

**ABORTION: YOUNG MEN'S CONSTRUCTIONS OF
THEIR LIVED EXPERIENCES**

by

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DECLARATION

“I Jessica Jacqueline Morolong declare that *Abortion: Young men’s constructions of their lived experiences* is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.”

.....

10 MAY 2013

Jessica Jacqueline Morolong (Ms)

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This study would not have been possible without the grace, mercy and blessing of my Lord, Jesus Christ.

I am indebted to contributions of a number of people that in some way or another made completing this thesis possible:

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ABSTRACT

The Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act (CTOP Act 92 of 1996) is perhaps the most revolutionary piece of legislation internationally ever to have been promulgated to regulate abortion and as such women's reproductive lives. Abortion research tends to focus on the experiences of women and thus cast abortion as solely a territory that represents women's reproductive concerns and the power to choose to procreate. While the CTOP Act safeguards women's right of choice and a form of determination relating to what happens to their bodies, it also fails to recognise or even make pronouncements about the role that a man plays in the choice to terminate a pregnancy as well as how abortion affects a man's life. This therefore implies that legally, men do not have a stake to influencing the decision to terminate a pregnancy.

This qualitative study was undertaken to explore how young unmarried males whose partners have undergone an abortion construct abortion and the meanings that they attach to the experience of abortion. Interviews were conducted and the data was analysed using discourse analysis. Some of the young men knew about the woman's decision to have an abortion and others did not know. Common findings include a sense of helplessness due to feeling that the decision is ultimately that of the woman, anger for those who did not know about the decision to abort and a lack of forgiveness towards their partners.

Keywords: Abortion, abortion legislation, Choice on Termination of Abortion Act (Act 92 of 1996), Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, Social Constructionism, masculinity, anger, loss, pain, emasculation, unmarried men

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APPENDIX 1

CONSENT FORM

Researcher: Jessica J. Morolong
MA Clinical Psychology Student
University of South Africa (UNISA)

Dear Participant

The aim of this study is to explore the underlying issues around young males and abortion. The study is aimed at addressing the impact of abortion on young males whose partners have undergone abortion.

Participation is voluntary and you are requested to take part in an interview which will be recorded. The interview will last between 45 minutes to an hour and there might be a need for a follow-up interview. You may discontinue the interview at any point or skip any questions you do not feel comfortable to answer without any negative consequences.

All information obtained during the course of this study is strictly confidential and will only be used for research purposes towards my dissertation. Data that may be reported in scientific journals and in my dissertation will not include any personal information which could identify you as a participant in this study.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Jessica Morolong

I _____ certify that I have read the consent form and volunteer to participate in this research study.

Signed _____ at _____ (Place) on _____ (Date)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Abortion is an issue that remains controversial and contested. Despite the fact that it was legalised in South Africa in 1996, opposing individuals and organisations struggle for control and sway discussions about abortion. The contested nature of abortion yields emotional and psychological consequences for both the woman and man involved. Studies on abortion often focus on the impact that abortion has on females and often exclude the experiences of men. The role that men play in the decision to abort as well as their role as partners to these women is often marginalised.

This chapter provides an outline of the study and focuses on the problem statement of the research. The significance of the study is also discussed against the backdrop of the research question as well as research aims and objectives. The chapter also offers a brief exploration of the prevalence and legislative aspects of abortion in South Africa in order to provide contextual background to support the arguments made in the study. Furthermore, methodological issues are briefly discussed to put into context how the research question was explored and how the analysis of the results was conducted.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Abortion, like any other loss of a baby, is a traumatic experience for both men and women. However, the experiences of men are often not given much attention when it comes to the issue of abortion. Shostak (2008, p. 362) states that men whose partners had undergone an abortion

reported “an overwhelming feeling of powerlessness, a disorienting and unfamiliar emotion exacerbated by their loneliness”. Most men define their role in the relationship as one of having to support their partner and, often, due to societal norms and expectations, may repress their emotions regarding the abortion. It has been reported that a man whose partner has undergone an abortion may feel “that he did not fulfil his role as a protector of his unborn child” (Brauning, 1996). The abortion procedure is physically and psychologically traumatic for the woman (Gaul, 2013). Men may feel guilty and responsible for putting their partner in a position of having to go through such a traumatic procedure and experience alone and might feel that they have failed to protect their partner (Myburgh, Gmeiner & van Wyk, 2001).

The feeling that they have put their partners in a vulnerable position and that they have failed to protect their partners, often comprises men’s masculine identity as protector (Coyle, 2007; Wemhoff, 2010). Men are often socialised to be protectors of their loved ones and it is common for a majority of men to feel as if they failed to protect their partner as well as their unborn baby. Coyle (2007, cited in Speckhard & Rue) state that “men who have been involved in an abortion often struggle with their internal self-concept of masculinity, feeling that they have failed to protect and nurture”. Men’s response to the abortion experience may be influenced by factors such as the role they play in the decision-making process, current personal and financial situation and values and beliefs. The nature of the couple’s relationship can also influence how the man experiences the abortion. These are aspects need to be considered when exploring the impact of abortion as abortion affects men and women equally, even though the experiences may be different. The following section briefly discusses the background to the study.

1.3. Background of the study

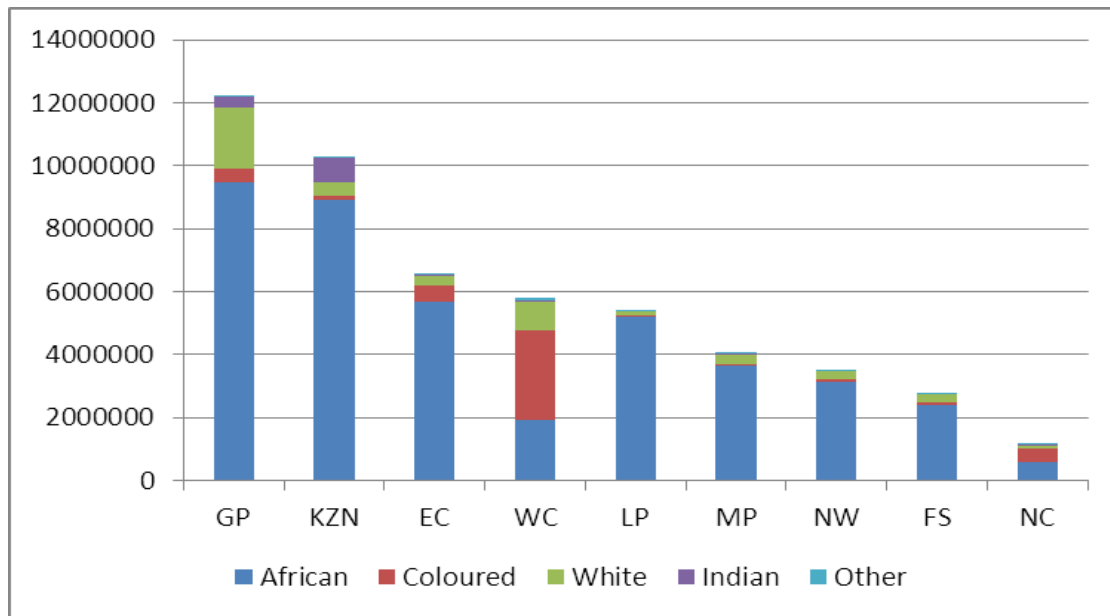
Abortion has become increasingly prevalent in South Africa since its legalisation. The Choice on Termination of pregnancy act (92 of 1996) was promulgated in South Africa to ensure that abortion is accessible and safe to all women who want to terminate a pregnancy. According to the prescriptions of the CTOP Act, a woman of any age (even a girl of the age of 12), can opt for and have an abortion without the consent or knowledge of her parents or her partner (Government Gazette, 1996). In this way, the law ensures that the woman's right to choose to have an abortion is secured. However, as in any issue that involves choice and rights, contestations about whose rights are promoted and whose are compromised become inevitable. Since it takes both a woman and a man for a pregnancy to take place (this is obviously if we put the role of technology aside), the CTOP Act can be seen to promote the rights of women, while being silent about the rights of men when it comes the issue of abortion. This silence implies that women therefore have the right to decide whether or not to include their partner in making the decision on whether or not to have the baby that he helped create. When a woman decides to have an abortion against her partner's wishes, she can do so because the men practically has no legal right or power to make pronouncements regarding the fate of the pregnancy.

1.4. Description of the research setting

The study was undertaken in Welkom in the Free State Province. Welkom is a city in the Free State province of South Africa and is located about 160 km northeast of Bloemfontein which is the provincial capital. Studies often focus on big cities and/or rural areas with little focus on small cities. This study focuses mainly on the experiences of young men in the small developing city of Welkom in the Free State province of South Africa.

According to SouthAfrica.info (2012) and the 2011 South African census (Statistics South Africa, 2011), the Free State province has a population of approximately 2745590 (see figure 1.1). The Free State is divided into five district municipalities namely, Xhariep, Lejweleputswa, Thabo Mofutsanyane, Motheo and Fezile Dabi. According to Free State Development Corporation (n.d) Lejweleputswa holds approximately 23.2% of the province’s population. Lejweleputswa, which consists of 18 towns, is in the north-western part of the Free State and consists of five municipalities, namely, Masilonyana, Nala, Tswelopele, Tokologo and Matjhabeng. Welkom is the district capital of Lejweleputswa and lies in the Matjhabeng municipality. Welkom has a population of approximately 432000 people, 49% of which is male.

Figure 1.1: Distribution of the South African population by province and population group



Source: Statistics South Africa, Census 2011 - Census in brief

According to Adams (2011) 529410 abortions were reported in South Africa since the passing of the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act (Act 92 of 1996). It is reported that 68736

abortions were reported in 2010 in South Africa with 5595 of these being in the Free State province (Johnston, 2011). It is further reported that in the same year the Free State province had the sixth largest number of abortions in South Africa preceded by the Gauteng, Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Limpopo and North West provinces (Johnston, 2011).

1.5. Motivation for research

Many of the studies on abortion are focused on the experiences of women. Not many studies pay attention to the experiences of men and those that do, mainly focus on the experiences of married men whose wives have decided on an abortion (Brauning, 1996). Abortion is not just a female issue; it also affects men in various ways. Just as the decision to keep a baby is a matter that affects both partners, so should the decision to abort.

When it comes to issues of reproduction, society and the law, often focuses on women and pays little attention to the opinions and needs of men. As Rosenwasser, Wright and Barber (1985, p. 97) assert “little attention has been focused on men’s rights and responsibilities in an abortion situation”. Not much has changed in this regard since Rosenwasser et.al (1985) made this assertion. As an equally integral part of procreation, men also need to be acknowledged in discussions on abortion.

This study looks at the experiences of young men who at the time of the abortion were not married to their partners.

1.6. Research question

The current study addresses the following question: What are the experiences of young men whose partners have had an abortion? The study, therefore, aims to explore how men construct their experiences in relation to abortion.

1.7. Aims and objectives

The aim of the study is to explore the experiences of young men whose partners have had an abortion. The researcher aims to explore how the decision was made between the partners and what emotions and feelings came with making the decision. The aim of the study is to understand how men construct their experiences of abortion.

1.8. Research approach

A qualitative research approach was used to explore the experiences of the young men whose partners have had an abortion. Qualitative research allows the researcher to “understand social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life” (Fouché & Delpont, 2002, p. 77). The results of the interviews, analysed using discourse analysis, served as a basis of the impact that the abortion experience has on the men.

Qualitative research is “research that elicits participant accounts of meaning, experience or perceptions” (Fouché & Delpont, 2002, p. 79). It is research that is aimed at understanding phenomena rather than explaining them. Qualitative research “focuses on understanding how people experience and interpret events in their lives” (Whitley, 2002, p. 34). According to

Whitley (2002) the researcher is an inseparable part of the research process and the researcher's experiences are also valuable data.

The study is rooted in an interpretive paradigm which attempts to understand how people make sense of their reality. The interpretive paradigm assumes that there are different realities due to varying human experiences. Through the various descriptions, the researcher can attempt to understand the experiences of the participants.

This study was approached from a social constructionist perspective which is embedded within the qualitative paradigm. Social Constructionism, according to Somekh and Lewin (2005), views phenomena in the social world as being "formed and sustained by social structures and interactions rather than being constants that conform to natural laws" (p. 348). Social construction theory suggests that the meanings that people ascribe to their experiences are created in social interactions. The use of language is, therefore, important because reality is perceived to be co-constructed through language. It is an important tool in giving a description of one's experiences and the meanings attached to these experiences.

Objectivity in Social Constructionism is viewed as impossible as it is believed that a researcher cannot fully disregard or step away from his/her assumptions and opinions. A researcher cannot view the phenomenon being researched from no view at all. This means that "the task of the researcher therefore becomes to acknowledge and even to work with their own intrinsic involvement in the research process and the part that this plays in the results that are produced" (Burr, 2003, p. 152).

Through social construction, participants are able to “explore and create new meanings so that they can make sense of their subjective experiences” (Launer, 1995, p. 379). The theory helps in acknowledging that people experience the same phenomenon differently and that they will, therefore, attribute different meanings and emotions to the same phenomenon.

The research approach and methodological consideration are discussed further in chapter 4. The following section provides a brief overview of the chapter outline contained in this dissertation.

1.9. Overview of chapters

The literature review which explores the different views on abortion and abortion legislation in South Africa is presented in **Chapter 2**. Furthermore, the impact that abortion has on men and the implications on contemporary masculinities and the fatherhood role are also be addressed. **Chapter 3** presents the conceptual framework from which the study is approached and the researcher’s epistemological position is also introduced. The research methodology as well as the ethical considerations for this study is discussed in **Chapter 4**. Empirical data that has been collected is presented in **Chapter 5** and the results are then discussed in **Chapter 6**. The dissertation concludes with a consideration of the limitations of the study and conclusions and recommendations for further research are explored in **Chapter 7**.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Abortion is an issue that has been debated widely and has been the focus of much research internationally and in South Africa. Much of the discussions about abortion in South Africa in particular in the late 1990s have focused on legalising abortion and ensuring that services are more accessible for women. Since the legalisation of abortion in South Africa, the country has witnessed a number of women procuring abortions even in the most rural areas where access to abortion services has been the most challenging. By 2005, just over half a million abortions were performed in South Africa since the passing of the Choice on Termination of pregnancy Act (Act 92 of 1996) (Adams, 2011; Johnston 2011). While most accounts of abortion reflect the impact that it has had on the lives of women, little attention is paid to men's accounts pertaining to how abortion shapes their lives. In this chapter, literature relating to abortion is explored focusing specifically on how men are represented through various discourses on abortion.

In order to set proper context and provide background to the literature on abortion and the focus of the study, the following section briefly presents a picture of the incidence of abortion in South Africa and outlines prevalence rates in the area within which the study was conducted.

2.2. The prevalence of abortion

The Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act (Act 96 of 1996) stipulates that any woman of reproductive age can procure an abortion legally during the first trimester (0 to 12 weeks of pregnancy). Public discourses show that abortion has become increasingly prevalent in South

Africa since it was legalised. In the period between 1996 and 2010, significant increases in the number of abortions performed per province in South Africa can be noted (Table 2.1). Although the numbers have fluctuated over the years, they remain significantly high. These numbers, however, are usually a representation of those abortions that have been recorded. As such, the numbers of cases of abortions that are solicited illegally or privately are not reflected in national statistics. Although the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act has been passed and gives women more rights to their reproductive life, some women may still opt for illegal (backstreet) abortions or to go to a private doctor. The numbers may, therefore, be higher considering those abortions that go unrecorded. Table 1, which is based on abortion rates compiled by Johnston (2011), is a representation of the recorded rate of abortions in South Africa in the period from 1997 to 2010.

