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NARRATIVES OF COUPLES AFFECTED BY INFERTILITY:
DARING TO BE FRUITFUL

BY

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To my parents



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SUMMARY

Fertility lies at the heart of Life: it re-energizes and regenerates. It is one of the most intimate areas of human existence.

Worldwide, infertility is on the increase. However, advances in biomedical technologies, such as in vitro fertilisation (IVF) give hope to those who are suffering from infertility. At the same time it brings the question of moral responsibility into focus. The availability of donor sperm and eggs, coupled with greater recognition of the rights of lesbians and gays to become parents either by adoption, utilising donor material, or openly exercising their rights as already existing parents, have complicated previous more conservative understandings of what 'family' means.

The epistemological point of departure of this research is described in Chapter 3 and is positioned within postfoundational practical theology, with an emphasis on critical emancipative feminism. The underlying research methodology is the narrative approach, embedded in social constructionism.

The research explores the narratives of four couples. These co-researchers, affected by infertility and childlessness, share their stories of surrogacy, secondary infertility, gay parenting and miscarriage that are presented in Chapters 4 to 7. In Chapter 2 the researcher includes her story as someone living with infertility. Particular attention was paid to understand and develop insights concerning preferred lives of fruitfulness in spite of infertility and childlessness.

The explored narratives revealed varying discourses that are introduced throughout the thesis, but are specifically integrated in Chapter 8. In the final chapter the author reflects critically on the research and writing process as a whole.

Key concepts: Narrative, couples, affected, infertility, fruitfulness, practical theology, postfoundationalism, feminism, social constructionism, 'Seven Movements'.

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