach bisexual participants should undertake this endeavour with the knowledge that their sample may be biased towards self-identified bisexual individuals "who are more "out" about their sexual identities and feel a personal connection to the LGBT community" (p. 658). Their recommendation to make use of a participant-driven referral system when recruiting individuals from hidden populations was followed in my own research in an attempt to decrease the likelihood of this type of sampling bias occurring, in addition to following their recommendation to expand their recruitment strategies through taking advantage of the multiple avenues provided by the Internet to reach specific groups, given that explicit bisexual communities are usually sparse.

Despite the abovementioned efforts, only women who self-identified as being lesbian responded to the call for participants. Perhaps their absence in my research could be attributed to a possibility that bisexual women may opt to become parents through simpler, more conventional avenues, i.e. in the context of a heterosexual relationship where they do not have to be concerned with alternative conception methods and the related complex decision-making process. This postulation is partly supported by research conducted by Herek, Norton, Allen, and Sims (2010) who reported on the population parameter estimates for a variety of demographic, psychological, and social variables in the United States of America using data from a US national probability sample of self-identified lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults ($N = 662$). They found that, while nearly all gay and lesbian individuals in their sample who were in a relationship, had a same-gendered partner, the greater majority of coupled bisexual individuals were in a heterosexual relationship. Very little is known about bisexual parenthood in the context of a same-gendered relationship due to a marked absence of research on the topic (see Biblarz & Savci, 2010; Delvoye & Tasker, 2016; Short, Riggs, Perlesz, Brown, & Kane, 2007). Admittedly, by wanting to include bisexual women in my study, I may have run the risk of, as is often the case, merely collapsing their stories and experiences with those of lesbian

women (see Biblarz & Savci, 2010; Bostwick & Hequembourg, 2013), and neglected their unique experiences of motherhood and reproductive decision-making.

Participants were further selected based on their **relationship status**, in that they were involved in a same-gendered relationship at the time of the research. Although the context of single-parenthood among lesbian and bisexual women provides another valid context for exploration, I included the criterion of selecting only same-gendered *couples* to more clearly define the boundaries of the study and because my research is specifically interested in the unique discourses that operate in this particular context.

The use of a **retrospective approach**, where participants recounted past narratives of their decision-making process (e.g., Chabot & Ames, 2004; Touroni & Coyle, 2002) is a shared feature of the body of research reviewed here. An exception of the aforementioned is the study by Wall (2007), which combined a prospective and retrospective approach by including lesbian parents/co-parents, lesbians who wished to have children one day, as well as lesbians who do not want to have children at all. My research intended to include both prospective and retrospective accounts to facilitate a richer understanding of reproductive decision-making by including participants who are at different points in their decision-making process. In order to include both prospective and retrospective accounts, I set out to recruit women according to two subgroups – firstly, women who did not make a firm decision at the time of the research regarding having children (offering prospective accounts), and secondly, women who made such a decision (providing retrospective accounts). It must be borne in mind that these parameters served as an ideal guideline, and it proved difficult to recruit couples according to these exact configurations. Each couple responding to my recruitment endeavours included women who were already parents, thus offering retrospective accounts of their reproductive decision-making process. I am of the opinion that this was the case since women who were already mothers perhaps felt better equipped to share their experiences than women who were still in the process of deciding on the means of conception; a process which is evidently complex.

Although I did not impose any particular limitations to the geographical location of the potential participants, aside from expressing an interest in exploring the views and experiences of South African women who fit the research requirements, it just so happened that all participants reside in Gauteng, a province in South Africa. A perceived advantage of having participants from the same geographical location is that they are able to provide their unique

accounts within a similar geographical context with a presumably similar socio-political context as well as discourses developed by and about lesbian mothers therein, which benefits the research by more clearly focussing the research findings.

4.5   Data Collection

This section provides a discussion of the methods employed to collect data (i.e. in-depth- and joint interviews) and explores the process implemented to develop the interview guide. It further highlights the presence of power relations in interviews and explains how I aimed to address these in this study.

4.5.1   Data collection strategy: Semi-structured, face-to-face, joint interviewing.

Participants who agreed to take part in the study were contacted to establish an interview date, time and location suitable to both partners. Once this had been established, I conducted semi-structured joint interviews, as opposed to individual interviews, in order to obtain accounts regarding the ways in which each lesbian mother constructs meaning around reproductive decision-making *in conjunction* with their respective partner.

4.5.1.1 Semi-structured interviewing.

A standardised set of predetermined questions does not allow participants to venture into areas of discussion that were not set out from the start; and as such, such practices could limit what one might learn from participants' unique experiences (Franklin, 1997). Franklin (1997) refers to the **shared understanding model** of interviewing, providing useful interviewing guidelines for the study. **Semi-structured interviews** form part of this model and allow for a richer, more in-depth exploration of complex concepts (Burman, 1994; Franklin, 1997; Rubin & Rubin, 2005) when compared to structured interviews (Burman, 1994; Franklin, 1997). The shared understanding model requires the interviewer to direct the interview according to topics raised or thoughts expressed by the participants (Franklin, 1997). This model was useful in this study, as it allowed each partner's accounts to direct and shape the types of questions asked during an interview, and catered to the fact that each couple has a unique relationship dynamic and account to relay. The limited availability of research in the South African context regarding lesbian women's reproductive decision-making further factored into the decision to implement the shared understanding model; this method allowed

the interviewer to direct the interview based on new insights relevant to this study, particularly in a context where I did not have a clear framework on which to base more specific types of questions. Rubin and Rubin (2005) highlight the importance of directing the interview in light of new insights: "Qualitative research is not simply learning about a topic, but also learning what is important to those being studied" (p. 15). The interview questions were created to stimulate interaction related to the identified research question via related open-ended questions, as opposed to questions that would from the outset limit the type of information that the participants were willing to share (e.g. closed-ended questions). The interview guide for this research can be viewed in **Appendix A**.

4.5.1.2 Face-to-face interviews.

Although **face-to-face interviews** were the ideal means of participant interaction, I made provision for potential participants to engage with me through Skype, an online conferencing communication medium, thereby attempting to transcend the traditional boundaries of distance. None of the responding participants made use of this option as each couple was within travelling distance. Each participant was interviewed face-to-face, either at their home or a public venue of their choosing. Participants were given the opportunity to choose an interview location in which they would feel most comfortable and safe to disclose sensitive and private information. Although I suggested a neutral and safe interview location, such as a boardroom at the University of Pretoria, two couples opted to be interviewed in their home, and the remaining two couples selected local restaurants as a meeting place.

4.5.1.3 Joint interviews.

In this study, the aim of conducting joint interviews was not to access "full" or "true" accounts. Instead, an attempt was made to acknowledge that the accounts offered by participants were necessarily influenced by the context in which they were produced (in relation to the interviewer's presence, as well as their partner's presence). It would have been ideal to conduct both individual- and joint interviews in order to access *different* types of accounts; it could be anticipated that participants would potentially draw on different discursive resources when interviewed individually and jointly. Although not employed in the research, this methodology would have enriched the research findings and further allowed for the exploration of how and to what end, these discursive resources are employed in each context. This methodology, however, was not feasible given participants' availability and their

reservations around speaking about their reproductive decisions without having their partner present. Most of the couples interviewed opted to be interviewed with their partner, purely for the sake of the convenience of setting up one, instead of multiple suitable interview timeslots.

Some problems might arise when requesting a separate interview from individuals in a relationship, as is evident in a study done by Morris (2001) that required individual and joint interviews with cancer patients and their "carers". Morris (2001) found that some couples were hesitant to do separate interviews, because they claimed that they did not keep "secrets from each other" (p. 555) and the implication that the participants did, in fact, keep secrets from one another caused discomfort among them. This study's focus is directed towards the ways in which lesbian women construct meaning within their respective relationships, and consequently employed only joint interviews, instead of both joint- and individual interviews, to avoid similar implications as observed by Morris (2001). In her study on the use of social networks for researching non-heterosexual women (i.e. recruiting individuals who are part of a researcher's social network), Browne (2005) noted that some participants admitted to feeling discomfort when discussing certain issues in the presence of their partner or someone they knew, often because they wanted to avoid hurting their feelings. It should be mentioned that I did not personally know any of my research participants, yet the presence of their partner potentially limited what participants in the current study under discussion, were willing to discuss within the context of a joint interview; this could not be remedied by additionally conducting individual interviews, given participants' reluctance to be interviewed without their partner.

Browne (2005) and Morris' (2001) research served as reminders that both individual and joint interviews could cause discomfort and that I should be respectful of participants' decisions to grant only one or the other, or both. Given more time and participant willingness, it would have been ideal to include both types of interviews in my research in order to explore the different ways in which participants talk about reproductive decision-making when interviewed alone or with their partner.

Burman (1994) suggests that, before the interviews commence, the participants should receive an outline of the areas or questions that will be addressed in the actual interview. This serves as a means to put participants at ease or to clear up any reservations they might have had about being part of the interview process (Burman, 1994). It further affords participants the opportunity to decide as a couple whether they will be comfortable to talk about topics or

answer the questions listed in the interview outline; this methodology was implemented during the course of data collection. Ethical implications relating to the interviewing process are highlighted in the "Ethical considerations" section.

During the joint interview, I remained aware of the possibility of one partner speaking more than the other partner, as was found in Morris' (2001) study. In such an instance the less talkative partner could be asked to elaborate on certain issues (Morris, 2001), especially if it pertained to understanding their role in the construction of meaning and in negotiating reproductive decisions. In my capacity as the interviewer, I remained wary of causing any discomfort such as discussed above. Morris (2001) further noted that "[j]oint interviewing provides the opportunity for combining something of the intimacy of an individual interview with the public performance of a focus group" (p. 558). In this manner, meanings that they mutually create could come to the fore when individuals who are in a relationship speak. The relationship could become an entity in itself within the context of the interview, where one partner incorporates their partner's narrative as their own (Morris, 2001). On the other hand, individuals within a relationship might not fully share the same frame of reference, where different emphases might be placed while giving a shared account, or the presence of another participant could affect what an individual will disclose (Morris, 2001).

4.5.2   Interview guide.

Since I intended to conduct semi-structured interviews, the interview guide had to be flexible in nature. Burman (1994) suggests that it is useful to identify and list topics and accompanying issues in the interview guide instead of setting out particular questions that must be adhered to; by stating the topic headings as questions, the interviewer will have a clear indication of what to ask. The topics in my interview guide were created by reviewing my preliminary literature review, refining the study's research question and generating topics to guide the discussion in a manner that would stimulate responses to inform my research question.

This study's ontological and epistemological underpinnings were further kept in mind while constructing the interview guide. I asked open-ended questions to elicit full responses as opposed to "yes" and "no" answers, and attempted to avoid framing any questions in a manner that would lead the participants to limit what they believe they were permitted to discuss; i.e. my questions did not include language to suggest that any specific topic was taboo and I

attempted to phrase my questions in such a manner as to not convey any particular value judgements, specifically pertaining to gender, sexuality or motherhood. This is in line with Franklin's (1997) shared-understanding model, which suggested that I remain mindful of the manner in which my own beliefs and social identities could influence my approach to conducting the interviews. I made active attempts to reflexively interrogate this influence accordingly.

The interview guide was structured in the following manner according to specific topics that were identified to aid in answering the study's research question:

- **Introductory question** allowing participants the opportunity to ask for clarification about any aspect of the research before commencing with the interview.
- **Topic 1:** *Meaning constructed around reproductive decision-making by lesbian or bisexual[3] women who choose to be/ who are parents.* Concerning this topic, participants were encouraged to relay their stories of how they decided to become parents together, including which factors they considered before coming to their final decision around the means of conception, or in cases where some of the participating women already had children from a previous relationship, but had to decide on sharing motherhood with their current partner.
- **Topic 2:** *Gender discourses and the negotiation of sexual identity in relation to identity as a parent/prospective parent in the context of the traditional female maternal role.* Here, participants were encouraged to engage with gender discourses by discussing the meanings they attributed to being a mother, to their identity as a mother in conjunction with their identity as a lesbian woman, and by discussing what constituted being a "good mother".
- **Topic 3:** *How lesbian and bisexual women position themselves in relation to dominant discourses of reproductive decision-making.* This topic explored how the study's participants experienced the reactions of their family, friends, and others they encountered before deciding to have-, and after having children together. This included

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[3] The interview guide made provision for the inclusion of bisexual women in the study, although only lesbian women participated, as discussed earlier in this chapter (see Recruitment of Participants).

reactions experienced upon disclosing their intention to have children or disclosing that they have become parents in the context of a lesbian relationship.

- **Closing question** providing an opportunity for participants to raise any additional thoughts, opinions or concerns before bringing the interview to a close. Participants were encouraged to contact me in future if they wanted to have more information about the research or wanted to add anything further to the already shared accounts.

Each topic highlighted above was accompanied by preliminary, related interview questions (see **Appendix A** to view the complete interview guide), which served as a point of departure for participants to engage with the topic at hand and to explore the discourses related to each of these as they pertained to each couple's journey towards joint motherhood. In this regard, it was particularly useful to conduct semi-structured interviews, as participants were able to discuss existing, or raise alternative discursive perspectives.

4.5.3 Power relations in interviews.

Power relations inevitably exist between the researcher and the researched in the context of an interview (Dos Santos 2012; Karnieli-Miller, Strier, & Pessach, 2008). In my research, I understand power as the influence a particular individual, either the interviewer or interviewee, yields over the outcomes of the interview; i.e. what is shared during the course of the interview. In addition, I further view the exercise of power as discursive in nature (as theorised by Foucault, 1989), and as a bidirectional process. These views are influenced by Vähäsantanen and Saarinen's (2013) research on power relations in research interviews. It is important to recognise and manage potential power imbalances that may exist between the researcher and the research participants, as it may influence the ways in which knowledge is shared by participants and constructed or interpreted by the researcher (see Kelly, 2006; Kvale, 2007; Nunkoosing, 2005; Packer 2013; Snape & Spencer, 2003).

Postmodern research from a poststructuralist point of view critiques positivist research for framing knowledge creation as the unlocking of universal "truths" through engaging with research participants; this is because from a poststructuralist perspective, meaning cannot be separated from the context in which it is created (i.e. time and place) and all knowledge is viewed as a socio-historical product. Within a positivistic world view, the researcher and the "subject" have predetermined roles, where the researcher remains a neutral and objective observer of human phenomena, and oftentimes, the researcher is the sole decision-maker in the

established research relationship (Karnieli-Miller, Strier, & Pessach, 2008). Qualitative research, in its attempt to redistribute the power in a researcher-participant relationship, draws principally on constructivist and critical paradigms, with the aim of improved focus on the experiences and perspectives of marginalised individuals and groups (Karnieli-Miller, Strier, & Pessach, 2008).

Packer (2013) argues that researchers are unable to provide definitive accounts or explanations in their work because a researcher's understanding of interviewees' accounts, and language in itself, are necessarily intersubjective. As such, both conducting and analysing information provided in the context of an interview, are reliant on the researcher's own understanding of the interviewees' accounts, which is inherently influenced by multiple factors such as the researcher's understanding of language, their culture and position in society. Snape and Spencer (2003) highlight that race, class, gender, material conditions, cultural and political factors (typically the first three factors mentioned here) influence the ways in which findings are analysed. This understanding stems from critical theory, and lead to a call, particularly from a feminist research perspective, for greater equality between researchers and those being researched (e.g. through advocating for collaborative research between the researcher and their participants) (Snape & Spencer, 2003).

Qualitative approaches tend to emphasise the importance of a reflexive approach, where the notion is discarded that a researcher has the capacity to remain unbiased in their quest to understand their research participants' accounts of their experiences and perspectives (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Power does not only rest with the researcher in the context of an interview, but may shift from the researcher (as the seeker of knowledge) to the interviewee (as the privileged knower) throughout the interviewing process (Dos Santos, 2012; Nunkoosing, 2005), which Nunkoosing (2005) refers to as a "dance" of power. In this sense, an interview cannot be seen as an exchange between equals, as the interviewees are able to limit what they are willing to share with the researcher (Parker, 2005) and the power of setting up the interview parameters, interpreting and reporting on the interviewees' accounts ultimately lies with the researcher (Kvale, 2007). At the same time, the researcher may also be in a position of power

as a result of their gender, race or class, depending on their socially ascribed characteristics in relation to those of the interviewee.

4.5.3.1 Feminist interviewing.

Feminist research is typically interested in uncovering and understanding power relations at work within particular contexts (Powers, 2001) and approaches within this framework are geared towards addressing the reproduction of power within the interviewing process through allowing research participants to tell their stories and provide accounts in a manner they wish to convey it (Parker, 2005). As far as possible, I attempted to ensure that I asked for clarification on unclear accounts throughout each interview, thereby allowing interviewees to challenge my interpretations (Franklin, 1997; Parker, 2005).

Further to this, the practice of women interviewing other women assists in the endeavour to manage the power in the researcher-research participant relationship (Reinharz, 1992; Warren, 2001). Dos Santos (2012) explains that interviewing is a valuable research method for studies involving women, particularly as women's accounts were often obscured in centuries of male-dominated, male-narrated research. In this way, women are able to provide their accounts in their own language, in a manner that captures their experiences from their own perspectives.

4.5.3.2 Self-disclosure

Researchers exercise self-disclosure when they disclose their personal views and experiences to their participants in an attempt to establish rapport; this is viewed as a feminist research technique intended to elicit richer, more complete participant responses (Peters, Jackson, & Rudge, 2008). Legard, Keegan, and Ward (2003) are not in favour of full self-disclosure, expressing that - despite acknowledging the researcher's inability to remain completely neutral – the researcher needs to remain empathic without becoming too involved. They maintain that answering personal questions posed by participants or providing the researcher's personal views may also be problematic in that this could result in obtaining accounts that have been shaped as a result of the researcher's influence, rather than a full account from the participant's point of view. Postmodern perspectives recognise that researchers are not merely neutral observers, but have an active influence on the knowledge

produced (co-created) as a result of engaging with research participants (Snape & Spencer, 2003).

Self-disclosure is often employed in feminist research to assist researchers in managing power relations in the interview context (Abell, Locke, Condor, Gibson & and Stevenson, 2006; Burman, 1994; Peters, Jackson, & Rudge, 2008). Through employing self-disclosure, I was able to relay my own opinions and experiences concerning the topic under discussion with the women whom I interviewed, when appropriate and when prompted by participants. Research participants may feel more comfortable in sharing their stories when knowing the researcher's stance on the topic at hand (Millward, 2000; Peters, Jackson, & Rudge, 2008). I found this to be the case in each of the interviews conducted for this study – the participating couples appeared to feel more at ease with the interview and disclosure once they established my personal views on homosexuality and same-gendered parenting and after gaining insight into my motivation for conducting the research. I disclosed from the outset, either after being prompted or voluntarily, that I am a heterosexual woman with an interest in furthering gender and sexuality research, while advocating for LGBT rights.

Once it was established that I was interested in hearing about and reporting on participants' own accounts of their experiences of becoming mothers, and not conducting research with the purpose of providing a skewed report on lesbian motherhood, the participating couples seemed eager to engage with the questions posed to them, and the interviews went by in a comfortable, free-flowing manner with open communication. It is important when employing self-disclosure, to acknowledge that the sharing of personal accounts on the part of the researcher could have the undesired effect of emphasising the differences between the researcher and the participants, which may limit and/or distort what participants are willing to disclose, as a result of the perception they may have of the researcher's motives and how they believe the researcher may perceive them or report on their shared accounts (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003). It was important, in my view, to remain genuine throughout the interview, to convey my sincere wish to learn from the women who agreed to participate in the study, all the while being mindful of the fact that participants may not necessarily want to know about my life. This required of me to disclose my own orientation

and motives for conducting the research and, when probed by them to answer participants' questions about my own experiences and views in an honest, yet respectful manner.

As soon as possible after the interviews had taken place, and as Burman (1994) suggests, I wrote down any thoughts and feelings on the topics and issues that came to light; this served to create field notes and as a reminder of my own possible preconceptions. I will continue to discuss my personal views in Chapter 5 in the section on reflexivity.

4.6   The Transcription Process: The Data, at First Glance

Each of the interviews conducted with the four participating same-gendered couples was recorded with the permission of the eight participating women and the recordings were transcribed for data analysis purposes (Burman, 1994). Recordings were transcribed verbatim, although sections where participants requested that the conversations be left off the record, were omitted. I transcribed each of the interviews personally, which assisted in getting a first glimpse of the emerging themes, and required of me to remain reflexive in the process as not to enable any particular viewpoint or interpretation of the resulting text. Bucholtz (2000) views transcribing as a political process where the transcriber has to make decisions around which parts of the interview will be transcribed based on their interpretation of what would be relevant to consider during analysis, as well as how it will be transcribed; i.e. how the interviewer and interviewees will be represented. These decisions are ultimately based on the intended readership of the transcripts, how the transcripts will be used, and the transcriber's own interpretation of and expectations about what is relayed in the interviews (Bucholtz, 2000). Bearing this in mind, I endeavoured to transcribe the recordings myself, and to do so verbatim, while trying to remain cognisant of any attempts on my part to distort participants accounts or to portray accounts in a particular light.

Further to this, Willig (2008) maintains that transcriptions alter the interview data from spoken to written language, and consequently, does not mirror the interview in its entirety. While bearing this in mind, and given that the manner in which something is said could affect its meaning, I viewed it as important to provide indications of the non-linguistic elements of the interview through, in the transcriptions, taking note of the meaning evidently conveyed through non-verbal cues provided during the face-to-face interview itself (e.g. through the

participant's facial expression or tone of voice employed). The interview transcriptions may be viewed in **Appendix C.**

4.7 Data Analysis: Thematic Discourse Analysis

This section will provide an overview of thematic analysis and its phases, after which it will turn to a discussion of discourse analysis. Finally, this section will elaborate on how the interview transcriptions were analysed through employing thematic analysis, informed by feminist poststructuralist theory and by drawing on principles of discourse analysis.

4.7.1 Thematic analysis.

Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as an analysis method that identifies, analyses and also reports on themes that have been identified within data. Fereday & Muir-Cochrane (2006) view thematic analysis as a pattern-recognition method, where emerging patterns within data form themes or "categories of analysis" (p. 82). Boyatzis (1998), an author detailing merely one of many variants of thematic analysis in psychological research (see Aronson, 1994; Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Crabtree and Miller, 1999; Joffe & Yardley, 2004; Merton, 1975; Tuckett, 2005), views thematic analysis as a method that bridges the languages of quantitative and qualitative data. Although this may be a useful way of employing thematic analysis, this study is not concerned with bridging this divide. In this study, thematic analysis has been employed because it is deemed as a theoretically neutral method of analysis, which is flexible in analysing qualitative data given that "the search for, and examination of, patterning across language does not require adherence to any particular theory of language, or explanatory meaning framework for human beings, experiences or practices" (Clarke & Braun, 2013, p. 120). Consequently, it is able to produce intricate and rich descriptions of data within various theoretical frameworks (in this case a feminist poststructural framework), by allowing researchers to analyse data in a meaningful way in answering research questions that were developed and explored within a particular framework; and to do this without having to adhere to any specific theoretical commitments should they choose not to produce a "fully worked-up…analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84) as prescribed by a particular framework.

Thematic analysis involves six phases in which data (in this research, the four interview transcriptions generated through my interactions with this study's participants) is carefully

reviewed; coded according to general emerging patterns; grouped into meaningful themes and sub-themes; reviewed again to alter existing codes and themes (or to generate new ones), where themes are named and defined based on what they represent in the research context; and then written up in a manner that answers the study's research question/s (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013). It should be noted that the purpose of the analysis was not to obtain quantitative data through reviewing the number of code occurrences, as is the case with content analysis; rather, each comment was treated as important, irrespective of the number of times it was mentioned in the accounts shared by the participating couples in this study (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

4.7.2   Discourse analysis.

4.7.2.1 Theoretical underpinnings: Discourse analysis.

Discourse and the methods of analysing and understanding it first developed in disciplines such as linguistics, philosophy and anthropology, which then gave way to being used in multiple other disciplines, including psychology (Schiffrin, Tannen, & Hamilton, 2001; Willig, 2008). According to Willig (2008), discourse analysis approaches language "as constructive and as functional" (p. 98) and as such, it is not merely a methodology, but rather a different perspective for viewing and treating language; where a text is read to understand what it is doing, not merely to uncover its meaning. Schiffrin, Tannen and Hamilton (2001) refer to the gift and the curse of discourse – the former being that new meanings can be created through altering the relationship between sentences, while the latter refers to the fact that the existence of multiple meanings may cause difficulty in deciding on the intended or the most sensible meaning.

Gee (2014) explains language, discourse and its power in the following terms: Language obtains its meaning from the practices it is used to endorse, while a particular practice makes a determination about who is good and acceptable within said practice; adhering to the practice is considered a "social good". The ways in which we speak or write have the power to frame individuals as acceptable (or not) in the practices in which we engage and consequently have the power to give or deny or for someone to gain or lose social good. As a result, speaking or writing is not merely a manner of conveying information, but has an impact on what is acceptable and what someone is able/allowed to do and be within a given context. "Social good" is enmeshed with politics in the sense that certain individuals who possess it, are able to

make decisions about how social good may be distributed in society; for example, who is acceptable and therefore, qualifies to have money, power and status.

4.7.2.2 Conducting discourse analysis.

The aforementioned description is in line with Foucauldian discourse analysis in that analytic attention is focused on how prevailing social discourses covertly exert power to shape and guide individual thoughts and actions to reproduce these discourses. Although multiple methods for discourse analysis exist, I have opted to draw from Foucauldian discourse analysis, as discussed and outlined by Willig (2008), given that it is aligned with the tenets of feminist poststructuralist theory: Focussing on language's ability to construct reality through creating the boundaries in which individuals are able to operate, through either enabling or restricting what certain individuals are able to be, say and do, often with the assistance of social institutions that operate by regulating social life. In this sense, certain discursive resources (see 'social good' as described above) are made available within a particular social context, based on discursively constructed objects and subject position/s therein. Dominant discourses involve ways of being and doing that are considered 'normal' or acceptable behaviours in a particular social context, in that they "privilege those versions of social reality that legitimate existing power relations and social structures" (Willig, 2008, p. 113), but may be challenged, over time, by counter-discourses.

Willig (2008) delineates six stages involved in conducting Foucauldian discourse analysis:

- Stage one is dependent on the study's research question and involves identifying how discursive objects are constructed, by looking at both implicit and explicit references thereof. In this study, I was concerned with the discursive constructions of lesbian motherhood, femininity, homosexuality, gender, and the female body (objects).
- Stage two focuses on highlighting the differences between constructions of a discursive object and then locating these different constructions more broadly within discourses.
- Stage three attends to the discursive contexts relevant to the various constructions of the discursive objects and the purpose and function of constructing the object in a certain way; i.e. a discourse's action orientation.
- Stage four pays attention to the subject positions offered by identified discourses. Subject positions "offer discursive locations from which to speak and act rather than

prescribing a particular part to be acted out" (Willig, 2008, p. 116), within the framework of what the constructed "subjects" are able and expected to do within a given discourse.

- Stage five explores the possibilities made available through the discursive constructions of objects and the resulting subject positions; i.e. evaluating how discourses restrict "what can be said and done" (Willig, 2008, p117).

- The sixth and final stage examines how social realities are constructed through discourses; i.e. what one is able to experience and how one is able to participate in a given social context from a particular subject position.

Although I did not make strict use of these six stages in their prescribed sequence to analyse the four interviews, I utilised them rather as dimensions of a single analytic edifice that does not impede the flow of data, while capturing the richness of each participant's accounts within the discursive realms discussed above.

4.7.3   Thematic discourse analysis.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic discourse analysis may take different forms, while sharing the common goal of identifying themes throughout an entire set of data, as opposed to individual accounts. As thematic analysis can be described as ideologically neutral (Clarke & Braun, 2013), this study infused the thematic analysis approach with principles of discourse analysis, as highlighted above. This approach involved paying close attention to discourses emerging from the data, in order to enrich the typically broader focus of thematic analysis. After identifying discursive themes, the analysis was "deepened" by identifying discursive constructions of objects, action orientation, positionings, practice (limitations and opportunities created by discourses and subject positions) and subjectivities, which were drawn upon in participants' accounts.