Table 2.1: South Africa’s National abortion statistics (1997 – 2010)

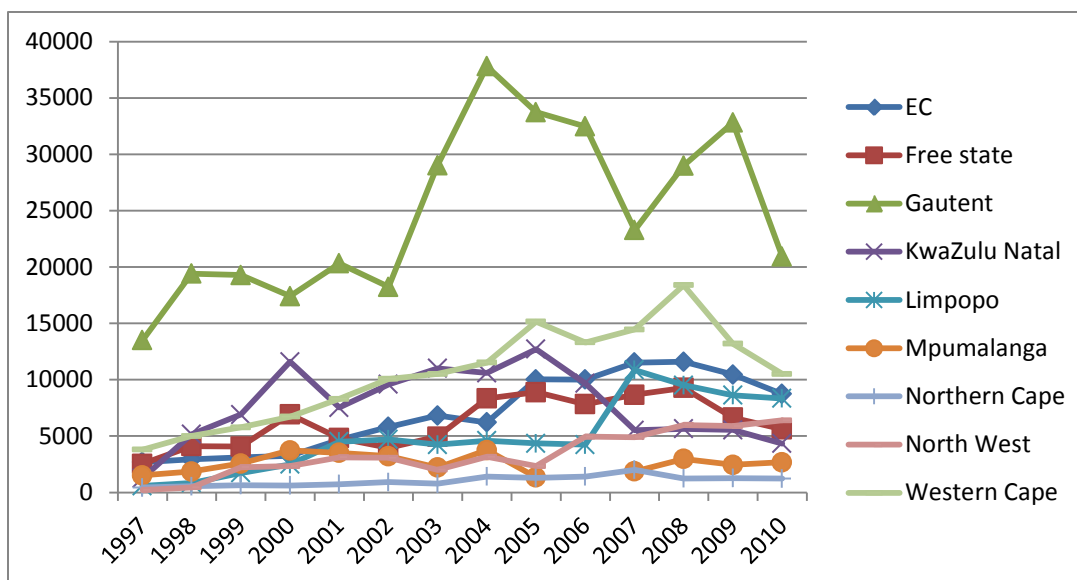
Province	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
E Cape	2693	2938	3109	3265	4671	5814	6819	6210	10034
Free State	2534	4107	4062	6919	4824	3949	4952	8343	8890
Gauteng	13505	19417	19298	17408	20321	18227	29021	37806	33727
KZN	1259	5167	6900	11592	7533	9592	11015	10602	12706
Limpopo	570	852	1728	2493	4512	4706	4236	4587	4357
Mpumalanga	1509	1857	2558	3728	3520	3218	2206	3757	1346
N Cape	435	552	642	615	738	910	779	1408	1305
North West	218	445	2231	2329	3120	3070	2011	3165	2336
W Cape	3796	5008	5775	6721	8300	10065	10513	11517	15149

South Africa	26519	40353	46303	55070	57539	59551	71552	87035	89850
		(66878)	(113175)	(168245)	(225784)	(285335)	(356887)	(443922)	(533772)

Source: Johnston (2011)

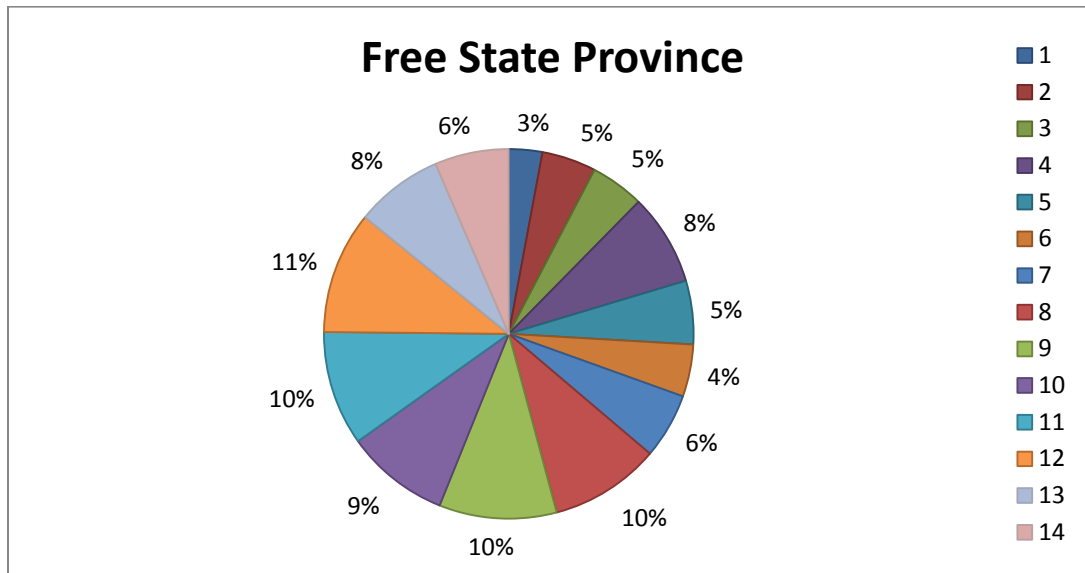
A limitation of the statistics provided by Johnson (2011) is that it reports the figures of performed abortions and does not provide information abortion requests. Therefore, it becomes impossible to analyse the variations between actual abortions requested and those performed. Based on the statistics provided by Johnston (2011), the Free State province had the sixth highest number of abortions reported in 2010 in South Africa, with Gauteng having the highest number, followed by Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Limpopo, and North West Provinces. Prevalence in Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape Provinces has consistently remained the lowest over the 14 year period from 1997 to 2010. Kwa-Zulu Natal province, on the other hand, shows steep increases during 2000 and 2005, with a sharp decrease noted in 2007 which gently steadies towards 2010.

Figure 2.1: Number of abortions per province (1997 – 2010)



A closer look at abortion statistics in the Free State province shows that the province accounted for three percent (3%) of the overall number of abortions in the country in 1997 (Figure 2.1). The number of abortions performed in the province increased steadily until 2000. The total number of legal abortions that have been performed in the Free State Province in the first trimester of pregnancy from 1997 to 2010 is 86591. Abortion trends in the province show that abortion rates in the province increase steadily every four years and start to decline by the fifth year (Figure 2.2). This trend may possibly be accounted for by maturation factors, variations in birth control and fertility issues. These factors were however not analysed in this particular study as the intention is just to describe basic statistics on abortion rates in the province.

Figure 2.2: Abortion rates in the Free State Province (from 1997 – 2010)



According to the statistics obtained from the Matjhabeng Clinic in the northern part of the Lejweleputswa district where Welkom lies, there were 1706 abortions requested and 804 performed between January and December 2012. In the same time period in 2011 the amount of

abortions requested was 2024 and 854 were performed. The number of performed abortions reflects those abortions done in the first trimester (0-12 weeks).

The following section discusses legal issues concerning the regulation of abortion in South Africa. Historical factors around the various legal instruments promulgated in South Africa are also considered to show the convergence of socio-political dimensions in abortion discourse.

2.3. Abortion and legislation in South Africa

2.3.1. The Abortion and Sterilisation Act (no 2 of 1975)

Legislative instruments and regulations in South Africa have undergone changes since the colonial era. Regulations on abortion were governed by the Roman-Dutch common law before the 1975 (Cope, 1993). In 1975 the Abortion and Sterilisation Act (no2) was passed. The introduction of the Abortion and Sterilisation Act (no2 of 1975) brought about changes which enforced stringent medical requirements before an abortion could be procured. This law allowed for an abortion only if the pregnancy posed a threat to the woman's mental wellbeing. The provisions of the Abortion and Sterilisation Act (no 2 of 1975) required the following conditions:

- (a) Pregnancy should be a threat to the woman's physical and/or mental health
- (b) The baby should be at risk of being born with a malformation
- (c) Pregnancy that is a result of rape (which has to be proven), incest or
- (d) The woman is mentally handicapped

The 1975 Act was intended to provide women with more control in order to determine whether they want to have a child or not. However, the conditions under which it could be procured were

criticised by many as restrictive and in fact aiming to deliberately prevent access to abortion (Cope, 1993; Ngwena, 2007). According to Mhlanga (2003) the 1975 Act allowed women no rights to their reproductive lives. While the 1975 Act gave the impression that women's rights to an abortion were increased, the restrictive medical conditions made it practically difficult if not impossible to acquire an abortion.

The construction of abortion as a mental health issue under the 1975 Act had several implications for the woman contemplating an abortion. In order to acquire an abortion, a woman had to get permission of the spouse and a medical examination by two independent doctors who could prove that carrying the pregnancy to term presents mental health risks for the expectant woman. Even though the Act seemed sympathetic to the plight of women who fell pregnant as a result of rape, the act of proving that a rape indeed did happen was in itself an impractical exercise. The dynamics of gender inequality and issues of power involved in violations of such a nature present practical challenges for women to prove the occurrence of a rape.

Due to the restrictions of the 1975 Act, many women sought alternative (dangerous) ways of terminating their pregnancies. To avoid the challenges imposed South African law at the time, many who could afford, sought abortions either overseas or from local doctors who were performing abortions illegally. As such, given the economic demographics of the country then, some wealthy and mostly white women could afford to take overseas trips to have the procedure done (Cope, 1993). The poorer women of other races, particularly black women, would often resort to 'backstreet abortions' or attempting to terminate their pregnancies themselves. These

kinds of desperate measures led to many deaths and also put pressure on the health care system to manage the damage caused by incomplete abortions.

Under the 1975 Act, a woman required at least four practitioners and sometimes a psychiatrist and a magistrate to agree that she was eligible for an abortion. Two medical practitioners, neither of whom could perform the procedure, had to provide the woman with certificates of diagnosis to present to the gynaecologist who would procure the abortion. The gynaecologist then had to get the permission of the state-authorised doctor whose hospital he would be using to procure the abortion. These medical practitioners could not be in the same partnership and had to be of different employers (Ngwena, 2007). Going to all these practitioners isolated the woman from her family doctor which she is accustomed to and the requirement of consultation fees added to the woman's troubles. Not to mention the time it takes to consult all the practitioners.

Eligibility for an abortion did not guarantee that a woman would get an abortion because "the state did not have a duty to provide access to requisite services" (Ngwena, 2007, p. 329). This meant that a woman could go on for weeks searching for a doctor who is willing to procure the abortion as well as a hospital where the procedure could be done. According to the 1975 Act, doctors had the right to decide for a woman over her reproductive life. Apart from having to receive the doctors' permission, not all hospitals provided the service and practitioners were not compelled to provide the service which made it difficult for most women to exercise their limited right to an abortion. Women in rural and poorer areas in particular, struggled because of the scarcity and even the lack of hospitals in their areas.

The 1975 Act was consistent with the thinking of the Apartheid regime which promoted the marginalisation of black people. Ngwena (2007) argues that “the Act was discriminatory not only against women but also between women” (p. 329). Due to the difficulty of access to a legal abortion, many women who were mostly black, turned to unqualified persons to perform the abortion or they would attempt to perform the abortion themselves; often leading to incomplete or septic abortions which often led to the death of the woman. Access to abortion services was easily accessible to the white community and those that were not eligible to have an abortion could afford to have a private doctor perform the abortion (illegally) or to go overseas to have an abortion where the law was more permissive (Cope, 1993).

2.3.2. The Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act (CTOP Act no 92 of 1996)

In 1996, a revolutionary move took place in abortion politics. Abortion became legal in South Africa in October 1996 when the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act (Act 92 of 1996) was passed. The Act (referred to as the CTOP Act from here onwards) then came into effect in February 1997. According to this Act, any woman of any age can get an abortion by simply requesting, with no reasons given, if she is less than 12 weeks pregnant. Between 13 and 20 weeks of pregnancy, a woman can procure the abortion under the following conditions:

- (a) her own physical or mental health is at stake,
- (b) the foetus will have severe mental or physical abnormalities,
- (c) she is pregnant because of incest,
- (d) she is pregnant because of rape, or
- (e) she is of the personal opinion that her economic or social situation is sufficient reason for the termination of pregnancy.

If she is more than 20 weeks pregnant, she can get the abortion only if her or the fetus' life is in danger or when there is likely to be serious birth defects” (Abortion in South Africa, 2010). According to the 1996, Act women have the right to an abortion on demand within the first twelve weeks of gestation.

The CTOP Act was passed in response to the increasing number of deaths due to septic (illegal) abortions and to give women more freedom to their reproductive life/health. According to Ngwena (2007), the CTOP Act promotes reproductive rights and extends freedom of choice by affording every woman the right to choose whether to have an early, safe and legal termination of pregnancy according to her individual beliefs. Abortion on demand can, therefore, be procured without informing or getting the consent of anyone, including the partner. Unlike the Abortion and Sterilisation Act (no 2 of 1975) which required the permission of numerous medical practitioners, under the CTOP Act, trained midwives can perform abortions up to 12 weeks. The main aim of the CTOP Act was to improve access to abortion services and to lessen the blockages created by requiring evaluations from a number of medical doctors before an abortion can be acquired.

While it can be argued that the provisions of the CTOP Act ensured a woman the capacity to maintain a certain level of privacy by limiting the number of professionals to be consulted before procuring an abortion, Mkhize (2000), maintains that the CTOP Act gives rise to secrecy in that it provides a space for women to isolate themselves from their family, friends and even their partner when deciding on an abortion. The secrecy inherent in the construction of abortion as solely a woman’s legal right, Mkhize (2000) argues, may lead to lack of social and familial

support for women who are undergoing the process of abortion. Women who choose not to tell their partners about the abortion have to carry the emotional burden and possible pain on their own.

Although the 1996 Act gives women more freedom regarding their reproductive life, it remains a contested terrain. Some of the difficult aspects of the law involve giving a girl as young as 12 years of age the right to abort without parental consent. This implies that a girl can keep abortion a secret and has to deal with the emotional turmoil that might follow on her own. The Act also isolates the man from the situation and can be seen to deprive him of a say regarding the life of the unborn baby.

2.4. Abortion and human rights movement

Abortion is inevitably a human rights issue whether it is looked at from the perspective of the woman's right to choose or that of the baby's right to life and even the man's right to fatherhood. The following section will briefly look at the way in which the various Acts on abortion have been influenced by the drive to promote human rights.

2.4.1. The universal declaration of human rights

In 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which brought general awareness "of the existence of rights which are inherent in all human beings, which thus pre-exist, and stand above, the State and all forms of political organization" (Trindade, 2008, p. 2). The Declaration states that "no one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home nor correspondence, nor attacks to his

honour and reputation” (Making multicultural Australia, n.d., p. 2). In line with this statement, women rights to make their own decisions regarding their reproductive life without having to get permission from other parties (doctors, spouses, parents) is recognised and supported by law.

The 1975 Act, although it provided the option of a legal abortion, it restricted a woman’s right to make the decision to have an abortion (that is, eligibility), it restricted her right to privacy by requiring permission from practitioners, and gave women limited access to facilities in that only designated hospitals could provide the service. The 1996 Act is regarded as being more consistent with the Declaration of Human Rights as it gives women the right to make their own decisions regarding whether or not to abort. It also gives women the right to access to abortion services by making services available (free of charge) from public hospitals.

The 1975 Act infringed on women’s rights to privacy and in an attempt to address that issue the CTOP Act has in a way given women more reproductive autonomy. The questions that remain though are, where does the role of the father feature in debates of abortion? How then do meanings of fatherhood change given the woman’s right to choose to procreate?

In South Africa access to abortion services is not only legally sanctioned, it is a constitutional right for women who chose to terminate their pregnancies. The transformation from The Abortion and Sterilisation Act (Act 2 of 1975) to The Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act (Act 92 of 1996) had to do with acknowledging women’s rights which are ultimately human rights. Restrictive laws, such as the 1975 Act, “infringe the human rights of women, and worse still, fuel recourse to unsafe abortion as the only realistic alternative” (Ngwena, 2007, p. 335).

