Representations and responses to surrogacy in the reproduction of the family

Lulu Le Vay

Declaration

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own. Wherever contributions of others are involved, these are clearly acknowledged.

Lulu Le Vay

Acknowledgments

Foremost, I want to thank the participants who took part in this project. Without them, this thesis would not have been possible. I also want to thank my supervisors Beverley Skeggs and Rebecca Coleman for their continual support over what has been a challenging process. I will also be eternally grateful to external readers and cheerleaders Hannah Le Vay and Jessica Carlisle. Despite the obstacles, we made it to the finish line. I consider this project a team effort.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to two important women in my life who I lost during the process. My mother Sonja Le Vay, who died in September 2016, and my dear friend Zoe Smith, who died in August 2017. Although my mother was unable to really grasp what the project was about, I knew she was proud of me. She hoped to still be here when I completed – it's a shame this wasn't possible. Zoe, on the other hand, was with me every step of the way, reading drafts of chapters when she had the time. Even in the hospice during her last two weeks, she would ask me to keep her updated on my progress, and wanted to know what the latest comments were. Zoe, I will never forget you.

Abstract

This thesis explores representations and responses to surrogacy on TV and film. It examines how conventional notions of 'the proper family' are reproduced. Through textual analysis and audience work, this research explores how conventional ideals of family are constructed, and how female viewers interpret such values. A specific focus is on how narratives are articulated through genre devices, and how particular televisual techniques shape audience perception.

Through textual and empirical methods, this thesis demonstrates how dominant textual narratives are steered by constructing heterosexual infertile characters as non-normative, in need of transformation into genetic mothers through surrogacy, or natural pregnancy enabled by heterosexual love. Same-sex parenting and homosexuality are articulated as more acceptable when positioned within compulsory monogamy. Through the lens of queer theory, conventional notions of family, motherhood and femininity are exposed, as any positions outside of this ideal are portrayed as 'failing to comply'.

The research was conducted through three focus groups of women, consisting of mothers and non-mothers. Clips from popular mainstream texts featuring surrogacy storylines across sitcom, soap, reality TV and film were shown. Despite the hetero-norms that drive the narratives in the texts, the audience data revealed desires to see alternative happy endings that show infertile female characters more positively, and which recognise alternative formations of kinship situated outside of heteronormative monogamy and the genetic tie. The research respondents consider alternatives *as* meaningful, if not *more* reflective of contemporary structures of family.

This research reveals the temporal gap between mainstream texts, which uphold the white, heteronormative, genetically-reproduced family as the ideal, at a time when forms of families are continually diversifying, and when more women are choosing alternative life paths outside of marriage and motherhood.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis explores representations and responses to surrogacy on TV and film. It examines how conventional notions of 'the proper family' are reproduced. Through textual analysis and audience work, this research explores how conventional ideals of family are constructed, and how female viewers interpret such values. A specific focus is on how narratives are articulated through varying genre devices, and how particular televisual techniques shape the viewer's perceptions of not just surrogacy as a practice, but its place within normative family and motherhood.

Why surrogacy?

A common question people ask me when I tell them about this project, is what sparked my interest in surrogacy? In 2010, after a decade of ongoing reproductive health issues which resulted in numerous surgeries, my consultant informed me that fertility was unlikely, and that if I wanted children 'of my own' I should consider surrogacy as a fertility option. I was stunned, as this was something that I had never considered, or in truth, known that much about. I knew what it was, but little about the legal framework and processes. As a consumer of popular culture, the only reference point that immediately came to mind was that *Sex and the City* star Sarah Jessica Parker had engaged a surrogate to produce twin girls in 2009. This was a story that had been splashed across the popular press, which I had read.