Below, I describe each of the phases followed in conducting thematic discourse analysis with the four interview transcripts generated in this study, based on thematic analysis as set out by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Foucauldian discourse analysis as set out by Willig (2008), as described earlier:

- In the *first phase* of data analysis, I carefully scrutinised the available texts (four interview transcripts) before any similar or prevalent patterns were identified. It

required that I both repeatedly and thoroughly reviewed each text while taking note of my initial thoughts.

- In the *second phase*, the most elementary constituent identified within the raw data served as the basis for generating general codes and were, during the coding process, organised into meaningful groups.

- In the *third phase*, I assigned as many codes as possible to potential discursive themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that the extracts of data that are relevant to the identified themes and sub-themes should be coded accordingly. They further emphasise the importance of careful consideration before identifying a theme. The identification of themes relied on my own discretion, while their significance relied on whether it captured something relevant pertaining to the research question. Themes were structured based on the prevailing discourses identified in the participants' accounts.

- In *phase four*, I reviewed the identified discursive themes, evaluated which themes should be merged based on their links to common discourses, or scrapped as irrelevant. Collated extracts for each potential theme were reviewed to verify a logically discernible pattern in terms of the discourses upon which participants appeared to draw in their disclosures. If they did not form a coherent pattern, the relevant themes were revised and extracts were either regrouped into more fitting discursive themes or discarded altogether. Here I evaluated whether the themes appeared to form an accurate representation of the discourses that permeated the entire data set and, consequently, whether the identified themes were credible. The dataset was thoroughly reviewed in order to either confirm or deny that the identified themes formed an accurate representation of their intended meaning. This exercise also served to identify and code any data that might have been missed in the initial phase. Coding is said to be "an ongoing organic process" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 15), which implies that, if the initially identified themes are not credible and coherent, the initial phases up to this point would have to be repeated in order to refine the coding, and consequently the thematic map. This phase was concluded with an awareness of how each discursive theme relates to the others, and what could be said of their implications as a whole.

- In *phase five*, each theme was named and defined according to what they essentially represent in terms of the predominant discourses across the participants' accounts. This was done by linking each code to the relevant extracts collected from the data set and amalgamating these codes into a discursive theme. Each theme, therefore, represents a

particular discourse which permeated the conversations of the participants as clear from the closely related coded material. This phase involved, as explicated above, a Foucauldian discourse analysis of each theme by considering the subject positions, participation and other discursive resources inherent in the participants' accounts (as per the six stages of Foucauldian discourse analysis mentioned above) to provide an analysis on how lesbian women construct meaning in their accounts on reproductive decision-making. Here I want to reiterate that I did not make strict use the six stages of Foucauldian discourse analysis in their prescribed sequence, but applied them rather as dimensions of a single analytic structure that allowed for capturing the richness of each participant's accounts within the relevant discursive realms.

- The *final phase* involved producing a comprehensive account of the analysed findings on how lesbian women construct meaning around reproductive decision-making, especially with regard to their gender, in a meaningful and comprehensive way. I attempted to include sufficient evidence to support the identification of discursive themes, while forming an argument that related to the research question.
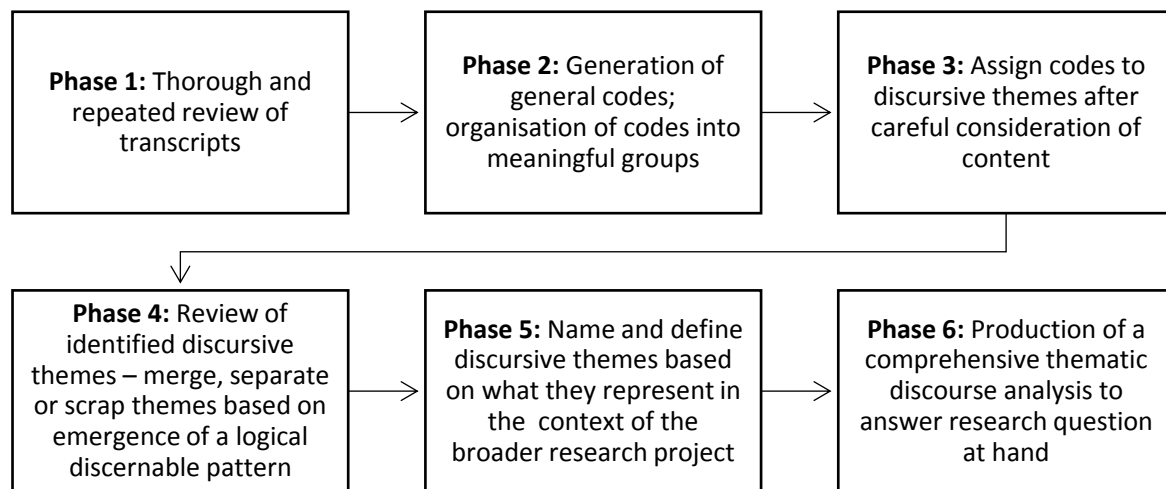
Figure 4.2: Summary of phases followed in conducting thematic discourse analysis. *Adapted from Braun & Clarke (2006) and Willig (2008)*

4.8   Ethical Considerations

This section will cover the ethical principles taken into consideration throughout the research process, according to the ethical guidelines set out the American Psychological Association's (2010) "Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct", where applicable to my research (also see Willig, 2008, p. 19). The following research and publication guidelines are attended to here:

- **Institutional approval (Section 8.01)**

Prior to commencing with my research, I applied for ethical approval with the Research Ethics Committee (Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria) and started with recruitment and data collection once approval was granted at the end of May 2013. My research has not deviated from the original proposal, aside from not being able to include bisexual women and prospective reproductive decision-making accounts in my research, as only self-identified lesbian women who have already made the decision to become parents (thus offering retrospective accounts) responded to my recruitment endeavours.

- **Maintaining confidentiality (Section 4.01)**

The women who participated in my research were assured that their confidentiality and anonymity would be protected through various measures: Firstly, through making use of pseudonyms when referring to them throughout this study and omitting any clearly identifying information from the accounts presented in my findings; and secondly, by securely storing the transcriptions and informed consent forms (See **Appendix B** for informed consent forms used in this study). Given that all relevant data pertaining to the study, such as voice recordings, transcriptions and informed consent forms are in digital format, these were encrypted, password protected and securely stored on a cloud computing platform. Copies of relevant material will be made available to the University of Pretoria's archives to be securely stored for 15 years for archiving purposes, prior to being destroyed. Confidentiality and anonymity extended to my communication with others, as I refrained from discussing any of the participants' personal information with anyone.

- **Informed consent to research and recording of voices (Section 8.02 & 8.03)**

According to section 8.02 American Psychological Association's (2010) "Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct", informed consent is required from research participants prior to participating in the research, which involves being informed about the purpose of the research, what their participation would entail (e.g. individual or joint interviews, filling in a questionnaire, or participating in a focus group) how long they could expect their participation to last. As per the guidelines, I created an informed consent form that comprised of two parts: The first part contained an information sheet, which ensured that potential participants understood the purpose of the research and what participation would entail, while the second part required their individual signatures to acknowledgement that they

understood what their participation would involve and to provide consent to have their interview recorded.

I disclosed that their participation would involve an in-depth interview with themselves and their partner, in a location of their choosing and lasting between 90 and 120 minutes. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any point, without having to offer an explanation or suffer any consequences as a result (also see Willig, 2008). Participants were furthermore informed that the interview would be recorded for the purpose of transcription and analysis.

I acknowledged that emotional and/or sensitive topics may arise during the interview, although the purpose of the research enquiry was not to cause any harm or discomfort, and indicated that participants could take time to discuss their decision to participate in the research with anyone with whom they feel comfortable. I further provided the contact details of "Out", an LGBTQ organisation that would be able to put connect them with a telephonic counselling service or assist them in making a face-to-face appointment with a trained professional for confidential counselling, should they have wished to discuss any of the topics raised during the interview. Participants were further informed that I would exercise confidentiality and keep their shared accounts anonymous through the measures discussed in the previous bullet-point.

My own contact details, as well as those of my research supervisor at the time of research commencement were made available in the informed consent form, alongside a prompt to contact either of us in the event that participants had any queries related to their participation.

- **Deception in research (Section 8.07)**

I did not implement any deceptive strategies and ensured that participants had all necessary information about the research prior to making a decision about participating; participants were further provided with the opportunity to have any further questions about the research answered during the course of the interview and after the data collection phase had concluded.

- **Debriefing (Section 8.08)**

I kept participants informed of the progress of my research once data collection was completed and encouraged them to contact me should they wish to provide any further inputs. Once the research is concluded, the findings will be made available to couples who participated

in my research. At the time this study was submitted, no participant feedback had been received, aside from some queries regarding my progress, however, I encouraged participants to contact me should they wish to receive clarification or wish to comment on the interview analysis findings and drawn conclusions.

4.9 Research Quality

The quality of quantitative (positivist) research is typically assessed through evaluating its reliability, the validity of its conclusions, the representativeness of the sample/s used, and the generalisability of the research outcomes as obtained through objective inquiry (Mays & Pope, 2000; Willig, 2008). As has already been established in this study, qualitative research from a social constructionist point of view is enmeshed with subjectivity, not only through the collection of subjective and contextual accounts, but also, as discussed above, the subjective interpretation and presentation of these accounts by the researcher. As such, and when taking into account the goals of qualitative enquiry (Mays & Pope, 2000), the same means used to assess the quality of quantitative research would not be appropriate in assessing this particular study, which is underpinned by a social constructionist epistemology and ontology theoretically linked to feminist poststructuralism, and carried out through qualitative methodology. Although postmodernism is concerned with the notion that no universal truth or objective reality exists (Willig, 2008), it does acknowledge the possibility of what Dos Santos (2012) discusses as "regional, specific, personal and community forms of truth built on local narratives and daily life and language" (p. 114).

Many methods of assessing the quality of qualitative research has been put forward (e.g. Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999; Flick, 2007; Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992; Mays & Pope, 2000; Patton, 2002; Seale, Silverman, Gubrium, & Gobo, 2006; Walsh & Downe, 2006), with a great deal of overlap among these methods. Mays and Pope (2000) provide a comprehensive list of criteria contributing to the quality of qualitative research and highlight questions that can be asked when assessing the quality, as illustrated in Table 4.1 below. This section will discuss the quality of this study through identifying these questions and through addressing each in turn:

Relevance	•Has the research made a useful contribution to existing knowledge?
Clarity of research question	•Was the research question clear enough? Did it reveal any preconceptions on the part of the researcher?
Appropriateness of design to answer research question	•Was the research methodology appropriate in answering the research question/s?
Context	•Would the reader be able to relate the findings to other settings based on an adequate description of the study's context?
Sampling	•Were all potential cases and settings included in the selected sample?
Data collection and analysis	•Was data collected and analysed in a sytematic manner, providing sufficient evidence for the research outcomes?
Reflexivity	•Did the researcher pay attention to ways in which they influenced the research outcomes through their own views, prior assumptions and employed methodology?

Figure 4.3: Criteria used to assess research quality. *Adapted from Mays & Pope (2000)*

4.9.1   Relevance.

A comprehensive literature review, as covered in Chapter 2, serves to position this study within existing research in order to highlight how it contributes to existing knowledge (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999). When viewed in relation to existing research, this study is most certainly relevant in that it not merely reiterates what is already known, but also contributes

potentially new accounts to the growing body of research on reproductive decision-making among lesbian women, particularly in the context of a couple.

4.9.2   Clarity of research question.

The research question (as highlighted in section 4.2.1 of this chapter) was formulated after conducting an initial literature review on the subject to contribute to the currently available body of work on the ways in which self-identified lesbian women in same-gendered relationships account for their reproductive choices. The question was framed in a manner that would elicit accounts to this end, without presupposing any particular outcome in ascertaining how the participating lesbian women construct meaning around reproductive decision-making, particularly as it relates to their gender.

4.9.3   Appropriateness of design to answer research question.

The purpose of this chapter is to clarify the links between the various research elements that make up this study's chosen research design. Elliot, Fischer and Rennie (1999) maintain that the employed methodology needs to be able to adequately address and attend to the research enquiry and furthermore, needs to contribute to existing knowledge. Further to this, Flick (2007) highlights that the quality of planning prior to the commencement of a research endeavour depends on careful consideration prior to selecting a theoretical framework, developing a research design and selecting the most appropriate methodology to answer one's research questions. This involves having a clear understanding of the ideological boundaries of the chosen theoretical framework and that of the broader methodological choices; Chapter 3 aimed to review the theoretical underpinnings of Feminist Poststructuralism, while this chapter detailed suitable methodological considerations, particularly as it pertains to appropriately answering the research questions. As can be seen in section 4.3 of this chapter discussing the research design, the methodological, epistemological and ontological underpinnings of this study appropriately serve to address the study's research question, which is aimed at understanding the gendered constructions of lesbian motherhood.

4.9.4.   Context and sampling.

Here, I discuss context and sampling as highlighted by Mays and Pope (2000) together, given that the research sample influenced the context of this study. This study's research question is interested in the accounts of self-identified lesbian women from South Africa in the

context of a same-gendered relationship, who either already made the decision to become parents together or who were in the process of making such a decision. Given these parameters, recruitment focussed on finding women who matched these criteria. With regard to sampling, research participants were selected by making use of purposive sampling where participants were selected based on their ability to meet the delineated criteria (Bernard, 2000; Marshal, 1996; Willig, 2008), in addition to snowball sampling where research participants were asked for potential participant referrals; both of these are methods of non-probability sampling and particularly useful when attempting to gain access to participants from minority groups or hidden populations (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003), which was the case here. As previously discussed, eight self-identified lesbian women (four same-gendered couples) agreed to participate in the research and all met the specified selection criteria.

To establish the quality of this study with regards to context and sampling, the following two questions require answers: Would the reader be able to relate the findings to other settings based on an adequate description of the study's context? Were all potential cases and settings included in the selected sample? The aim of this research is not to deliver generalisable results, but rather to discursively explore the accounts relayed by the participating women and to locate these accounts within existing literature. This, coupled with the fact that the research participants were recruited from a hidden population, did not allow for the inclusion of all potential cases and settings in the selected sample, as the study was reliant on accounts of a small number of willing participants. I believe that the descriptions of the research context provided throughout this study sufficiently enable readers to relate the findings to other contexts as the findings can be located within existing research (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 6).

4.9.5 Data collection and analysis.

The data was collected and analysed in a systematic manner (as documented in this chapter), providing clear evidence for my findings after I considered and incorporated all relevant material in my analysis of participants' accounts. I kept detailed records of the interviews themselves in the form of verbatim interview transcripts, and exercised rigour in analysing them by documenting each phase of analysis and substantiating my research outcomes by drawing directly from participants' accounts. I further drew on available literature on the topic under consideration in order to locate my findings therein. Detailing all steps taken during the process of data collection and analysis allows the reader to draw their own

conclusions regarding whether the available data supports the interpretations and research findings.

4.9.6   Reflexivity.

A postmodern approach to research views the process as an inherently non-linear and complex one, where each aspect of the research methodology employed is influenced by the researcher's own theoretical and political points of departure, the language employed in collecting, analysing and presenting of shared accounts, and the participants being researched (their subjective positions, their willingness to divulge certain information and the ways in which they phrase their accounts in accordance with the research context), which culminates in the production of a text to relay the research findings to a particular audience (Alvesson, 2002). As has already been established, this research endeavour has been undertaken from the position that knowledge is inherently enmeshed with subjectivity and that knowledge is co-constructed between the researcher and the participants in their study. As a result, it is an impossible task to produce impartial knowledge (Hurtado, 2010), which is why the practice of reflexivity forms an integral part of qualitative enquiry (Finlay & Gough, 2008). Although reflexivity is often implemented as a methodological tool to ensure "truthful" research outcomes (Finlay & Gough, 2008), from a feminist poststructuralist perspective, I deemed it necessary to include a section on reflexivity in order to acknowledge and interrogate the extent to which my inquiry from my subjective position as a researcher, a heterosexual, middle-class, unmarried woman in my mid-twenties, may have influenced the research process and, in conjunction with the research participants, its construction.

Here, reflexivity involves being self-aware when reflecting on "the intersubjective dynamics between the researcher and the researched" (Finlay & Gough, 2008, p. ix). Feminist reflexivity mandates an exploration of the power relations that exist between the researcher and the individuals participating in research and an interrogation of not only the researcher's own subject positions, but also their vested interest in the research outcomes (Finlay, 2008). Davies et al. (2004) describe reflexivity as a manner of reflecting on the discourses that have an effect on us, while distancing ourselves from the discourse in order to interrogate its effect on us and others; this involves reflexively interrogating the language used to bring discourses into existence.

Furthermore, I actively attempted to acknowledge my role in co-creating the knowledge generated throughout this study by referring to myself in the first person (e.g. using 'I' and

'myself'). Traditional academic writing styles using third-person language such as 'we', 'the author' or 'the researcher' is typically used in an attempt to remain objective and may represent distance between the researcher and those participating in the research (Letherby, 2003).

I will reflexively interrogate my own subjective position and the ways in which my interactions with the women participating in this research informed and constructed the research findings. Self-reflexivity is as important during the analysis of interview data as it is during the interview process. As previously mentioned, my thoughts and feelings on the topics and issues that became known during the course of the interview, were written down as soon as possible afterwards. The quality of the conclusions I reach during the process of analysis was significantly enhanced by interrogating how my own beliefs and social identities might have influenced these conclusions.

4.10   Chapter Conclusion

This chapter highlights the methodological considerations taken into consideration upon designing, executing and analysing the current study. It expands on the theoretical framework as set out in the previous chapter, by discussing this study's epistemological and ontological underpinnings as executed through employing qualitative methods. The research design was carefully outlined by discussing:

- Sample selection and participant recruitment through utilising snowball and purposive sampling, and non-misleading recruitment letters and informed consent forms;
- Data collection through joint, semi-structured interviews to obtain the reproductive decision-making accounts of eight lesbian mothers, and the presence of power-relations in the context of interviews.

An overview of the followed transcription process once data had been collected is provided, discussing the purpose and limitations of capturing participants' accounts in a written format, in order to prepare for data analysis. I discuss how the process of transcribing formed part of my analysis process in that it created the opportunity to carefully engage with the accounts provided by the research participants. The data analysis methodology, which involved thematic analysis infused with the principles of Foucauldian discourse analysis, was carefully detailed to describe the means through which this study's findings were obtained. Foucauldian discourse analysis was selected given its strong link to the tenets of feminist poststructuralism.

This chapter concludes with a discussion of the research quality from a qualitative research perspective, which outlines the criteria involved in assessing the quality of this particular study. As is clear from the discussion, all reasonable measures were taken to ensure research quality, an ethical approach to conducting research and engaging with research participants, including employing reflexivity throughout the process.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will outline the most prominent findings emerging from my analysis of the four in-depth, joint interviews conducted with four lesbian couples. Table 5.1 below briefly details this study's participant information as a point of reference. As discussed in Chapter 4, I analysed the data by employing thematic analysis, underpinned by Foucauldian discourse analysis. In this chapter, I will highlight each emerging theme (or rather emerging discourse) in turn, by listing the relevant codes that make up the particular theme (see **Appendix C** to view interview transcripts and **Appendix D** to view the abbreviated analysis coding sheets), followed by a discussion of the particular discourse as it relates to answering my research question: How do lesbian women construct meaning around reproductive decision-making, particularly as it relates to their gender? In each discussion, I will draw on the accounts relayed by the research participants, as well as relevant findings from this study's literature review and theory. Finally, I will conclude this chapter by discussing the reflexive interrogation of my own subject position, preconceptions and behaviour that may have influenced the ways in which the data was analysed.

I wish to reiterate that from a feminist poststructuralist theoretical perspective, as is employed in the present study, reproductive decisions are seen as enmeshed with hetero-patriarchal discourses (Macleod & Durheim, 2002) and consequently, this framework remains critical of the view that decisions are made by rational subjects in possession of individual agency. Feminist poststructuralist theory emphasises the socially embedded nature of decision-making and considers individuals' accounts of their choices and practices as shaped by their discursive context (Weedon, 1987); all interview transcriptions were analysed by bearing this in mind.

Table 5.1: *Participant Information*

Interview	Participants (Identified by pseudonyms)	Number of children	Method of conception	Context
1	Rachel and Michaela	2	One biological child from a previous "heterosexual" relationship (Michaela); One adopted child.	Both children reside with and are raised by Rachel and Michaela, who are legally married. Their adopted child has been legally adopted, and they are both listed on the child's birth certificate as the child's parents.
2	Cammie and Sophia	1	One child, conceived through in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) from an unknown donor, carried to term by Sophia during a previous same-gendered relationship.	The child resides and is raised by Cammie and Sophia, who live together. Sophia's previous partner no longer wished to be a parent and is not listed on the birth certificate as Sophia's child's parent. Cammie has been assisting in raising Sophia's biological child and is viewed in the family unit as Sophia's co-parent.
3	Tess and Louise	3	Three biological children from a previous "heterosexual" relationship (Louise).	The children alternate their residence between Tess and Louise, and their biological father and step-mother. They were raised in both households. The children call Tess "mom".
4	Caroline and Heleen	1	One child conceived through in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) from an unknown donor, carried to term by Heleen.	Caroline and Heleen are both listed on the birth certificate as the child's parents.

5.2 THEME 1: Discourse of Heteronormative Gender Roles - "…because I am more like a man, they want to know: "Does she call you 'dad'?"

5.2.1 Theme 1 codes.

- **Code 13:** Accounts of masculinity and femininity: Gender roles
- **Code 31:** Accounts describing how parental roles are established between partners
- **Code 39:** Discussions about masculine and feminine identity (closely linked with code 13).

5.2.2 Theme 1 discussion.

This first identified discourse has bearing on how lesbian women in a same-gendered relationship are typically constructed in the context of their relationship as partners as well as parents, and although it does not necessarily directly pertain to the present study's participants' considerations prior to becoming parents together, it has bearing on the context in which reproductive decisions are made. It should firstly be noted that participating couples relayed that they experienced their parental roles as "evolving naturally" and that it was not necessarily an aspect of their parenthood which they established prior to deciding on becoming parents together. It will, however, become evident how their socially ascribed gender roles influence their own gender identity. Within the discourse of heteronormative gender roles, the discursive construction of gender (as a discursive object), and more specifically of masculinity ("masculine") and femininity ("feminine") are of interest.

Participants tended to discuss their parental roles and their roles within the context of their romantic relationship in terms of heteronormative masculine and feminine gender binaries, and further relayed how strangers or acquaintances attempt to make sense of their roles as parents (or mothers) and of their gender- and sexual identities by drawing on a heteronormative understanding of gender roles. Here, I refer to an example related by Rachel and Michaela when describing their experience of these heteronormative constructions of their gender roles, particularly, how they make sense of this discourse by attributing others' views about them to the way they typically dress and behave:

Interview 1

> Rachel: *"Yes, and many people have that thing of, because I am more like a man, they want to know: "Does she call you 'dad'?" And it is one of the, it is the dumbest thing you can think of."*

> Michaela: *"Rachel wears men's clothing, and she cuts her hair like a man, and she only wears men's clothing. She even wears men's underwear; there's really nothing feminine about her. And it's almost as if people out there expect the child to call her "dad". And it is very stupid, because I mean, we know she is a woman, she knows she is a woman."*

> Rachel: *"I still think like a man, so there's certain things that I do with her [referring to their adopted daughter] and what she can also see, can notice that I'm a little bit different..."*

In this extract, masculinity and femininity are constructed as characteristics that can be attributed to someone wearing clothing typically associated with a particular gender – in this case, wearing men's clothing constructs a woman, and more specifically a mother, as masculine and as fulfilling the role of a heteronormative male in the context of her same-gendered parenting relationship. This discursive construction consequently implies that Rachel's child ought to naturally look to her as a father-figure and refer to her as "dad" despite her being and identifying as a woman. In their own talk, both Rachel and Michaela attempt to reconstruct such a notion as absurd, which indicates their resistance to the discourse of binary heteronormative gender roles in which such a notion was originally constructed. In her presentation at the International Congress of Psychology, Marecek (2016) discusses some of the feminist revolutions that have taken place throughout the twentieth century that have brought us to our current understanding of gender and sex categories as negotiated through culture, as dynamic and fluid, and the understanding that people inhabit these categories rather than possessing them and are consequently "genderised" in society into binary categories of masculine and feminine, male and female, mother and father. These categories serve to organise people into social structure as they are imbued with shared social meanings that have the ability to rank people.

Here, West and Zimmerman's (1987) notion of "doing gender" comes to mind, where they view the meanings attributed to gender as negotiated and (as is evident in the above quote taken from my interview with Michaela and Rachel), where people produce themselves as men and women through the discourses they employ. Morrison (2011) expands on the idea of "doing gender" and on Butler's (1990) notion of gender-as-performative, by using both a performative and a performance focus in her analysis of discourse, meaning that she does not merely attend

to the performative nature of gender (where one's being in the world as a man or a woman is shaped by the ways in which one is constructed within a particular discourse), but also the performance itself (the processes that are involved in a more conscious and immediate enactment of identity). In the above account, Rachel is constructed as a father-figure within the present discourse, and she has to, alongside Michaela who gives voice to her perception of Rachel's views ("…we know she is a woman, she knows she is a woman…"), negotiate her identity as a woman who happens to prefer wearing clothing typically made for men and who does not necessarily behave in ways typically associated with the behaviour of a feminine woman. Her performance in this regard gives rise to other ways of being in the world that do not necessarily ascribe to the norms upheld by society, such as identifying as a woman without necessarily wanting to be feminine, or perhaps even deconstructing the notion femininity.

Building on this, according to Michaela's account that some people have uttered surprise when finding out that she identifies as being lesbian, particularly due to her more "feminine" presentation, femininity is constructed as a characteristic of a heterosexual woman:

Interview 1

Michaela: *"There really are people who are surprised when they hear that I am gay. Then they meet Rachel, and perceive Rachel as this 'mannetjie'* [a word in the Afrikaans language, which is used in this context to refer to someone as an effeminate man] *and it's almost as though they then understand better."*

Michaela: *"She* [Rachel] *is the strong, silent type [laughs]." "And uhm, we have, when I met her, she never really went to church, for the simple reason that people stare at her and the way she dressed. And there was no way to let people know that she, to dress her in a feminine way so that people would accept her. That's not who she is. And uhm, for me it was not an issue, because I'm feminine, so people did not easily notice it."*

This is in line with Weston's (2013) finding that upon coming into contact with a lesbian mother, others often assume that she is heterosexual, and Chabot and Ames's (2004) assertion that becoming a mother could render a woman's lesbian identity less visible because of such assumptions. Michaela's femininity is constructed as something that stands in contradiction to what is expected of her sexual orientation, yet, as acceptable or more comprehensible upon meeting her partner, Rachel, who is considered masculine because of her appearance and the clothing she chooses to wear, thereby completing the heteronormative masculine and feminine binary expected in a relationship. The binary constructions of their

identity further require of lesbian mothers in the context of a couple to assist others in making sense of their roles in the relationship, and of their roles as parents. As lesbian women, they are positioned as subjects within this discourse who have to adopt either a masculine or feminine role, lest they be considered defective and incomplete as a couple.