The requirements of the 1975 Act, such as getting approval from several doctors for the abortion to take place, infringe on a women’s right to privacy and the limited access to hospitals for black

women infringes on their right to equality. The transition to democracy provided an opportunity for abortion laws to be reviewed and addressed. The predominant concern with human rights provided an opportunity “for addressing issues of women’s rights and health broadly, and abortion in particular” (Blanchard, Fonn & Xaba, 2003, p. 110).

2.5. The impact of abortion

The concept of abortion often elicits emotional reactions in individuals due to differing opinions or views on the matter. Researchers note gender differences in how individuals who have experience abortion react. Jakupcak, Tull and Roemer (2005) indicate that men are often socialised to avoid vulnerable and painful emotions. Therefore it is not uncommon to find that men may try to conceal emotions related to impact that an abortion experience and potential loss of the prospect of siring a child possibly elicit for them. In this section, the impact that abortion has on both men and women is discussed.

2.5.1. Abortion as loss

Loss is an important concept in psychology. This concept has particularly been investigated widely in death and dying studies, particularly in as much as it relates to the experiences of the terminally ill. Loss, as such can be tangible and intangible, and may result in a change in the emotional state of the person experiencing the loss. The loss of an unborn child, particularly through abortion, is often not viewed as the loss of a real person (Dilts, 2001). The loss is further clouded by it being a loss by choice (even if it was a choice made by one partner). Brauning (1996), who writes from a religious perspective, proposes that no one is untouched by the life of a child; that both ‘mothers’ and ‘fathers’ of aborted children each struggle with the loss of the

person who touched their lives. Although a woman who has undergone an abortion and her partner are generally not referred to or considered as parents, Brauning's (1996) argument reflects the religious view that a foetus is a human being and the woman and man are constructed as parents even though the foetus has not been born yet. In this way, the denial of parenthood as a result of abortion becomes conceivable. Conceived in this way, abortion translates into loss, in this case loss of motherhood or fatherhood. It can be assumed that the implication is that both expectant parents are likely to experience the abortion as a loss. Therefore, as much as an expectant mother might go through feelings of excitement, anxiety, anger and/or guilt when she finds out that she is pregnant, so might the expectant father. According to Doka and Martin (2001), although women are often viewed as being more readily able to show emotion and request help, it does not mean that men do not grieve.

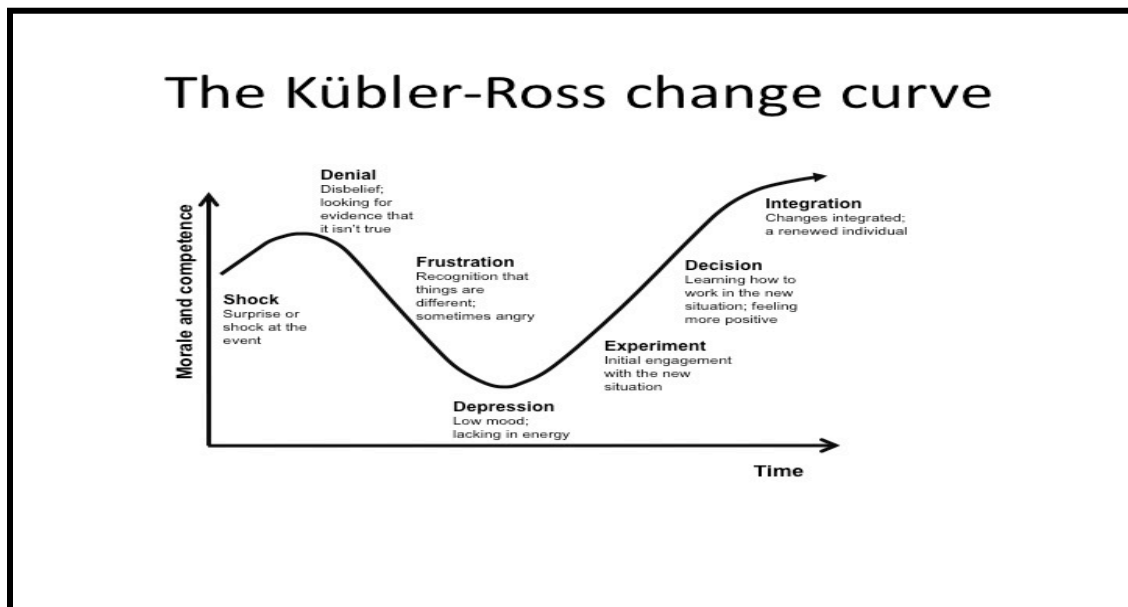
Loss, according to Freeman (1999) has been an important concept in psychology and clinical therapists worldwide have long found Kübler-Ross' (1969) five-stage model of loss – denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance (depicted in figure 2.3)– extremely useful in talking about, understanding, and treating those who experience a sharp negative break with their past. Pregnancy can be seen as a process of change in the physical, emotional, cognitive state of pregnant woman requiring steady adjustment and adaptation. Abortion therefore, brings about a sharp disruption of this process, which further requires adjustment, for both the woman undergoing the abortion and the partner.

Kübler-Ross' (1969) original five emotional stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance can be clustered into three distinct transitional stages. The first cluster is shock and

denial, the second cluster involves anger and depression and the last cluster concentrates on acceptance and integration.

In an impending unwanted pregnancy, according to this model, the first reaction is usually shock which is frequently short lived. Despite this, it results in a temporary slowdown and possible confusion about what to do next to solve the problem. After the first stage, anger is often the next instinctive reaction. A scapegoat is found and blamed for what is happening. When the anger dissipates, a real downturn of emotions happens as the realization hits home that change is a genuine reality. Morale, during this stage, tends to be negatively affected and declines substantially. The extreme emotions of anger once resolved lead to enthusiastic and optimistic mood and individuals start to accept that change is inevitable. People start to create opportunities to survive the situation. The cycle continues when another event that causes a sharp break with the past happens.

Table 2.3: Five-stage model of loss (Kubler-Ross, 1969)



Pregnancy and abortion are both incidents that provoke experiences of loss and intense emotional reactions which the woman undergoing an abortion and the partner need to work through in order to adjust to the changes. Men are often socialised to not express emotions of pain, loss and/or grief. Such socialisation therefore affects how men experience and handle the abortion process.

2.5.2. Emotional expressiveness and socialisation

Emotions are defined as “biologically based, adaptive reactions involving changes in physical, affective, cognitive, spiritual, and behavioural systems in response to perceived environmental events of significance to the individual” (Doka & Martin, 2010). According to Gross and Muñoz’s (1995) model of emotion, the manner in which a significant event (such as abortion) is interpreted affects the type of biologically based emotional program that is aroused. This in turn is influenced by an individual’s response tendencies which are how the individual regulates and adapts his behaviour. This model asserts that emotional responses are influenced by psychological and environmental factors.

The responses of those around the individual play a significant role in influencing their emotional reactions. From an early age children learn which emotions are safe to express and which are not sanctioned (Gross & Muñoz, 1995). Boys are often socialised to be restricted in how they express their emotions, particularly those related to pain and grief. Through observing and modelling the behaviour of those around them, men may have learned that certain emotions and emotional reactions are unacceptable (Jakupcak, et al., 2005). Men are often “discouraged from expressing ‘feminine’ emotions of loss, sadness, and tenderness, and this can produce a

significant psychological block at times of male grief” (Thompson, 2001, p. 27). It is due to this kind of socialisation that men might seem less affected by abortion. Although gender role socialisation may influence the different ways in which men and women grieve, it does not determine the ways of grieving (Doka & Martin, 2010). It would, therefore, be unjust to assume that men feel less pain than women when they experience an abortion. It might be more appropriate to say that they express their pain differently. According to authors such as Gray (2001) and Dilts (2001) men are more likely to remain silent about their inner experiences and to grieve alone and in secret.

Whether a man agreed to the decision to abort or whether he would have liked his partner to carry the pregnancy to term, men experience a number of emotions regarding the abortion. “Some are angry and upset with themselves and their partners for being in this situation...a general sense of sadness and regret is prevalent among men who prefer the women to carry the foetus to full term, rather than carry out her decision to terminate” (Myburgh, et al., 2001). Males may experience feelings of voicelessness, helplessness and a sense of emasculation due to not really having a choice on whether the baby is aborted or kept, because it is ultimately the woman’s choice.

Men are often of the view that the decision to abort remains that of a woman as it is her body and she will be the one to carry the baby should it be carried to term. Current legal instruments support this notion as the final decision regarding abortion is regarded as the legal right of the woman. The Choice of Termination of Pregnancy Act gives the woman the right to an abortion

without the consent of the expectant father which therefore leads to his opinion not being worth much, if anything at all.

In Coyle (2007), Myburgh et al, in their investigation of how nine men experienced abortion (pregnancy termination), identified the following three themes: (1) powerlessness related to the abortion decision; (2) emotional turmoil due to the impact of abortion on both inter- and intrapersonal relationships; and (3) the use of defence mechanisms in response to stress.

Men's grief is often evaluated against social norms based on gender and because of this, men are often overlooked by caretakers at abortion clinics. Due to the neglect by caretakers and society in general regarding abortion, men may be more vulnerable than women and may experience delayed grief reactions (Gray, 2001). Coyle (2007) reports that Poggenpoel and Myburgh found that adolescent boys displayed feelings of guilt and helplessness as well as social pain due to being excluded from the abortion decision and not being acknowledged as an expectant father. These feelings of helplessness and guilt may be more intense with young adult males who feel ready for the fatherhood role and/or those who feel they should be ready to have a baby and be able to take care of it.

Coyle (2007) further states that men may experience confusion and uncertainty in their role or responsibility due to the emphasis of abortion being a woman's right. In *Male Attitudes* (2002), it is proposed that apart from being concerned about the physical and emotional damage the abortion might cause their partner, many men in clinic waiting rooms feel isolated and angry at their partners and at themselves for being in that situation.

2.5.3. The impact on relationship: The questioning of one's role as partner

Shostak and McLouth in Myburgh et al. (2001), argue that excluding men from the experience of abortion is “both an individual crisis and a crisis for the relationship between the man and the woman”. The feeling of being excluded and detached can have a negative effect on the relationship. In an attempt to be strong for their partner, men may also suppress their emotions during an abortion experience and this may lead to them being withdrawn in the relationship. According to Abortion Recovery International (2010) 25-70% of the relationships where there has been an abortion do not last long after the experience. In those instances where the relationship ends, men then have to deal with not only the loss of the baby (which they may have wanted to keep), but also the loss of their partner.

Studies, such as Coyle (2007), have also shown that in instances where the couple remains together, certain aspects of the relationship may deteriorate. According to Coyle (2007), men have reported that they experience difficulties communicating with partners even on general issues, and that their sex life becomes negatively affected after an abortion. This can be expected as abortion brings about a questioning of one's role in the decision to abort as well as one's role in the relationship. The sense of emasculation that comes with the decision to abort can therefore complicate the relationship.

2.6. Contesting views on abortion

There are different and conflicting views on abortion which centre around issues relating to the rightfulness of abortion, who has the power to determine the outcome of a pregnancy, who should be eligible for abortion if it is at all a consideration, as well as when (that is, how far

along in the pregnancy) a woman should no longer be allowed to have an abortion. Despite the legalisation of abortion in South Africa in 1996 through the passing of Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act (92 of 1996), there is still stigma around the issue of abortion. Discourses on abortion reveal two contesting camps, that is, those that are either for (pro-choice) and those that are against abortion (pro-life). The pro-life movement regard abortion as a rejection of motherhood and a denial of an innocent life while pro-choice movement view it as an expression of a woman's right to determine what happens to her body.

2.6.1. Abortion as a rejection of motherhood and/or a denial of fatherhood

Oppositions to abortion practice are formulated around religious beliefs and moral values. Pro-life debates on abortion argue that the foetus should be seen as a human being right from conception and that the life of a foetus should be valued. This perspective puts more weight on the right to life of the unborn child and overrides the importance of the woman's right to decide what happens to her body. For some pro-life activists, abortion is not an option even if it places the woman's life in danger.

Pro-life advocates argue that the pro-life view of abortion is limited to the life of the baby and the value thereof. They point out that the pro-life argument does not necessarily take into consideration pregnancy complications and threats to the woman's life due to the pregnancy. The contradictions have been pointed out already in the 1970s by Thomson (1971) who indicates that some individuals support the pro-life view on the basis that abortion is directly killing the foetus (murder) whereas not having an abortion would only be *letting* the mother die from the pregnancy, not killing her. This sparks a new debate on whether the advocates of the movement

are pro-life for the foetus but anti-life for the mother (Meserve, 1983). They seem to be more pro-baby (foetus) than they are pro-life as the woman's life does not appear to be a priority. In an attempt to defend their case relating to being anti-life where the woman is concerned, pro-lifers extend their thesis to argue that abortion should not be an option as it is damaging to the woman's mental and physical health.

2.6.2. Abortion as a right of choice

On a more liberal side, abortion is regarded as a woman's right to choose to determine what happens to her body. As such, abortion is seen as a woman's prerogative. The prochoice movement casts abortion as a body politic where only a woman should have the freedom to choose what happens to her body. According to Callahan and Callahan (1984) the basic principle is that "those who must personally bear the burden of their moral choices ought to have the right to make those choices" (p.220). The implication here is that whatever decision is made, there will be consequences and the power to decide should lie with the person having to live with those consequences.

2.7. Masculinities

Morrell (2006) asserts that "masculinity is neither biologically determined nor automatic. It is socially constructed, can take many different forms and can change over time" (2006, p. 14). Masculinity can be viewed as an internalised sex role which males are socialised into. It is about "the knowledge and feelings of a man about who he is" (Jansz, 2000, p. 168). Men are often socialised to protect and provide for women and children. Children are often seen as a sign of

manhood and when one is regarded 'a man' then it is expected that he has children and take on the role of a father (Morrell, 2006).

According to Ratele (n.d), "the dominant construction of masculinity is still mainly of men as economic providers". It is for this reason that some men may agree to an abortion - because they are unemployed and would, therefore, not be able to provide for their partner and their baby. Making such a decision, in itself, is difficult and could be emotionally traumatic. The decision is, essentially, of whether to bring a child into the world and not be able to take care of it or whether to let your financial standing rob you of the opportunity to be a father.

Men's roles have often been "underpinned by cultural stereotypes, which call for men to be tough, objective, stoic and emotional(ly) inexpressive" (Myburgh et al, 2001). Due to these social expectations, men tend to not acknowledge their feelings and, as a form of a defence mechanism, may end up rationalising and intellectualising their feelings. Although these cultural stereotypes and social expectations are diminishing in intensity, men are still not as emotionally expressive as they could be (Myburgh et al., 2001). Many men would rather suppress their emotions in an attempt to be strong for, and to show support to their partner.

According to Gibson and Hardon (2005), "masculinity and its concomitant processes and relations are highly contextual: dynamic, historically and culturally produced and reproduced" (p. 1). Context plays an important role in how masculinity is expressed. According to Ratele (2008), masculinity can be viewed as "something males do and establish in ongoing activity in relation to females, to other males, but also in relation to their own inner lives" (p. 517). The

construction of masculinity is influenced by ones race, ethnicity, social class, education level and maturity.

Nowadays, men find themselves in a difficult position where they are expected to be protectors and to be stoic while at the same time being sensitive and emotionally available and expressive. This has led to the existence of different views and variations regarding masculinity or the masculine identity. Men are now constructing their own understanding of what masculinity means for them as individuals within their lived contexts.

Although masculinity has overarching characteristics such as being stoic and being a provider, how masculinity is expressed is influenced by the specific era in which men live. Masculinity, as such, needs to be viewed in light of the changes and developments of femininity and women's rights. We now live in a society where men are no longer the sole providers and/or breadwinners; a time where gender roles are being adapted. Men have had to find ways in which to claim their masculine role in relation to the evolving feminine role. How masculinity is defined in relation to the changes in gender roles, will be influenced by the man's acceptance or rejection of the changes, his cultural beliefs and his flexibility (or lack thereof) regarding the male role.

2.7.1. Men and fatherhood

Fatherhood is often associated with manhood and is an important part of the construction of masculinity. Like masculinity, fatherhood is understood and carried out in different ways. According to Mkhize (2000), fatherhood is “intertwined with the process by means of which men come to an understanding of who they are - their sense of identity and place - in society”

(p. 186). Fatherhood, like masculinity, is therefore, also context-bound and one's understanding of it is influenced by social, cultural and personal norms.

Men are often portrayed as being distant and uninvolved in their parenting role, particularly those men who are no longer in a relationship with the woman they have had a baby with. These men are often seen as only offering financial support (if ever) and offering no emotional support for their children. Men are not often portrayed as embracing of their role as fathers even though many men take up their role as a father and are involved in all aspects of the lives of their children.

Besides portraying fathers as emotionally distant, unmarried fathers are also portrayed as being physically absent in their children's lives. Men who are not married to or are separated from their partners often have to prove themselves (as fathers) more than their married counterparts as they may be denied access to their children when their partners see fit.

Although times and gender roles have changed over the decades, men generally still view the role of a father as that of being a provider and a protector. According to Morrell (2006), a good father is seen as one "who does his utmost to secure life opportunities for his children" (p. 21). When a woman opts for an abortion a man might feel that he has failed to protect his unborn child and that he has denied his child to the right to life. The role that a man plays in his child's life and the extent to which he is actively involved may be influenced by his construction of masculinity and gender roles. For instance, a man who believes his role is to provide for his family financially may not be readily available emotionally for his child.

2.7.2. Men and abortion

Men play a significant role in procreation and should therefore not be excluded from issues of reproduction. Discourses that acknowledge the role that men can play in issues of reproduction and abortion need to be produced in order to alter some of the longstanding normative stereotypical ideas surrounding what it means to be a man. This is more so important in contemporary times as gender role definitions are transforming with changing times. Men are affected by abortion in terms of their personal emotional processes as well as what they envision their partners to be going through during the procedure. Shostak (2008) reported that in a study conducted in 1999-2000, the results indicated that many men would have liked the opportunity to accompany their partners in the procedure room, to be there for them in the recovery room as well as the opportunity for counselling with their partners. Men experience feelings of guilt because they feel responsible for putting their partner through the traumatic experience. The guilt is further exacerbated by not being able to support their partners through the procedure.

Excluding men from the process and experience of abortion does not only pose a problem for the man, but also for the relationship. According to Shostak and McLouth in Myburgh et al. (2001), a pregnancy that isn't expected or wanted is both an individual crisis and a crisis for the relationship between the man and the woman" (n. p). When excluded or neglected from the decision-making process and the abortion experience itself, men may detach from the experience and the relationship. This in turn could lead to the man being emotionally unavailable and unsupportive to the woman.

An unexpected pregnancy perturbs the dynamics of the relationship, and having to make the decision regarding whether or not to abort, aggravates the situation. According to Boyle (1997) men are central to abortion with regards to their role in making the decision as well as in the support they can give to their partners. How the woman copes with the abortion is often affected by how the man handles the abortion. This further indicates the importance of involving men in the abortion discussion and acknowledging their feelings on the abortion experience.

Men's decision regarding abortion is informed, among other factors, by their own desire to be fathers or rather to take on the identity of father (and its accompanying responsibilities)" (Reich, 2008: 10). Although the pregnancy is an affirmation of their virility, men find themselves in a position of considering whether they are prepared to become fathers and to take on the responsibility of being a provider. According to Reich (2008) men sometimes base their decision on their perception of their partner as a mother as well as whether or not they envision a future with their pregnant partner. A man's reaction to the abortion and how it affects him is often influenced by his readiness for fatherhood, whether or not he was included in the decision-making process as well as whether or not he agreed to the abortion.

Although the Choice on Termination Act (92 of 1996) has given women the right to decide on their reproduction, it may be seen to compromise traditional perceptions of masculinity by taking away men's power and control over a life they co-created. This may make it difficult for men to understand their role or even construct a viable role that they can play in the abortion experience. The male role of being a protector is also compromised as some men view abortion as a failure to protect their unborn baby. Whether the possibility of an abortion has been discussed or not, the

decision lies with the woman because the Act states that a woman does not need to inform her partner or have his consent to have an abortion. Men are, therefore, responsible for the pregnancy but marginalised when it comes to the decision to abort.

2.8. Conclusion

Abortion remains a rather controversial issue regardless of revolutionary legal regulations. Abortion laws have changed in South Africa over the years and in the process influencing how men and women determine their lives as reproductive and procreating beings. Abortion laws over the decades did not give women much right over their reproductive life. The CTOP Act (92 of 1996) introduced interesting power twists by giving women the right to decide on their reproductive lives. In this chapter, the changes in the provision of abortion that were made possible through various legislative instruments in South Africa were discussed. Masculinities were defined and the role that men play in the abortion experience was considered.

In the following chapter, the conceptual framework of the study is discussed.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Introduction

Newtonian-Cartesian epistemology with roots in logical positivism which is based on Newtonian physics and Cartesian thought has been the only way of thinking for more than 200 years. The tenets of this epistemology privilege reductionistic thinking at the expense of contextual issues. The focus on context steps outside the confines of reductionism and creates a transformation in thinking which sees things as interrelated to the settings in which they take place. Although Newtonian thinking is no longer looked at as the only source of truth or as the only reality, it has heuristic value and is a useful paradigm when viewed and applied in context. In the light of this study, a brief overview of ecosystemic epistemology will follow to provide the building blocks for the conceptual underpinnings of this study as well as the methods used in this research project.

In this chapter a theoretical model which constitutes the foundation of this study will be discussed. A view of ecosystemic epistemology which is based on cybernetic principles will be given, followed by the operationalisation of these principles in the theory of social Constructionism. To enter into this discussion, the idea of epistemology is discussed next.

3.2. Defining epistemology

There are various definitions of epistemology. According to Auerswald (1985), epistemology is “the study or a theory of the nature and grounds of knowledge” (p.1). It is concerned with the rules of operation that govern cognition and attempts to indicate how specific organisms know,

think and decide (Bateson, 1979). With reference to the social domain, epistemology becomes a study of how people or systems of people know things and how they think they know things (thinking about thinking) (Auerswald, 1985; Keeney, 1983). In this sense, epistemology highlights how people construct their worldview and indicates the basic premises underlying action and cognition. One's underlying epistemology guides the manner in which one perceives, thinks and acts in the course of conversation, therapy or research. It is therefore through the lenses of one's epistemology that one sees the world, experiences it and attempts to make sense of it. According to Keeney (1983), one's way of perceiving becomes only a way of making sense of something and not the only way. Keeney (1983) argues that any position, perspective, conceptual frame of reference, or idea is a partial embodiment of a whole we can never completely grasp. Keeney's (1983) ideas are therefore commensurate with cybernetic epistemology.

The epistemological position of the researcher informs how the research is approached and conducted and influences the interpretations and conclusion that are reached from the data collected. The basic principles of an ecosystemic epistemology will be applied to the research context, as this formed the major part of the researcher's epistemology.

The ecosystemic epistemology emphasises relationship, ecology and whole systems. It encompasses interrelation, complexity and context. Ecosystemic epistemology is defined by Capra (1987), Keeney (1982, 1983, 1984) as the frame representing 'ecology', cybernetics and systems theory. Ecosystemic epistemology combines two important concepts of 'ecology' and 'systems'. Ecology is taken from Bateson's (1979) and Bogdan's (1984) view of a system as an

‘ecology of ideas’ and ‘systems’ are taken from von Bertalanffy’s (1968) general systems theory. It is a holistic perspective which rests largely on the concept of complementarity wherein part behaviours are considered to be distinctions drawn, or punctuations made by the observer. This means that the attribution of meaning encompasses all possible ideas of all participants regarding the situation and the definitions of the situation, as well as regarding the defined problem and specific behaviours within the situation (Fourie, 1991). Fourie and Lifschitz (1989) indicate that an ecosystemic epistemology adopts an ecological way of thinking, an acausal view of life and interaction, and a constructionistic view of reality.

3.3. Cybernetic epistemology

The science of cybernetics concerns itself with pattern, organisation and process. This new way of thinking encompasses ecology, relationships, language, meanings, complexities, context and a multiverse of realities. In this study, the researcher will explore the relationships and patterns that evolve in the ecology of abortion and investigate the meanings portrayed in language by participants in the specific research context. From a cybernetic perspective, reality is looked at in terms of relationships and the interconnectedness of the elements concerned (Becvar & Becvar, 2009). An individual, viewed from within a cybernetic perspective, is influenced by and influences his environment. There is therefore, interdependence among individuals and their environment.

3.3.1. What is real and what is reality?

Reality and the meaning we attach to it are informed by culture, experience and how we are socialised. Individuals form and co-construct meanings with and in relation to others and their

environment. This is important to acknowledge when attempting to understand how young men make meaning in relation to their experiences of abortion as it allows for variance in the way that abortion is experienced. In acknowledging that reality is dynamic and continuously deconstructed and reconstructed, the researcher is aware that the participants will attribute their own meaning to the abortion experience. The manner in which each participant understands and experiences the abortion is a reflection of his reality. This means that each participant therefore constructs his own reality of abortion and this reality is influenced by various factors (for example whether or not he wanted to keep the baby, his beliefs around abortion, cultural prescriptions around gender roles, and so on).

It is the researcher's opinion that what is real is generally determined by consensus, but that reality is how one experiences what is real. One's reality is therefore not necessarily determined by what is generally accepted to be reality although it is influenced by general consensus pertaining to what is real.

3.3.2. Systems theory

Systems theory is not concerned with the cause of behaviour as people are viewed as mutually interacting and influencing each other (Becvar & Becvar, 2009). In the 1940's, cyberneticians began focusing on patterns of communication and the processing of information in an attempt to understand complex systems. Behaviour was looked at as being influenced by feedback. In systemic terms, feedback is a change regulating mechanism where positive feedback acknowledges and accepts that a change has occurred in a system and negative feedback on the other hand points to the maintenance of the status quo. When discovering that a woman is

pregnant, the couple's relationship is perturbed and they are required to make a decision relating to the disruption of the past state of affairs that has been brought about by the pregnancy. Positive feedback therefore would occur when they accept that there is a change in the system. Whether or not the feedback is perceived as being good or bad is context-bound. Feedback in a system does not *cause* anything; rather it describes the process in the system at a particular point in time.

Systems theory is about looking at the behaviour as well as the response to the behaviour. From this perspective phenomena are not understood in a linear cause-and-effect manner, but rather "as a function of the context or 'systems' within which they occur and where they serve important adaptive or stabilising functions" (Lindegger, 1999, p. 257). Systems go through both stability and change at various points as a means of survival. A potential change in the system is either accepted or opposed depending on what the system needs for a stable, functional state. A well-functioning system experiences both homeostasis and change depending on the need and the context.

An integral point in systems thinking was the shift from first order cybernetics to second order cybernetics. First order cybernetics viewed the observer as an outsider who is observing what is happening inside the system. The focus was on describing what is happening and the observer was not seen as part of what is happening. Second order cybernetics considers the observer as part of the system as her observations, thoughts and actions have an influence on the system.

Systems theory is an ecological perspective which looks at individuals in relation to their psychological, social and physical environment. It is not a pragmatic theory although it can be used to describe relationships, understand events or make changes (Becvar & Becvar, 2009). It proposes that “an individual’s thoughts and actions can be explained and described only by understanding microsystem and macrosystem of the person’s environment” (Woodside, Caldwell & Spurr, 2006, p. 259). There is no judgement regarding good or bad as an individual is viewed relative to his context. An individual’s thoughts and actions are viewed in terms of appropriateness within a particular context.

Systems theory implies viewing people and situations from a holistic perspective and it aims at understanding the world as a set of systems at interplay with each other. It attempts to move past the either/or dichotomy and attempts to view situations from a both/and perspective. The both/and perspective looks at both sides of the story and does not disregard or reject one view over another. From this perspective each side of the story is seen as giving meaning to the other. The use of a particular view therefore depends on the particular context.

According to Systems perspective people, issues and events are not viewed in isolation, but rather in an integrated manner. Consistent with the interpretivist paradigm, the social and historical context in which a person exists is important when attempting to understand the individual. From Systems perspective the why of the matter is not of interest, rather how people interact and/or view the matter at hand. What is of focus are the patterns of interaction as well as the mutual influence between the individual, others and events. There is no isolated cause or effect because all elements of a system impact on each other. It is, therefore, important to

acknowledge in this study that various factors, such as the kind of relationship the male has with the partner, will influence how the abortion is handled.

From a systems perspective, interdependence and subjectivity are viewed as being an inevitable part of observation as the “observer perceives, acts on, and participates in creating his or her own reality” (Becvar & Becvar, 2009, p. 7). Reality is therefore not seen as external to the observer, but rather as constructed by the observer. When working from a Systems perspective, it is important to acknowledge that the research has an impact on the participants, the researcher and the research context.

As much as the participant’s responses and the manner in which he responds are the focus of the study, it must be acknowledged that the researchers questions and how they are posed impact on the participants’ responses and the manner in which they respond. From this perspective, reality is viewed as a multiverse. The researcher is part of the process and is not an objective observer. The researcher and the participant create a common reality within the research context.

3.4. The influence of postmodernism and the turn to language

Postmodernism came as a shift from modernism and shatters the belief in absolute truth, logical reasoning (rationalism) and objective truth (empiricism). Modernism is a more practical view which asserts that knowledge comes from sensory experience and evidence, and that knowledge is based on reason. Modernism is based on the idea that knowledge is out there waiting to be objectively discovered by the knower who is independent from the known (Becvar & Becvar, 2009).

The postmodern perspective suggests an adoption of a critical stance relating to issues of what is knowledge and how can that knowledge be arrived at. This perspective is often associated with plurality and difference. Postmodernists are of the opinion that there is no absolute truth; that individuals determine their own understanding of truth. Postmodernism proposes that realities are social constructs that are context-bound. It holds that there are multiple realities and emphasises the role of language and power in the construction of these realities. In essence, postmodernism promotes the idea of equally valid perspectives rather than facts or levels of correctness (Willig, 2008).

From the perspective of Systems theory, postmodernism reflects an ongoing tension between theories and practices consistent with the level of first-order cybernetics in which the situation is described from an outsider perspective and those consistent with the level of second-order cybernetics in which the researcher is seen as part of what she is observing (Becvar & Becvar, 2009). From the perspective of second-order cybernetics “reality is understood as constructed as a function of the belief systems that one brings to bear on a particular situation and according to which one operates” (Becvar & Becvar, 2009, p. 88).

According to Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers (2004), postmodernism contends that there are multiple realities which are made real by the meanings people attach to them. The meaning of the research and the research context is described from the participants’ perspective as well as that of the researcher. Postmodernism views the researcher and the participant as co-creators of a reality that is shared. The research context is therefore co-created based on the meaning that the researcher and the participant attach to the research.

Postmodernism moves away from the modernist belief that knowledge is objective, reality is rather seen as subjective and constructed through language. According to Becvar and Becvar (2009) this shift brought about the challenging of power which was attributed to those who held knowledge. There was a move from facts and absolute truths to different perspectives which are considered equally valid. This shift from facts to perspectives also led to attention being put on language and discourse.

Language is central to postmodernism as it is a tool that individuals use to construct their reality. It is understood “as the means by which individuals come to know their world and in their knowing simultaneously construct it” (Becvar & Becvar, 2009, p. 91). Language is a tool that individuals use to express their thoughts and experiences. It also forms part of our socialisation and is therefore culture-bound and community bound. Culture and community determine one’s context, therefore context will play a role in establishing the kind of language to be used and how it is used.