Interview 1

Michaela: *"… I can moan and moan and moan the whole day and she [Dana, their adopted daughter] won't listen, but when Rachel talks, she listens. So uhm, and I am the one that gets cross. I will give her a spank on her bum every now and then, but you [referring to Rachel] have never spanked her."*

Rachel: *"Yes, she is, Michaela is more in the kitchen, she cooks and stuff like that."*

Michaela: *"She's [their adopted daughter] a lot more attached to Rachel, it's very, I won't say that she loves her more, she's just more attached to her and maybe it is because I am the cross one. But when she's sick, she comes to me."*

Interview 2

Sophia: *No, look, Lilly [Sophia's biological daughter] will, for Father's Day she made Cammie a Father's Day card."*

Cammie: *"…it's not that she [Lilly] sees me as a father, she does recognise me as a female, struggling around the fact of maybe not being feminine… She [Lilly] wants to know why I want to be more like a guy, but she'll come to me with those questions."*

Sophia [when referring to an instance where her step-father did not wait for her mother to get safely inside their house before walking in himself]: *"…it pisses me off. I expect Cammie to do that for me. So, yes, she is the male part of our relationship and I expect her to do things, she's there to protect us. Yes, we must protect her as well, but that is why she is there, to protect us, love us, look after us."*

In referring to the interview extracts highlighted above, the subject position made available within this context is one where both partners are not permitted within the discursive framework of heteronormative gender roles to simultaneously adopt a feminine gender identity, thereby frequently requiring of them, and others, to revert to a heteronormative understanding of their relationship and, in some instances, their parenting roles. They are limited in their action, within this discourse, in terms of how they are permitted to conduct their lives as parents

and partners within their relationship, because one partner is essentially positioned into a role as the masculine father figure who is responsible for disciplining the children and looking after the family's physical well-being (e.g. Sophia [Interview 2]: *"...that is why she is there, to protect us, love us, look after us."),* where the other partner takes on the role of maternal figure, associated with being the nurturer who looks after the family's emotional well-being (e.g. Michaela [Interview 1]: "…*when she's sick [referring to her adopted daughter], she comes to me*."). This also unfolded in the accounts provided by Tess and Louise, showcasing the difficulty in assuming both masculine and feminine roles simultaneously:

Interview 3

Tess: *"I played more of a masculine role in the relationship, so when it came to the point of being a mother, the children saw me as more of a father figure and also all of a sudden as a mother figure, so it became confusing for me at times. It was a question of, what do they want me to do now, should I answer as a father would or should I answer as a mother would? So it was difficult for me at a stage to play two roles, so I had to choose one."*

Janine: *"And did you eventually find the middle ground?"*

Tess: *"Let me put it this way, I acted on feeling, on instinct, about the way I should handle a situation. If they came to me with an emotional problem, I normally took on the mother role and then handled the problem accordingly. Or when they had assignments where they come to me for help, I chose to be more of a father figure where we built things and broke things and all of those things."*

Janine: *"So when you talk about a father figure, do you mean the stereotypical view one has of a father?"*

Tess: *"Yes, someone that is more stereotypically seen in a masculine role, like swinging a hammer and stuff like that. Things that are manlier."*

Janine: *"And the mother figure?"*

Louise: *"More emotional, shows the emotional side and has to be gentler and be able to give advice. Although you can often also find an emotional side to a father figure, but who is a bit more firm. Mom is usually the gentler one and always tries to comfort and so on, where the father figure is more responsible for the authority side of things."*

These participants' accounts of their gendered roles are better understood in context of Salih's (2007) explanation of how a discursive framework in which identity categories are enacted (in this case a heteronormative framework and feminine and masculine gendered identities) serves to curtail these categories; identity "scripts" are "always already determined within this regulatory frame, and the subject has a limited number of 'costumes' from which to make a constrained choice of gender style" (p. 56). In the present study, this refers to participants understanding, or having their roles and identities within their same-gendered relationship and as parents understood by others in masculine or feminine terms. This is further in line with Butler's (1990) and Morrison's (2011) understanding of gender-as-performative, as was highlighted in the present study in Chapter 3, and then again discussed earlier in this chapter. In contrast, Tess and Louise discussed that, although they do at times ascribe to heteronormative gender roles, the construction of the binary of masculine and feminine roles does not present the full picture:

Interview 3

Louise: *"...in our household it is not a question of clear-cut gender roles where she does the more manly tasks and this one does the more womanly tasks."*

Janine: *"Because it isn't as clear-cut to begin with."*

Tess: *"Exactly, I am still a woman. That's how I see it, I don't want to be a man, and otherwise I would have gone for a sex-change a long time ago."*

The enactment of norms regarding what is considered an appropriate or viable identity corresponds with cultural discourses that constitute and regulate the ideal (Butler, 1990). In the above instance, and as is the case with Caroline and Heleen (see the next extract of Interview 4 below), it is clear that they challenge the discourse of heteronormative gender roles through asserting their subjective experience as women and their female gender identity, despite the societal claim that they, as lesbian women, do not fit the mould of a "normal" couple or behave like "acceptable" heterosexual women by being in a romantic relationship with another woman.

In challenging the heteronormative gender role discourse, the subject position made available is one where both partners are allowed to assume multiple roles that may also be shared between partners, that are not necessarily bound by the norms of heteronormative

masculinity or femininity and the following extract from my interview with Caroline and Heleen lends expression to this interpretation:

Interview 4

> Caroline: *"I think that there is often a thing where one of the gay couple… one is the man and one is the woman and with us it's not like that at all. We are very equal in our partnership and in our relationship. And I think that I identify very easily as a woman. I am not a man. I also wear dresses – not necessarily makeup because that is going to trouble, but it hasn't changed anything about me. It [being a mother] hasn't woken something up in me where I now suddenly think that I am straight."*

5.3 THEME 2: DISCOURSE OF HETERONORMATIVE PARENTING – "It has been said to us in so many words, that we are lesbians, we don't know how to raise children."

5.3.1 Theme 2 codes.

- **Code 1:** Accounts of decision-making factors – Others' treatment of their child
- **Code 8:** Accounts of decision-making factors – Family's reactions
- **Code 12:** Accounts of decision-making factors – Others' reactions towards lesbian mothers
- **Code 34:** Accounts describing community opposition to holding a lesbian identity
- **Code 52:** Relaying fears about child/ren growing up to be homosexual

5.3.2 Theme 2 discussion.

Within the current theme exploring the discourse of heteronormative parenting, the "lesbian mother" is discursively constructed. The lesbian mother is constructed as someone who, as a result of not ascribing to a heteronormative sexual identity, is perceived within this discourse as dysfunctional or disordered and is consequently rendered unsuitable to parent a child (Morell, 2000). This echoes the assertion that discursive power has more often than not led to marginalising and stigmatising those who do not subject themselves to prevailing normative discourses (Dews, 1989; Foucault, 1993). In such cases, those who do not subscribe to the politics of a dominant discourse (in this case, lesbian mothers) are considered inferior,

diseased or otherwise deficient and so condemned to forms of intensive regulation in order to ensure that they abide by the normative discourse (Brown, 2000; Foucault, 1986). Louise recounts her experience of divorcing her now ex-husband and fighting to keep custody of her children: *"When we started with the divorce proceedings, he took the kids away from me and said, 'You are a lesbian and you cannot look after the kids.' Because in 1996, the law to protect me was not yet in place."* Further to this, she related, *"So here I am, I can't do a thing. I can't fight back because there is no law to protect me, and the family advocate says: 'She's gay, how is she going to look after the children?' "* Here it is evident that Louise experienced her ex-husband and the family advocate as holding the view that her identity as a lesbian woman rendered her unfit as a parent and that the law at that time perpetuated this construction. Louise further discussed how she was not only deemed to be an unfit mother by her ex-husband and in the view of the law, but that she was also perceived as psychologically disordered for identifying as a lesbian woman, which served as obstacles when trying to gain access to her children: *"I had to go see a psychologist just so that I could go see my children for a weekend. I had to, before the divorce was finalised, go see psychologists to prove there was nothing mentally wrong with me."*

According to Pies (1989), lesbian women are more often expected to provide a convincing argument for their choice to become a mother, while heterosexual women are less likely to be held under similar scrutiny. Pies' (1989) reference is much older, but is shown to still hold relevance by Weston's (2013) assertion that lesbian women's identity as a mother is often mistaken for being accompanied by a heterosexual sexual identity, and by Boyd (2003, 2013) argument that lesbian motherhood is often viewed as "transgressive motherhood" in the sense that it does not adhere to the normative maternal discourse. The subject position made available through this construction of the lesbian mother, as is evident in Louise's accounts, is one where her identity as a mother is viewed as incompatible with her identity as a lesbian woman. This further exemplifies the oppressive potential of (prevailing dominant) discourses through curtailing the actions of individual subjects (Dews, 1989; Foucault, 1993); a lesbian woman is not allowed, within this framework, to pursue motherhood, as the discourse of heteronormative parenthood stigmatises her as an unfit parent for not abiding by its sanctioned parameters of sexuality (Atkins, 2007; Baliber, 1994; Brown, 2000).

Louise's adverse experiences with the law occurred two decades ago and the South African Constitution currently extends its protection to homosexual individuals and their

families. In 1996, South Africa became the first country in the world to provide protection of the rights of its citizens based on their "sexual orientation" via the South African Constitution (Cock, 2005) although this is not always upheld by those in positions of power. An example of this was given by Caroline and Heleen, where they discuss an instance where they were advised to seek treatment from another doctor as the doctor who worked at the clinic they initially went to for a consultation regarding their available options for conception, would not assist same-gendered couples:

Interview 4

Heleen: *"...and then we went to them [a clinic specialising in in-vitro fertilisation] to find out about options, and so on.*

Caroline*: "Yes, it is a little closer [to their home] and cheaper and so on [to go through the insemination procedure]. But then they actually told us there [at the clinic] that the doctor was not prepared to help us because he thought that what we were doing was wrong and then they gave us the name of another doctor and we went to see him."*

Such an instance, where someone in a position of power refuses to assist same-gendered couples to become parents, is not isolated. Ross, Steele, and Epstein (2006) found in their research that knowing whether assisted reproductive technology service provision is lesbian and bisexual positive remains a key concern for women in the process of deciding upon which services to use; this is because "homophobia and heterosexism faced by lesbian and bisexual women may be an important determinant of their ability to access services" (p. 735). Golberg et al., 2009) discusses some of the challenges faced by women in same-gendered relationships who want to adopt, explaining that same-gendered couples are sometimes encouraged to hide the nature of their relationship to improve their chances of a successful adoption or that they are faced with adoption agencies refusing to assist them at all. Distiller (2011) describes her own experience of a South African hospital refusing to facilitate her son's birth based solely on her sexual identity, despite such a refusal being unconstitutional.

A lesbian-headed household is constructed within the current discourse as unconducive for childrearing as it does not adhere to notions of the ideal family unit where children are raised by heterosexual, preferably married parents consisting of both a mother *and* a father (Morell, 2000). This construction does not allow lesbian women to become parents without being placed under scrutiny (which again, is in line with Pies' (1989) assertion that lesbian women are more likely than heterosexual women to have to justify their decision to parent) and

without having their parental competence called into question. Louise relates how Tess and herself have been subjected to this type of scrutiny by both family and people they do not know: *"In some instances, we had really bad comments. People would ask us, being lesbian, what we knew about raising children. [They would say] [t]hat we had no place being around children."*

The following extracts serve to illustrate other participants' adverse experiences with family members upon telling them their intention to become parents together:

Interview 2

Sophia: *"My mom and stepdad were staying with me and I didn't tell them that I was going to plan it [receiving in-vitro fertilisation], when I told them I was pregnant. Then it was 'a load of shit' [according to her mom and stepdad] – they were totally against it, which on the one hand I can understand, but on the other hand, I'm not a child anymore…"*

Janine: *"So what were some of their reasons for being against it?*

Sophia: *"They felt that Sabine [Sophia's previous same-gendered partner] and I raising a child together was not right."*

Interview 4

Heleen: *"Her family was very relaxed and happy [about their decision to have a child]. My family needed a little more time to process it.*

Caroline: [Expressing her mother-in-law's reaction to finding out that they were deciding to have a child together] *"First we got married and now we want children. Damn it!"*

Later on in the interview, Caroline elaborates on her mother-in-law's initial objection to the pair having a child together:

Caroline: *"I think the worst [reaction upon finding out that they were planning to go for insemination] was actually your mother. Your mother's reaction.*

Heleen: *Yes.*

> Caroline: *"But I don't think that was our issue, it is her mother's issue. She had to deal with the fact that her daughter was going to have a baby and who she would say the father was."*

Heleen and Caroline's accounts indicate that Heleen's mother's initial objection to them having a child together had more to do with her concerns over how she would frame her daughter's family composition when discussing it with other people. In worrying about *"who she would say the father was,"* Heleen's mother perpetuates the notion that there is something unacceptable with two women having a child together in the context of a same-gendered lesbian relationship, or on a broader level rather indicates the influence of the discourse of heteronormative parenting on the acceptance of a different type of family composition.

From Sophia's accounts, it appears that her mother and step-father had a moral objection over her and her ex-partner having a child together, particularly as she later relates that her step-father has *"a problem with my 'lifestyle' ",* when referring to her being in a relationship with another woman (Cammie) and their raising a child together.

In each of the abovementioned accounts, lesbian motherhood is "othered", and consequently constructed as unacceptable. The construction of "unacceptability" could imply that lesbian motherhood is either considered as disordered, as was illustrated in Louise's accounts; as defying the acceptable mode of parenting, as illustrated in Heleen and Caroline's accounts, or; as immoral, as is illustrated in Sophia's account regarding her parents' reactions and Caroline and Heleen's account describing how their reproductive decision-making was indirectly affected by a healthcare professional's refusal to assist same-gendered couples in conceiving a child. These connotations to lesbian motherhood has implications for lesbian mothers on multiple dimensions, including adding a barrier to gaining access to more affordable and convenient reproductive technology, as was the case with Caroline and Heleen, who had to seek advice and treatment elsewhere; and having to constantly defend their decision to have children, but more specifically, their decision to raise them with a same-gendered romantic partner, as mentioned in the accounts of Sophia, Louise and Tess, and Caroline and Heleen. Michaela and Rachel's accounts did not include specific experiences where they were criticised for their decision to parent, although they discussed accounts of how others in a public setting reacted towards them for being a lesbian couple (e.g. while grocery shopping and when applying for a marriage licence). Although this type of account has bearing on the prevalence of heteronormativity, I wanted to illustrate with this theme, accounts pertaining specifically to

the potential consequence of a heteronormative discourse on lesbian motherhood, and not necessarily lesbian relationships.

Another potential problematic (in my view) implication of constructing lesbian motherhood as an unacceptable form of parenthood, is that it implies that a lesbian-headed household creates a harmful environment in which to raise children, often because of the misconception that the child raised by a lesbian mother/s will grow up to be homosexual as well. This concern furthermore has the potential to perpetuate the belief that homosexuality (or any other sexual orientation that deviates from heterosexuality, for that matter), is an undesirable sexual orientation and consequently be perceived as such by both outsiders and lesbian parents alike; for lesbian parents, this view might be purely because of the adversity that appears to be part and parcel of being non-heterosexual.

As is evident from Tess and Louise's aforementioned account (*People would ask us, being lesbian, what we knew about raising children. [They would say] [t]hat we had no place being around children.")* outsiders appear to be concerned for the child's wellbeing as a result of being raised by lesbian parents who they have constructed as unfit parents due to their sexual orientation. On the other hand, the present study's participants were concerned over their child's wellbeing outside of their home as a result of how their children may be treated by a heteronormative society for being raised by "othered" parents, let alone how their children may be treated if they turned out to be gay as well. This can also be linked back to the restrictive effects of discourse, where others' adverse reactions towards lesbian parents and their potential adverse reactions towards their children, may be seen as an attempt at regulating these subjects back into the prevailing discourse (as described by Foucault's (1993) discursive technologies of domination, which serve to regulate bodies to act in accordance with prevailing discourse). The following quotes serve to illustrate participants' concerns over their children's wellbeing outside of their home:

Interview 1

Michaela: *"I have always had the fear, with Harvey* [Michaela's biological son] *too, that… children are very cruel, and I was always afraid that they would say to Harvey, for example, especially at school, 'You do not have a father, your father is a woman,' or things like that. But fortunately, that has never really happened."*

Rachel: *"And luckily he stood up for himself when it came to talk like that, because you always get one or two* [children] *who…"*

Michaela: *"Who ask questions…"*

Rachel: *"And he will stand up for himself."*

Michaela: *"But I still have that… because she [their adopted daughter] still small, that decision I have made… Look, it was my decision to live out my sexual preference publicly. So then there is that fear that the decisions that you made can harm your children…"*

In the above extract, Michaela and Rachel express their fear that their children will be treated differently or come to harm in any way because of their decision to *"…live out [their] sexual preference publicly."* Rachel later expands that, not only does she share this fear, but she draws parallels between her behaviour as a child (e.g. having a preference for playing with toys that are typically designated for boys to play with) and that of her daughter (e.g. occasionally playing with her brother's toy cars), and worries that this means that her daughter will also somehow grow up to be a lesbian. In her account, she acknowledges that she is *"being a little silly"*, meaning that she knows that this is not necessarily a real concern based on her daughter's behaviour, but that she remains concerned about her child having to go through the same adversity she had to face because of her own sexual orientation. Rachel's worry that her child might ever be homosexual may also illustrate her own subjectification to the discourse of heteronormative parenting, and unintentionally perpetuates this discourse.

Interview 1

Rachel: *"She [referring to their adopted daughter] plays with Harvey's [toy] cars every now and then, but in my head, sometimes I know I'm just being a little silly, then I tell her not to play with those cars, because I used to do it [referring to when she was a child, playing with toy cars]. I did with my little brother's [played with his toy cars]. Then Michaela says, 'Leave the child alone.'*

Michaela: *"Yes, it's almost as if Rachel is afraid that if the child plays with a [toy] car then the child will become 'skeef' [an Afrikaans slang term which refers to someone who is homosexual/ queer], then I tell her, 'Leave her.' "*

Michaela reiterates Rachel's concern over how the world would treat her children if they turned out to identify as anything other than heterosexual, and expresses the worry that it might be because of her own sexual identity. Her laughter in the context of the interview, as noted in the extract, indicates that she does not seriously believe that it would be her fault, but rather that she acknowledges that this could be society's perception, and that Rachel and herself would not want their children to experience adversity or emotional pain over their sexual

orientation. Distiller (2011) discusses the persisting belief that homosexual parents are somehow able to transmit their homosexuality to their children, and consequently "producing" more homosexuals, which in the current discourse is seen as problematic. This belief perpetuates the belief that homosexual parenting does not allow for a conducive environment for child-rearing, and consequently creates anxiety and concern among lesbian mothers over their child's wellbeing in the world 'out there'. Here I want to reiterate findings from this research's literature review, where Golombock (2013) discusses that extensive research, including longitudinal studies, has shown that children from lesbian households are no more likely to be homosexual than children raised in a heterosexual household.

Interview 1

> Michaela: *"What are you going to do if one day Dana [their adopted daughter] comes to you and says that she is 'skeef'? Is it my fault because **I** am, or what?* [Laughs]. *Do you understand? You still have those same* [fears as other parents] … *Many people asked me when Harvey was for instance smaller, 'What will you do if Harvey says to you that he likes boys?' And what **will** you do? You will cry your eyes out, and feel guilty for a while and then go and support that child."*

> Rachel: *"Because look, if you look closely, there are many of them* [referring to homosexual individuals] *who commit suicide… So it's horrible."*

> Michaela: *"They are not accepted in the community and then they commit suicide. And now that's not what you want for your child."*

The extracts from interviews 3 and 4 below further illustrate the study's participants' concerns over how their children will be treated for being raised by lesbian mothers. As mentioned in the literature review, children from lesbian-headed households are frequently required to defend or disclose their family structure to others, while children from a heterosexual household are not required to defend why they have both a mother and a father as parents (Kruger, 2011; Lubbe, 2008b). The below extracts also express the sentiment that same-gendered parents do not take the decision to have children lightly, as they do not want their children to have to go through what they themselves had to endure due to visibly identifying as lesbian women. This was also cited by Wall (2007) as one of the factors impacting lesbian women in his sample's decision to parent. Wall (2007) expands by discussing the finding that lesbian women with high levels of internalised homophobia and

associated internalised beliefs that lesbian women cannot be successful parents are less likely to want to become parents.

Interview 3

> Janine: *"I would like to know; why didn't you want to have children [initially]?*
>
> Louise: *"I'm going to ask you the following question: Will you choose to live in a world where you are discarded, so humiliated and so pushed away [for your sexual orientation], you know? And if you don't want to grow up there, how in the hell can you want to bring children into it? It's an immensely difficult decision and I don't think any couple makes such a decision just because they **want** to have children… The way you cope as a [lesbian] parent, your children have to cope three times as much, it is friends that judge, it is friends' parents that judge them. It is the whole community that turns against those children. You as an adult can handle it. That's one reason I didn't want to have children."*

Interview 4

> Caroline: *"I don't think that Heleen necessarily wanted to have children. I think the thing for Heleen was more a moral issue. I don't really know. You must say…"*
>
> Heleen: *"Yes, more the social aspects or… strange questions, the children will tease him, and whatever."*
>
> Caroline: *"A couple of people with whom I have already spoken have said that it [having the child in the context of a same-gendered relationship] was a very difficult decision for them because they had to overcome so much adversity themselves before they got to the point where they could be comfortable with themselves and they didn't want to bring their child into a world where to be gay was such a big issue and where a child could possibly be victimised – to be subjected to the same awful things that the parents had been subjected to."*

The above extracts bring across, once more, the restrictive effects of discourse (Foucault, 1993). According to feminist poststructuralist theory, identity categories such as gender and sexuality are constrained by the normative nature of the discursive resources available to the subject and are necessarily curtailed by the discursive frame in which they are enacted (Salih, 2007). The regulatory power of dominant discourses consequently does not allow individuals to choose their own identity (Butler, 1990; 1999; Foucault, 1993) – i.e. the discourse of heteronormative parenting does not allow lesbian women to become mothers without subjecting them to scrutiny and stigmatisation for their non-conformity.

The next theme builds on the present discourse of heteronormative parenting. It should be seen as a theme in its own right as it serves as a possible counter-discourse that originated as a response to the discourse discussed here in Theme 2.

5.4 THEME 3: Discourse of Parental Responsibility and the Responsible Parent - "I just don't think that the decision to have children is any different for a straight or a gay couple"

5.4.1 Theme 3 codes.

- **Code 15:** Accounts describing the effect of motherhood on identity
- **Code 16:** Accounts describing what it means to be a mother
- **Code 38:** Accounts of what it means to become a mother to partner's child
- **Code 53:** Discussions about parental concerns transcending sexual orientation

5.4.2 Theme 3 discussion.

This theme is comprised of codes exploring different, yet related accounts pertaining to how participants discursively construct "parenthood". Within the discourse of parental responsibility, it is interpreted from participants' accounts that a parent, and more specifically, a mother, is constructed as someone who is responsible for the physical and emotional wellbeing of her child/ren (and her family), whether biological or adopted, and for protecting them from the world "out there" by providing a stable home and the necessary skills to cope outside of the home. The following extracts reflect participants' descriptions of the word "mother" to illustrate this construction:

Interview 1

> Michaela: *"It's your responsibility to protect that child, it's your responsibility to be an example for that child, it's your responsibility to tell that child: 'You know what, no matter what the world out there does, your mother is always at home…' And that's a lot of responsibility, but it's good to know that you serve as an anchor in the child 's life."*

Interview 2

Sophia: *"To me it would be loving that child, raising that child to be the best adult that he or she can be. To give them the means to cope with life, when you can no longer do it for them. I think that's the meaning of motherhood."*

Cammie: *"I believe that a mother is somebody who not only can run the house but also manage the children, manage the dogs. It is in every aspect of it. That's my view of motherhood."*

Interview 3

Janine**:** *"And do you [Tess] see yourself as… do you see them as your children [Louise's biological children] as well?"*

Tess: *"Yes, look, I will fight for them. If anyone treats them unjustly, I will fight for them."*

Louise: *"For me, motherhood… there are three girls that were brought into this world that I had a hand in raising and to show them what life expects of them and what they have to give in life. So it's the way I feel about being a mother from my side, that I mean something to those three girls. And me being a mother, where they can come to me with any problem and talk to me about it... When my child came along, and then the second and the third [child], my view was, I want to provide to my children, or I want to encourage them to be everything they can be…"*

Interview 4

Heleen: *I think that there is one big word [to describe being a mother] and that is "care" …it really is just about all that you watch out for during the first couple of years – to fulfil that need, to care. Food and health – for me that's what I feel at the moment."*

Caroline*: "For me, when I think about being a mother, then I believe that there are always two paths that one can choose. The one is to raise your child and the other is to educate your child. And to raise a child you need to ensure that they have a roof over their head, that they are sorted out financially, but to really educate a child and to teach him to be a good person in the community, for me a lot of effort needs to go into it and you need to sacrifice a part of yourself so that you can give it to him. And I think to teach him… To raise a child is easy – you give them food and off they go – but to fulfil the emotional needs and to really teach them – just to teach them about values and emotional things and about humankind and about the environment in which we live – that everything is connected and that you cannot just rely on yourself, but that you need to rely on other people."*

Mothers are positioned within this discourse as responsible adults with the capacity and desire to meet her child/ren's physical and emotional needs, who further did not take the responsibility of having a child lightly, and who puts her child/ren's needs ahead of her own. In this position, a mother's concerns and responsibilities relating to her child/ren are not contingent upon her sexual orientation or identity, but rather whether she is ready to become a parent in the emotional and material sense, and particularly whether she is able to provide a stable home for her child/ren. Although Distiller (2011), writing about her own experiences as a lesbian co-parent, acknowledges that differences exist between heterosexual and homosexual parenting, such as the often differing methods required to conceive and the assigned gender roles, she explains that lesbian parents are not necessarily more revolutionary than their heterosexual counterparts, as may be suggested by some feminist literature which views being a lesbian as "intrinsically revolutionary", since "the daily routines associated with raising children feel very, very ordinary, if no less challenging for being shared by most people on the planet" (p. 2). The argument made by the present study's participants is not that their parenthood as lesbian women are revolutionary, but rather that it is ordinary, such as described here by Distiller (2011). This is illustrated through extracts from three particular accounts that stood out upon reviewing the interview data, where participants discussed their views that parenthood in the context of a lesbian relationship is no different to parenthood in the context of a heterosexual relationship, in that irrespective of their sexual orientation, parents have similar concerns when it comes to their children's wellbeing or when it comes to making a decision about whether a couple is ready to become parents together (decisions about the method of conception aside):

Interview 1

> Michaela: "*If you really want to have a child, just be sure you're emotionally ready as a couple. And that you are sure you are emotionally stable and you can provide a child a stable thing. Do not have a child* just *because you want to.*"

> Rachel: "*Yes, you have to be very stable and know 'this is what I want' because, in my time, I drank a lot. And that's what I wanted and at that moment I wasn't ready [to have a child]. And everything fell neatly into place on that day [referring to the day they adopted their daughter], when we realised well, but it's here now, you are now a mother and you need to take more responsibility. So they [referring to any couple wanting to have a child together] must physically and personally feel ready.*"

Michaela: *"And whether she [referring to their adopted daughter] grows up in a gay relationship or a straight relationship, a person should always be ready, whether you're gay or straight."*

Rachel: *"And you know, you have exactly the same fears as any other parent."*

Interview 3

Louise: *"I, as a mother, have done what I could. So I believe, what motherhood thus means to me is, to do what I could for my children. If there is one thing that does not come with a manual, it is children… If I knew then what I know now, when I was a young girl, I would tell you straightforwardly: "Do you know what? If you want to have children in a gay relationship, you need to go and think very carefully about what you are doing. It is not a fashion statement. It really isn't… It's not a case of: "Oh, that's nice. Let's adopt a child." That's not what it's all about. Yes, it's nice. Give that child a home, but are you ready? Are you grown up enough to be able to take that step?"*

Louise also disclosed that her relationship with Tess was reliant on the rule she had established between them that Louise's children (conceived in the context of a 'heterosexual' relationship) would always come first and that if Tess could not accept this at any point, their relationship would come to an end. Tess adds that: *"With that choice, I had to step into the relationship, like, I know that if I make her [Louise] choose between myself and her children, then I should just pack my bags."* This extract further serves to illustrate that, not only did Louise feel concerned over being ready to be a parent, but before bringing anyone else into her family, she protected her children's wellbeing by putting their needs ahead of the needs of a romantic partner.

Interview 4

Caroline: *"I don't know, but I just don't think that the decision to have children is any different for a straight or a gay couple. It is a huge decision… I think that maybe there are many sensational complexities, because our child may be teased because we are gay and your child may be teased because he has big ears. But they [referring to both children from gay or straight families] will definitely be teased and they will go through life as we went through life and they will have to learn and to accept."*

This subject position allows participants to emphasise that lesbian parenthood and the decision to become a mother in that context should not be treated any differently to the context of a heterosexual relationship, in that it is underpinned by the same/ similar concerns for their

child/ren's wellbeing. It may be considered important to be constructed as a "good" and responsible parent within a heteronormative context, as was also found by Wall (2011) and Eisenberg (2002) so as not to be judged as unfit and irresponsible parents simply for being part of a family unit comprised of two mothers, instead of the socially accepted heterosexual parenting unit, which is, in that context, deemed ideal for child-rearing. This is echoed by Almack (2006), who explains that lesbian mothers may be required to "work harder than most to demonstrate their child's welfare is not in jeopardy" (p. 7). Donovan and Wilson (2008) discuss that lesbian women who choose to become parents are viewed as "morally suspect, selfish and not empathic to their children's potential feelings…"; their feelings about wanting insight into who their biological father is or their feelings around growing up in a different type of household when compared to their peers. Almack's (2006) research on the socio-legal discourses around donor- and self-insemination among lesbian parent families in the United Kingdom, found that the women in her study were adamant to carefully consider the costs and benefits of all possible insemination options before making their decision, so that their decision can by no means be viewed as irresponsible. In light of the restrictive effects of discourse on a person's subjectivity and identity (Butler, 1999; Foucault, 1993) the present study's participants' construction of parenthood is important when considering that in some instances, in the broader heteronormative society (as is evident in the discussion of Theme 2 above), lesbian motherhood may be constructed as irresponsible and as an unconducive child-rearing context.

5.5   Reflexivity

In this study, I reflexively interrogated my own subjective position, and the ways in which my interactions with the participants informed and constructed the research findings; this is what Finlay and Gough (2008, p. ix) refers to as a self-aware interrogation of "the intersubjective dynamics between the researcher and the researched" (Finlay & Gough, 2008, p. ix). Feminist reflexivity mandates an exploration of the power relations that exist between myself (as the researcher) and the study's participants, as well as an interrogation of my vested interest in the research outcomes (Finlay, 2008). This section critically discusses my reflexive accounts pertaining to conducting the interviews and analysing the results.

I identify as a heterosexual woman. I am also currently unmarried without any children, biological or otherwise. During each interview, I noticed that I was hyper-aware of my heterosexuality; an awareness that was amplified upon being asked by each of the interviewed couples whether I also identify as being a lesbian. I recall feeling apologetic about being

heterosexual, and consequently, feeling like I was, to a certain extent, prying into the participating couples' personal lives from a subject position typically associated with the "othering" of non-heteronormative identities and practices. As a result, it was important to me to ensure that the participating women knew that I was "on their side", and when asked about my own orientation, I stated plainly that I am heterosexual, *but* that I am also an advocate for LGBTQ rights. In doing so, I positioned myself as someone who has their best interests at heart and someone who would not abuse my position as a researcher to perpetuate erroneous views of lesbian women in general, and lesbian mothers in specific. I acknowledge that in my attempt at showing my support, I placed my views on a moral high-ground, distinguishing between my virtuous, inclusive, open-minded heterosexual position of acceptance and the narrow-minded, unaccepting heterosexual positions of individuals who do not necessarily support LGBTQ rights.

I further then need to acknowledge that, in wanting to show my support, I may have inadvertently positioned myself as being in a superior position, lending a hand to the less privileged, non-heteronormative folks who needed me, a heterosexual woman, to somehow tell the "normals" that the "others" are not so bad after all.

I actively attempted, throughout the research endeavour, to question my views and how my attempts at showing allegiance could counteract the endeavour of doing justice to the reproductive decision-making accounts of the women who entrusted me with knowledge of their experiences. Additionally, I am not a mother, nor am I currently in the process of becoming one, which further distances my own experiences and points of reference from those of the women participating in my research. This required of me to evaluate my own understanding of what a mother is, and is not. I became aware of my own propensity for viewing parents in general, from my subject position as a heterosexual woman; i.e. according to the male-female / masculine-feminine dichotomy. My awareness of my own preconceptions and their potential implications, allowed me to re-evaluate the conclusions I drew from the interview data, and amend these when I became aware that I drew on discursive language that perpetuated stereotypes or erroneous views about the participating lesbian mothers.

As a last remark on personal reflexivity, I want to state it plainly that, although I identify as a heterosexual woman, and often find myself guided by heteronormative discourses, I do not condone the "othering" of people based on their sexual identities and actively attempt not to align myself with the first and second discourses emerging from this study's analysis. I find

it problematic that lesbian mothers often have to go to great lengths to justify their decision to parent, and that even one of the women who participated in this research had to answer someone who wanted to know whether her child calls her "dad" because she prefers wearing men's clothing and because she does not adhere to conventional ideas of femininity.

5.6   Chapter Conclusion

My thematic analysis underpinned by Foucauldian discourse analytic principles yielded three key discursive themes that aim to address the present study's enquiry into the ways in which lesbian women construct reproductive decision-making, particularly as it relates to their gender: 1) discourse of heteronormative gender roles; 2) discourse of heteronormative parenting and 3) the discourse of parental responsibility and the responsible parent. In answering the study's research question, these findings collectively indicate that lesbian mothers seem to be caught in the grasp of what Morell (2000) terms as a fundamental paradox of pronatalist discourse, in that despite a "successful" female identity being associated with that of being a mother, prevailing heteronormative discourses prescribe who, and under which circumstances someone is allowed to become a mother. Within the discourses discussed here, the prevailing heteronormative prescriptions about parenthood require:

- that a parental unit be comprised of one feminine, maternal partner and one masculine, paternal partner, irrespective of their own gendered identification. The study's participants appear to have internalised the prevailing heteronormative discourse of gender roles to varying degrees, as some couples appear to inadvertently enact its prescribed scripts within the context of their romantic relationship and as parents, despite recognising that their parental roles developed without any forethought (necessarily) prior to becoming parents.
- that lesbian women's decisions to become parents be scrutinised and that lesbian mothers have to provide justification for their decision to enter into motherhood, not only for choosing another woman as a co-parent, but also for deciding to have a child in the first place. This is a problematic discourse in that it perpetuates the view that lesbian motherhood does not provide a suitable context for child-rearing and creates worry with participants that their children will be exposed to adversity or "othering" for being raised by lesbian parents.

In light of the aforementioned prevailing heteronormative prescription about parenthood, a counter-discourse was constructed through the accounts of the study's participants, who have constructed a parent (and by extension, a mother) as a responsible individual who have both the means and the desire to attend to the emotional and physical needs of their child. Within this discourse, lesbian mothers view their identity and role as a parent as no different to those of heterosexual parents, in that they share similar concerns over their children's wellbeing. Within this construction, a lesbian woman's identity as a parent transcends her sexual identity.

In considering how lesbian mothers make reproductive decisions with regard to their gender, participants appear to consider the parenting couple's perceived ability to perform both maternal and paternal functions, indicating their subjectification to a heteronormative discourse. They further appear to be mindful of the potential consequences of the "othering" of their children by society based on their sexual identity, but have developed a counter-discourse to make their reproductive decisions viable based on their understanding of good parenting as separate from sexual identity. By exercising their limited agency within this restrictive heteronormative discourse, these women made their decisions on reproduction based on their ability to care for a child both in terms of pragmatic, cost-benefit factors, and their capacity to meet the child's emotional needs and to protect them from potential "othering" by segments of the society.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, LIMITATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 6, I discuss the research findings presented in Chapter 5 and contextualise these findings through addressing the study's research question in light of the identified research problem. I then set out to identify the study's limitations, and construct recommendations for future research.

6.2 Discussion of Findings

The thematic analysis underpinned by Foucauldian discourse analytic principles yielded three significant discursive themes, namely 1) the discourse of heterosexual gender roles; 2) the discourse of heteronormative parenting; and 3) the discourse of parental responsibility and the responsible parent.

In the first theme, the **discourse of heteronormative gender roles** was explored, which elaborated on how lesbian mothers' parenting roles are constructed within this discourse in terms of masculine and feminine gender binaries. The study's participants tended to discuss their parental roles and their roles within the context of their romantic relationship in terms of heteronormative masculine and feminine gender binaries, and further relayed how strangers or acquaintances attempt to make sense of their roles as parents (or mothers) and of their gender- and sexual identities by drawing on a heteronormative understanding of gender roles. This finding corresponds to Marecek's (2016) discussion that people are "genderised" in society into binary categories of masculine and feminine, male and female, mother and father, which serve to organise people into social structure, Weston's (2013) others often assume, when meeting a lesbian mother, that she is heterosexual, and Chabot and Ames's (2004) assertion that becoming a mother could render a woman's lesbian identity less visible because of such assumptions. As a consequence, lesbian mothers may be confronted with having to explain their identities to others, as was the case with Rachel who was asked whether her daughter calls her dad, or Cammie who discussed that she has had to explain her identity to her daughter, *"She wants to know why I want to be more like a guy, but she'll come to me with those questions."*. The discourse of heteronormative gender roles permeated throughout participants'

accounts describing how a mother who is more masculine in appearance or in their parenting role is viewed as a father-figure and typically perform roles commonly associated with that of a man or father (for example in Cammie's case where she is expected to look after Sophia and their child and keep them safe), and a mother who appears to ascribe to normative notions of femininity, takes on the role of a normative mother and her sexual identity is rendered less visible as a result (as with Michaela, who was met with surprise upon others' discovery of her sexual orientation for the reason that she appears feminine) . The enactment of norms regarding what is considered an appropriate or viable identity corresponds with cultural discourses that constitute and regulate the ideal (Butler, 1990); in this sense, these binary discursive constructions exert power over lesbian mothers' subjectivity by creating parameters of being. Within these parameters, lesbian mothers' gender roles are constructed through the societal expectations of a parental couple (consisting of a mother and a father), as well as the lesbian mothers' own, potentially unintentional, enactment of gendered scripts prescribed by the prevailing discourse.

The second theme explores the **discourse of heteronormative parenting** in which lesbian-headed households are viewed as unconducive to child-rearing and where a woman's identity as a lesbian may be viewed as incompatible with her identity as a mother (Morell, 2000). This theme explores participants' experiences of adversity from both strangers and family, not only for having a visible lesbian identity, but also for being lesbian mothers. It was discussed that lesbian women's desire to parent is called into question, and it is often required of them to provide convincing arguments for their decision to have children, where heterosexual women are not necessarily required to do so (Pies, 1989); Sophia's parents were against her decision to have a child with another woman and Tess and Louise have been met with questions over their competence to parent from both family and strangers alike.

Furthermore, this theme explored how the discourse of heteronormative parenting may restrict lesbian women's reproductive decision-making through individuals in positions of power barring them from entering into parenthood, solely for holding a non-heteronormative sexual identity with which they do not agree; this finding resonates with previous research by Golberg et al., (2009), Ross, Steele, and Epstein (2006) and Distiller (2011). This theme brings to the fore how the discourse of heteronormative parenting can serve to marginalise and stigmatise lesbian mothers by requiring of them to account for their decision to become parents, by constructing their parenthood as undesirable and as such, allowing barriers to their

reproductive choices to exist. This discourse generates concern for lesbian mothers as they express worry that their children will be "othered" by society for being raised by lesbian parents, who have already experienced the consequences of being "othered". The discourse of heteronormative parenting appears to be resisted through the third theme under discussion.

In the third theme, I elaborate on the **discourse of parental responsibility and the responsible parent**. This theme explores accounts pertaining to how the study's participants discursively construct lesbian motherhood as a role which is not entered into lightly, and which requires a responsible adult with the means and desire to look after the emotional and material needs of her children. In previous studies, it was found that lesbian women made reproductive decisions with considerable forethought so that they could in no way be seen as irresponsible parents (Almack, 2006; Eisenberg 2002; and Wall, 2011).

This discourse serves as a counter-discourse to the discourse of heteronormative parenting, in that it serves to construct lesbian motherhood as equivalent to heterosexual parenthood for holding similar concerns over their children's wellbeing, particularly in light of the problematic implications of constructing lesbian motherhood as an unacceptable form of parenthood (which is may be the case because of the misconception that a child raised by a lesbian mother/s will grow up to be homosexual as well). Foucault's fourth discursive technology, referred to as the technology of the self, discusses one's capacity for self-definition and self-regulation which may either collude with prevailing discourses or potentially operate partly in resistance to them (Baliber, 2000; Foucault, 1993). It is within this technology of the self that Foucault locates limited agency which has been an influential tradition carried forward in feminist poststructuralism (Dews, 1989). In creating a counter-discourse, lesbian mothers define their own identities as parents by resisting the notions of lesbian motherhood upheld within the dominant discourse of heterosexual parenting.

The study's research question was addressed in greater detail in the Chapter Conclusion section of Chapter 5, although I will discuss it here in brief. This study's findings collectively indicate that lesbian mothers seem to experience a fundamental paradox of pronatalist discourse, in that despite a "successful" female identity being associated with that of being a mother, prevailing heteronormative discourses prescribe who, and under which circumstances someone is allowed to become a mother (Morell, 2000). In considering how lesbian mothers make reproductive decisions with regard to their gender, participants appear to consider the parenting couple's perceived ability to perform both maternal and paternal functions, indicating

their subjectification to a heteronormative discourse. They further appear to be mindful of the potential consequences of the "othering" of their children by society based on their sexual identity, but have developed a counter-discourse to make their reproductive decisions viable based on their understanding of good parenting as separate from sexual identity. By exercising their limited agency within this restrictive heteronormative discourse, these women made their decisions on reproduction based on their ability to care for a child both in terms of pragmatic, cost-benefit factors, and their capacity to meet the child's emotional needs and anility to protect them from potential "othering" by segments of the society.

These findings have implications for addressing the marginalisation and stigmatisation of lesbian women who wish to become parents and raise their children without having to justify their decisions purely because of their sexual identity.

6.3   Limitations of Study

All of the women participating in my research were from a similar level of privilege (middle-income levels), although the findings may have been enriched through exploring how lesbian mothers from varying levels of privilege construct meaning around reproductive decision-making. Advertising the study at family planning clinics and treatment centres that provide services to women of varied socio-economic statuses, may have been useful in increasing the size of the potential sample from which to recruit participants and thereby aiding in potentially recruiting women from diverse levels of privilege, given that privilege may play a significant role in the discursive resources made available to individuals within a given context.

Each of the participating couples became parents under varied circumstances. Only two of the couples actively decided to become parents together, and it occurred through two varying modes of conception; one couple decided to opt for in-vitro fertilisation, while the other adopted their baby from one of their relatives who was not ready to become a mother. With both of the remaining two couples, one partner had already had children from a previous relationship, prior to meeting their current partner and co-parent; one from a previous heterosexual relationship, and one from a previous same-gendered relationship. The study would have benefited from narrowing the recruitment scope even further by requesting participation from couples who created their families in similar ways.

In a country as diverse as South Africa, it may further have benefited the study to recruit participants from varying racial groups to better understand the potential differences and similarities in the gendered discourses of a more diverse group of same-gendered couples who have decided to become parents together.

6.4   Recommendations for Future Research

It could be insightful, given more time and greater participant willingness, to conduct both individual- and joint interviews in order to access *different* types of accounts; it is anticipated that participants would potentially draw on different discursive resources when being interviewed individually and jointly. Although not employed in this study, this methodology would have enriched the research findings and further allowed for the exploration of how and to what end, these discursive resources are employed in each context.

As alluded to earlier, an understanding of gendered discourses employed in South Africa would be greatly enhanced by conducting research with same-gendered couples from various levels of privilege, racial and cultural designations, as well as various regions in the country, as it may be interesting to see whether differing constructions of gender and sexuality may be evident when expanding on each of these categories.

I originally wanted to include bisexual women in same-gendered relationships in this study, but had no inroads into recruiting any participants who self-identify as bisexual. Future research could perhaps employ more effective recruitment methods to explore the reproductive decision-making among lesbian *and* bisexual women in the context of a same-gendered relationship to further expand on the current study's findings.

Future research exploring how lesbian couples create meaning around reproductive decisions, particularly with regard to their gender, would further benefit from focussing narrower attention on the various ways in which they create their families; in other words, participation criteria should possibly be narrowed down to include only one particular mode of conception at a time, to allow a more meaningful exploration of the gendered discourses that operate in each context., particularly South Africa.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

I have identified particular themes that will direct possible inquiry during the interview. As the interviews will be conducted in a semi-structured manner, I could either ask questions based on these themes or to deviate from the interview guide by further exploring information relayed by participants.

Theme 1: Meaning constructed around reproductive decision-making by lesbian and bisexual women who choose to be/ who are parents.

1.   Would you please tell me the story of how you decided to become parents together?

2.   What are the factors that you took into consideration before deciding to become a parent (parents)?

3.   Could you tell me about the method you decided to use to become parents?

Probe: If artificial insemination was chosen as the route to parenthood:

-   How did you decide which partner would give birth?

-   What were the factors that played a role in your choice of donor (i.e. choosing a known or unknown donor)?

Probe: If adoption was chosen as the route to parenthood:

-   Would you please tell me the story of how you decided on adoption?

-   What were some of the things that were important to you to take into consideration before starting the adoption process?

Theme 2: Gender discourses and the negotiation of sexual identity in relation to identity as a parent/prospective parent in the context of the traditional female maternal role

1.   How would you describe the word "mother"?

2.   What does/would becoming a mother mean for you as a person/couple?

3.   Can you tell me about how being a parent, or wanting to become a parent influences the way you think about your sexuality/ your identity as a lesbian woman?

Probe: Examples

4.   Can you tell me about any discussions you might have had about the role each of you will play in raising your child/children?

5.   How important is it for you to have a father/male figure present in your child's life?

Theme 3: How lesbian and bisexual women position themselves in relation to dominant discourses of reproductive decision-making.

1.   What were some of the reactions you got upon telling your family about your plans to have children and how did you react in return?

2.   What were some of the reactions you got upon telling others (i.e. friends, colleagues or even healthcare practitioners) about your plans to have children and how did you react in return?

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Research study: Reproductive decision-making of lesbian and bisexual women

There are two parts to this informed consent form:

- An information sheet (to provide information regarding the study)

- Consent to participate (to sign if you choose to participate)

You will receive a copy of the full consent form.

Part 1: Information sheet

The purpose of the study

I, Janine Ordman, am a student at the University of Pretoria and I am conducting research aimed at understanding how lesbian and bisexual women living in South Africa make decisions about having a child/children, in an individual capacity and also in conjunction with their partner. An increasing amount of lesbian and bisexual women in South Africa are choosing to become parents, whether by means of donor insemination, surrogacy or adoption. Available research in South Africa centres primarily on the reproductive decision-making processes in heterosexual relationships; therefore this study wants to acknowledge and illuminate the factors that impact on lesbian and bisexual women's decision to have children within the South African context. The study is being conducted in partial fulfilment of my MA Research Psychology degree.

Participation

This research will involve your participation in both an individual interview and in a joint interview with your partner. The individual interview will take no more than an hour and the joint interview will take between an hour and a half and two hours. The interviews will be recorded by means of a tape-recorder in order to portray your responses accurately when analysing the data. The recording will remain confidential and will only be accessed by my study supervisor (Dr. Ingrid Lynch) and myself. Your participation will be kept anonymous, which means that neither your name nor any other identifying details will be shared with

anyone. In the event that you are interested to review the study's results, you will be afforded the opportunity to do so and to provide input into the conclusions drawn from it.

You are invited to participate in this research because I believe that you will be able to provide unique insight into the research topic and that your experience as a lesbian or bisexual woman who has decided, or who is in the process of deciding to have a child/children, can contribute much to the understanding of and to the available knowledge on the topic.

The information you provide during the course of the research process will only be used for the purpose of the research study and will then be stored for 15 years in a safe location at the University of Pretoria for archiving purposes.

You may talk to anyone that you feel comfortable with about this research before deciding to participate and do not have to decide today whether or not you want to do so; you may take time to reflect on your decision. If some of the words or concepts are not familiar to you, please inform me of this so that I may provide a clearer explanation. Furthermore, your participation in this study is voluntary, which means that you may withdraw at any time without having to offer an explanation.

Potential risks or discomfort

Emotional and/or sensitive topics may arise during the interview. If after the interview there are still topics you wish to discuss further, you may contact "Out" at 012 430 3272, an LGBT organisation that will put you in contact with their telephonic counselling service or assist you in making a face-to-face appointment with a trained professional for confidential counselling. Furthermore, if you experience any discomfort when agreeing to participate in joint and/or individual interviews, you are encouraged to choose an option you find most comfortable.

Benefits of participation

The study will not provide any direct benefit, however your participation will contribute to a better understanding of the factors that influence lesbian and bisexual women's decision to become parents.

Any further questions regarding the research study may be directed at:

Janine Ordman (Researcher) **OR** the **s**tudy supervisor

Contact number: [Omitted in Appendix to protect personal information]

Email address: [Omitted in Appendix to protect personal information]

Research study: ***Reproductive decision-making of lesbian and bisexual women***

Part 2: Consent to participate

I hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, procedures, and risks of this study. I am aware that the information will only be used for research purposes, and that confidentiality will be protected. My participation in the study is voluntary and I can withdraw at any time without offering any explanation or suffering any consequences. I also give permission for the recording of the interview.

Participant signature _____

Date _____

Janine Ordman (Researcher) _____

Date _____

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS

Transcript of Interview 1

Transcript Keys:

- Interviewer: J - Janine
- Interviewee 1: M - Michaela
- Interviewee 2: R - Rachel

Note: Interview 1 was conducted in Afrikaans and was translated to English for analysis purposes.

[Start of recording]

J: So, tell me a bit about your family, your background.

M: Uhm... I am originally from the Northern Cape, very small town, very narrow-minded community. And uhm, it was very difficult for me to get accepted as a lesbian. So I tried very hard in the beginning, to be straight, like they say and uhm, that is also why, how it came to be that I had a child out of wedlock. And uhm, then I decided, when I was 20 or 21 I had Harvey, and while I was pregnant with him I decided that I am no longer going to keep up appearances, and after that we [she and her partner] met. And it [her "coming out" as being a lesbian] was especially difficult for my mother; my grandmother was the one, funny enough, that noticed it first and was the first to accept it [referring to her lesbian orientation]. But it was difficult for my mother, and it, my mother actually got over the whole lesbian business after she met Rachel and saw the type of relationship we have with one another and how we behave towards one another. Because I think older people have this strange notion about, uh, same-sex relationships, and yes I think that they think only about the sexual type of thing and they don't think about the relationship type of thing. Ag, and yes, after my mother met her, she was, she started accepting little by little, until the day we got married.

J: So you are married, legally?

M: Yes, on the 19th we will be married 3 years.

J: Congratulations!

M: Thank you. And November we'll be together for 10 years.

J: And uhm, could you tell me a bit about the story of how you decided to become parents together?

R: Well... becoming parents wasn't really something to decide on because she was already a parent, so her child was my child. I have known him since he was 3 years old, so when I moved in with her, parenthood was already part of it. And it was because I don't sleep with men, I really wanted children. And then she [Michaela] came along and made my dream come true. And uhm, yes, it wasn't really a decision, I really wanted to become a parent and there it was just easier and I have always nagged to have another child, then we had her [referring to their adoptive daughter]. And in my case it wasn't, it was actually not difficult to come out [as a lesbian], because it was very obvious, my family just accepted me that way and uhm...

J: From the very beginning?

R: I grew up that way, so it was a lot easier for me than it was for her [referring to Michaela], and I was more like a boy. My mother knew.

J: And for you [Michaela]? Uhm, there is the question of a relationship dynamic. Was it an easy transition for you to decide that you also want another child?

M: No, you know, it was a lot more difficult for me than it was for her [Rachel] and I didn't want another child. I had difficulty growing up, I grew up being very poor and my mother was an alcoholic for 23 years, and I just thought that I never wanted to expose a child to the things I was exposed to. I never really had a love for children, since I was I little, younger, and uhm, the way I fell pregnant with Harvey wasn't very good, so I didn't have contact with Harvey's dad after he was born. So I didn't really, uhm, have a desire to have another child. And then my youngest sister fell pregnant, she was 16 or 17 at that point, and she absolutely, absolutely wanted nothing to do with that child and she initially wanted to abort the child, and then... and uhm, my mother stopped drinking about 8 years ago and she had these feelings of guilt over... We are three daughters and I am the eldest, and she had terrible feelings of guilt about that time and how she treated us when she was drunk and how she neglected us when she was drunk. She [her mother] didn't create a home for us and we grew up with my grandmother and later I had to raise my sisters, and so, uhm, just because I had to be mature at such an early age and had to make decisions and raise my sisters, I really didn't want to have more children. But I felt that I had my fair share of child rearing, and uhm, so it was very difficult for me. Rachel

loves children very much. Her cousins have many children so she surrounded herself with children and she loves children and always had the desire. Since we started going out, she has told me she has a desire to have a child. And Harvey was 3 years old when we started going out, so she had contact at least, but my sister decided to give her child up for adoption or wanted to abort the child, so luckily it was too late to abort the child, and uhm, you know, I basically decided it [to adopt her sister's child] in the heat of the moment; from my side it was an impulsive decision. My mother didn't want Megan to get rid of the child, but her own health isn't of such a nature that she would have been able to take care of the baby by herself. So then I, ag I just woke up one morning and phoned her to say "You know what, we'll take the child", and I told her " I'll take the child on one condition: It has to be a legal adoption", because uhm, I don't get attached to people and I don't trust people easily, but when it happens I develop a strong bond, so I didn't want to let a baby into my house and then the child gets taken away in 2 or 3 years, no. So then we talked to my sister and she said it was okay [for them to legally adopt her baby] and she just asked whether she could have access [to the child]. So I said to her we will tell her [the child] that you are her biological mother and when she is older she'll come and visit you. If you lead a responsible life and you have a decent, stable home and stuff, then she will come and visit you and you are welcome to come visit us. So when she is grown up she will know that you are her mother and we will explain it to her. And look, my son understands that his mother doesn't have a husband like other mothers do and when he was younger it was easier, but since he has grown up it has become more difficult; he sometimes gets rebellious, but he has never questioned my relationship with her [Rachel], and uhm, you know, we had her [the daughter] and later in the maternity ward, I was there.

R: We only had a short honeymoon

M: [Laughs] She was born in August and I carried all the costs for her birth, and she has been with us since the day she was born. And last year 20 June, short before she turned 2 years old, the adoption was finalised.

J: Okay, did it take long? I mean, did it feel that way to you?

M: It [the finalisation of the adoption process] felt like forever to us. My sister pushed us around a lot emotionally, then she wants the child, then she doesn't want her and at the end of the day I decided, no, she [her sister] has to go to school, she has to grow up.

R: And she [their daughter] changed our lives, immensely!

J: I can imagine!

R: And she calls both of us "mammie" [Afrikaans word for "mommy"].

M: She calls both of us "ma" and…

R: Yes, and many people have that thing of, because I am more like a man, they want to know: "Does she call you "dad"?" And it is one of the, it is the dumbest thing you can think of.

R: You can't raise a child like that.

M: Yes you know it's actually, Rachel wears men's clothing, and she cuts her hair like a man, and she only wears men's clothing. She even wears men's underwear, there's really nothing feminine about Rachel. And it's almost as if people out there expect the child to call her "pa". And it is very stupid because I mean, we know she is a woman, she knows she is a woman.