3.4.1. Social Constructionism

Social Constructionism is a theory which in many ways is consistent with the tenets of postmodernism and there are many overlaps between the two. Social Constructionism suggests that the meanings that people ascribe to their experiences are created in social interactions through language. Our understanding of knowledge and experiences is constructed in our daily interactions with other individuals. Social construction cautions against merely accepting our assumptions about our reality of the world because there are multiple realities. It requires that a critical stance be taken in the way we understand the world and ourselves. It opens us up to

exploring the constructions of reality that others may have and viewing them from a critical stance. Social construction does not subscribe to the notion of an objective reality therefore we need “to be ever suspicious of our assumptions about how the world appears to be” (Burr, 2003, p. 3). Not only should the researcher view the perspectives of the participants from a critical stance, but also her own views. In social constructionist research the researcher cannot be separate from the research. Objectivity is viewed as an impossibility as it is believed that a researcher cannot fully disregard or move away from his or her values, beliefs, assumptions and opinions. A researcher cannot view the phenomenon being researched from no view at all.

The fact that the researcher chose abortion as a topic of study already implies that she has an opinion on the matter. Looking at abortion from the perspectives of young males further directs the researcher’s views, opinions and assumptions regarding the abortion. The researcher can therefore be assumed to view abortion as not only a woman’s issue, but as one that also affects men. This means that “the task of the researcher therefore becomes to acknowledge and even to work with their own intrinsic involvement in the research process and the part that this plays in the results that are produced” (Burr, 2003, p. 152). The researcher needs to therefore be aware of what she brings into the research process with regards to her biases and assumptions regarding abortion, particularly with regards to the experiences of young men.

Social Constructionism acknowledges the role that cultural and historical beliefs play in our ways of understanding. How we view ourselves, others and our world is influenced by past experiences and social learning. The way in which young men construct their experiences of abortion is influenced by their upbringing, their culture and their social standing. The same goes

for the researcher. Social Constructionism proposes that through interactions people bring together their respective views and co-construct a context-specific reality or understanding.

3.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, cybernetic epistemology systems thinking were discussed. Social Constructionism was also contextualised through a discussion of postmodernism to illustrate how this paradigm can usefully be used to conceptualise abortion within the setting of the current research project. Systems theory promotes viewing an individual relative to his context and acknowledges the mutual impact individuals and the environment have. From this perspective reality is seen as being co-constructed. This perspective further implies that the researcher has an impact on the participants and the research itself.

The following chapter presents the research design and methods followed in this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine the foundation and basic elements of the research approach and method adopted in this study. Discourse analysis as a research design is discussed and the relevance of this method for this specific study is explored. Foucauldian discourse analysis is contextualised within the realm of Social Constructionism as a qualitative research paradigm. The relevance of making use of this paradigm will be evaluated and ethical issues, as well as the reliability and validity of the research study will be explored.

4.2. Research approach: Interpretive qualitative research

A qualitative research approach is adopted in this study in order to get a better understanding of the experiences of men whose partners have had an abortion. Qualitative research focuses on how people experience and make sense of events in terms of the meaning that they personally attach to the events (Willig, 2008). Qualitative researchers are less concerned with uncovering objective truth, as such, the researcher takes care not to impose own meaning to the experiences of participants. Participants are seen as meaning constructing agents who subjectively give meaning their experiences of the world.

4.2.1. The basic tenets of interpretive qualitative research

According to Willig (2008), epistemology “involves thinking about the nature of knowledge itself” (p. 2). It is about how we learn about the nature of reality and it goes hand in hand with

our ontology which involves how we see and describe our world. Our epistemology, as indicated in the previous chapter, is an explanation of our way of thinking.

The study is rooted in an interpretive paradigm which attempts to understand how people make sense of their reality. The interpretive paradigm assumes that there are different realities due to varying human experiences. Therefore, the manner in which participants react to a common experience, will be influenced by past experiences and their interactions with others. Through the descriptions and understandings of reality that participants provide, the researcher can attempt to understand the experiences of the participants. How participants describe their experience of abortion will give better insight and a better understanding of how men construct their experience.

Interpretivism and qualitative research are sometimes used interchangeably. This observation has been noted already by other researchers, such as Williams (2000). For some, the former term is taken to mean all of those approaches in the human sciences that do not take a hypothetico-deductive approach to investigation, whilst others maintain that qualitative research is itself characterised by an interpretive approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 1995; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2000; Willig, 2008). One also notices that researchers that regard themselves as interpretivists often differ in perspectives of what counts as an interpretation, or how one should go about doing the interpretation (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2000).

In this chapter, the term interpretivism is used to indicate those strategies in psychology and social research which interpret the meanings and actors according to their own subjective frame

of reference. There is a tendency in interpretivism to often concentrate on a linguistic interpretation of actor's meanings (Willig, 2008). The definition of interpretivism is broadened in this study to include observation techniques which seek to make sense of actor's actions and language within their natural setting. The interpretive researcher uses rich details to describe what she has observed (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999).

According to the interpretivist perspective reality is not free from bias. Personal feelings, thoughts and opinions influence people's perceptions of existence and how objects and subjects come into being. The interpretive perspective supports the belief that reality is constructed by subjective perception. Predictions and generalisations can, therefore, not be made. According to this perspective, people have free will, purposes, goals, and intentions which imply that people should be studied as active agents.

The interpretive paradigm assumes that all "subjective experiences are real and should be taken seriously (ontology), that we can understand others' experiences by interacting with them and listening to what they tell us (epistemology)" (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999, p. 123). Proponents of an interpretive paradigm are interested in the social construction of meaning. Interpretivism studies meaning and phenomena in context. It acknowledges that human behaviour is context-bound and that various social realities exist due to human experiences being different.

From an interpretive perspective, the researcher and the social world influence each other and there is no value-free, objective reality. Interpretivism embraces the internal reality of subjective experience (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p. 6). From this perspective, the impact of the

researcher on the participants is acknowledged and accounted for. The researcher, through reflection and reflexivity can take note of how she may have played a part in the responses and reactions of participants.

Qualitative interpretive research assumes that reality is socially constructed and it “elicits participant accounts of meaning, experience or perceptions” (Fouché & Delport, 2002, p. 79). According to Willig (2008), qualitative researchers study people in their own territory. In line with this idea, participants were asked as to where they would like the interview to take place and five of them requested that it be done at their homes while one requested that it take place at a friend’s home.

The researcher considered it important to create a context where the participants would be in a place where they would feel comfortable as abortion is quite a sensitive and private matter. With any research, particularly when dealing with sensitive matters, it is important that the researcher is aware not to impose her values and beliefs on participants although it is inevitable that her biases, values and perceptions will in some way have an influence on the research process in terms of the questions asked and how they are asked.

Research on abortion does not put much focus on the experiences of men, particularly young, unmarried men. Qualitative research can be a manner in which the marginalised can be given a voice in either a descriptive or an explanatory manner (Willig, 2008). It can be aimed at interpreting what people say in an attempt to explain the reasons behind what they have said. Qualitative research is also aimed at understanding phenomena rather than explaining them and

therefore “focuses on understanding how people experience and interpret events in their lives” (Whitley, 2002, p. 34).

4.3. Research method

The methods of a research study entail the order in which tasks are done in order to reach a particular objective. It refers to the technique of the research study. In this section, the selection of participants and the process of data collection are briefly described.

4.3.1. Participant selection and data collection

Quantitative research is more concerned with getting a representative sample because it allows effective generalization of data. A representative sample means a sample that resembles the population in as many ways as possible and that allows the researcher to accurately generalize the results. A representative sample should replicate the population properties in approximately the same proportion as they occur in the target population (Bless & Higson-Smith 1995, Brink 1996). In contrast, qualitative research focuses on Nonprobability sampling. Rensburg (1998) explains that nonprobability sampling procedures are used where the population may or may not be accurately represented. Nonprobability sampling is appropriate where the researcher’s aim is to generate theory and wide understanding of social processes.

Participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling, according to Durrheim and Painter (2006) depends not only on availability and willingness to participate, but cases that are selected should be typical of the population. The selection criteria was that

participants should be young, unmarried men of reproductive age whose partners have had an abortion. Six young men living in Welkom were selected purposively to participate in the study.

In-depth interviews were used to collect data from six young men identified to participate in the study. Pitout (1995) indicates that in-depth interviews are useful to obtain more detailed information regarding how the phenomenon is experienced. Interviews lasting between 30-60 minutes were conducted with six young males whose partners had undergone an abortion. Interviews were conducted at locations that the participants chose. Five of the interviews were conducted at the homes of the participants and one was conducted at the home of the participant's friend. Once the data had been collected, transcription took place and then the data was analysed. The data was transcribed verbatim in the language(s) the participants used. The researcher saw it fit to not translate the data during transcription lest the essence of what the participant said be lost in translation. Social Constructionism advocates observing how language is used and by not translating the transcription, the use of language is analysed as it is. It was important that participants speak in a language that they are comfortable with so that they can express themselves freely and fully. For this reason it was important to transcribe in the language(s) that they used.

While the methods of a research explain the process followed in undertaking the research project, the research methodology is about the rationale behind the methods used in the study. It also encompasses the assumptions that underlie the study as well as the theories used in support of these assumptions. It describes the research approach, context and purpose for data collection. Discourse analysis is regarded as both a research design and methodology as it encapsulates a

particular paradigm which is constructionist in nature. The following section describes discourse analysis and how it is used within the context of this study to obtain information related to the research question and how the data obtained within such a study is analysed.

4.4. Discourse analysis

Discourses are ways of speaking or writing that construct an event in a particular manner (Willig, 2008). They are ways in which people express or conceptualise their views and/or their understanding on matters or phenomena. Discourses not only describe things, they also do things such as allow an individual to take a particular position regarding a subject matter and therefore produce a particular version of events. Burr (2003) suggests that discourses can be seen as frames of references which allow us to view the world around us in a certain way. Burr also states that discourses are “connected to social structure and social practices” (2003, p. 64). Discourses, therefore, serve to construct phenomena in different ways with each discourse claiming the right to truth.

Language is central to social activities and allows for a variety of constructions of a particular discourse. Individuals use language in order to construct their understanding of events and to carry out a particular function and/or effect. Discourse analysis looks at language within a particular context. Language is used to construct objects, subjects and events; to construct various versions of the social world. Discourse analysis is about finding patterns in the way language is used by the participants and it is through these patterns that common themes are identified among participants’ discourses. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999, p. 159) propose

that “discourse analysis involves striking a critical distance from the text in order to identify discourses...and to see what these discourses do”.

Discourse analysis suggests that “to make sense of what people say, we need to take into account the social context within which they speak...[and] people’s speech is understood as social action” (Willig, 2008, p. 93-94). It goes beyond content and rather puts emphasis on what language is doing; on what people are trying to achieve with their words. Discourse analysis “interrogates the nature of social action by dealing with how actions and/or meanings are constructed in and through text and talk” (Nikander, 2008, p. 415).

4.4.1. Discourse as action

Elliott (1996) suggests that discourse analysis is concerned with naturally occurring speech and its social rather than linguistic organisation. It is not primarily concerned with content but rather with how language is used. It is concerned with what individuals are doing with the language they use. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) suggest that discourse analysis can be defined as the act of showing how certain discourses are deployed to achieve particular effects in specific contexts. What people say is made sense of by understanding it from the context in which they say it. According to Wood and Kroger (2000) the discourse analyst should look at discourse for what is done, not primarily for what it is about.

Discourse analysis, according to Potter and Wetherell (1987), allows for a better understanding of social life and social interaction from the study of social texts) and acknowledges that there are multiple realities. Like Social Constructionism, discourse analysis requires that the researcher

be critical. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) propose that discourse analysis involves striking a critical distance from the text in order to identify discourses...and to see what these discourses do. It is about finding patterns in the way language is used by the participants and it is through these patterns that common themes will be identified among participants' discourses.

4.4.2. Foucauldian discourse analysis

According to Willig (2008) Foucauldian discourse analysis is concerned with the role of language in the constitution of social and psychological life. It looks at language and language use beyond the immediate context. It looks at the relationship between context, discourse and subjectivity (individuals' feelings and thoughts). Within this approach, discourse is viewed as "a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events" (Burr, 2003, p. 64). This approach is concerned with the particular way in which an individual presents or paints a picture of an event.

Foucauldian discourse analysis is often associated with issues of power and social change. The way in which language is used serves a purpose and has a particular meaning. The attitudes and opinions of individuals are not what is important. What is important is what they do with their use of language; what purpose the way they use language has. According to Burr (2003) discourse regulates knowledge which informs social practices. This in turn is linked to power relations. Those discourses which have been accepted as common knowledge will have more power as the less popular discourses are often marginalised. Burr (2003) states that power, from this perspective, is seen as defining something in a way that produces a particular knowledge that allows you to do what you want.

According to Foucauldian discourse analysis, discourses are linked to social and institutional practices such as marriage, education, parenthood, employment, and so forth. This study looks at the discourses of young, unmarried men whose partners underwent an abortion. Their discourses are looked at in terms of their abortion experiences and the meaning(s) they attach to the experience. According to Elliott (1996) discourse analysis encourages diversity in response. Therefore, although there may be common themes in the responses of participants, it is important for the researcher not to expect participants to give similar responses.

Willig (2008, p. 115-117) suggests six stages which provide guidelines for doing a Foucauldian discourse study. Willig's guidelines for analysing which are adopted in this study are described below:

1. Discursive constructions

This first stage focuses on the construction of the discourses through language. It is focused on the different ways in which the discursive object, in this case the abortion experience, is constructed. For example, the men in this study construct abortion and the decision to abort as ultimately being the woman's decision. In this stage the different ways in which participants construct their discourse of their experience of abortion are identified through highlighting all instances in which the discursive object is referred to, both implicitly and explicitly. This means that not only keywords are looked for but also indirect references to the abortion experience. When participants do not directly refer to their experiences of abortion, it is perceived as another way in which the experience is constructed.

2. Discourses

This stage focuses on identifying discourses within which the constructions of the abortion experience lie. When all the sections that contribute to the construction of the abortion experience have been identified then the differences between the constructions are looked at. For instance, one of the participants in this study expressed how abortion shows just how cruel women can be whereas another participant said that the experience made him realise how strong women really are. This stage focuses on identifying various constructions of the abortion experience within the broader discourse. It is concerned with identifying variety within the wider constructions of the experiences of the participants.

3. Action orientation

This stage places focus on “the discursive context within which the different constructions of the object are being deployed” (Willig, 2008, p. 116). The focus is on what is gained from constructing the abortion experience in a particular way at a particular point in the interview. The researcher then looks at the function of the construction and how it relates to the rest of the surrounding text. This helps in understanding how various constructions of the abortion experience are used to achieve certain goals. For instance participants may construct their experience in such a way that it elicits sympathy from the researcher.

4. Positionings

At this stage the subject positions are looked at. Participant’s constructions of their experiences offer a subject position within the broader discourse in which they attach meaning(s) to their experience. A subject position offers a discursive position from which to speak and act which in

turn has implications for subjectivity. For instance, by constructing the decision to abort as that of the woman, men are positioning themselves as helpless.

5. Practice

At this stage the focus is on the relationship between discourse and practice. An exploration of the ways in which discursive constructions and the subject positions contained within them open up or close down opportunities for action. By positioning themselves in a particular way within a particular construction of the abortion experience places certain limits regarding what can be said and done.

6. Subjectivity

This is the stage where the relationship between discourse and subjectivity are explored. Discourse influences how we see the world and how we are or behave. Once a subject position has been taken people tend to see the world from that position. The consequences of the participant's position are explored in terms of what is thought and felt and experienced from the participant's particular subject position.

4.5. Ethical considerations

Ethical practices are important so as to ensure that participants are not exploited during the research process and that they are not coerced into participation. It is important and simply courteous to ensure that participants know and understand what they are taking part in as well as how and where the information they provide will be used. Willig (2008) offers some basic ethical issues that should be considered when doing discourse analytical work, namely:

Confidentiality

When doing research on personal topics such as abortion, it is imperative that participants are assured of confidentiality, and privacy. By confidentiality, it is meant that the information provided by the participants as well as their identity will only be available to the researcher and the supervisor. Participants' names have therefore been changed. According to Singleton in Strydom and Venter (2002, p. 67) privacy means that participants can "decide when, where, to whom, and to what extent his or her attitudes, beliefs and behaviour will be revealed".

Deception

Willig (2008) warns against deceiving participants. In this study participants were informed on what the study is about and that it is for academic purposes. There was no deception.

Informed consent

Participants' consent to take part in the study was obtained before data was collected and participants were required to sign a consent form (appendix 1) that clearly states the aim of the research, the procedures that will be followed as well as what the results will be used for. The consent form also informs the participants of their rights. The permission of participants was obtained to use their experiences for research purposes. The participants were also requested to give permission to use a voice recorder during the interviews. They were further informed verbally of the reasons for recording the interview.

Participants were informed of their right to remain anonymous to the extent that only the researcher would know their identities, and that pseudonyms would be used. Privacy and confidentiality were ensured by making data available only to the researcher and the supervisor.

Right to withdraw

Participants were informed of their right to stop the interview or skip any questions posed to them should they feel uncomfortable. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time or to discontinue the interview at any point of the research without any negative consequences or harm against them.

Debriefing

Prior to the interviews, participants were informed on the aim of the study, what informed the decision to undertake this particular topic. After the interview, the interview process was reflected on and participants were given the opportunity to ask any questions and provide any comments or feedback regarding the research.

4.6. Reflexivity

According to Whitley (2002), the researcher is an inseparable part of the research process and the researcher's experiences are also valuable data. Reflexivity is about the researcher reflecting on her own position in the research process. As mentioned above, the participant and the researcher co-construct their research context. Reflexivity refers to the researcher's awareness of the role she plays in the research process. She becomes aware of the impact that the participant and the research context has on her as well as the impact she has on the participant and the context.

Reflexivity also implies equal status between the researcher and the participants and their understanding of the issue at hand. In this study participants were also given an opportunity to ask questions regarding the issue. Reflexivity compels the researcher to take critical stance and analyse; she constructs her analyses. She also needs to acknowledge her values, opinions, biases and prejudices as they inevitably also impact on the research process.

The research data is a construction that resulted from my participation in the interview process and the writing of the stories gleaned from the interview data. The manner in which the discourse were extracted and analysed follows an inductive and intuitive process of constructing meaning. According to Anderson (1992), “one might wait with the applications of theory and let the practice be as free as possible in its search for relevant descriptions and understandings. Thereafter one might discuss these findings” (p.55). The process of coding the data is in essence a construction of a new conversation that results from being open and sensitive to the text, while also being sensitive and open to the messages coming from within the self of the researcher as you interact with the data.

4.7. Conclusion

The research data process and methodological consideration were discussed in this chapter. The results of the study are presented in the following chapter accompanied by extracts from the interviews.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents data from the interviews conducted with six young men who shared their experiences of having had a partner that had an abortion. Brief descriptions of the participants will be provided so as to create some context of the participants. The data will be presented in according to how the abortion experience is constructed. The various discourses around abortion will also be described.

5.2. Description of participants

Six young men (who will be referred to as Kevin, Thabiso, Lolo, Bradley, Andile and Lebo) were interviewed. Three of them (Kevin, Lebo and Andile) knew that their girlfriends would be having an abortion and the other three knew about the pregnancy, but only found out about the abortion after it was done. The following are brief descriptions of the young men and their situations. Their names have been changed for confidentiality reasons. The ages mentioned here are the ages at the time of the interviews.

Kevin: Kevin is 24 years old and has an older sister. He lives with his parents and is in tertiary. At the time of the abortion, Kevin was in tertiary with a part-time job and his girlfriend was in Gr. 12 (matric) when they found out she was pregnant in 2008. They did not tell their parents of the pregnancy, but had a discussion between themselves and they decided on an abortion. The decision was driven by the couple not being ready to be parents, the girl not being done with high school and Kevin not having a stable job amongst other factors. Kevin did not go with his

girlfriend to the abortion clinic, but states that he was there for his partner when she got back from the clinic. Their relationship ended soon after the abortion. Kevin wonders whether deciding to have the abortion was the right decision.

Thabiso: Thabiso is 28 years old and is the eldest in a family of two siblings; he has a younger sister. He lives alone in a rented house. He works at a shop that does signs and logos, but also sells t-shirts (that he designs) on the side. He and his girlfriend were both in tertiary when they found out she was pregnant in 2003. He and a couple of friends had a small clothing design business at the time. Thabiso and his girlfriend had decided to keep the baby and he had told his parents about the pregnancy.

He subsequently dropped out of university and they (he and his partner) moved to Johannesburg so that he could find a job in order to provide for his girlfriend and the baby. His girlfriend told him she was visiting her family in Lesotho, but came to Welkom instead and had an abortion without telling him. She used the money that they had been saving up for when the baby was born. Thabiso later told his parents that it had been a false alarm and that his girlfriend was not really pregnant. Their relationship fell apart and Thabiso moved to Cape Town. Thabiso still harbours anger towards his girlfriend.

Lolo: Lolo is 32 years old and is the last born in his family. He has two siblings and four half-siblings. He lives with his friend in a rented house and has temporary employment. Lolo and his girlfriend had been dating for five years when they found out about the pregnancy in 2005. They had agreed to keep the baby and he used to go with her to doctor's appointments and tried to show her support. She found a job and felt that the pregnancy would get in the way of her career. The couple spoke about the matter and Lolo asked his partner to keep the baby, but she had an

abortion without his knowledge. Lolo harbours not only anger towards his girlfriend, but hatred as well. The experience and deceit has led to him not liking nor trusting women in general.

Bradley: Bradley is 22 years old and is the second born in a family of three siblings. He has an older step-brother and a younger sister and they all live with their mother. Bradley is currently suspended from tertiary for being involved in a violent student protest. He was a student at the university of technology and his girlfriend was in Gr. 12 (matric) when they found out she was pregnant in 2009. They had agreed to keep the baby and they had also agreed not to tell anyone until she started showing. His girlfriend's older sister (and guardian) found out about the pregnancy and told her to have an abortion which she did without Bradley's knowledge. Bradley broke off the relationship and although he still sees his girlfriend around the neighbourhood, they are not on speaking terms.

Andile: Andile is 26 years old and is the second born in his family; he has three sisters and a half-brother. He works as a building site manager and also manages local performing artists. Andile and his girlfriend were in tertiary and had been together for about two months when they found out that she was pregnant in 2006. Although they initially thought of keeping the baby they ultimately decided to have an abortion. He asked for money from his parents (giving false reasons for needing the money) and he accompanied her to the abortion clinic and waited in the waiting room. Andile and his girlfriend talked about the experience and the procedure and supported one another. They named the baby.

A few months after the abortion Andile's girlfriend complained of a void that she felt she needed to fill. She 'convinced' him to try for a baby, which they did. She fell pregnant again, in 2007, and he was looking forward to fatherhood and was ready to tell his parents. She then said she

wants an abortion again as she cannot disappoint her family by having a baby. Andile was against the decision, but reluctantly went along with the decision as he felt he had no choice. He again accompanied her to the clinic, but this time he waited outside the clinic. The second time around, they did not talk about the experience. The couple broke up a few months later and about a year after the break up, Andile found out that the girl has a baby with someone else. Andile expressed anger, hurt and feelings of betrayal.

Lebo: Lebo is 27 years old and is self-employed. He designs and prints t-shirts and caps. He lives with his parents. He was not really in a relationship with the woman he impregnated. At the time he found out about the pregnancy, he and the woman had not been in contact for some time and she would be busy when he would try to contact her. He initially did not believe the woman when she told him she was pregnant in 2008. She told him she wants an abortion and he agreed, also because he felt like he had no choice. He provided money for the woman to have the abortion. Although Lebo would have rather not known of the pregnancy and/or the abortion, he feels the abortion was the right decision at the time because of the nature of their relationship.

5.3. Presentation of empirical data

The results are presented according to step one and two of Willig's six steps of data analysis namely, (1), discursive constructions where the focus is on how the abortion and the experience thereof is constructed and (2) identification of the various discourses that the men share around abortion. The discourses are illustrated below with reference to extracts from the interview transcripts:

Reproduction as a woman's issue

Men often view abortion as something the woman has the final say on. They tend to feel obliged to go with the decision whether they agree or not. The decision is, in many cases, left up to the woman as she will be the one that has to carry the baby should an abortion not be done. Women are still seen as the primary caregiver and are therefore seen as the decision-makers regarding abortion.

Andile: *“So I asked her ‘whats up, what are we gonna do about it?...fine, it’s your body. It’s your life, but just know this time I’m not on your side...at the end of the day it’s the individual that decides on their body”*

Kevin: *“The baby has to grow up, tlameile a be [it has to be] breastfed”*

Lebo: *“So I asked her what, what she wants to do...If she decides she doesn’t wanna go through the whole pregnancy thing and ja, I guess she has more say about what goes on with her than I do...“I wish men had wombs. Man, I would carry my fucken child man.”*

Rationalisation

It is not uncommon for men who have agreed to the abortion to give excuses for their decision. Men are often blamed for women having abortions and they therefore may feel the need to explain why they did not disagree to the abortion. On the other hand there is also a need to explain why they agreed when they were actually against the decision.

Kevin: *“You have a job, but it’s not...it’s not a job that you’d be able to raise someone...”*

“I did my matric, ke qetile [I am finished], went to tertiary, ho monate [it is wonderful], but what about her, wa bona [you see], what about her?”

Lebo: *“I don’t think it would have been healthy for the kid to be in...to be around in a relationship which the mother and father isn’t, are not really getting along”*

Emasculation

When an abortion decision is made, by one or both partners, men tend to feel weakened; they tend to question their masculinity. With the decision being viewed as ultimately that of the woman, men tend to feel sidelined, like their opinion and feelings do not matter.

Andile: *“So it’s like, ‘was it me that you were against?’”*

“So she just used me for the money to get, you know...”

Lolo: *“Ke ile ka utlwa kele motho emong a [I felt as though I was a different person]... ke’ore... ya useless [I felt like someone who is useless]”*

“Ke’ore ke ile ka fellwa ke matla [I felt powerless]...“Ke ntho e etsahatseng ho rona re le babedi, a nka qeto yena a le mong [It’s something that happened to both of us, then she made a decision on her own]...E etsa monna a skaba le boikarabelo [it turns a man into an irresponsible person]”

Lebo: *“I didn’t wanna be the one that kept, that wanted to keep the baby when she didn’t want to”*

“I know I didn’t a baby at the time, myself, and ja, I didn’t have much say”

“Men are mostly like, I don’t wanna say submissive, but they, they sort of pull back.”

“The man’s role is a bit more on the sideline, in the background”

Thabiso: *“Like I’m not man enough even my, where my baby’s life is concerned I’m, I don’t matter.”*

“You know. And then they just taken and you had the power to stop that, but you couldn’t do shit.”

“Maybe if I was financially well off like, you know, she wouldn’t have minded or I was in a position like... you know.”

“Ja, maybe she didn’t believe that we’d pull through, something like that.”

Doubt

After the fact, men that knew and agreed to the abortion tend to question whether the decision they made was the right one. They tend to wonder if they should have done things differently and if so, what it is they could have done differently,

Andile: *“’Cause I could sense that we both wanted it, but we were too scared to tell our parents”*

“I wish I had more money or I had a decent job by then”.

Kevin: *“The decision I took, well, hell, was it a good one?”*

“But now, thinking about it, was it really, really, really, really a good, good thing?”

Support

Men who have been informed about the decision to abort often feel the need to be there and to support their partners. There is a sense of responsibility for putting their partner in such a position.

Andile: *“I even sat in the other room, the waiting room, when it happened”*

“I was waiting in the car outside so they never saw me the second time”.

Kevin: *“I’ll support any decision you take because le nna, wa bona, I’m responsible for what happened.”*

Lebo: *“If it was by me I think I’d want to be there”*

“I know such things like you don’t, you need someone. You need support”

Pain - ‘Tigers don’t cry’

Men, from when they are little boys, are often taught to be tough and to not express feelings of hurt. They are socialised to be tough, but this does not mean they do not experience these feelings. When they do experience feelings of hurt, men tend to cover them up and to try to deal with them on their own. Although they may acknowledge their pain, men tend to not show it.

Kevin: *“I have experienced it and it’s not a nice thing, it’s not a nice thing”*

“I know the pain that comes ka nthonyana tse jwalo (with such things)”

Lolo: *“So ke ile ka suffer-a for two years eno (so I suffered for those two years...)”*

“So e qala eba bohloko daai ding eo, hore a nke qeto a le mong... (So that thing starts being painful, that she made that decision on her own)”

“...eka o hlokahaeletswe ke mme...(like your mother has passed away)”

“Ke ile kae kwalla pelo ntho ena ke batlana le solution yah ore nna ke iphekola jwang (I kept this thing in my heart trying to find a solution as to how to heal myself)”

“Taba kena le ho lora ngwana (thing is I sometimes dream of a child)”

Thabiso: *“I ran. To Cape Town. I went as far as I could that time. Running away from the pain.”*

“Eight years later and shit is still making me depressed.”

“And I had emotional pain and no need to release it, uhm, through physical pain.”

“The pain was too much”

Fatherhood dream destroyed

To some, particularly those who wanted their partner to carry to term, the abortion was an end to their dream and hope of being a father. The excitement and looking forward to being a father was crushed. The sacrifices made to provide for the unborn baby are seen to have been in vain. There is a sense of been cheated of their chance at being a father.

Lolo: *“Nna ne ke batla ngwana (I wanted the baby)”*

“Ne ke zama ka hohle-hohle hore keng, ke protect-e ngwana...le yena hape (I was trying by all means to protect the baby...and her also)”

Andile: *“I really feel cheated. I felt robbed...I was also looking forward to it”*

Thabiso: *“I even dropped out of college for a couple of months just to hold my own, man.”*

“I had already told my parents hore ke phothile (...that I had impregnated her).”

Attachment and Loss

Just as an expectant mother might feel a sense of attachment to the unborn baby (even if she is considering an abortion) so might the expectant father. It is not uncommon for men to experience a sense of loss after the abortion regardless of whether or not they agreed to it. A pregnancy tends to evoke various emotions which do not go away instantly just because an abortion was done. Therefore, the abortion, evokes a sense of loss of what could have been.

Andile: *“I really feel cheated. I felt robbed...I was also looking forward to it”*

“Ok, maybe I’m lying ’cause we sort of had a name for it. It’s crazy, ja, ’cause maybe I guess I was attached, but you know, I admit it”.

Lolo: *“Ba cut-ile life ya ngwana’ka enele hore tlameile ke tloba le yena (they cut the life of my baby that I was supposed to have)”*

Thabiso: *“You gotta protect your own, man.”*

“I have a more bond to the baby than her... ’cause the bond with the baby is spiritual and physical.”

Abortion as murder

All the participants seem to view abortion as killing someone or a living organism. They view abortion as murder; as the ending of a life. The view is of their baby being killed and/or denied a life (particularly by the woman).

Andile: *“I helped kill someone”*

“I just murdered according to me”

Bradley: *“I would tell her ‘your sister killed our baby”*

Kevin: *“you denying someone life”*

“ha ke encourage batho ba phetseng hantle hore ba etse, daai ding (I don’t encourage people in their right mind to do this thing”

Lolo: *“Bona babe ba decide-a hore, ok, ba kill-e ngwana (then they decided that, ok, they will kill the baby)”*

“Le nou ntse ke nka ele murder (even now I regard it as murder)”

Lebo: *“She actually killed someone”*

“It’s like a life that you’re, that you’re, that you’re thinking of destroying”

Thabiso: *“I believe there is life even in the foetus, man. The spirit is already there, sometimes grow...growing”*

“So ja, it felt like murder.”