R: It was very difficult for me as a person who thinks like a man, um, like when she started talking, that she calls my "ma", so I also had to deal with it and uhm, yeah it was difficult but I'm used to it now and I feel like a mother to her and if she calls me "ma". I still think like a man, so there's certain things that I do with her and what she can also see, can notice that I'm a little bit different, but yes, it was a little difficult for me, but I'm used to it.

J: And uhm, if you think about the word "mother" and about the traditional things that are connected to it, what does the word "mother" mean to you?

R: It is, it means a lot more, it's very intimate because like, I lost my mother when I was in high school and it's almost as if I understand what it is to be a mother. Look, we are still learning, as she grows up. Uhm, I also learn a lot from Michaela. How she was with her son and how we grew up, because my grandmother was still there, she was still a mother to us, so mostly we would, with Harvey as a boy... I, inward I felt like a father to him but I did not expect him to call me that. He called me by my name. But it is not so difficult. It's actually very nice and you feel like a parent.

J: And to be a parent, what do you consider to be characteristics of a parent?

R: Yes, uhm, I don't know how to answer you.

J: For example, taking care of the child [being a caretaker] and…

R: I learned a lot. With her, like the hair business, its stuff that I had to learn, like matching clothes and stuff like that.

M: But you're getting there.

R: It's getting there, I'm getting there [smiles].

J: And for you [directed at Michaela]?

   [While Michaela pays attention to their child I continue talking with Rachel]

R: It was difficult in the beginning but, like even like now when we are with family, they tease me quite a bit, you know, to do hair, because they know how I am.

P :   [In response to the question regarding the meaning of parenthood] For me, motherhood, it comes almost naturally to me, because from childhood uhm, because I was very young when I had to raise my two sisters, and I understand it in the sense that it's your responsibility to protect that child, it's your responsibility to be an example for that child, it's your responsibility to tell that child: "You know what, no matter what the world out there does, your mother is always at home." It is your responsibility to create a home for that child. I was at one point almost obsessed with creating a stable home for Harvey. It was just because of my own growing up, because I grew up with my grandmother, and then it was my aunty and it was my mom, so I have never, since I, since I was little until I finished high school, I never had a home, with a mother and a father. So my mother and father were not married and my mother's husband committed suicide when I was 4 years old. So it was, I did not have a childhood, so for me it was almost an obsession to create a stable home for my child and then later for Dana too, and to make it stick in my child's mind that: "Life out there, it can do nothing to you." And that's a lot of responsibility, but it's good to know that you serve as an anchor in the child 's life, and even my sisters still know, and Rachel too, I am still a mother figure to many people.

J: And uh, I just want ask a more specific question. So what has parenting, or rather becoming a mother meant to you as a couple? What are some of the things you discussed about motherhood, or about the decisions around having another child?

M: You know what, we have, because we don't really ... look we do not intend to... "We have been together for so many years, then married and then we'll have a child like a normal married man and woman would: They are now engaged for so many years and married for so many years and after 2 years, they are going to have a child and stuff". We basically decided

to ask for Dana when her mother was only seven months pregnant, and in those two months we did not really have a chance to make preparations because we got married and then the wedding was over, and we only had those two months to prepare for the baby's arrival.

R: It all happened so quickly.

M: It all happened so quickly and uhm we basically just decided to love the child and to take responsibility for her or him that was on the way and to take it day by day. And because there already was a child, Harvey was 9 or 10 at that stage and he was already quite grown up. So we already had a taste of parenthood. In my case that Harvey is my biological child and Rachel's case, he was very small when she, when we as a family, when we started dating and then started to stay together and later got married. So uh, now still, we, she [their adoptive daughter] is two now and turns three in August. We take each day as it comes and just try to make the best of it. But we have planned for stuff, like policies and such stuff. So in the long term we have made plans for the future. But before she came, it was just, we just do the best we can.

J: So are you both named as her parents on her birth certificate?

M: Yes, we are both down as her parents [on the birth certificate], we were married in community of property and her surname is also... When we got married I accepted Rachel's surname. And Dana's surname is also... when she was born she was registered at the hospital with my sister's surname and uhm, but Dana is now also Kannemeyer, which is our surname. We are still waiting, since last year, for the birth certificate.

J: So what were some of the reactions that you got from your family when you told them that you will be adopting the child?

R: They were happy. They were in the clouds because they know how much I love children.

J: And also because they accepted you from the very beginning?

R: Yes, and because I finally also have my own little one.

M: Yes, Rachel's sexual orientation was, it was actually much easier for her. As she says, she was like a boy since childhood. And I think it's easier for a "butch" woman than for a feminine woman. Because it's hard for people to understand that you are a woman, you look

like a woman, you dress up as a woman, you act like a woman, but you want to *be* with a woman.

R: People still get a fright when they see her and find out that she is actually gay, and then they don't understand, because she is feminine.

M: There are many people that don't know I am [a lesbian], they've known me for years, and like people at work that uhm, if you take for instance, we, I don't easily socialise with people at work or colleagues, because I want to keep my work and my home life separate. But there are times where you have to do teambuilding and such with them, and there really are people who are surprised when they hear that I am gay.

J: And probably more surprised when they hear that you have a child?

M: They know there's a child involved, yes. Then they meet Rachel, and perceive Rachel as this "mannetjie" [an Afrikaans term referring to an effeminate man] and it's almost as though they then understand better because, like my friend's dad asked her "What is it that you want?" and she said "I am a woman, I just want to be another woman's wife"

[They both laugh at this remark]

M: So when they see Rachel and I together, it is easier to accept because Rachel is more dominant in the manly sense and I am like a typical woman; I talk a lot…

R: I just listen… [said jokingly]

M: She is the strong, silent type [laughs].

J: What impact, if any, do you think these personality characteristics that you have just mentioned, have on your parenting styles?

M: I am the one that talks a lot, I am the one that says "don't"; "don't do that", "stop it" and Rachel just sits there and…

R: And I listen…

M: She just listens, but if she raises her voice, Dana listens. But I can moan and moan and moan the whole day and she [Dana] won't listen, but when Rachel talks, she listens. So uhm, and I am the one that gets cross. I will give her a spank on her bum every now and then, but you [referring to Rachel] have never spanked her.

R: Yes, she is, Michaela is more in the kitchen, she cooks and stuff like that, and then this one [referring to their daughter] wants attention. Then she will come to me and I will give her attention and play with her and then we'll sit around or she will go moan about me there. So she sees with whom she can do what with.

M: She's a lot more attached to Rachel, it's very, I won't say that she loves her more, she's just more attached to her and maybe it is because I am the cross one. But when she's sick, she comes to me. So it's almost as though she knows which one of us to go to depending on which type of attention she needs.

J: Do you think that you would ever go through such a process to have another child?

M: She really wants to [referring to Michaela], but…

R: Look, I really like children.

M: We have two children now and financially it is…

R: I don't think I would be able to pay attention to another child at the moment, because I love her so much [referring to Dana].

M: Maybe when she is bigger, and Harvey is 10 years older than her so Harvey is now in Grade 8 and uhm ... and then when he is finished with high school, then she goes to school. So maybe one day when she is bigger and does not need so much attention anymore, but if a person financially speaking wants to give a child good quality care and school and stuff... then one cannot really afford another child.

R: Because it's like, with my cousins, they have one more [referring to having more children] and then that child hasn't really received attention. So every time I get there and see them I want to give them attention ... because you know they do not get it from their parents.

M: Yes, because they are [born] too close to each other.

R: Because they feel they should come live with me or visit me for it [for attention]. Because they see us with her [Dana] in the first place and in the second, I give that child attention. Uhm, they might ask for money or ask that I take a walk with them. They get it from me because they don't get it from their parents. There is one [child] that cries constantly to come and live with me.

J: Before you adopted her, were there certain things that you considered, such as how society will respond to two women having a child together?

M: I have always had the fear, with Harvey too, that... children are very cruel, and I was always afraid they would say to Harvey for example, especially at school: "You do not have a father, your father is a woman", or things like that. But fortunately this has never happened.

R: And luckily he stood up for himself, when it came to talk like that, because you always get one or two [children] who…

M: Who ask questions...

R: And he will stand up for himself.

M: But I still have that ... because she's still small ...that decisions I have made…. Look it was my decision to live out my sexual preferences publicly. So then there is that fear that the decisions that you made can harm your children and ...

R: And you see it out there ... and children talk. And you know, the strangest thing of all, she [refers to Michaela] grew up without a father ... I, okay, he was there but, I was 7 years old. And Harvey and even now with her [referring to Dana] so there was not really a father figure in our lives. Okay, grandpa is still there but not that physical...

M: Yes, I had a grandfather…

R: …that physical father figure. So that is kind of one of the strange things about our marriage.

M: And when you see how you are treated, you know, it's amazing. People who know you and then find out you're gay, they completely change towards you. And then you get people who walk in the same store isle, and the man and the woman who come to do shopping see you two do shopping [referring to Rachel and Michaela] and they walk exactly the same, he pushes the trolley and she puts groceries in. Okay, Rachel pushes the trolley and I put the groceries in and then the man almost overturns his trolley because he does not want to walk by the same shelf as us.

R: And sometimes I get mad.

M: Yes, sometimes she gets mad.

R: And then she calms me down, but then, you understand, you still get people like that. It's like, you tell yourself you are not going to pay attention to it, but…

M: It hurts sometimes because, I personally feel that, I am still the same person. Like me or don't like me because of my personality, not because of my sexual orientation, because I don't shove it in people's faces, and that is what I also tell Rachel. It is very seldom, for example when walk in the evenings to buy takeaways that we will hold hands, but I feel that we don't demonstrate in public how we feel about each other. We don't hang onto one another or kiss one another and stuff in public. So uhm, I feel that is how we show respect to society, so why can't society show us some respect?

R: That is why, when I went to meet her mother, her mother saw something completely different. We don't hold hands, she doesn't sit on my lap, we were more like friends, and her mother was like, okay…

M: "Oh, okay is that how it is?"

R: Because that is just how we are, even when we are at home. But even when we're with my family, they are used to it by now. So they aren't like "oh goodness, they are going to cling on to one another now".

J: I think people often want to place others into 'boxes' to make sense of things.

R: We have been this way from the start, so I'm not afraid, I have respect for people. But when I feel that I want to hold my wife's hand one day, I want to hold her hand.

J: And uhm, on a different note. Were there any religious considerations that you had before deciding to adopt your child?

M: You know, we were very lucky in that respect. We belong to a gay church, we are members of a gay church and uhm, I grew up Catholic, and she grew up in the Dutch Reformed Church. And uhm, we have, when I met her, she never really went to church, for the simple reason that people stare at her and the way she dressed. And there was no way to let people know that she, to dress her in a feminine way so that people would accept her. That's not who she is. And uhm, for me it was not an issue because I'm feminine, so people did not easily notice it. But when we got married, we went to court and we wanted to get married in court. Not in court, but home affairs, treated us very badly the day we were there. And...

J: Because you wanted to get married?

M: Because we wanted to get married. "Same-sex marriage", and then they continue talking in their own language. So we didn't understand what they were saying, all we could gather from what they were saying is "same-sex marriage" and then one of the cleaning ladies there gave us the number of a pastor, [name purposefully omitted to preserve anonymity], and she said "Call this pastor, this pastor does gay marriages", so we phoned her. And at that point, Rachel didn't go to church, but the thing is, we are both Christians. And we believe the same things, and that was an advantage, and I raised Harvey, since he was little I raised him in the church and I left the Catholic Church when I was 18. And then I joined a Pinkster church and over the years went to church alone with my sister and then later with Harvey. And you know, then [name of pastor purposefully omitted to preserve anonymity] invited us to meet with her and eventually we joined their church, and we got married…

R: From the first day I walked in to that church I felt at home.

M: And you feel that relief of, gosh, I'm not being judged. You can just sit here and listen to the word of God.

R: Yes that is all I want. I don't want someone to look at me and stuff. If you read the Bible in the right way, then you won't do those types of things.

M: And the thing is, although it is a church, understand it is a gay pastor and stuff, they do not preach justification for being gay. They preach like you get at an ordinary church, the standard word of God and my desire was just that we have to go to a church... I believe that a child's foundation must be a Christian one, or whatever your faith is. And you have to raise your child. And you know, we are very lucky in that sense that we are now, we've been part of the church for almost four years. And we are very fond of each other, there is a lot of caring for each other and Dana and Harvey are the only children at the stage in the church.

J: So they are accepted there and...

M: They are accepted, the pastor is like a grandfather to the children... so yes, they are. And you know and we are the only Coloured people in the church with the only children in the church, and you know... it's love.

J: And how does it influence you that you are the only Coloured couple in the church and then also your child... how does it influence the dynamics there?

M: You know, it's absolutely wonderful because they don't treat us as if we are different, because... when did you meet her [directed at Rachel, asking about when they met with their church's pastor]? She came on Thursday and just lay there on the bed beside her and prayed for her [Rachel was in a car accident earlier this week where she was injured]. So they do not act differently towards us than they do towards each other, you know, and if they kiss a White person hello and congratulate them on their birthday, they do exactly the same with us, so we feel part of the church. We don't feel different.

J: Like a place where you feel like you belong...

M: We are very few, and I think it's because we are so few that we are so close. We have a prayer group at church praying for everyone and everything. We are 5 people or 6 people that handle the prayer requests so we get emails and requests on Facebook and so on. And I'm part of the prayer group, so we get our requests on a Monday for the week and then we pray for personal problems and issues and stuff. And I am part of the music department of the church.

R: She sings beautifully.

M: And also our programmes. So I am very involved with the church.

J: I just want to see if there is anything that I have missed... uhm... Oh, maybe just one more thing. How important is it for you to have a male-figure or a father figure present in your child's life?

M: You know, although Rachel feels like a man in her heart and thinks like a man, she knows and we know that she isn't a man. And a child grows up and sees that she isn't a man, so you can't imprint it into a child's mind that "I am a man" So uhm, it is actually difficult, because I grew up without a father and know what's missing without having a male figure, I believe that it is important for a child to have a male figure. Like I said, luckily I still have a grandfather. Rachel unfortunately doesn't have a grandfather; he has also passed away. And then we have a male figure present in church.

R: She [referring to their daughter] receives a lot of attention from them.

M: She receives a lot of attention from them, so it's actually unfortunate that there is no permanent male figure in our house, so we just have to make the best of it.

J: What do you then feel is missing in the absence of a male figure, if anything? What would a male contribute that you two feel you cannot necessarily, or...

M: You know...

J: Unless there isn't something?

M: Actually nothing...

R: It was maybe only at a time, as in Harvey's case, he's a boy so there were many typical things he did like other boys, because understand when he grew up and I bought toy cars for him and played cars with him, like a man would, then it would have been easier.

M: And especially when he went into puberty and started asking questions.

R: He wanted to start riding a bicycle and stuff like that.

M: Rachel did a lot, did most of the stuff that a father would do with a boy but uhm, he started asking questions about his father, and I answered the questions to the best of my ability. I told him who his father is and said I did not know where his father is at this stage... And when Harvey was 3 years old, we lost contact with him so uhm, I hope one day to introduce them to each other for him to... you know, I do not want to influence how he views his father. But, except that Harvey has typical boy questions about his body, where a man could answer better than I, as a woman could answer him, we did not really miss having a man in our lives.

J: And then, in conclusion, what advice do you have for a couple in your situation that wants a child, anything that you learned about how you are together and the adoption process and everything. Do you have any advice for other couples?

M: If you really want to have a child, just be sure you're emotionally ready as a couple. And that you are sure you are emotionally stable and you can provide a child a stable thing. Do not have a child just because you want to.

R: I think it, they themselves as a person must be ready. Look, and there are couples who still go out and do all the nice things.

M: Your motive must be right [for having a child/ren].

R: Yes, you have to be very stable and know "this is what I want" because in my time, I drank a lot. And that's what I wanted and at that moment I wasn't ready [to have a child]. And

everything fell neatly into place on that day [they adopted their daughter], when we realised well, but it's here now, you are now a mother and you need to take more responsibility. So they must physically and personally feel ready.

M: And you must be sure of the responsibilities and parenting that accompanies it [having a child].

R: Because a child requires a lot of responsibility.

M: And you must ensure that you not only have them as a couple, or that the family setup's good [taken into account], but that child in the picture is going to come, you have to be absolutely totally prepared for that child.

R: You have to give 100%.

J: And I mean, it doesn't really differ in terms of whether you are in a heterosexual relationship and whether you are in a... [homosexual relationship].

M: Not at all. You have to take exactly the same precautions and have the same feelings, emotionally you do everything the same way. You must be sure, that's why I say you should think in terms of yourself, but more in terms of the child who is on its way. You do not think you're now ready for the child, but whether the child will be ready for you.

R: Yes, because a child is only a child, he cannot... Maybe they are born, and she doesn't know what type of family she is in. And whether she grows up in a gay relationship or a straight relationship, a person should always be ready, whether you're gay or straight.

M: Yes, and you have to be prepared, what life outside hands you, you must be able to handle. For some reason people think if you adopt a child you are going to raise the child to be gay.

R: Yes, it was the other girl's question.

M: Yes the other girl asked her, are we going to now raise her to be in a same-sex relationship. I told her "No"!

J: But was she from a university?

M: Yes, she was from the University of Pretoria.

R: It is one of the things we talked about that for me was totally not ... because for this child [referring to their daughter], it is her decision, same as with Michaela and I.

R: She [their daughter] plays with Harvey's [toy] cars every now and then but in my head, sometimes I know I'm just being a little silly, then I tell her not to play with those cars, because I used to do it [referring to when she was a child]. I did with my little brother's [played with his toy cars]. Then Michaela says "Leave that child alone".

M: Yes, it's almost as if Rachel is afraid that if the child plays with a [toy] car then the child will become "skeef" [an Afrikaans slang term referring to being homosexual], then I tell her "leave her".

R: It's probably a bit silly, but from my side I have grown up that way, I played with my brother's toys. And like now with my cousin's child, I heard the boy, we call him Spiderman, he now plays with the girl's stuff. So there is not the case of, it's toys, they are all you have to play with.

J: Yes [agreeing].

R: So she's growing up.

J: And yes, children are still learning what they like.

R: Exactly!

R: We're not going to tell her, you will not wear dresses, you will not wear *that*, you will not wear pink, and you are going to so and so.

M: And you know, you have exactly the same fears as any other parent. What are you going to do if one day Dana comes to you and says that she's "skeef" [an Afrikaans slang term for referring to someone as homosexual], is it my fault because I am, or what? [Laughs] Do you understand, you still have those same [fears]... Many people have asked me when Harvey was for instance smaller, "What will you do if Harvey says to you that he likes boys?" And what will you do? You will cry your eyes out, and feel guilty for a while and then go and support that child. And uhm, the reason I just hope and pray that none of my children will be that way is because of the knock society gives you. And if it is so, society can be very cruel. I mean, now, Rachel is 32, I 'm 34 and uhm, we, it's still difficult for us there if you step outside ... and people give you fowl looks.

R: Because it's probably just one of the things you are afraid of for your children.

M: Yes because you do not know, "jssie", will the child be emotionally strong to withstand it?

R: Because look, if you look closely, there are many of them who commit suicide.

M: Yes...

R: So, it is horrible.

M: They are not accepted in a community and then they commit suicide. And now that is not what you want for your child.

J: I really wanted to thank you again for letting me in and telling me about these things. I know it is not necessarily easy, since I am an outsider.

R: We like to talk…There are people out there who think we choose this life and it isn't so.

M: Yes! If have to think about the hell I went through. I told my mom I was gay when I was 12, I like girls, I was 12 at the time, in standard 5. And on that day my mother gave me such a big spanking that I never wanted to talk about it again. And you know, from there you try to be straight and try to have boyfriends, and you make many, many, many wrong decisions to just become straight. And at the end of the day you give up, to realise, you know no matter what I do, I won't become straight. Even if I sleep with a man, I won't become straight. Even if I repent and throw my whole life into the church, I won't become straight. So it's one of two things, either I live my life in a decent way, or I spend the rest of my life being alone and unhappy, so, yes.

J: I agree. Well if there's anything more that you want to add or something you think I forgot to ask...? Are you comfortable with everything we have discussed?

R: Yes.

J: Then I am happy, thank you.

[End of recording]

Transcript of Interview 2

Transcript Keys:

- Interviewer: J – Janine
- Interviewee 1: C – Cammie
- Interviewee 2: S: Sophia

[Start of recording]

J: I just want to know whether you both identify as lesbian?

C: Yes.

J: Okay and then can you just tell me a little bit about your family background? In terms of your own family unit.

C: My family unit is Sophia, myself and Lilly, her daughter. And then we've got Sophia's mother and stepfather living with us in the house as well. So that's the family unit that we are, as such.

J: And what are some of the factors that you guys took into consideration before deciding to become parents?

S: Cammie and I aren't parents of Lilly. Lilly is from another relationship that I decided I wanted to be a mother, and her choice was well she was not comfortable with it. She couldn't see her loving another child – somebody else's child, because she's got a son of her own from her previous marriage and I said to her well I wanted a child and I wasn't going to back down from that. So it was basically you're on your own. All the costs involved, is your problem. So ja.

J: And do you consider yourself as Lilly's parent?

C: Yes, I do. Very much so.

J: How did you guys decide, you got together and then it must have been something, I don't know a big thing for you to have considered being with a woman who already has a child.

C: Not really, because my sister and my brother and my younger sister, she's now only in her 20s, I actually brought her up to a large degree, my brother and sister's children as well.

I've had quite a bit of input in their lives. It wasn't that difficult when I knew she had a child. It was like wow she is my family, if I can put it that way, but when I first met Lilly and we took to one another like this, actually even before we met, she [Sophia] was hesitant in meeting me and Lilly was the one pushing for her to meet me and when I got there, Lilly was the first one to come to me, immediately, hug me and the two of us established a relationship. So, ja.

J: That's wonderful. So how did you feel about that whole situation?

S: I was quite happy about it because to a large degree, Lilly is very important to me. Especially I think because of the fact that she's born into a gay relationship and people are going to treat her differently. I was looking at that, so it's important to me that she and Cammie get along because if they don't get along then – we can't actually have a relationship. So no I was quite glad that the two of them hit it off, got along.

J: And then tell me a bit about the method that you used to conceive your child.

S: Artificial insemination.

J: And how did you decide – did you give birth to her yourself?

S: Ja.

J: And did you have some considerations about where the donation would come from?

S: There's a sperm donor bank in Parktown which I used – I actually went through to them. They give you a list of the sperm donor details like height, age, IQ and then you make your choice from there. I made my choice and then the guy doing the insemination said to me why don't you take this guy, because you and he will make very nice kids together. I said okay – I will go on his input, take his choice and Lilly is a beautiful little girl. So it was good choice.

J: And so you chose an unknown donor. And so there won't ever be a time where you think you would want your child to meet the biological father.

S: No.

J: Well you don't really go into that aspect –

C: And the thing is what Sophia has done is Lilly is really fully aware of the facts. That she was artificially inseminated. This is the one thing, we've never hidden, since I've been in the relationship with her, is to hide anything away from her. In that respect. So Lilly knows. I

mean, you do find later in life they want to find their fathers, things like that. She'll know it won't be a possibility [loud background noise]

J: And what was the process like for you to go through the artificial insemination. Where the clinics very open to assisting a lesbian woman with it or not really –

S: The guy who actually did it was very very nice about it and he actually made my ex-partner sign a form saying she would be responsible for Lilly. Which she refused to do. What normally happens is a gay couple to have a child, the other partner – [can turn around and say it's not my child] I don't want to look after the child – so she signed the one form – she refused to sign the other one which I think today I must update [unclear – extremely loud noise]

J: So let me just look at more specific questions.

C: We've also actually thought about maybe wanting to have a child together okay – which I mean would [unclear] if we could, if it would be possible, for Sophia to conceive another child I don't know – we could consider adoption or maybe a surrogacy but that is difficult, with the laws we have in the country as well – they have changed the law to consider - gay couples can have children, it is still the criteria. They try and put it outside the range for gay couples to have children. And then also they want to take the, they want to make – the children – to adopt.

J: So you don't really, it's not like you can choose the child that you want to bring into your life. It might not necessarily fit into who you guys are as a couple. So what were your considerations when you decided to have Lilly? I mean were there specific factors that you fit into consideration like religion or anything to that effect?

C: No it was basically just to, sticking – you want a child and that's it.

J: So it wasn't a whole process of deciding well is this world ready to embrace a child born into a lesbian relationship? Did you think about that at all or not really –?

S: Not really. My sister's in a gay relationship as well and she's got two kids with her previous man. I know that Francois and Bianca were [unclear] my sister's child would go to school and do things like – cause such a scene [very loud noise] children will go to school, try to prevent issues, we'd say [unclear] so yes I did think of it.

J: But your main consideration was still you want to be a mother. And how does being parents together influence your relationship dynamic?

C: It's actually very difficult, because you know mother figures. I don't know if you know about mother figures. [unclear] and if you say something. Whereas I'm coming from my perspective, I look at it logically and I can see that the child is using the situation to her advantage. It did cause problems – we've gotten to this point where we are standing together and dealing with it sensibly and there's a change. There's a definite change in Lilly's perception. She calls me Conker. If Conker's going to get upset, she can always run to mommy and mommy will give in. She will nag and nag and nag, and she's got a lovely nature of why, but why must it be like this. As a parent, you don't have to explain yourself – you don't have to explain, the child must just do as you say. When they get older, you can then start and say this is why I said this. For her to challenge the authority that we have as parents, but why – the one with Amanda – her brother wants to come and visit and I said no. But why? I said Lilly, my answer is no. But I want to know why. There's no such thing as that, my no is my no – I don't need to qualify my no. This is where we were getting, she would then explain to Lilly. I would say don't explain, leave it it's not necessary. She's got to understand we're the authority figures, we're the parents, she's the child. She acts sometimes, the way she speaks to her mother, the way she acts, it's like she's the mother, and the mother is the daughter. It's problematic. That has been problematic. It caused us to not talk to one another. I'm getting to this point blank refusal of acknowledging both of them.

S: There have been a couple of days that she and I have had a fight, and it's normally about Lilly that we fight.

J: Then how do you end up resolving that? Just by talking to each other then?

S: Just by talking – [unclear] and we'll like reach a compromise, say okay this is how we will deal with it, but now we've decided, just like the other day when Lilly asked me if Amanda can come over, and I said to her I need to speak to Conker about this, but why must you speak to Conker, it's your house. I say because Conker and I are in a relationship. I need to speak to her. And she doesn't want to say Cammie.

J: Where does that come from?

S: Friends of ours – their little girl couldn't say Cammie, she'd say Conker. So she started with Conker.

C: Now everybody calls me Conker.

J: How old is Jessica?

S: 7, turning 8 in December.

J: It sounds like she has a very strong willed mind.

L1   Very. She's knows how to get her mother – she's very quick with her mind, what she says. But I've told her I'm quicker than her. What was it like the other day when I said she had to go do something and she said she will play with the wall. She says wall play with me, and wall doesn't want to play, you know. And then she wants to have this – but the wall doesn't want to play with me - so when she came in the other day, a DVD, must tell her which one. I said can a DVD talk? No. I said so you have to choose. That type of quickness in response to her. Is what I can do. I can counter her every time. Mommy, I think – get frustrated with her. [very loud noise]

J: So how, how did other people react, specially first of all – when you told them, like your family, how did they react when you told them you want to have a child of your own?

S: My mom and stepdad were staying with me and – I didn't tell them I was going to plan it, when I told them I was pregnant then it was a load of shit – they were totally against it, which on the one hand I can understand but on the other hand I'm not a child any more –

J: So what were some of their reasons for being against it –

S: They felt that Sabine [Sophia's previous same-gendered partner] and I raising a child together was not right -

J: Because of your sexuality?