Anger

With the feelings of being denied the chance to be a father, the helplessness that comes with feeling that they do not have a choice in the decision to abort as well as the pent up feelings of hurt, it is expected that the men would have anger. There is anger, not only at their partners, but at themselves also for not doing more to try to keep the baby.

Andile: *“You see, like this one now, I was pissed off, really”.*

“I was sort of bad-mouthing her... I made sure that they think it’s her fault not mine”

“So right now she has a kid and I’m here - no kid, you see. So I’m still angry with her about that”

“I felt used, you know. Maybe I was just the guy that provided the money to do all those things, you know”

Bradley: *“So I was rather betrayed”*

“We did it together and we agreed we were going to keep the baby”

“I am angry”

Lolo: *“Ke hore entlek motho wa mosadi ke motho ya... ha ke mmatle, man! (Actually a woman is somebody that I hate, man)”*

“Ha kesa batla ho ipona ke le situation-eng sa motho wa mosadi a nkutlwisa bohloko (I don’t ever want to see myself in a situation where a woman hurts me again)”

“Mare a ntshepisitse hore ha ana etsa ntho eo, k’hae etsa (even though she promised that she wouldn’t do that thing, she did it)”

“So ke bona ele ho balea boikarabelo ho dumellana le melao ya di abortion [so I see agreeing with abortion laws as running from responsibility]”

“Ntse kele ready for ho etsa revenge [I’m still ready for revenge]”

“Ona le ngwana nou. Ha mo bolaya keng...le yena oo jwalo ka waka [she has a child now. Why did she not kill him too... like mine]”

Thabiso: *“In all honesty I felt betrayed”*

“Like broken-hearted, you got dumped type pain.”

“I remember feeling like I have to avenge this, man.”

“You know, make them fall in love, break their hearts”

“That’s something worse, man, like spitting in my face, you know. Having my balls cut off in front of my kids.”

“Used mother fucken six hundred bucks a inkileng account-ong ya rona [...that she took from our account].”

“Took six hundred of the savings to go kill that baby.”

“I wanted to fuck her up...cut her throat or something.”

Secrecy

The decision to have an abortion often comes with secrecy. There is secrecy from the female who does not tell their partner of their intention to abort. There is also a secrecy from the couple not to tell their family and friends of the pregnancy and the decision to abort. There is a sense of not wanting people to know about the experience, either to protect themselves or their partner.

Andile: *“’Cause I could sense that we both wanted it, but we were too scared to tell our parents”*

“I called my parents and made up a story about me needing money”.

Kevin: *“Re le babedi feela (just the two of us), without the knowledge of our parents”*

Lebo: *“I don’t really see why they should know about something that they wouldn’t have approved of in the first place”*

Thabiso: *“K’ha kere ene (so I told them it was) a false alarm, she wasn’t pregnant. I had to lie.”*

“Ja, so no custom was never made, nothing. I remains a secret.”

“How do you tell your parent that shit like ‘yo, it wasn’t my fault, but that bitch she done killed my baby’”

“They would hate her”

Shame

There is a sense of shame and embarrassment that comes with abortion, regardless of the reasons for the decision, people do not feel they can talk about the experience because of fear of being judged.

Andile: *“I felt ashamed. I felt... I didn’t feel like a normal human being”*

“Telling them would seem like I was bragging”

Family (parental) expectations

Young people often opt to undergo an abortion because of fear of disappointing their parents. They fear the reactions of their families should they find out they are going to have a baby. Once the abortion has been done there is still shame and fear of the families’ reactions should they find out about the abortion.

Andile: *“She can’t go along with it because she was a first year student, she didn’t wanna disappoint her parents”*

“Cause I could sense that we both wanted it, but we were too scared to tell our parents”

Bradley: *“And her sister forced her to... ’cause her sister was her sole provider”*

Lebo: *“I don’t think they would have approved...of...my having a kid with her”*

Thabiso: *“And uh, they would be disappointed if she got a baby while studying, you know.”*

“Especially when you have a mom who’s always telling you hore ‘thaka tsa hao dina le bana’ ‘tseding di a hlahlamisa’ (...that your peers are having children, some are having their second”)

Guilt

Men often feel guilt after the abortion. There is guilt for agreeing to the abortion, guilt for not doing more to keep the baby, guilt for keeping such a secret from family and friends and guilt for killing the baby.

Andile: *“You know the normal guilt of I just...to kill someone or I helped kill someone”.*

Kevin: *“You denying someone life”*

“I have denied someone, wa bona, a chance to live”

“‘Kebe o zamme haholo, man (You could have tried harder)”

“I have denied them also the opportunity...to become grandparents”

Lebo: *“Just knowing that you know, you, you, you, you decided to kill someone”*

Thabiso: *“I have never been cleansed from that. I believe if you lose a baby you gotta slaughter a sheep or something.”*

“Who knows maybe the dark cloud is still following me, but from my baby.”

Shifting responsibility and distancing self

From this study, it appears that young men tend to (implicitly) shift the responsibility for the situation unto their partners. They distance themselves from the situation and leave the decision to the woman. They tend to portray their role in the situation as minor and as that of a support structure for the woman.

Andile: “So, ja, she talked me into it and we end up doing it again”.

“And that time I really, I wasn’t, I was too young to know anything. I was just blank” and “I was just supporting her. I felt sorry for her to be honest”.

Kevin: “So, wena what do you ’tend to do, wa bona, ka the situation?”

“No, wa bona, wa bona nna le di doctor tsa di tshepe, nna le dingaka...ha re connect-e (you see medical doctors and I don’t connect)”

Lebo: “*So I asked her what, what she wants to do*”

“I helped her. Got her some money”

“I thought about it that she actually killed someone”

Relationship breakdown

A common occurrence after the abortion is the ending of the relationship. The abortion experience seems to have an impact on the couple’s relationship regardless of whether the men knew about the decision to abort or not.

Andile: “After the abortion things just went bad... it just fell apart”

Bradley: “And about a few months later from then I saw fit to breakup with the girl”

Lolo: “Ona ntsa tlo mpolaya jwalo ka ngwana oo (she was going to kill me just like that baby)”

“So abortion yae entseng ke yona e sentseng ntho engwe le engwe (So the abortion that she did ruined everything)”

Thabiso: “Dude, I didn’t even wanna touch her. I don’t remember having an erection after that.”

Lack of forgiveness

For some of the men the anger is still very evident to a point where they are unable to forgive the women for having undergone an abortion. Some of the men seem to have difficulty forgiving themselves.

Lolo: “*Ho ile hoa senyeha ntho tse baie even le now hak’so motshwarele* (a lot of things went bad, even now I haven’t forgiven her)”

“*Ha wa ntsebisa then be ke o tshwarela hape re tswela pele, ho nna ke bona ele ntho engwe nkare o baleha boikarabelo* (You didn’t tell me then I forgive you and we carry on, to me it’s something like running from your responsibility)”

“*Nkese tshwarele mmolai lekgale* (I can never forgive a murderer)”

Andile: “*Ja, so right now she has a kid and I’m here - no kid, you see. So I’m still angry with her about that.*”

Never again

The abortion experience appears to have had a major impact on the participants. It is an experience that they would rather not have to experience again. They vow to do all they can should they be in a position again in which their partner wants to have an abortion.

Andile: *“I think I’d force her to keep it”*

“I’d be crushed, but that’s gonna be the end of me and her”

Bradley: *“I mean if my girlfriend pre...gets pregnant I wouldn’t risk her having an abortion”*

Lolo: *“Ne ke sa tlo tswela pele le yena...(I would not carry on with her)”*

Kevin: *“I would do anything, everything in my powers to keep the baby”*

Lebo: *“I wouldn’t do it again.”*

“I wouldn’t let my girlfriend or anyone that I get pregnant go with it, like do it again”

Thabiso: *“I would definitely dump her and I would not just let it go, man.”*

“Even now I’m still saying no abortion.”

Alcohol and promiscuity

It is not uncommon for men to turn to alcohol in an attempt to avoid their pain. Some men become promiscuous either in an attempt to hurt women as much as their hurting or in an attempt to avoid being attached to one woman and risking being hurt again.

Andile: *“So while I was sitting there I was just drunk, just so I can bear with it”*

“That’s why I’m saying we were drunk already so it felt much easier to talk”

“So then had I been sober, I don’t think I would have told anybody”

Bradley: *“The fastest way to deal with everything is to get drunk and be with women”*

“Slept with like 15 girls all of last year”

Thabiso: *“Fucked so many women. Just went loose until I thought I was in love again.”*

“You know, make them fall in love, break their hearts”

Perception of women

The perception that the men have of women based on their (the men) experiences varies. Although there is anger and a sense of loss, some view women as being strong for going through the process. Some who had no knowledge of the abortion view women as deceptive and dangerous.

Lolo: *“Batho ba bo mme ke di tsotsi [women are crooks]”*

“Ke nnete le batle, le jwang, mare le kgopo bo mama [it is true you women (pointing at the researcher) are beautiful, you are whatever, but women are cruel]”

Lebo: *“I respect them more ’cause what they can put up with, they go trough at times”*

“I’ve always thought their strong, but like ja, I got to experience that first-hand and understood why, you know, they can be such tough people at times”.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter presented the results of the study. Extracts from interviews conducted with six young men were provided in an attempt to add to the authenticity of the findings. The following chapter discusses the results and provides the interpretation of the discourses constructions of how young men talk about abortion and make meaning of their experiences.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented the results of the study focusing on how young men construct their experiences of abortion and the discourses that emerge around the issue. In this chapter, the effect of the constructions and what the discourses achieve is discussed focusing specifically on how participants construct their role as partners and how they position themselves with regards to the abortion

6.2. Analysis of results

The results are analysed by integrating the following steps suggested by Willig (2008) when doing discourse analysis:

- (1) **Action orientation** which looks at what is gained or achieved by constructing the abortion experience in a particular way,
- (2) **Positioning** - is a stage which looks at the position in which the participants place themselves through their constructions of their experiences.
- (3) **Discourse practice**, which focuses on how the constructions the participants make as well as the positioning may limit them or open them up to various experiences and/or opportunities.
- (4) **Subjectivity** is a stage that addresses the consequences or implications that come with the various positions participants place themselves in.

6.2.1. Tigers don't cry

Participants expressed pain with regards to the abortion in terms of the loss of the baby and the loss of the prospect of fatherhood. Even Kevin, for whom going through with the pregnancy was not an option, expressed pain and a sense of loss. It appears that the pain of those who did not know about the abortion is embedded in anger. Participants that knew about the abortion expressed a sense of not really having much of a choice in the decision-making process as it is ultimately the woman's decision as it is her body. All of the men reported that their relationships ended shortly after the abortion, mostly due to not being able to forgive themselves and/or their partner. This therefore, translates to experiencing a double loss; loss of a baby and loss of a relationship.

Apart from the general sense that men have regarding who makes the final decision when it comes to abortion, the Choice of Termination of Pregnancy Act (Act 92 of 1996) also somehow immobilises men when it comes to deciding whether a baby should be kept or not. The law gives women the right to have an abortion without their partners' consent which therefore gives them the right not to tell their partners about the abortion (until after the fact). On the other hand, even if women tell partners that they want an abortion, there is not much men can do to stop them because their consent is not required.

6.2.2. Emasculation

Finding out about the pregnancy, in itself, puts men in a difficult position because regardless of whether or not they want to keep the baby, they feel it's ultimately the woman's decision to make as she will be the one carrying the baby. Having their girlfriend go for an abortion, with or without their knowledge, made the men feel somewhat inadequate. The men report feeling that they had not fulfilled their role as a man, their role as a protector. They felt that their abilities to be fathers were questionable. Thabiso felt that his girlfriend did not trust that he could provide for her and the baby. He reports not feeling inadequate as a man ("Like I'm not 'man' enough even...where my baby's concerned"). Lolo states that he felt useless because his girlfriend made all the decisions (regarding the life of their baby) on her own. Andile's girlfriend fell pregnant after their break up and she kept the baby which led to Andile question her perception of him, particularly as a father ("was it me that you were against"). There was a sense of being disrespected among the men who did not know about the abortion. Thabiso views what his girlfriend did as more than being disrespectful; to him it is a humiliation of some sort ("Like spitting in my face...having my balls cut off in front of my kids).

Although the young men did not explicitly say it, they felt used, like they were no more than sperm donors. It is as if they were good enough to procreate yet they have no say in what happens to the life of their baby. In most cases they were also used to finance the abortion procedure which further exacerbates the feeling of being used. Thabiso found out that his girlfriend used the money they had been saving up for the baby to finance the abortion and this adds to him viewing the situation as more than just disrespect. Andile had to call his parents and make up a story about needing money so that his girlfriend could have the abortions, one of which he was totally against.

These constructions of feeling useless, emasculated and used evoke feelings of sympathy. When listening to these men one cannot help, but feel sorry for them. Through these constructions the men place themselves in a position of helplessness, but also a position that somehow relinquishes them of responsibility. The men who knew about the abortion portray themselves as bystanders in the whole situation. This in turn prevents them from looking at the role they might have played in their partners' decision to abort. The view or portrayal of themselves as emasculated and useless may have led to the men attempting to gain their masculinity through promiscuity as indicated in the following extracts:

Thabiso: “So that made me sorta like I’m not ‘man’ enough so I would boost my ego, or confidence or whatever the hell it is”;

Bradley: “The fastest way to deal with everything is to get drunk and be with women”.

6.2.3. Pain

The men seem to have a tendency to downplay the pain that they felt at the time of the abortion and that which they are still feeling. This could be linked to society's expectations of men to be strong and inexpressive of emotion. It seems as if the more comfortable manner in which men can express their pain is by hiding it behind anger. The men seemed to express anger more readily and openly than their pain. The men say that they are over the incident and that they have moved on, but it could be heard in their voices and seen on their faces that the pain is still there. Thabiso and Bradley tried to hide their pain and anger behind jokes and laughter, but it still came

through. Thabiso tried masking his pain in being playful throughout the interview. With him it was more how he said things than what he said.

Bradley: “She didn’t want no babies running around I guess (smiles)”.

By being playful the men distance themselves from the pain and try not to acknowledge it. This could lead to them not working through their pain and not truly moving passed it. The internalised pain could then manifest as anger, particularly towards women.

Lebo, Kevin and Andile tried to mask their pain in being calm and composed. The men tried to speak of the experience in a casual manner so as to not get emotional. They tend to speak of the abortion in a detached manner, but the pain comes through at times. Lolo, on the other hand, was open about his anger and pain. He speaks of the pain of the abortion as being similar to that of losing one’s mother. Although Lolo is open about his pain, he also is not moving past it and it is manifesting as anger.

6.2.4. Loss

The men experience the abortion as not only losing a baby, but also as losing the opportunity to become a father. It is a loss of the dreams of raising a child that came with knowing about the pregnancy, particularly for those men who did not know about the abortion. Men, who did not know about their partner’s wish to abort, became attached to the idea of fatherhood only to have that taken away from them. Thabiso speaks of the spiritual and physical bond between a parent and his child, implying that he had already bonded with his baby.

There is also a sense of loss in terms of the trust in the relationship and a loss of the relationship itself. In some instances, as with Andile, Lolo, Bradley and Thabiso, the breakdown of the relationship also stems from the lack of forgiveness. The men report not being able to forgive their girlfriends for robbing them of the opportunity to be fathers. The men reported thinking about their children. They think of what gender they might have been, how old they would be now and about what they would have liked to do with their children. Lolo reports dreaming of a baby and he believes it is the baby that was aborted.