S: Yes. How are you going to look after her, how are you going to cope – children get sick – I said how many other mothers out there that children get sick and have jobs, have to cope with that –

J: And then was your family when you told them that you were going to be a parent, when you guys got together –

C: They've all got children. It's not really a problem to them – I'll be very candid here, they seem different with Lilly as opposed to them and their children because – [unclear] I have never used [unclear] on Lilly. My sister and my brother in law, their relationship, [unclear] they – and I had – they've allowed them, only when it's necessary – so they've seen the difference and they said to me this isn't how we know you, and I said you know what, [unclear] how can you make sure that – she believes, I don't necessarily agree with them very [unclear]

– sometimes think that [unclear] would do Lilly all the good, I really do. Because it will bring her in line without having to – you know, the crazy rules and – as I've told her, you can put your will against me little girl, it isn't going to work. I don't give in. I am very implacable with that – sorry, that's the way I am. And I don't, I won't bend for a child. A child must bend to my world. Until she's got to the point where you see she's developed into who she should be and she can exercise some will. But now, as a child, no ways. There's no such thing, as she's going to be with her – it's not going to work that way.

J: It sounds like both your families are very accepting of your family situation, so it's not a problem -

C: No my sister's little one, keeps on asking when I go and visit, she says when is Lilly coming to visit again? No hassle whatsoever. They absolutely love one another. What does Lilly say? They're cousins, hey. That's the first thing that they - and we want to get married. We will get married once we've overcome some of these obstacles. But then she will genuinely be her cousin, because I want to adopt her.

S: I think the only problem or the only thing that's really a problem in our relationship is my stepfather. He doesn't approve of the lifestyle. [unclear]

J: He doesn't approve of her in what sense though?

S: Of my lifestyle. [unclear] It's a problem. But I've been to the stage where I don't let what you think affect me anymore. It's my life, I'm happy – my daughter's happy – they can fight, to then get started, then I feel like

C: What I get upset about is the fact that he influences Lilly, her behaviour so it's not just her and myself being able to influence her in the way we want her to grow up. He influences her and he influences her adversely. Totally against being the authority that I stand for, because look in the relationship that we have, that's where my authority comes from with Lilly as well, but because he's not – he's not the alpha male. He thinks he is, so he tries, to influence Lilly, which is frustrating, it really is. We will get two steps ahead with Lilly and then go five steps back. It frustrates me. [unclear] A sense of, say I'll say to him and I'll walk away, but I don't want to say because then he'll take it out on her or on Lilly, or on his wife. I don't want to get to that, where I say you have got no right whatsoever to say this or that. I don't want. I'm not used to taking my authority position that I have in our relationship and exercising it. Because I consider, I love her mother to bits. She's like my mom, more my mom's – but she's a lovely

woman. I don't want to cause her any undue hurt either. So I keep it in check, I bite my tongue, which is wrong.

J: What were some of the reactions that you got from other people outside of your family sphere regarding you being parents – have their actions been negative, or positive –

S: I think more shock I don't really mix with the family a lot, so I think – they were like, she's pregnant, she's had a baby, the few who were at the baby shower were quite excited about it.

J: Do they have strange reactions to two women having a child together, have you ever encountered anything like that –

C: When we go shopping we'll be looked at, and the way Lilly reacts, they look at us, they're not really sure, but we never had anybody approach us and ask us anything in that regard. But you know when we really, we're so natural – I mean, I don't see why one has to make a statement about it. We are just like any normal person in life.

J: I had this one couple that I've interviewed, and the one partner told me that people, they don't understand the dynamic, they don't understand, they kind of want to put each individual into a little box and say so you're the woman in the relationship and you're the man in the relationship so does that mean your child then calls you dad. That's so stupid, it's a very stupid thing, so I'm glad that you guys haven't experienced anything like that.

S: No look, Lilly will, for Father's Day she made Cammie a Father's Day card. But – there's not really been anybody –

C: It's like she's come to me, she said to me you're actually my second mommy, she says to me why don't you be more like mommy, but that's the way me am, it's just me. I don't really have an answer but it's not that she sees me as a father figure, she does recognise me as a female, struggling around the fact of maybe not being feminine.

J: I understand.

C: I mean when I got into the relationship with Sophia, Lilly was dressed more like a boy, and now you see her she wants skirts, dresses and high heels, she wore skirts and dresses and high heels, she wants to be a model. She doesn't ask mommy about these things, she asks me. She wants to know why I want to be more like a guy, but she'll come to me with those questions.

J: Interesting.

S: There was a meeting at the school the other day and the head mistress said to me that when they met Cammie and I were the first time with Lilly, they were really scared. She thought Cammie was Lilly's mother because Cammie was asking all the questions and talking to Lilly. I just sat there and listened. So I said that's just me, I'll meet somebody and be very quiet. So I think – so I said to her actually – but ja Lilly will go with Cammie –

C: She asked me all those questions – the anomaly is I'm the male figure -] I'm actually creative, that's my passion, my forte whereas Sophia's not, she's only getting there. So –

J: Talking about sexuality and gender roles and whatever, how has becoming a mother changed or not changed your idea of your sexuality, or as your identity as a lesbian woman? I'd like to know from both of you. If it even has.

C: The only thing that it's really done is – it's made me a lot more understanding, and a lot more compassionate than what I would have been. I think in some ways it's – daunting. I think in some ways we should say, let's take – coming from what she was, not wanting Lilly to go down the same road but going about it the wrong way, I'm overcompensating too much.

J: In what sense?

C: Allowing Lilly too much freedom. Not boundaries, but she must develop as a child. Like I said sometimes Lilly treats her mother as if she's the child and she's the adult – because they've had this very close relationship because of the other partner that is not involved. The two of them was like this. Then I came, Lilly was sleeping in the bedroom with Sophia, in the room. Because of that separation, when we've now, we've been battling to change the whole thing, she's now got her own bedroom, but we still have some instances of struggle for her not to come and climb into our bed. She calls mommy in the night. Mommy must go and lie with her, so we were trying to separate those, for her to be like any other child. She's very fearful, but it's your fears that get projected into her. Fear of spiders, and what's the – Parktown Prawns, little mosquitoes, and I call it an irrational fear. I'm not a fearful person, so I won't say irrational, I won't say it's wrong. It's not me, I won't say. I found sometimes it's maybe a little over the top. She will get hysterical so Lilly follows what Mommy's doing. Say for instance, so she's calming down – Jessica is staying fearful. It's very tough. Very tough.

J: Coming back to the idea of how it has impacted or not impacted your own sexuality, has it [unclear]

C: I think actually yes for you in a way, because of the fact that Lilly has become so feminine as well, looking at now, it's mommy got to look at the dresses and the skirts, and things like that with Lilly. I remember when we were in the beginning, this would be nice, that would be now, Lilly is now also getting her own style, but now mommy is also looking at it, thing that view of is that would really suit her, she's grown exponentially she's turning 8 but she's wearing clothes of – 13 to 14 year old, we've got to look at that very carefully because of the personality she has as well. She's quite a vivacious child. Very posing, she wants to be that model. She's got a look about her, if you're not aware of it, she looks 13–14 year old. She's not there yet, you know what I'm saying. So yes it's difficult in that respect.

J: And for you? Has it changed your view of your sexuality –

C: More male than female, so what do you think, [unclear]

J: Would you say its brought about more of a feminine aspect?

S: I wouldn't say more of a feminine aspect, I would say more. I can't even remember what happened a week ago, two weeks ago. The Cammie that I first met, the Cammie that in this case, were two totally different people. She's [Cammie's] become a bit more softer. Not so – there's just black and white – she started to see a little grey in some areas and in others it's still black and white, that's it, there's no in between.

J: And what does the word "mother" mean to you? I'd like to know from each of you.

S: To me it would be loving that child, raising that child to be the best adult that he or she can be. To give them the means to cope with life. When you can no longer do it for them. I think that's the meaning of motherhood.

C: I think I find that a difficult question. I have never seen myself in a mother role, more from the perspective of being an authority father type of figure. Though Lilly views me as a second mother, but she knows that I'm not like a mother. Like her mother, let's put it that way. So I don't know, it's difficult for me to explain. It really is. I can't see myself in that role, really that much.

J: So when you speak about the mother's role, is it more like the, you know the stereotypical idea of what's a feminine mother should be like.

C: No. I believe that a mother is somebody who not only can run the house but also manage the children, manage the dogs. Is it in every aspect of it, that's my view of motherhood. But her view is that you've got to – You don't.

J: But in that sense you struggle with describing what the word mother means to you.

S: Yes.

J: Okay, I understand. Then just a bit more of a specific question, how important is it for both of you to have a male role model or maybe a father figure in your daughter's life. Is it important at all or not really?

S: I don't think it really makes, like I said to Cammie the other day, we were busy talking about something and I said to her like my step dad, they get home at night, and he will open the gate, and then he will go inside. And he won't even wait to see if my mother's in safely and it pisses me off. I expect Cammie to do that for me. So yes she is the male part of our relationship and I expect her to do things that she's there to protect us, yes, we must protect her as well but that is why she is there, to protect us. Love us, look after us.

J: So you don't necessarily think about exposing her to more other male influences?

C: She has a lot of male influences, if you take my sister's husband, she's got – [name omitted to preserve anonymity], she's got – [name omitted to preserve anonymity], – I don't actually believe [name omitted to preserve anonymity], is -

J: Are they your family members?

C: [Name omitted to preserve anonymity], is the step father. He's the grandfather. I mean, uhm..

S: My brother was staying with us for a while as well.

C: She understands the role of a male figure and in a lot of ways when she needs protection she will come to me, she knows that I, she sees me in that view as the protector. It's not as if she doesn't know about a male figure as well being there, so if there's nobody there and I am there, she views me in that light. So I don't know. I think she knows, a normal relationship of girl and boy, she's Justin Bieber crazy she knows that and she'd love to marry him, so she knows that, and she likes, compared to – [unclear] sexual relationships. I mean there's nothing wrong with us being in a relationship. It's just viewed as wrong by the world. I can explain it

or say it that way and she knows that. She's not shy or what's the other word, ashamed or – [unclear] she'll hold both our hands.

J: She is raised in that context, it's not something that's strange to her –

C: We know that she'll be, she is teased a lot at school but were not acting adversely, we're not very, don't do that, we're nicely involved. You know children are harsh, children are like that. But if you don't react to it they accept it and it then becomes part of the norm as well. It's no longer the exception, no longer something that you can use against them, against Lilly in this instance. That's how I view it. The less we make a fuss of her as well the easier it is for her to just – what are we talking about. You know one doesn't need to actually worry about explaining the relationship. It's not necessary – and she knows, if she needs mom to go and speak to the school she will go and tell mommy. If she needs me, she will tell mommy and mommy has to tell me. But you know, in a sense of going to [unclear] there's an issue, say for instance a boy is giving her hassles, she will tell mommy to tell me, I've got to go and deal with it – [unclear] you see so she knows, she's got her clear definition in her own mind, where it will be best -

J: Now that you are both parents and you mentioned earlier that you were thinking about maybe becoming parents again, what are some of the things that you would take into consideration now besides the fact that now your biological clock seems to be ticking. Or are there other factors that you would take into consideration now, that you couldn't take into consideration before having Lilly?

S: For me personally, from the point that especially we do it now, while I was pregnant that Lilly was involved a lot and Cammie be a lot more involved with Lilly, because she wants a baby brother or sister. Begging for it, nagging for it. So you'd love it. And I'm sure that Cammie would be involved in the pregnancy. Lilly more than Cammie [unclear – very loud background noise] we feel that Lilly – because she's been with you in the relationship perspective, giving Lilly more attention, feeling Mommy's tummy. Things like that. Getting her involved in those kinds of things.

J: And do you have any religious considerations or not really?

S: Look, I'm a Christian. I also believe that God is [unclear] I will give you an example, I was born out of wedlock or I was conceived out of wedlock many years ago, with a chip on my shoulder because of the stigmatisation. So one day in a church gathering the pastor said a

profound verse. It's very key to understand it. God chose parents. He [the child] did not choose his circumstances first, and secondly parents are illegitimate, because they walked outside of God, it's their lives. So by me being born in that situation, I was physically tiny – I didn't choose the circumstances.

J: So that's how you were –

C: Even with Lilly I was trying to instil that kind of value in Lilly to understand, when you were conceived it was with love. How it came about is not for you to worry about it. He knew that Lilly was going to be born. He knew that she [Sophia] was going to be a parent. The circumstances might not [matter], who knows. I'm now taking God's view of it. It might not be circumstances, and it would be the same if we had a child.

J: So a part of my study focuses on the social aspect of it and the people outside of your relationship, like for instance, religious or medical institutions and things like that. Have you ever had any experiences where they've commented on your parenthood, based on your sexuality or not really?

S: No, I think the only place that really commented on it was the school.

J: Even when you delivered the baby, that wasn't an issue.

S: I don't think so. I actually really don't think so. [unclear – very loud noise]. At that stage I didn't care.

C: There was no [perceptions from anyone].

J: So it doesn't seem like the outside world really impacts your view of yourselves which is [unclear]

S: At my work there are very few people that know that I'm in a gay relationship.

C: The organisation you're working for –

J: So you just keep your professional life and your personal life separate.

S: I keep it separate, they know about Lilly, and how she was conceived. They don't know why. It's a few people that know that.

C: I'm again very open about it. I don't give a damn who knows what. So my employer, I'm manager of [name omitted to preserve anonymity], they all know, even the staff members, I don't hide it away.

J: Is it a restaurant?

C: It's a restaurant ja, I don't hide it away. I don't believe in hiding it away for the simple reason, let people get their whatever, grievances, grudges, if they want to hide it afterwards hide it, that's fine, but sometimes they make jokes. I know these jokes, so really, you know it's - they have to live with it. I've actually got a saying, I sent it to you as well, don't judge me until you've walked a day in my shoes, then judge me.

J: Do you maybe have something else to add, in terms of decision-making and becoming parents?

C: Look it's not easy, it really isn't easy. We know, we had to go together, to get information, there would be consideration of age. That would be a determining factor.

J: Might I ask, you don't have to give me the exact age, it's just maybe for biographical background.

S: I'm 42.

C: And I'm turning 41, so in terms of having another child naturally. It's just a bit difficult, it's not insurmountable, you can do it, but if one had to look at the route of going for adoption, age does play a major part. At my age alone and then hers alone they would waiver.

J: And then maybe in terms of you, so you're going to, is that your plan to adopt Lilly once you get married?

S: Yes.

J: So I suppose if you want to adopt another child together you would have to be married in order to do that.

L!:   No you don't have to.

J: Okay so you can both be listed as the parents.

S: It's just it would be a little bit awkward. They don't really give you a new born baby. They will give you a child that's maybe seven years old, which I find problematic. You've got to now learn to bond with that child. I'll tell you why I say that. My mother, and my stepfather when I was about 13 / 14. They adopted a child who was 18 months at that time. She grew up and she became a monster in our house.

J: In what sense?

S: She - Her mother was a psychopath and father was into drugs and things like that, and she had inherited some of those psychopathic tendencies. So she caused a lot of problems in our household, the older she became. I think if we had adopted her at birth it would have been different, but she had that 18 months' influence from her parents, both the psychopath and the drugs. Into her system as well. So it does play a role, it really does. But growing up and having to be moulded into our family was difficult. So when I look at that, that's my version of what I'm saying. To have a child adopted from 18 months upwards I would find problematic coming from where we were. I don't know how it would be by the court of law, they might say, I just said your background doesn't influence it.

J: There are many factors, you can't really pinpoint any one thing, and different aspects of your identity are influenced by different things.

S: Another thing for me would be a major focus point would be financially. Because I mean Lilly's in a private school, it's bloody expensive, so to have another child and [unclear – very loud] and Cammie sometimes says I spoil her. The whole family says I spoil her. Maybe I do, but education wise I want her to have the best. So having another child, in the beginning it might be okay but when the child goes to school and later college, that's what we've got to consider.

J: It's a lot, I mean you guys seem like you're a very happy stable family unit, like any other family everyone has their issues, everyone has their cross to bear.

S: I think a major issue for me, and I don't think I've ever said this to Cammie, for me as Lilly's mother what makes it sometimes very difficult for me is, yes we are in a relationship but I sometimes thought, Cammie works long hours so I make decision because it's in the now. Cammie will get upset because I didn't discuss it with her. I see her side of it, but I think to me it's a case of I am her mother, it's happening now, I'll make the decision. Cammie gets upset, so yes, like with me telling Lilly I'm going to discuss it with Cammie first, but why, so I'm trying to now back down and say I need to discuss it with her, and I need to get myself onto another huge – because yes we've had major, major issues. Issues where for days we don't talk to one another. I can fight with Lilly but don't you dare fight with her, because – I get my back up straight away, which I shouldn't do, but I suppose it's just that mother instinct.

C: Why I say sometimes, because Lilly is the type of, mommy must give her an answer now, and it might go mommy might not want to do it, but because she's nagging, now saying to her, I have to ask Cammie – it gives you time to ponder it, it gives Lilly wait a minute, it's

not just mommy any more, she actually always says to her but Conker's going to say no – I don't always say no. I don't, but that's her psychological, that Conker's going to say no, so what does Mommy say, okay, because she's putting it in mommy's mind Conker might just say no or will say no – whereas if she says to Lilly I have to first discuss it, I don't have a problem its fine but at least she's discussing, she's including me in the process of bringing Lilly up. Being a parent with her. Not carrying the burden alone, because she can turn around and say but you also said this. Whereas now, I can just say but you made that choice. You made it – now she can turn and say you also said yes. So we both help together. But I would like us as a family together the two of us to be a unit, whenever Lilly comes with something, let us first discuss it because now if you just move back from the situation, and look at it first, then say okay, yes we can do or no, because why we are saying no, because Lilly is getting older and she's going to want to know the why. Like I said earlier, some of the things she doesn't need to know, but later we can say that's a pitfall there, that's a pitfall there, that's why we're not letting you go – yes maybe in a year or two's time that's the way – but that we do together, what mommy's saying yes, we get into fights, she doesn't see my logic, she doesn't see where I'm coming from. I was in the cops. I'm streetwise, I know what goes on in the world. I know what goes on. Okay, I don't walk around with blinkers so I look at these situations and Lilly who looks older than her age, because she's tall, she's very intelligent, she's highly intelligent, she can sit and have a conversation with you, that you would believe she's about 13 – 15 years of age. She's articulate. She will use words that will astound you in the right context of a sentence, but she's not streetwise. She's still very much a child. So in that way, that's how I want to protect her, and that's why I say let me first discuss it, don't just say yes and then afterwards the consequences, but, but. But then it's too late. What are we going to do? How do you address that but afterwards – you can't. Before that but gets there, address it first.

J: Something just occurred me to ask. When you first got together and decided you're both going to be her parents, did you negotiate the role each of you would play in her life beforehand or did it just kind of evolve?

C: It just evolved naturally really.

J: Okay, oh and then I wanted to know so what made you guys decide to participate in the study?

S: I don't know what made Cammie but she just showed me the Facebook message and I said to her that looks interesting, I'd like to take part, and she said that's why I showed it to you.

[End of recording]

Transcript of Interview 3

Transcript Keys:

- Interviewer: J – Janine
- Interviewee 1: L – Louise
- Interviewee 2: T: Tess

Note: Interview 3 was conducted in Afrikaans and was translated to English for analysis purposes.

[Start of recording]

J: Do you both identify as being lesbian?

L: Yes!

J: And you too? [Directed at Tess].

T: Ja.

L: Dead sure!

T: Yes, dead sure!

J: Because my study also includes bisexual women, I just want to know for clarification.

L: No! No! [To emphasise that she is not bisexual].

T: We have been in a lesbian relationship now for 15 years.

J: Wow, that is a long time. Can you tell me a bit about your family setup?

L: Let's start on my side because, so that you can understand where I come from. I grew up in a town in the Northern Cape that's smaller than an egg. And if you get to the chicken you'll miss the place. There, when we were kids ... Okay now let me first say that I am forty five (45). When I was 15 years old, and came out of the closet, and if you used the word lesbian or "moffie" or gay, it was worse than when someone says 'Satanism' today, and the church wrote you off, your family threw you out, you were placed under censure, something that does

not happen anymore today. And so I pickled through, with a guy here and there. "Jitte", but it did not work. I then went to stay at residence and when I come home, my mother finally found out. Then all hell broke loose, and she set an ultimatum, where either I marry, or she would tell my dad. Now my father and I were very "close" but he was a very sickly man. He had tuberculosis and he had heart problems. He was much older than me. My mother was 43 and my dad is 48 years older than me. So for him, to try to explain it to him would fail completely and she would ultimately have damaged his health. So the ultimatum was: I had to marry that year, or she would tell. And then I met the ex. He was 10 years older than me, or rather he is still 10 years older than me. And I thought to myself: "Uuuuhm, okay, maybe I'll be able to live with you", because he was already a grown man in the sense that I was 18 and he was 28. I never wanted to have children. It really wasn't my idea. But then he and I got married and I got asked whether there would be a baby. Eh! With a lot of effort... okay, I was never on contraceptive pills and so I became pregnant. My eldest daughter was born, don't regret it today, but when I fell pregnant I was sure I wanted to get rid [of the baby]. I did NOT want to have children! It just wasn't for me. And a while later she was born [referring to her second child], the eldest was 10 months and 28 days at the time. It was a big accident. And the third one was born almost three years later. Also by accident. None of my children were really there by choice, and if you want to know how many times sex was had in the marriage, you can count the number of children, to put it that way for you. It wasn't something that I was interested in. As far as things in the home were concerned, we were good friends, until it got to the bedroom door, then I couldn't handle him! Then in 1995, beginning '96, I decided: "You know, a person can only live with a lie for so long, and then you can't anymore." And the worst, I have no objections against any religion, but interpret it in the light I'm saying it in: There is no greater sin for me than lying to yourself. Because it makes you sick, it disrupts everything, it disrupts the world around you. And the day I decided I will no longer lie to myself, I'm going out on my own, everything fell apart. I struggled, probably for 9 years just to pick up those pieces. Which is what she helped me with. I was divorced that September. Was in a relationship with a girl at that stage who beat me to a pulp. We were together for a year. I already asked her [referring to Tess] to wait for me and she had a year's time to think about whether she wanted 3 daughters or not. And a year later, about 1996/97, December '97 she [referring to Tess] and I walked into our relationship.

J: I would like to know, why didn't you want to have children [initially]?

L: I'm going to ask you the following question: Will you choose to grow up in a world where you are so discarded, so humiliated and so pushed away, you know? And if you don't want to grow up there, how in the hell can you want to bring children into it? It is an immensely difficult decision and I don't think any couple makes such a decision just because we *want* to have children.

J: It's not a decision to take lightly.

L: The way you cope as a parent, your children have to cope three times as much, because it is friends that judge, it is friends' parents that judge them. It's the whole community that turns against those children. You as an adult can handle it. That's one reason why I didn't want children. The other reason is, I don't like children. Snot noses and diapers and stuff like that, it isn't me. When they're able to talk and you can give them two smacks, "shap"! And when they're able to understand. I can't... I'm a very impatient person. I don't have the energy or the patience to struggle with a baby. Ask her, I'm the most... when patience was handed out, mine was stolen, gone, there was nothing left for me. It was difficult for me. My children's first 3 years were like hell to me. From there on I was able to cope with it. But this nappy change and bottle... Oh no! No.

J: And you met them when they were much older? [Directed at Tess]

T: The eldest one was 8, and 7, and the youngest one was 3 going on 4. So yes, I met them when they were past the difficult stage, when they were in the toddler phase.

J: And what were some of the things that you considered before you decided to, except that you cared about her [referring to Louise], to enter into the relationship?

L: First tell her that you also didn't want...

T: I also didn't want children because I realised at a very young age, when I was 9 years old that I was completely different to the rest of my friends. Instead of looking at the boys along with the other girls, I looked at the girls along with the boys.

J: Oh, okay...

T: So I knew from a young age that I was different. Now my father was a rigid old "boer" that understood nothing. Everything had to happen according to his guidelines. My mother was a little bit more open because she's 15 years younger than my father. So our relationship was

a bit better. So when I went to her and said: "Listen mommy, I'm different. There will never be children, there will never be a boyfriend," all of that stuff, she didn't have a problem with it and she kept it quiet to herself. She never discussed it with my father.

L: We'll leave it at that. That's another piece of research.

T: Yes, it's a sad story, so we'll leave it there. So when my father passed away when I was 18 years old, I completely came out of the closet and started being myself. And that is when I finally decided, you know, I'm never going to have children of my own, because as it happened when my brother was born, he's 9 years younger than me, I physically raised him.

J: I see.

T: So I was 9 and suddenly I was thrown into the grown-up world and was told: "Listen here, now you're grown, now you have to raise someone." My mother was in the hospital for 6 months at that time and there was no one who could look after him. So that's where in my life I decided, I personally do not want children. And yes, then I met her. At that stage I didn't know that she had children, until we had our first visit. We worked together at the same place and that's where I got to know her, and then I found out, no, she has children. So I thought to myself: "Oh shit, they are young children and I already know, it's a very difficult thing." If it's your own children it's something completely different, but if it's someone else's, there's a lot to take into account. You have to win their trust. And remember, their mother just came out of a divorce, and out of another relationship where she was beaten to a pulp. Now all of a sudden you go into it. What are *you* going to do? So you are literally watched with a hawk-eye. Every move you make, everything you say.

L: And today still.

T: And it still happens today.

J: Did you sort of take on a mother-role? Do they consider you as part of the family in that regard?

T: Look, it took a long time. Like I told her, I don't want the children to feel forced into calling me "mamma". I told them, as small as they were: "Listen here, your mother and I are now together, I am going to look after her now." So I told them that they could call me aunty ("tannie"). And that is where it started, they started by calling me aunty ("tannie"). And that was two years, three years…

L: Three years.

T: Yes, three years, when the eldest one, who used to be the most sceptical of them all…

L: Ooh, she was.

T: That is when she started saying mommy ['mamma'] on her own. Then I became "mommy Tess" ['mamma Tess'], which is what they still call me. And then the other two decided, if you are going to call her mommy, then we'll call her mommy too. So yes, I didn't force them. I also didn't really take over the mother-role, I was more like a friend to them.

J: And do you see yourself as… do you see them as your children as well?

T: Yes, look, I will fight for them. If anyone treats them unjustly, I will fight for them.

<div align="center">[Break]</div>

L: When she and I came to the point of starting our relationship, I told her that she should understand one thing very clearly: If I have to choose between her and my children, "pack your bags now. I will never place you before my children." She had to make that choice…

T: With that choice I had to step into the relationship, like, I know that if I make her choose between myself and her children, then I should just pack my bags.

L: She had to know from the start that she takes second place.

T: I had to make my decision that day, whether this thing is going to work, where the children fit into our relationship, or am I going to distance myself and say: it doesn't matter how much I love you, let's call it a day".

L: But I have to say that we also experienced something hurtful. When we got a divorce, when my ex and I got a divorce, he knew that I was in a relationship with another woman, so his ego was "in sy moer in." He's one of those rigid Boer men, to put it that way, and you know, a woman does not leave… for another man it is still okay, but for another WOMAN! When we started with the divorce proceedings, he took the kids away from me and said: "You are a lesbian and you cannot look after the kids." Because in 1996, the law to protect me was not yet in place. So here I am, I can't do a thing, I can't fight because there is no law to protect me, and the family advocate says: "She's gay, how is she going to look after the children?" Because everyone believed at that stage that gays just fuck around. To put it crassly. We're on

drugs, we're drunkards and we "spyker" [a crude Afrikaans slang term referring to sleeping around]; all the things that are wrong [speaking about people's perceptions]. Nobody ever realised, but listen here, we are ordinary people with the same hurt and heartache and fears and all of those things [as other people]. Everyone just saw the party things [the perception that gay and lesbian people just partied].

J: Yes, even from a psychological point of view it used to be seen as a disorder, but luckily not anymore.

L: Yes, you don't understand. I had to go see psychologists just so that I could go see my children for a weekend. I had to, before the divorce was finalised, go see psychologists to prove that there was mentally nothing wrong with me. And the worst of all is, after the divorce, I tried to commit suicide. Because the whole family, everyone pressured me, because I "have to let go of my nonsense."

J: Yes, as though you can change yourself.

L: Yes, I lied for nine years about who I am, and it didn't work. You don't want to know about all the drama I had to go through. I took pills, not because I didn't want to live anymore. I just wanted to escape. I just wanted to say "listen to me." It is true what they say, many suicides are a cry for help, not because you really want to end your life. It was a cry for help: "Listen to me! Listen to me!" Yes, that was the February that it happened, the suicide [attempt]. And she and I [referring to Tess], we were first just friends and when we got to a point where we started talking about a relationship, I told her: "You have to understand very clearly, if I have to choose, I would choose my children, point one. Point two, you will at all times treat my children as though they are made of gold. You will not attack them, you will not badmouth their father, you will do nothing negative [towards them]. So she [Tess] did not have the right to scold them unless it was a matter of life or death, or if I wasn't there. She [Tess] probably made one of the toughest, most difficult decisions, to enter into a relationship where there were children involved. I think it must have been hell for her.

T: The choice was more deliberate for me. I had to physically go and sit down and think to myself: "Listen, here, am I going to stand for this, will I be able to do it?" Yes, look, I made the decision and said: "Okay, let us give it a chance." And it wasn't easy. I made the choice at that point, of, I won't say: "Now you have to listen to me!" I went in as a friend to support

them, and I decided that I would rather be their friend, and if they had problems, they could systematically see that they can talk to me.

J: So the part where you said to her that you are the one who takes care of the kids' problems and your kids come first, was that a way that you sort of worked out the parenting roles? For instance, that you will be responsible for that type of thing...?

L: No, not at that stage, that was not the goal with the conversation. The goal of the conversation at that stage was to say "Back off, those are my children." I was a very overprotective mother. In that moment it had nothing to do with our roles. You have to understand really well. My daughters are, to this day… It doesn't matter whether we get along or not, we have our hiccups and growing pains and I am a very difficult mother - I don't take any nonsense, but my kids are my everything. And I felt, If she can make it through this tag along session while the kids are present, good! If she doesn't make it, then it was never meant to be. I loved her from the beginning, but I was extremely cold. Especially when it came to my children and their circumstances, I would have written her off just like that, thrown her away like that, because they are all that mattered to me.

L: I think it was about three years before the kids started calling her "mamma Tess", and that is when I started including her more. For instance, I went to the kids' school plays without her, I just didn't take her. Although I really would have wanted to do it in those instances, I didn't feel like it was her place.

J: Until they…

L: Until they started doing it [calling her "mamma Tess"], then I started to from my side, if they wanted something, to tell them to go and ask her [Tess]. Then I started shifting the role.

J: And did you ever have a deliberate conversation about which role will be played by whom, or was it something that just occurred naturally?

L: It happened naturally, yes.

T: Between the both of us, it basically occurred automatically. She is the biological mother, so she has the…

L: …Authority

T: Authority [said in agreement with Louise]. Although I will play the supportive role, if the right is passed to me [the right to exercise authority over the children], then I will take over the authority-role and she will take over the support-role.

[Some information omitted from transcription at the request of the participant]

J: Coming from, where neither of you ever really wanted to become parents, but it happened, I want to know from you both, what does the word "mother" mean to each of you? What connotations are linked to the word?

T: It's actually difficult, because I am not a person that really talks about stuff like that [Laughs].

J: Any way you feel comfortable to talk about it is fine.

T: For me, motherhood… there are three girls that were brought into this world that I had a hand in raising and to show them what life expects of them and what they have to give in life. So it's the way I feel about being a mother from my side, that I mean something to those three girls. And me being a mother, where they can come to me with any problem and talk to me about it. I believe it will happen far into the future, until the day that I start walking with my cane. Like now, the middle daughter moved back, instead of going back to her father in Kimberley, she decided that she will come back to us. So it makes it, how shall I say it, it's a revelation, because I have meant something in her life, for her to do it [for her to move back].

L: Although she is the one who did not grow up with us. The other two lived with me for about five years. So she didn't live with us at all, so she didn't know my household. She didn't know anything about my household.

T: For the times she visited us during holidays.

J: And then for you [referring to Louise]? The connotations related to it [to motherhood]?

L: You first have to understand where I'm coming from. I didn't grow up with my own mother, my own mother died. The mother that raised me was my grandmother and she was distant and criticised me about everything. Whether I got nine out of ten for my test, it was bad.

And if I boiled the egg too soft for how she had wanted it that was also bad. So nothing I ever did was ever right, so I had no self-image or self-confidence. When my children came along, and then the second and the third, my view was, I want to provide to my children, or I want to encourage them to be everything they can be, because that is something that I never had. And I think I accomplished that, I don't think I fared too badly with that because I have always helped them. And my youngest daughter, what did she do? Hip-hop? I don't understand a thing about it. I myself did modern dancing, but the way of hip-hop was not for me. But I said… [makes kissing noises]. I stood next to the hockey field and cheered them on. Something my mother never did for me. So, if it's about motherhood, it was about supporting them, even when I didn't believe in them, even when I thought what they drew or what they had done was the biggest nonsense, I said: "Wow, I like it." And I did it with so much emotion that they felt it was right, or rather, how I tried to portray was: "You know I sincerely think what you are doing is good, you are good, everything is good." So it is my hope that I am better than where I have come from. That I was more involved. Maybe even too much, according to them, yes. But to me, motherhood means that you are there for them at all times. You have to be on the rugby field, or on the netball field, or on the hockey field. No matter how badly their test marks are, you have to understand why they look bad and try to motivate them to try harder instead of just fighting about it. And yes, I'm only human, I reached a point where I was like: "I am tired of motivating you, you are not doing anything." And I had a fight. And it ended up in a mess so she went back [to her father]. So you as a mother have to understand that, just as you are a person that makes mistakes, they will make mistakes that will not be as easily acceptable by you as a mother. It's because you have these kids on a pedestal. And if they make mistakes, ooh! [Indicating that it is difficult to accept.]

L: I as a mother, have done what I could. So I believe, what motherhood thus means to me is, to do what I could for my children. If there is one thing that does not come with a manual, it is children.

J: And parenthood [jokingly added]…

L: I always joke and say: "You can get a manual for everything in the world, but the most important thing there should be a manual for, is for the person being born." There is no such thing.

J: Did the role of being a mother have an impact on your identity as lesbian women? And your sexuality? The ways in which you might view yourselves?

L: I don't think it really had any impact, for the reason that I am a very outspoken person and I have the attitude of, you know what, I am a lesbian mother, and that is that, take it or leave it. I wouldn't say that it really had an impact otherwise. Work went on as usual. People were, the straight people tried to make a bigger issue out of it [being a lesbian parent] than I did.

J: I understand

L: Everyone asked: "How do you do it?" "How do *you* [plural] do it?" You know, that effect. "Oh, you are gay, now how do you do it? [raise children]" In the same way you do it. There's no impact in that it changed anything for me personally.

[Louise leaves the table to use the facilities]

T: I played more of a masculine role in the relationship, so when it came to the point of being a mother, the children saw me as more of a father figure and also all of a sudden as a mother figure, so it became confusing for me at times. It was a question of, what do they want me to do now, should I answer as a father would or should I answer as a mother would? So it was difficult for me at a stage to play two roles, so I had to choose one.

J: And did you eventually find the middle ground?

T: Let me put it this way, I acted on feeling, on instinct, about the way I should handle a situation. If they came to me with an emotional problem, I normally took on the mother role and then handled the problem accordingly. Or when they had assignments where they come to me for help, I chose to be more of a father figure where we built things and broke things and all of those things [smiles].

J: So when you talk about a father figure, do you mean the stereotypical view one has of a father?

T: Yes, someone that is more stereotypically seen in a masculine role, like swinging a hammer and stuff like that. Things that are manlier.

J: And the mother figure?

L: More emotional, shows the emotional side and has to be gentler and be able to give advice. Although you can often also find an emotional side to a father figure, but who is a bit more firm. Mom is usually the gentler one and always tries to comfort and so on, where the

father figure is more responsible for the authority side of things. Exactly, and in our household it is not a question of clear-cut gender roles where she does the more manly tasks and this one does the more womanly tasks.

J: Because it isn't as clear cut to begin with.

T: Exactly, I am still a woman. That's how I see it, I don't want to be a man, and otherwise I would have gone for a sex-change a long time ago. I am a woman, and tonight when I go to bed, it will be with another woman. That is the only real difference in our relationship.

[Louise joins the interview again]

T: It's something that I also struggle with at this point in the context of my work, because I am a woman who works in a trade, so I can build things just as well as any man, but if you give advice as a woman, you are disregarded because you are a woman and you don't know what you're talking about. And from a lesbian relationship point of view where kids are involved, it is the same type of thing.

L: Yes, we apparently don't know anything. It has even been said to us in so many words, that we are lesbians, we don't know how to raise children.

T: You don't know how to raise children.

J: Who said this to you?

L: Family.

T: Family.

L: And people who found out.

T: People would just walk past us in a restaurant and ask "What are you doing with children?"

L: And that's what I'm saying. Why would you choose a life where you have to go through things like that?

T: I just want to add that at a stage, a few years ago, we thought about having a child of our own.

L: I was not one for being broody, but at one stage we started speaking about having a child of our own. And today I say thank goodness we didn't.

J: What were some of the things you took into consideration?

T: I wanted a little one that was blood related and it took nearly three years where we weighed the idea up and researched the different options of invitro fertilisation and where they split the egg up and combine our DNA.

L: And at that stage we had a problem because I no longer had a uterus, but I was the one with the ovaries. So the question of how fertile I would be arose. Then we decided that it would be her to carry the child and that we would just get a sperm donor and leave me out of the picture. And then we said, whoa, stop, no. For me it was about, what is we get a sperm donor, what will he want out of it? You hear so many stories of sperm donors who lay claim to the child afterwards.

J: And what about donors who remain anonymous?

L: I think it was a conversation about, what about the future and the fact that we realised that she was in her deep thirties, and to decide to bring a child into our relationship at that stage won't work because she had cancer and I landed in hospital with a liver problem and we decided that we would not be able to handle a baby.

T: We reached a point where we were concerned about, will we live long enough, because I didn't know whether my cancer was fully healed or whether she would keep her liver. Will we live long enough for the child to grow up with us? We didn't want for another child to grow up with someone else and we decided to stop trying and if it was meant to be that it would be. And then we realised that I can't have a child because there would be complications if I gave birth to my own child.

J: And did you ever consider surrogate mother?

L: No, it had to be our own child and it would have had to be her. I don't have a uterus and you need one.

T: And it is a case of, the bond between mother and child is better when the child is your own and you carried them, than when a child is adopted or was carried by a surrogate. Even when their little cells are yours, it's then almost as though they aren't your own.

L: A surrogate mother wouldn't have worked for me. You can't cut yourself off from the little person growing inside of you. The psychological bond takes time, that's a fact. To build that bond with a child you have adopted and somewhere this child tells you that you aren't his mother, that's something I wouldn't want to hear.

J: I just want to find out a bit more about, when you said you were considering a sperm donor, who would you have used?

L: In the beginning we went through all our friends to try and find out who would be interested.

T: All the single men in our circle of friends

L: And as we made the list, we shot it down.

T: Like, the guy has a bad temper and so on. And we also lost some people in our circle of friends, where we both eliminated friends and potential sperm donors from the list.

L: And when we got to the end of the list we realised that none of the people on it were good enough. The one has a sweating problem, the other has a bad temper, and that guy would become possessive over the child…

T: So we eliminated people based on the emotional side of the person and their physical health.

L: It's nice to go have a drink with some of these guys, but we considered our emotional bond with the person, whether we could talk to them about things that we cannot talk to others about, and then we looked at anonymous options. Someone may sound nice on paper, but how do you know that it matches reality? The person could be a psychopath.

[Some information omitted at the request of the participants]

J: How important is it to you to have a male figure in your children's lives.

L: It wasn't important to me, because I wanted to shoot their father many times before [said in a joking manner].

J: Was it because you did not get along or…?

L: Because he is egotistical and in that regard I felt that they didn't need a man in their lives because by that measure, all men are egotists. In my opinion, 90% of all the men I know are that way. If you boost them and pamper them you can get anything out of them, but give them a cold shoulder and they become the biggest pigs you can imagine. And my children don't need that in their lives. If I could have had children without having their father involved during that time, I would have had less trouble and less drama.

J: You have already mentioned a couple of things, but I would like to know about specific examples regarding people outside of the family – their reactions upon learning that you were a lesbian couple and that there were also children involved. What were some of the reactions?

L: In some instances, we had really bad comments. People who would ask us, being lesbian, what we knew about raising children. That we had not place being around children. But our close friends – those that are still pals with us today – are the people who said: "Be strong. Let us know if we can help. When can we look after the children for you? "That type. So the... Let us put it this way – the queer friends that we had were the ones who stood by us. They helped carry the dramas. We could go and cry. When the children weren't with us we would drive there and unburden ourselves of the crap and drama, six bottles of wine...

T: Or they would just come and fetch us.

L: After six bottles of wine everyone feels better. So they were kind of our psychologists.

J: Your support network?

L: Yes, our support network. We had a couple of straight friends who did the same - who were there for us at one stage. But as I said, the people who had the worst to say were those who had no idea about the setup of our relationship, the setup of our family and why things were the way they were.

T: That is the biggest thing that most people don't understand – that no matter whether a child grows up in a lesbian or gay relationship, their orientation is their orientation. As a parent, you cannot decide for him as to whether he will be straight or gay or bi-sexual or whatever (because nowadays there are so many orientations).

J: And then, is there anything else that you would like to add in terms of, specifically aimed, at the decision to become a parent in the context of a lesbian relationship?

L: Do you know? From my side I can say that it just happened. It wasn't really a conscious decision. Yes, I did think that perhaps it would be a good thing to have children. The man wanted children, but before I could decide – a yes or a no – it was there. If I could have my life over, I would still love to have children, but without there having to be a physical male role model.   I wouldn't want to have to go through the divorce thing again. What I mean by saying that is that I wouldn't want to wish my children away. Do you understand? If I knew then what I know now, when I was a young girl, I would tell you straightforwardly: "Do you know what? If you want to have children in a gay relationship, you need to go and think very carefully about what you are doing. It is not a fashion statement. It really isn't. And often, if you listen to other people's considerations and comments, they do think that it's a fashion statement. I may be wrong, but I am speaking from the point of view that...

J: What type of things do they say to make you think that way?

L: "It's a nice to have. It's nice to have children. It's nice. Oh, I'm going to dress him up so nicely." Do you know what? That's not what it's all about. Have you taken a look at the deeper things?   It's very easy to say: "It's nice to dress a child up and oh, I'll give him or her this and that…"

T: That is the material side. There is an emotional side to each child.

L: People must… If you go ahead and you must convey a message, we would appreciate it if you could say: "Think properly. It's fine – you can have children. No problem. We don't deny you that. We are not saying yes or no, but just consider it carefully because it is not a fashion statement." If you make that decision, it's a path that you're going to take until that child is dead, because your responsibility doesn't end the day when you as the parent are dead, because people will always refer to "your mother" or "your father". You will always be connected to what is taking place in that child's life. Whether you are alive or dead is besides the question. So, the day that that child lays down his head, only then does your involvement and responsibility end. That is unfortunately just the way it is. So if you don't see your way clear to bearing the responsibility of it and if you don't see your way to clear to changing your whole lifestyle… because your lifestyle will change. It's not a case of: "Oh, that's nice. Let's adopt a child." That's not what it's all about. Yes, it's nice. Give that child a home, but are you ready? Are you grown up enough to be able to take that step? And for the likes of us who, such as in my case where I didn't really have a choice… I married this man. Okay, I had a duty and I performed my duty, but oops, now the responsibility comes with the duty. So if I

really could choose, I would never even have gotten married, not even to mention having had children. Given my life over, I would also never put my partner in the same position that I placed her. Do you understand? At the time, it was her decision, but I would never make such a decision again. I wouldn't even become involved in a relationship where I would have to subject another person to the responsibility of having children if they don't indicate of their own accord… Or put it this way – she shouldn't have said: "You've given me a choice. I'm not choosing." There shouldn't have been a choice. Do you understand what I'm trying to say? I will never do that to someone again. It think it was unfair of me to do that to her. And I think she knows it too, but I must admit that she is coping well. After about sixteen or seventeen years, we are still together. So, yes…

J: And from your perspective, given what she has just now said, do you have anything to add?

T: Look, I could have chosen and have said that I didn't see my way clear to taking it on and that I'm not even going to give it a go. "Do you know what? Take your little children and off you go." Raising children is hell. I won't argue about that. It's a constant emotional battle and I made the choice that I saw my way clear to taking it on. I was very young. I was still actually only a child.

L: Which actually counted in her favour.

T: So I actually grew up with them and they reached adulthood with me. So we actually complemented each other at that point. I would never… Let's put it this way – I wouldn't want to change anything. Yes.

L: I would also not really want to change anything. I just wouldn't make the same choices in terms of placing her in the position in which I placed her. I think it was unfair of me but looking back today, I would keep our relationship just the way it is at the moment. There is no way that I would do anything differently.

J: Do I understand it correctly, when I say that it is more of a wish that things had been different in that time period, so that you wouldn't have felt that it was necessary to marry a man?

L: Yes. Absolutely.

T: Just to add, it has made the children more open-minded because they have grown up in both households.

L: In both worlds.

T: On both sides. And they are more informed that most other teenagers in their age groups. So they can… as has often been the case with the eldest girl, when she, was able to tell the others in her class – her confirmation class - exactly what happens in a gay relationship – that's it's exactly the same as what happens at her dad's place. "It is just that I have two mothers who live in the same house

J: So she has now been adopted by the church?

T: Yes, the confirmation through the church. Sorry.

J: Just for clarification purposes.

T: That's right. So she was busy with her confirmation classes for the church where she told them… because one of their lessons was regarding gays…

L: And the minister blatantly and directly told them that it was sinful. And then she said: "Come to my mother's home and then tell me what is sinful." And that's the other thing. It is so much easier to throw stones. If you want to say that it's sinful to raise children in this relationship or to be gay, then I just want to tell you one thing – I invite many people to have a look at many gay couples. We live a much more chaste life than many straight couples do. This is not meant to be derogatory, but on a Sunday afternoon I can take you to specific spots around Pretoria where aunties and uncles who sit in the very front pews of church and throw the hardest stones, load up the street-hookers and young men. And then I ask: "How do you raise your children – you who want to throw stones at me – what does your child see this afternoon?"

T: What are you doing?

L: What are you doing this afternoon? At least we… and I don't say we don't do it, but go and have a look…

J: There isn't a person without faults.

L: There you are.

J: And then, what gives any person the right to judge others?

L: One day when I was in the air force…   Actually, I must say when I ultimately and completely came out of the closet, and it was a very nice unit where I was working….   And one guy one day asked me: "Now explain to me…" I told him: "Sit still and let me ask you the following question. You and your wife discuss food – what you will be eating tonight…" "Yes", he says. I tell him: "You know, my wife and I do as well." And then I say: "Then the children come home and you talk about the children's homework and the sport and so on?" "Yes", he says. "Do you know what? My wife and I do too." I ask him: "Do the two of you go to church together?" "Yes." "Now you know – my wife and I do too." "Do you go to movies? Do you argue about finances? " "Yes." I say: "Oh my gosh! The only difference is that tonight two vaginas are going to bed together. At your place it is a penis and a vagina that are going to bed. Do you understand it now?" That was the end of that discussion and no one in that unit ever asked me the question again. People presume that because you are gay and that you have children in the relationship, that they can hurt you with questions. Until you start showing them that with the questions they are asking you, how many fingers are pointing back their way?

J: Yes, it's that their questions were maybe a little more ignorant than what they presumed.

T: Just to give an example. The children went to high school in Pretoria North at Gerrit Maritz and there are many gay children in that school. At one of the functions, they spoke about the gay concept and lesbians and so on. Afterwards there was a class debate regarding the matter, and one of the teachers made the comment that all gays go to hell.

L: I almost had to go and fetch my child from a psychiatric institution.

T: And then she immediately picked up her phone and said: "Mom, are you really going to hell?"

L: My child was in a terrible state.

T: We didn't understand what it was all about but when we investigated the concept further, we came to the realisation that this teacher is completely adverse to being gay or anything else that is abnormal to her upbringing. I would also like to find out how the fact resonates with her that teachers in schools are often the cause of misconceptions in children

about being gay. And many of those children who are gay remained completely silent because they don't want the teachers picking on them.

L: Look, if you really believe that the laws that were passed in 1997 to 1998 to really protect gays and lesbians, have come into play, then I would like to tell you to open your eyes. There is still so much discrimination – even to this day. You don't even want to know about it. And especially against vulnerable young teenagers who have just, in this world… I mean, we were all teenagers when we realised: "Oh, I am different." And it is during this time that one experiments and it is much worse. The discrimination today is much worse because it is more in the open. In my years it was very much "closet case" and there wasn't really any discrimination. You just couldn't… You actually did it behind closed doors. Today the teenagers are more open about it, but the discrimination is a lot worse. Whereas I thought that we were so much more educated and we are supposed to have less discrimination, I just want to tell you one thing – the discrimination is a thousand times worse than what it was. It is terrible to see what young children in the gay world are going through today, compared to what we had to endure. We didn't have the rejection from teachers or the churches who throw stones at us, as is the case nowadays. In those days no one spoke about it. It's easier to live with something when no one discusses it, but blatant words just hurt that much more I had to go and fetch my child from school and almost attacked a teacher because, as I mentioned, again I am very protective over my children and who gives anyone the right to tell my child that she is going to hell? Or I could just as well tell you that your parents are going to hell because they're straight. Who says there is room for straight people in heaven? Do you understand? How would you feel if I did that? Would it be nice for your parents to hear something like that? It's the same principle.

J: I think it is especially so because children are still vulnerable and they are still discovering themselves and are still finding out what is right and what is wrong, and then…

L: And then along comes a teacher telling them these things. And a teacher has a great influence over the way a child thinks. That is a learned person and an icon standing there. They know everything. Teachers know everything. And then they do something like that.

T: Nowadays that concept no longer exists.

L: When I think of the heartache that I experienced through my child for almost a year. She completely pushed me aside because I was going to go to hell. At that stage, the concept

at home was that external factors could sometimes be a lot more harmful than the couple of mishaps you carried out as a mother, and then the things that you did as a parent were sometimes pulled entirely out of proportion because now you are wrong. Now the whole world is against you because you are a lesbian.

J: So in retrospect, would you say that that is one of the things one should think about when deciding to have children?

L: Yes.

J: I then just want to officially conclude this interview on record and then we can continue chatting.

T: That's right.

L: I hope you at least have some information.

J: Definitely.

T: Let me know if you have any questions.

[End of recording]

Transcript of Interview 4

Transcript Keys:

- Interviewer: J - Janine
- Interviewee 1: C: Caroline
- Interviewee 2: H: Heleen

Note: Interview 4 was conducted in Afrikaans and was translated to English for analysis purposes.

[Start of recording]

J: I just want to make sure that you know what this study is about and if you have any questions, then we can clarify everything now.

H: Do we have questions?

J: Do you have questions?

H: No.

J: Good. Well then we can start. I just want to know, for the parameters of my study, whether you both identify as lesbian women.

C: I am very gay.

J: And you too?

C: Yes.

J: Because I also wanted to do my study including bisexual women, so that's the only reason I'm asking. And now, can you can tell me a little about your family setup?

H: What do you mean? What do you want to know?

J: Tell me a little about your family. How did you decide to become parents?

C: It was a massive process. So, we know each other – we've already been together for eleven years. And all my life I've wanted to have children. I don't think Heleen necessarily

wanted to have children. I think the thing for Heleen was more of a moral issue. I don't really know. You must say…

H: Yes, more the social aspects or [inaudible], strange questions, the children will tease him and whatever. But nowadays, in this age, everyone is teased. That's all.

C: It is so acceptable.

H: Yes, it became more realistic for me. So it's not…

C: I also think so because about four years ago I asked Heleen to… I asked Heleen twice to marry me. The first time she said no. And then a couple of years ago we started discussing whether we wanted to have children or not. That little girl on that photograph is our goddaughter. She's my niece and her husband's child. And I think she has changed many things for us because I think we realised that all a child really needs is love and the rest will follow. And at that stage her mother… because she was a nursery school teacher and she actually had two gay women who had a child – a little girl – in her class. And she one day told us that in the first two weeks it was quite strange to the other parents, but then it just becomes another family. So it actually doesn't really matter. And when they had her and we became her godparents, it opened worlds for us. I then realised that I really wanted to have children. I had always wanted to have children, but she changed many things for me and I think she changed many things for you.

H: Yes…

J: What kind of things?

C: I just thought whether we would be alone for sixty years. I mean, if we get old, who will look after us? That effect. And I don't think one wants to. We have already been together for eleven years. Our lives, you know, only included one another and I think one needs to have another dimension – another dimension which you can give love to. And I had always told Heleen that for me it's about… I had always wanted children because I think that's the way God shows His love and I think that it's the only way one can really experience that – when you have children to whom you can show all that love. So it was kind of a big thing for me - the decision to do it, and I [inaudible]…

J: And can you tell me a little about how you went to work to get the process moving to adopt the baby?

C: In the beginning, we actually went to see a psychologist just to make sure that our relationship was alright and that we could… How would one put it? And just to discuss things in general. We did that. It was one of the first things that we did. And when we finally decided that we wanted to have children we thought we should probably get hold of a gynae because we knew there were sperm banks because my father and them are friends with the guy who owns the sperm bank in Johannesburg. So we knew about that. And then we thought: "Okay. Now we should probably get hold of a gynae", and then we went to Medfem. Did we go to Medfem first?

H: Yes.

C: But that doctor specialised in people with problems, so they assist people who can't fall pregnant. There's nothing wrong with our ovaries. We can procreate – we just don't have a man. So then I actually tried to get pregnant through them [the first specialist they consulted]. It was insanely expensive. You can understand that they are specialists. They help people who are struggling. But then I didn't fall pregnant and we started thinking… Why did we seek a second opinion? Were we looking for someone closer or cheaper?

H: Yes, they told us that in Pretoria there was also Kloof…

C: …Kloof Hospital.

H: We could go to them to find out, and then we went to them to find out about options and so on.

C: Yes, it is a little closer and cheaper and so on. But then they actually told us there that the doctor was not prepared to help us because he thought that what we were doing was wrong. And then they gave us the name of another doctor and we went to see him. But in the meantime, one day Heleen and I were playing and swimming in the swimming pool and she told me that I had a lot of work stress and that it was expensive to do inseminations and so we thought that if we were to try three or four times, that there would be financial implications. And then Heleen said that she would try… she would try to fall pregnant. And so we decided on that

day. It is difficult to fall pregnant when you have so much stress. And then we went to see the Kloof guy and he examined Heleen and so on. Do you want to hear the whole story?

J: Yes please.

C: Alright. And then the guy told Heleen that she has lesions and he would have to operate and that they were present in her womb. Heleen was adamant that she wanted to give birth naturally and if they were to cut her womb, she wouldn't be able to give birth naturally. And then a friend who was staying with us told us… not the one that lives across the road, but another one who lives here. She was also pregnant at one stage. Her husband was away, overseas or something, and then Heleen took her to see her gynaecologist. And that's when Heleen met [name omitted to preserve anonymity] and Heleen liked her a lot. And then she said: "Man, just come in with me." When she was sitting inside, [name omitted to preserve anonymity] told her that she was pro-natural birth and that she didn't even do Caesareans. So if a Caesarean is necessary, she refers you to someone else – if someone really needs to have a Caesarean. And when Heleen walked out of there... Look, she has always been pro-natural birth, but then she was even more convinced. But then Heleen told me that this guy said that we would have to undergo surgery. The thing was booked for the twenty-fifth of July last year – the operation – because he said that she wouldn't fall pregnant if the things were not removed. And then she said no, she didn't want to have the surgery. It doesn't feel right in her heart. We are first going to see this woman. And that's when we went to see [name omitted to preserve anonymity]. And then [name omitted to preserve anonymity] said that ninety-five percent of women had it and that it wouldn't cause you not to fall pregnant, so why don't we try?