Lolo expresses a further loss; a loss of respect and trust for women in general. He expresses a hatred for women which has led to him engaging in same sex relationships as he cannot trust women.

“ke bone hole molemo hore ke rate motho wa monna” (I found it better to love a man).

6.2.5. Abortion as murder

The majority of the young men speak of abortion as murder, as killing someone. The men who did not know about the abortion speak of how their girlfriends killed their babies.

Thabiso: “Took six hundred of the savings to go kill that baby”.

The discourse, therefore, is of the woman that killed the baby even with the men that knew about the abortion. It is as if they try to distance themselves from the ‘murder’ that they speak of. Andile when speaking of the first abortion, speaks of how he helped kill the baby therefore implying that he was not directly responsible.

Andile: “I helped kill someone”.

Abortion is seen by these men as ultimately a woman's decision. It is as if their opinion and/or their wishes do not matter; like they do not matter.

Kevin: "I'll support any decision you take..."

Thabiso: "Like I'm not man enough even my, where my baby's life is concerned I'm, I don't matter".
Andile: "I was just supporting her. I felt sorry for her to be honest".

Abortion is constructed as murder. The young men talk about abortion as killing the baby. Indirectly, abortion can be seen as killing the man's dream of fatherhood. The Abortion Law can, therefore, also be seen as killing the voices of men when it comes to deciding on the life of their baby.

Andile: "we were hoping that things would work out and we'd end up keeping it".

"I told her that I wanna keep the baby"

"why is it only the woman's decision when it comes to abortions, but once the baby is born I have to be involved?"

Bradley: "I felt that (robbed) worse when my friend got his first baby two months ago, you know".

6.2.6. Anger

The men with whom their partners had not discussed the abortion, expressed a lot of anger. These men had talked to their partners and they had mutually agreed to keep the baby only to find out the woman had an abortion without their consent. Thabiso and Lolo expressed wanting to avenge the deaths of their babies. They expressed having thoughts of physically harming their

partners. Lolo reported that if he ever met his girlfriend and he had a gun he would shoot her. His anger is aggravated by his girlfriend's subsequent infidelity and the fact that she then had a baby with another man.

Although Andile's girlfriend told him she wants an abortion, his anger stems from the fact that the second time around his girlfriend asked to have a baby and then changed her mind and wanted an abortion when he had become accustomed to the idea of being a father. Andile also found out later that there was a possibility that the second baby was not his because his girlfriend was apparently cheating on him. His anger is further aggravated by his girlfriend having a child approximately a year after their break-up. Lolo and Andile are left wondering why their baby was killed and the other man's baby kept.

Andile: "A year later she went and fell pregnant and she kept it. (tapping on the table) Ja, that's real...that really pisses me off even 'til today"

"Ja, so right now she has a kid and I'm here - no kid, you see. So I'm still angry with her about that".

Lolo: "Ona le ngwana nou. Ha mo bolaya keng...le yena oo jwalo ka waka,.. (she has a child now. Why did she not kill it like mine)?"

Lolo's anger is so intense that it has turned into hatred, not only towards his girlfriend, but towards all females. He does not trust females and states that he never wants to be in a position where another woman hurts him again so he has decided to live a homosexual lifestyle.

Lolo: "Keore ha kesa batla ho ipona ke le situation-eng sa motho wa mosadi a nkutluisa bohloko (I don't want to see myself in a situation where a female hurts me)".

There is a sense that the men who knew about the decision to abort are also angry, but somehow do not feel they have a right to be angry since they went along with the decision. There is also anger towards themselves for putting themselves and their partners in that situation and also for going through with the decision to have an abortion.

6.2.7. Secrecy

There is a lot of secrecy surrounding the abortion experience. The couple tends to not tell anyone about the experience as they go through it, particularly not their families. The secrecy seems to fuelled, mostly from the females, by fear of disappointing their parents as well as fear of the reactions of family and friends. Disclosure of the experience seems to be with friends and/or siblings (not to parents) and it seems to happen only a few months after the abortion.

Andile: “They were telling me their problems, what they been through with their partners, nam, I told them.”

Bradley: “I did talk to my half-brother about it, but we didn’t get far ’cause we were drunk.”.

There seems to be a sense of shame and/or embarrassment around the experience. Andile states noticing that a lot of young men talk about in such a casual manner that it appears as if they are bragging.

“it’s just not something I wanna brag about to my friends, ’ya bona (you see). ’Cause telling them would seem like I was bragging”.

Thabiso, who had already told his parents about the pregnancy, speaks of how he told his parents that it was a false alarm and that his girlfriend was not really pregnant rather than tell them about the abortion. His reasons for not telling include the shame of being fooled by a girl, which his

mother has always warned him about, as well as his underlying need to still protect his girlfriend because he loved her and felt his parent would hate her for what she did.

“They would hate her so much.”

Lebo’s parents did not approve of the woman he was seeing which is why he did not tell them about the abortion. He has still not told them because he does not think his parents need to know because they might feel he judged them (and how they might react) just because they did not like the woman he impregnated.

Keeping the abortion a secret has various consequences for the men. For Thabiso, keeping the abortion secret has resulted in him not performing the cleansing rituals needed after the loss of a baby. All the secrecy leads to the men not having adequate support (if any) during and/or after the abortion. The couple only have each other in most cases and very often couples do not talk about the experience and the emotions attached to it. Since a lot of the relationships end shortly after the abortion, this implies that the men then go through the experience on their own. The secrecy also often leads to feelings of guilt.

6.2.8. Guilt

The men expressed a sense of feeling useless, particularly as men, because they were unable to protect their unborn child. There is a sense of guilt for making a baby and then not being able to protect it and let it live. The guilt that Thabiso feels had led to him questioning why things are not going well for him.

Thabiso: “Who knows maybe the dark cloud is still following me, but from my baby”.

Andile's guilt is expressed by him feeling responsible for helping kill a baby. Although Kevin and his girlfriend agreed to the abortion so as to not deny her the opportunity to complete her Matric, he still felt guilty for denying the baby a chance to live. It is as if he had to choose between his girlfriend's future and the life of his child. Kevin also expressed guilt about denying his parents the opportunity to have a grandchild. He talks about committing a sin by having sex before marriage and then again by having the abortion which he describes as killing a baby who was a gift from God.

6.2.9. Shifting responsibility

In an attempt to deal with the guilt they feel about impregnating their partner, men may tend to shift responsibility. Although it may come across as being considerate, asking the woman what she wants to do about the pregnancy is also a way of not taking responsibility for the decision. It is a way of letting the girl make the decision and 'supporting' her in her decision.

Kevin: "what do you 'tend to do, wa bona, ka (you see, about) the situation?"

"I'm not ready, but,...I'll support any decision you take because le nna, wa bona (I'm also, you see), I'm responsible for what happened".

Kevin talks about the decision-making in such a way that he is portrayed as a supportive boyfriend, but he is actually leaving the decision to his girlfriend. What he is actually saying is that whatever the decision his girlfriend makes, she should bear in mind that he is not ready for fatherhood. He is therefore indirectly making a decision, but does not want to take responsibility for it. Kevin further shifts, or rather avoids responsibility by not accompanying his girlfriend to the clinic and claiming that he does not like being around doctors as an excuse.

Andile reports asking his girlfriend what they were going to do when they found out about the pregnancy. So it was more about what she decides and not about what he thinks should happen. It seems like the men do not want to later be blamed for the abortion; they would rather have the woman decide so that if she later regrets the decision then they cannot be blamed for wanting the abortion. In Lebo's case he did not want to be responsible for the decision no matter which way it went. He agreed with what his partner decided.

Lebo: I just needed to be on the clear, basically. I couldn't, I didn't wanna be the one that kept, that wanted to keep the baby when she didn't want to".

6.2.10. Forgiveness (or lack thereof)

Although not explicitly said, there is a sense of the men not being able to forgive themselves and/or their partners. Most of the men felt betrayed by their partners and could no longer trust them after the abortion. Lolo and Thabiso have not forgiven their partners and are still so angry at them that they have reported a possibility of physically harming them if they saw them.

Lolo: "nna se ke setse feela ka hore ke bone revenge ya ka...maybe ke tlababere ka mora moo (all I am left with is to get my revenge... maybe I will be better after that)".

Bradley has not forgiven his girlfriend and her sister for deciding on the abortion without telling him. In particular he has not forgiven his girlfriend for allowing her sister to make the decision on their behalf and therefore over-riding a decision that they had made as a couple. Andile could not forgive his girlfriend for having an abortion after she asked him for another baby to fill the void that she felt from the first abortion. The inability to forgive their partners has kept the some

of the men somewhat enveloped by their anger which in turn slows their healing process. By not forgiving their partners some of the men have become weary interactions with females.

6.2.11. Never again

The men report that they never want to go through this experience again. They state that if they ever impregnated a woman and she wanted an abortion, they would do all they could to convince her otherwise.

Lebo: “I wouldn’t let my girlfriend or anyone that I get pregnant go with it, like do it again”.

Andile: “I think I’d force her to keep it”.

Kevin: “I would do anything, everything in my powers to keep the baby”.

Should the woman go ahead with the abortion, then a break up is inevitable. Thabiso; “I would definitely dump her and I would not just let it go, man”.

Andile: “I’d be crushed, but that’s gonna be the end of me and her, clearly”.

Lolo: “E thatha, mare ne ke sa tlo tswela pele le yena (it is a tough one, but I was not going to go further with her”.

6.2.12. Abortion as a challenge

Abortion is seen as a challenge and a risk that should be avoided. Throughout the conversation, Kevin does not use the word “abortion” or termination of pregnancy. He speaks of “daai ding” (that thing/it) and he does not talk of the “baby that died” but rather of the one that left (“Wale a tsamaileng”). This may be perceived as his way of coping with the pain that comes with calling it what it is. Using the word ‘abortion’ may make it more real and harder to deal with. Kevin: “Ha ke encourage batho ba phetseng hantle hore ba etse daai ding (I don’t encourage people in their right mind to go through that thing)”.

Bradley: “Abortion *is* a bad thing”

“Abortions are painful ’cause the person who’s aborting’s life is at stake, you know”.

Future prospects such as education (school) and work seem to be the main reason behind the abortions. Kevin and his girlfriend agreed on an abortion because she was in Matric and might have had to sit out for the year. Lolo’s girlfriend had an abortion because she got a job and would not be allowed to work there if she was pregnant. Thabiso’s girlfriend was the first in her family to go to university and she did not want to disappoint her family by having to drop out of university. Andile’s girlfriend also had the abortions because she did not want to disappoint her parents because she was in her first year of tertiary.

6.3. Conclusion

The decision to abort is often constructed as one that the woman should make therefore men tend to distance themselves from the experience. Although the men do feel that they do not have much of a say when it comes to the abortion decision, in some ways this stance works in their favour. In this way they are able to put their attention on the woman and not deal with their own emotions. By constructing abortion as a woman’s decision, the men that knew about the abortion

are absolving themselves of the responsibility and putting themselves across as victims of some sort. The implication is that even if they did want the baby they had no real say in the matter. For the men who knew about the abortion, portraying the decision as one made in favour of the woman takes the responsibility off of them and makes them less guilty for killing the baby. By being sidelined when it comes to deciding on whether or not to have an abortion, the men that did not know about the abortion, therefore feel that their anger and need for revenge seems somehow justified. Men feel that their hands are tied, so to speak, when it comes to deciding whether or not their baby lives or is aborted. Regardless of the nature of their experiences the general consensus of the men is that of being against the decision to abort, particularly without them being informed. The men would go to great lengths to ensure that they never go through the experience again.

The following chapter presents the conclusion, recommendations and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Introduction

In this concluding chapter, the problem statement, research method and demographics of the participants are revisited. In addition, a brief summary of the findings and a discussion of the strengths and limitations of the study are also provided. Finally, the recommendations for future research are suggested.

This study explored how abortion is constructed by men whose partners have already had an abortion. The aims was to investigate how they construct their experiences as partners and how these experiences are constructed in relation to the ability to influence the decision to choose to terminate a pregnancy.

7.2. Demographics of the participants

Six unmarried young men from Welkom area in the Free State Province of South Africa participated in the study. Pseudonyms were used to protect the participants' identities. Participant's ages ranged from 22 to 32 at the time of the interviews and had a common characteristic of having had a partner who went through an abortion. The participants read and signed informed consent in acknowledgement of understanding what the study entails and providing permission for the use of an audio recorder during the interviewing process. The consent form is included in appendix 1.

7.3. Conclusion and evaluation of the study

The men in this study felt they did not have much of a say in the decision to abort. Those that were informed about the decision felt that it was ultimately the woman's decision and did not feel that they had any other choice, but to agree to the decision to abort. The men with whom the decision was discussed, tried not to be the ones to make the decision as they did not want to be left with the consequences of the decision. They left the decision for their partner to make. There is a sense of not having much of a choice as the woman would be the one that has to carry the baby for the duration of the pregnancy and most likely be the primary caregiver after birth.

Those that were not informed about the decision to abort felt betrayed and belittled. Not only do the men generally feel they do not have a say, but the law also implies that. The Choice of Termination of Pregnancy Act (Act 92 of 1996) gives woman the right to have an abortion without the consent of the partner. This law somehow alienates men and implies that abortion is a women's issue. The men felt they had no power in the decision, particularly those who were not informed of the decision. The betrayal that comes with not being told of the intention to abort led to the disintegration of relationships. The abortion and the secrecy involved led to a loss of the relationship in the long run.

Both groups of men (informed and uninformed) felt a sense of loss due to the abortion. A loss of their baby, a chance to become a father and their relationship. The men somehow seem to take on the role of victim. Within their anger, disappointment and feelings of betrayal is a sense of feeling sorry for themselves. This may be attributed to their sense of helplessness and feelings of emasculation.

From this study it can be deduced that men generally do not have much support through the abortion experience. For those men who knew about the abortion it seems that it was more of a concern to be supportive of their partners. By being focussed on their partners, the men tended to ignore their own emotions. Abortion often comes with secrecy which therefore limits the amount of support available. Couples who go through the abortion experience often only have each other.

Due to men being socialised to be stoic, they tend to keep their feelings to themselves and to internalise the hurt and betrayal they feel. As a sense of release some men will tell friends or a family member, but only after the fact; not as they are going through the experience. When they do talk about the experience, the men tend to downplay their emotions and try to come across as having dealt with the hurt.

7.4. Strengths of the research

The major contribution of this study is that it was conducted on a relatively neglected research area and lifted the veil on men and abortion. Means were taken to ensure that the data that is collected is valid. Means taken to ensure validity includes inserting text extracts from the interviews and appending the original interview transcripts in the dissertation. I also attempted to increase the understanding of the reader about the topic of abortion and how it relates to men by using literature and presenting it in such a way that is easily understandable (Duncan, 2004; Richardson, 2000).

Ethical issues

I took care to keep in mind that my study involves other people and protected the identity of the participants by using pseudonyms (Chang, 2008). This also ensures that their privacy is respected.

7.5. Recommendations

Future studies could be undertaken at the time of the abortion experience or soon afterwards. In this manner the experiences are explored early on in the process and not as a reflection of what happened. These kinds of studies would therefore focus on the experiences of males who were part of the abortion decision.

It is recommended that future studies have participants from a wider spectrum in terms of race, socio-economic background and educational background as these all have an impact of one's experiences.

Longitudinal studies could be undertaken to explore the process, experience and emotions over time. This would give an indication of the ways of coping that the men use and whether their views change with time.

7.6. Limitations of the study

The participants in this study were young Black males who are mostly of a middle class background and who mostly have tertiary background. These factors have an impact on the way the men structure their experiences because, in general, reality is influenced by culture,

socialisation and environment. This puts into question the generalizability of the study with regards to men of other races and different cultural backgrounds.

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