H: So we didn't go to the clinic. The clinic is more for people who are really struggling.

C: And then we actually thought about it. Yes, it is so. And then she said that she would do it for us. Yes, and then they monitored Heleen a bit – she is also a homeopath. And yes, then we went to buy sperm and when Heleen was ready, the third time… then he was made in September last year – the little man [their son].

J: And how did you decide on which sperm to use?

H: Yes, that thing…

C: You get a list. I'm not sure whether you know what those lists look like. Do you want to know about it?

J: Yes please.

C: So the sperm banks have… It's completely anonymous in South Africa. We are not allowed to know who the parents are – the father. He will also never know. You can bring sperm in from overseas where it actually isn't anonymous, so that when the child turns eighteen he can go and find out who is father is if he wants to. But it's ridiculously expensive and we also didn't know about it. But do you really want to allow a third party into your marriage? And we don't want that. You must say if you want us to…

J: So which aspects of a third party weren't a pleasant consideration for you?

C: If he were to find out who his father is… oh, I don't know.

H: I think where it comes more into play is the European or American places where… or if you choose a donor who you know, such as a friend or a…

C: We also considered that.

H: And when he starts going to school, then he would want to have an input as to what he would rather have. He would rather choose that school or that school, or you know, that type...

J: So, would you rather have a complete say in your child's life than having it go to someone else?

H: And it can also become confusing.

C: It would be confusing for him as well, understand, because I think a big thing for me is that it is the reason we got married two years ago. We want a unity for him. It mustn't be a loose type of family. So we were like a married couple before we got married, because we had all the contracts and so on, but we didn't have the marriage certificate, and we got married because we knew we wanted him. Because it's a unit and one doesn't want to… It is a binding thing where you don't necessarily want to allow other people. Not into your small group, and if he knew his father… We actually thought about asking our friend Hennie, but Hennie would have wanted to be involved and that would make it complicated for him.

J: And now, shifting focus a little – what do you understand around the word "mother"? The question is directed at both of you – what does it mean for you to be a mother?

H: I think that there is one big word and that is care. I stumbled across a study… a post on Facebook that was placed by Genesis Clinic, which we belonged to. And it was about the fact that a child will cry if he feels that he has a need and it is just that way – he will cry to fulfil that need. And it really is just about all that you watch out for during the first couple of years – to fulfil that need, to care. Food and health – for me that's what I feel at the moment.

C: For me, when I think about being a mother, then I believe that there are always two paths that one can choose. The one is to raise your child and the other is to educate your child. And to raise a child you need to ensure that they have a roof over their head, that they are sorted out financially, but to really educate a child and to teach him to be a good person in the community, for me a lot of effort needs to go into it and you need to sacrifice a part of yourself so that you can give it to him. And I think to teach him… To raise a child is easy – you give them food and off they go – but to fulfil the emotional needs and to really teach them – just to teach them about values and emotional things and about humankind and about the environment in which we live – that everything is connected and that you cannot just rely on yourself, but that you need to rely on other people. So to me a big thing about being a mother is the physical needs and so on, there is also a teaching side to it.

 J: And did you discuss, before the time, what you thought each of your roles would be in the child's life or is it something that just evolves with time

C: I don't think a person really knows what to expect when you are going to have a baby because you are so stupid and this is our first child, so you don't really know.

H: I think our roles will still change. I think maybe when he starts going to school or something that it may change.

C: And I suspect that I will not be able to mete out much discipline. I think that will be Heleen's role.

J: How come?

C: I'm a softie. Yes, but I think that one of my roles is to play and to teach. I don't know. At the moment, we don't really need to think much about it.

J: And were there other factors that you also had to take into consideration before deciding to become parents, except for…

C: Such as our family?

J: Such as your family, the environment and religion, and I would like you to expand on that.

H: Family was quite... Her family were very relaxed and happy [about their decision to have a child]. My family needed a little time to process it.

C: First we got married and now we want children. Damn it!

H: Today they are crazy about him and...

C: Her mother would be here every weekend if she could.

H: I think it was just strange. For my mother it was more a case of: "What if someone asks?" What would she say? But I think she is over it now.

C: I don't think it's easy for parents to have gay children. I think that when I came out of the closet I was still very young and I always knew that I was gay – already from grade two onwards – so I didn't… My mom and them just happened to ask me when I was about 18 or 21 – somewhere around there – and I said yes. They cried terribly and I didn't understand it because they were the ones who asked. But my mom and them had a very long time to make peace with it and my mom and them are actually very religious people but they left the church because the church banned it [being gay] and said that we were to lead celibate lives. And my mom and them don't believe in that – they can see that we love each other dearly. They don't agree with what the church – the religious instances – have to say about the matter. So I think for my mom and them it was a lot easier because they are really… they accept us for what we are and they accept Heleen. Heleen is like a daughter in their home. I think for Heleen's mom them – even though we have been together for eleven years – were… My family talk about everything – everything is open and we discuss it. Your family doesn't necessarily talk that much.

H: No.

C: So I don't think they ever spoke about it. So I don't think that they have necessarily processed it like my mom them have. And that was an issue. When we said we wanted to get married, it was sort of making it very official. And when we wanted to have children her mother was quite opposed to it. Her father is a real "boerseun" so he doesn't talk about anything. To this day I really don't know how he feels about it.

H: Yes, he hasn't said much.

C: No. But Heleen also went to them and said: "I'm gay and I love Caroline and we are getting married and it is what it is.", and there was no problem with that. But her father didn't say much.

H: Yes.

C: Her mother had to dwell on it a little [the idea of them getting married]. I think our families… we are very close to our families. If you take a walk down here, you will see the many photographs of our family. We are very close to my parents. We are very close to her parents and her aunt and my cousin and them. So it was important to us that they supported us, but I think that for a gay couple, we couldn't ask for more because our support system is unbelievable. And everyone just accepts us. We really haven't had the issues that other gay couples seem to battle with. So I think that often people just make a huge hoo-hah about it and it's really unnecessary. But I also understand that many people are conservative and that for them it is a big hoo-hah.

J: A couple of people with whom I have already spoken have said that it was a very difficult decision for them because they had to overcome so much adversity themselves before they got to the point where they could be comfortable with themselves and they didn't want to bring their child into a world where to be gay was such a big issue and where a child could possibly be victimised – to be subjected to the same awful things that the parents had been subjected to. Was that perhaps also something for you, or not really?

C: It is a consideration [raising a child as lesbian parents] because the child will be teased, but all children are teased. So for me… I was never in the closet. I do as I do and, so if you don't agree with it, then you don't have to be in my life. For me it was never a difficult thing to be gay. I was gay from when I was that big. So I have never really accepted that adversity. I was a massive activist when I was younger. I really fought for gay rights and the right to

marry and to be able to do those kinds of things. But it was a decision that I made – something that I believe in and I stand by what I believe. And I have been attacked because I'm gay, but it has never held me back. It wasn't an emotional thing for me. I am just who I am.

H: In today's day and age it is so much more acceptable and our rights have also changed. People can't really say that you may not do this and you may not do that, so I think it also helps that people take those decisions easier these days. If you think back ten years or so – it was more difficult ten years ago.

C: And I think we have grown up in an era where I could at least fight for my rights. People in my mom them's age group, or people who are forty to fifty, didn't necessarily have the choices that we now have. They grew up with the concept that it is wrong and that if you did it… we still had the death penalty before 1994. So I think that the decisions in the older people's lives were more difficult than what it is for us. There are a lot fewer [inaudible] than what there were in those days.

J: And there are probably also more sanctions against it.

C: Yes, so I just think it's easier for us to… Yes.

J: And what were the reactions that you received from people outside of your family and friendship circle, when you told them that you were going to be parents?

C: As I said, I was never really in the closet, so everyone knows that I am gay. People at work were very excited. I have consulted my whole life and at a stage I decided that I wanted to become permanent and one of the reasons was because we had decided that we wanted to become parents. I didn't want the fluctuation of sometimes having work and sometimes not. It's too risky when you have a child. And I wanted to have stability in terms of leave so that I could have time with him, as well as maternity leave, should I fall pregnant. I started the negotiations by saying that I wanted to fall pregnant and my direct line managers, two or three levels up, are very open and very happy. And everyone [at work] knew when we went for insemination and were so excited about it. Yes, so I don't believe that we had any bad feelings about any of it. I think the worst [reaction upon finding out about insemination] was actually your mother. Your mother's reaction.

H: Yes.

C: But I don't think that it was our issue – it is her mother's issue. She had to deal with the fact that her daughter was going to have a baby and who she would say the father was. I think that is was more her thing than it was us. Or him [their child].

H: Yes, my work. I'm really alone. I'm at the estate [where they both live] so I don't really have anyone at the office. I'm really on my own. I eventually told everyone when I was already three months pregnant. And they were like: "Oh."

C: And I think all the trustees. Heleen manages the estate here where we live, so the people know that we live together, so I don't think that it was a shock to them.

H: It is more a different situation.

C: No one was shocked because they know that we live together. No one has ever given us any grief.

H: As you see, the neighbours come over to visit, so yes.

J: Have you had grief from, for example, doctors or healthcare professionals or the people outside of work people?

C: I don't think so. The sperm guys didn't have a problem. The one doctor at Kloof, we were told not to go to this guy because he wouldn't help people. I don't want to give my money to him in any case.

H: The other guy was okay.

J: That's at least positive.

H: Yes, there weren't any…

C: I also think we are very privileged. We went to a private clinic – Genesis Clinic – and so I don't think… I think that maybe it's different in the public sector. But we had a midwife and our midwife was unbelievable. Our gynae referred us to her. The two of them work together quite closely. Our midwife was very open. We weren't the first gay couple that they did.

H: If you think about it, [inaudible] is older. She is about fifty so it is a different era. She also had to get used to it.

C: But what a relaxing atmosphere we had. It was amazing.

J: That sounds positive, as though it was a very positive experience for you.

C: Very much.   But to me it feels like family – I just want to give them love and hugs.

H: It feels bad because we don't get around to seeing them anymore.

C: Yes.

J: So do you think that if you want to have another child, that you will go through the same process again?

C: For sure. There isn't even a… I would definitely have a natural delivery. I definitely won't go to a hospital. I don't want to have a gynae involved. I do if there are problems, but if there are no problems and a midwife is enough, then I will do it.

H: Yes, they know what they are doing.

C: Yes, we had an unbelievable team.

J: And how important is it for you to, for example, have a father figure or a masculine person in your child's life

H: There are plenty – my father, her father.

C: My brother.

H: Brothers.

C: My cousin's husband.

H: No, there are plenty. And we have also told them. Then they can take him fishing.

C: My brother has already said… My one brother will teach him to fish and my other brother will teach him to hunt.

H: Yes, he already has everything lined up.

C: I think also, from our side, we are not finicky girls, so we go camping. We 4x4 in Africa where there is no water or electricity, so he will do it with us. And I think it is important

that he have a father figure. I think it's important for a boy to know that he is a boy – that he can do male things – and I think we have a good supply of that in our family. And everyone is really involved so I am not really worried about that. My youngest brother said he would teach him to wee, standing up. So that is also sorted out. He said that they would go and wee outside in the garden – something that my brother still does.

J: How did becoming parents together influence your relationship, or influence you as a couple?

C: Can I be honest? We definitely have less sex.

H: Yes, there is definitely less time. But one does… yes, it's all about his little schedule. When he is asleep then you try to catch up on events of the day and try to fit it all in. One just mustn't forget that there still needs to be a relationship. It's important. I think it still needs to be strong.

C: I just told [a friend] outside… I don't know whether you noticed. She also has a little boy – herself and her husband. They also have two children and she was moaning that her husband does nothing and I think it's different in a relationship with two women. I also have the mothering instinct. Although he has nothing biological of mine, I still have the mothering instinct. I think a person helps a lot instinctively. So that takes a bit of pressure off Heleen. I work full-time in Sandton, so I am not here that much during the week. Typically, I am away from home for twelve hours and when I get home I want to spend some time with him, so I will take him and then Heleen has a bit of time to herself. I don't think it has changed our relationship. We work quite hard at our relationship, but…

H: Just as with any relationship.

C: Yes, just as with any relationship. So I don't think it has changed anything for us. I think your time is less. We had a lot of free time before him. We have a lot less free time and I think we are very selective about our free time. You don't just quickly nip out somewhere. You plan better and visit your better friends, rather than…

J: Has the process to become parents changed your idea regarding your sexuality at all? Or has it had an impact on it? About how you think about yourselves as women and so on?

C: Not really. I think that there is often a thing where one of the gay couple… one is the man and one is the woman and with us it's not like that at all. We are very equal in our partnership and in our relationship. And I think that I identify very easily as a woman. I am not a man. I also wear dresses – not necessarily make up because that is going to trouble, but it hasn't changed anything about me. It hasn't woken something up in me where I now suddenly think that I am straight. Definitely not. So I don't think that is has changed anything for me.

J: And also not for you?

H: No. We have just gone on. It was actually strange. On Friday I was still working, Sunday I went into maternity and Monday he was here.

C: She still wanted to stop working and then he arrived.

H: No, there isn't…

J: It sounded to me as though you said, in the beginning that it was initially quite a difficult decision for you. Can you tell me more about that? Was it a difficult transition for you?

H: I think, just as I said – the social things.

J: So it wasn't about you not wanting to be a mother, but more a concern about what it would mean for your child?

H: Yes, or about what people would say. You understand? The effect of us walking down the street – that effect. But now it's like this. It doesn't matter. He is adorable. So I think that if you can just move past that: "But what will they say?", then you realise that it doesn't matter anymore. You are who you are. They are who they are, so…

C: I also think that it's because… And I cannot speak for you. For me, because I am comfortable with who I am and because I have known for so long and don't have issues about it. I don't ever– and I think it's because I almost radiate it – offend anyone. I just am who I am. So I have never had any offensive behaviour against me. So I don't really know. It is not my point of reference at all, if you know what I mean. I know that there are people out there who experience it and who move in circles where it is very taboo. I just don't think that our

circles are like that. We have many gay friends and we have many straight friends. I just think we are well balanced.

H: Yes. I mean even at my previous job where I was in an office setup and was good, I immediately told everyone, from the start, that Caroline and I were in a relationship and the people accepted it. That's just the way we were. We actually made good friends with some of the people.

C: Yes, I don't think we've really ever had any uphill about these things. I don't know, I think it really depends on the circles in which you move. I don't think we're in very conservative circles. That's what I think. I don't know whether we're helping with your study at all because we…

J: I am getting different perspectives, so I am not trying to prove anything from a specific point of view. I just really… I want to see whether there is a golden thread linking some of the accounts that I get. And if there isn't one, then it's not for me to decide… I don't want to prove anything because this is a qualitative study, but I'm trying to sort of tell your story.

C: I would be very interested in your dissertation.

J: At the end of it all I will definitely give you… You will understand clearly what has happened with it all and I will also give you insights into it so that, should I have misunderstood or misrepresented anything about the way you feel about it, or that it was not precisely what you meant, that you can tell me, before I publish it, so that I can correct it. Because I would like very much to capture your story in the way that you would have told it. That is the aim of my whole thesis. Not to say that I have made this miraculous discovery or anything like that.

C: Could I ask you something? With the study that you are doing, have all parties had babies through insemination or are their women who have had children through previous marriages? Is it a spread?

J: It is a spread of a few different methods.

C: I also think that research has changed a lot over the last couple of years. It's not really a choice to be gay or straight. You are just like that – you are either straight or you are gay. My mother asked me one day: "Are you gay?" and I said "Yes." She then cried terribly and said: "Explain it to me." And I asked her: "Mom, could you be with a woman?", and she said:

"Are you out of your mind?" Then I told her that that was how I felt over men and that I couldn't help it – it is just the way it is. And I don't think that people understand that. They think it's a choice. But for us it's not a choice about being straight. You just are what you are. That's the way it is for us.

J: Precisely.

C: There really isn't a better way to explain it.

J: I fully agree with that as well and I became quite upset at some of the ways in which people were carrying out these studies and you are actually supposed to promote the cause, but all that you are really doing is causing more damage.

C: And I think that at the end of the day all you really want is for your child to be happy. He must be at peace and he must be able to make a good contribution towards society. And whether he's straight or gay or Goth, what does it really matter? As long as he is happy.

J: Just to conclude the formal interview, do you have anything else to contribute in terms of the topic of decision-making?

C: I think that's a very personal question. I think that every couple should be able to go through the process we have been through to have children, irrespective whether you are gay or not. It's a huge decision to become a parent. You have this child in your hands for the next… everyone says that it's eighteen years, but it's actually for the rest of your life. It's not for eighteen years. I think that if you realise that and that if you have made that decision, then it's very irresponsible for people to just have children and fall pregnant. It grieves me because I am involved with homes where families just dump their children somewhere and never have anything to do with them again. For me it's still better to raise my child in a gay home than for a child to be abandoned and have nothing at all. I don't know, but I just don't think that the decision to have children is any different for a straight or a gay couple. It is a huge decision.

J: And you are still dealing with the same things - feeding them and putting them to sleep and providing clothing and everything.

C: And to teach and to raise. I think that maybe there are many sensational complexities, because our child may be teased because we are gay and your child may be teased because he

has big ears. But they will definitely be teased and they will go through life as we went through life and they will have to learn and to accept.

C: Financially it's a massive decision. It's not cheap.

H: It's not just a matter of us jumping into bed and trying. There are other implications and maybe that is what is convincing about whether we are sure, whether we are ready. So you may go through those thoughts of…

C: We are not going to get pregnant accidentally. You sort of have to go through the decision.

J: And you have this array of options from which to choose.

H: It wasn't actually that many.

C: Oh, you still asked about that. I don't think we answered. Tell her about the donors and how we decided on that one.

J: Oh yes...

C: We didn't answer that.

H: Sorry. Caroline wanted him to look like me, so we went along with blue eyes, brown hair, yes. There aren't that many. It's more about length, height…

 C: Yes, gee, their family have beautiful eyes, man.

H: So yes, what they studied…

C: Ethnic group.

H: Yes, it really is just a one-liner that you have.

C: I don't know whether you have it, but we can actually send you the sheet.

J: I would appreciate it – just to see.

C: I will forward it to you – the sheet.

H: It's very little that, you know, you get.

C: And if you… Friends of ours in Australia also had a baby and they decided to use Mexican sperm, but if you want to stay within your ethnic group in South Africa, it is very… you have about six or seven to choose from. There aren't that many because the guys go through two years' worth of testing before they are allowed to donate. The selection is massive. They go through unbelievable selection. So yes, we liked two of them quite a bit. And they all study and they all do sport so they are more or less average guys and there were two or three for whom they had the specs for eyes and hair. And the rest we just left up to the divine hand. We had to at least leave something for our Gentle Father to do.

H: You could also choose whether you wanted a boy or a girl.

J: Oh.

C: Yes, did you know that?

J: No.

C: Yes, they split the sperm. The sperm that swims quickly is the little boys and the sperm that swims slowly is the little girls, so you can choose.

J: So did you decide not to choose?

H: Yes, we didn't decide.

C: We left something for the Boss [referring to God].

J: That is very interesting.

H: We hoped for a boy.

C: Yes, we are little boy moms, and then we used the one guy's sperm and we tried twice and it didn't take. And then the gynae told us to try someone else and then Heleen fell pregnant. And that is how we chose the sperm.

C: I don't think there is anything else. Is there anything else that you would like to know?

J: No, I'm quite happy. I have covered my topics.

C: Should you have more questions, just mail us or see us again.

J: Thank you. I appreciate it.

C: Is it? I am so excited. You must just finish now [Laughs].

[End of recording]

APPENDIX D: ANALYSIS CODES AND THEMES

Table D1: *Thematic Analysis: All Generated Codes*

Code no:	Code name:
Code 1	Accounts of decision-making factors: Others' treatment of their child
Code 2	Accounts of deciding on method of conception
Code 3	Accounts of the factors impacting reproductive decisions – the biological father
Code 4	Accounts of the child's knowledge of method of conception
Code 5	Accounts of positive encounters with those in position of power
Code 6	Accounts of considering a partner: Wanting to become a parent
Code 7	Accounts of internal considerations: Child rearing considerations: Parental authority
Code 8	Accounts of decision-making factors: Family's reactions
Code 9	Accounts of internal considerations: The function of marriage
Code 10	Accounts of assuming the mother role: Experience with raising siblings/family members
Code 11	Accounts of factors influencing reproductive decisions: Wanting to become a mother
Code 12	Accounts of decision-making factors: Others' reactions towards lesbian mothers
Code 13	Accounts of masculinity and femininity: Gender roles
Code 14	Accounts of external considerations: The influence of family on child
Code 15	Accounts describing the effect of motherhood on identity
Code 16	Accounts describing what it means to be a mother
Code 17	Internal considerations – existing child's involvement with new pregnancy
Code 18	Accounts describing behaviour employed to deal with others' adverse reactions around homosexuality
Code 19	Religious beliefs – context of conception
Code 20	Internal considerations – child conceived out of love
Code 21	Others' knowledge of sexual orientation – openness about sexual orientation

Code no:	Code name:
Code 22	Accounts describing reactions to discrimination (merged with code 18)
Code 23	Factors impacting reproductive decisions – age (ties in with code 2)
Code 24	Financial considerations
Code 25	Decisions of the biological mother about the child, without consulting non-biological parent
Code 26	Consequences of decisions made by the biological mother about the child, without consulting non-biological parent
Code 27	Attempts at addressing consequences of excluding non-biological parent from decisions made about the child
Code 28	Imperative of the biological mother to have authority over her child
Code 29	Non-biological parent's desire to be included in parenting & parental decisions
Code 30	The function of co-parenting and including non-biological parent in decision making about child
Code 31	Accounts describing how parental roles are established between partners
Code 32	Importance of having male influences in child's life
Code 33	Accounts describing child's understanding of parent's sexual preference
Code 34	Accounts describing community opposition to holding a lesbian identity
Code 35	Trying to be straight to gain acceptance in community
Code 36	Factors impacting reproductive decisions – "trying to be straight"
Code 37	Others' preconceived ideas about what it means to be a lesbian, impacting on social acceptance of sexual orientation
Code 38	Accounts of what it means to become a mother to partner's child
Code 39	Discussions about masculine and feminine identity (closely linked with code 13).
Code 40	Factors impacting reproductive decisions: Own negative childhood experiences
Code 41	Factors impacting reproductive decisions: Family member wanting to abort
Code 42	Factors impacting reproductive decisions: Legal adoption of the child
Code 43	External considerations: The biological mother's (surrogate's) involvement in the child's life
Code 44	Conditions for the biological mother's ("surrogate") involvement in the child's life

Code no:	Code name:
Code 45	Adoptive mothers' involvement in the child's birth
Code 46	Preparing for the arrival of the child
Code 47	Considering impact of having another child on existing children
Code 48	Religious considerations
Code 49	Religious institutions' reaction to homosexuality
Code 50	Negative treatment by those in positions of power
Code 51	Considerations around racial discrimination
Code 52	Relaying fears about child/ren growing up to be homosexual
Code 53	Discussions about parental concerns transcending sexual orientation
Code 54	"Coming out" and family acceptance impacting on lesbian identity
Code 55	General impact of "coming out"
Code 56	Considerations for not wanting children initially: Personality of the mother and her perceived ability to cope with motherhood
Code 57	Internal considerations for not wanting children: "Being different"
Code 58	Factors impacting on decision to become involved with a partner who already has children
Code 59	Integrating into partner's family: Gaining acceptance from partner's children
Code 60	The children come first
Code 61	Heteronormativity: Masculinity threatened by homosexuality
Code 62	Heteronormativity: The law and its protection of heteronormativity
Code 63	Discourse of disorder: Homosexuality seen as disordered
Code 64	Decision to become a mother: A normal extension of a relationship
Code 65	Function of a strong/stable relationship
Code 66	Imposed limitations in the medical context
Code 67	Factors impacting reproductive decision-making - health

Code no:	Code name:
Code 68	Changing perceptions on homosexuality over time
Code 69	Work considerations
Code 70	Effect of motherhood on the relationship
Code 71	Experience of adverse reactions from others dependent on with whom you surround yourself.

Table D2: *Composition of Themes*

Code	Interview number	Location of code in transcript (page number)	Substantive quote
Theme 1: Discourse of Heteronormative Gender Roles			
13	1	4, 7, 8, 12, 13	*"Yes, and many people have that thing of, because I am more like a man, they want to know: Does she call you "dad"? And it is one of the, it is the dumbest thing you can think of."* (Interview 1; p. 4)
	2	5,6,7	
	3	9	
	4	8	
31	1	7, 8	*"I don't think a person really knows what to expect when you are going to have a baby because you are so stupid and this is our first child, so you don't really know.*
	2	11	
	3	-	*I1: I think our roles will still change. I think maybe when he starts going to school or something that it may change."* (Interview 4; p. 4-5)
	4	4, 5, 8	
39	1	2, 4, 7, 10	*"I think that there is often a thing where one of the gay couple… one is the man and one is the woman and with us it's not like that at all. We are very equal in our partnership and in our relationship. And I think that I identify very easily as a woman. I am not a man."* (Interview 4; p. 9)
	2	-	
	3	-	
	4	9	
Theme 2: Discourse of Heteronormative Parenting			
1	1	9, 14, 16	*"Look it was my decision to live out my sexual preferences publicly. So then there is that fear that the decisions that you made can harm your children."* (Interview 1; p. 9)
	2	1	
	3	2	
	4	1, 6	
8	1	1, 2	*"And when we wanted to have children her mother was quite opposed to it. Her father is a real "boerseun" so he doesn't talk about anything. To this day I really don't know how he feels about it."* (Interview 4; p. 5-6)
	2	4	
	3	1, 3	
	4	5, 6	
12	1	9, 16	*"People were, the straight people tried to make a bigger issue out of it [being a lesbian parent] than I did. Everyone asked: "How do you do it?" "How do YOU [as a lesbian] do it?"* (Interview 3; p. 8)
	2	5, 7, 8, 9	
	3	8, 10, 11	
	4	1, 5, 6, 7, 9	
34	1	1	*"I am originally from a very small town. And uhm, it was very difficult for me to get accepted as a lesbian."* (Interview 1; p. 1)
	2	-	
	3	1	
	4	-	
52	1	15, 16	*"She [their daughter] plays with Harvey's [toy] cars every now and then but in my head, sometimes I know I'm just being a little silly, then I tell her not to play with those cars, because I used to do it [referring to when she was a child]. I did with my little brother's [played with his toy cars]. Then Michaela says 'Leave that child alone'."* (Interview 1; p 16)
	2	-	
	3	-	
	4	-	

Code	Interview number	Location of code in transcript (page number)	Substantive quote

Code	Interview number	Location of code in transcript (page number)	Substantive quote
Theme 3: Discourse of the Responsible Parent and Parental Responsibility			
15	1	1, 4, 5	*"I decided, when I was 20 or 21 I had Harvey, and while I was pregnant with him I decided that I am no longer going to keep up appearances."* (Interview 1; p. 4)
	2	6	
	3	8	
	4	-	
16	1	4, 5, 13, 14	*"To me it would be loving that child, raising that child to be the best adult that he or she can be. To give them the means to cope with life. When you can no longer do it for them. I think that's the meaning of motherhood."* (Interview 2; p. 7)
	2	7	
	3	4, 7, 8	
	4	4	
38	1	2	*Janine: "And do you see yourself as… do you see them as your children as well?" Tess: "Yes, look, I will fight for them. If anyone treats them unjustly, I will fight for them"* (Interview 3; p. 13)
	2	-	
	3	13	
	4	-	
53	1	14, 15, 16	*"And you know, you have exactly the same fears as any other parent."* (Interview 1; p. 14)
	2	-	
	3	5	
	4	10	
Note: Codes were directly indicated on my own transcription copies, which were then transferred to a more comprehensive coding sheet containing all relevant quotes. This table broadly shows the composition of themes.			