Surrogacy was never something I wished to pursue. I just didn't want children *that* much. However, due to my inquisitive nature as a journalist, I began to explore how the practice worked, primarily in Britain. Communications with a surrogacy agency revealed that I would not be able to get the parental order for the child – the document that would enable me to become the legally named parent of a child born through surrogacy. As the email from the agency representative explained: 'I'm afraid that, as a single person, surrogacy in the UK is not an option for you'. This infuriated me so much I wrote a feature about it for *The Independent* (Le Vay,

2010), which involved interviews with a specialist surrogacy law firm and the medical director of the London Women's Clinic. Both parties agreed that the surrogacy laws in Britain were out of date, and needed revising.

As explored in more detail in the discussion of the methodology (Chapter 3), it is common that research projects are inspired by personal experiences – and/or sympathies with a specific area – which should be acknowledged as the project's starting point (Taylor in Wetherell *et al,* 2001). Therefore, I acknowledge this conversation with my gynaecologist in his consulting room as a pivotal moment in my research career, and this project's starting point. Not long after *The Independent* article was published, I enrolled in the MA in Gender, Media and Culture at Goldsmiths, University of London.

The path to the PhD

Inspired by my experiences, for my MA dissertation I explored, with small focus groups, a selection of media representations across TV, newspapers, images, and celebrity case studies. This research phase was a way to study a range of ideas, but the results, although revealing, lacked nuance. Therefore, I decided to extend the project further into a PhD at Goldsmiths in 2013.

Before the course commenced, another poignant moment materialised through my journalism work, which is significant to this project. As a way to reflect on and to share with others the difficulties of coming to terms with the end of my fertility, I wrote a feature for the *New Statesman* (Le Vay, 2013) about the lack of social and cultural value attached to women without children. I coined the term 'Mumsnot' as a twist on online mother's community 'Mumsnet' to headline the article. Soon after the piece was published online, it went viral. I was inundated with emails, tweets and Facebook messages by women (and some men), most of whom I didn't know. People wanted to talk to me about their own experiences, which ranged from failed IVF treatment to how they felt marginalised by culture and society because they didn't have children, whether through choice or not. Due to the response, I ended up being interviewed on BBC Radio 4 (*Woman's Hour*, 2013). This broadcast

evoked further public reaction, which underlined that debates around motherhood are complex, specifically in the context of society, politics and culture, and that people wanted to talk about it – they wanted their voices heard. This further emphasised that this was an area that warranted further exploration. Therefore, I decided the focus of my PhD was to be on representations and responses to cultural articulations of surrogacy on TV and film, through the analysis of a small selection of popular texts.

TV and its audience

In conjunction with textual analysis, clips from a selection of popular mainstream TV shows and film steered by surrogacy storylines, across sitcom, soap, reality TV and Hollywood film were shown to and discussed by three focus groups. I wish to highlight here the rationale behind the formation of these groups. Drawing on my own subjectivity as a TV viewer – and consumer of popular media and cultural texts – it was important to explore contemporary representations and narratives of surrogacy through the lens of a variety of women with different positions on motherhood. I initially set out to separate the groups of women into mothers and non-mothers, but due to participants dropping out last minute, this wasn't possible. Therefore, the focus groups were mixed. The participants were of diverse ages, professional, cultural and class backgrounds – all with different experiences of fertility and motherhood. Some were mothers, some non-mothers, and in relation to the younger participants, some were pre-mothers. As it transpired, the diversity within the groups was productive. The different maternal positions that influenced individual responses to the TV texts opened up interesting dialogue between the participants which is discussed throughout the thesis. An outline of the participants' positions on, and experiences of, motherhood is presented in Chapter 3.

The consumption of TV shows is undoubtedly changing. However, as Lisa Taylor and Helen Wood (2008) highlight when writing about the importance of TV studies in the context of evolving media platforms and viewing/consuming practices, the TV is not *just* a screen, or a 'toaster with pictures' (2008: 145). It remains

important, as it is still at the heart of culture, regardless of how or where you view it. In relation to technological shifts and viewing practices, Taylor and Wood emphasise the importance of exploring audience reception, and stress that TV and audience work are important areas to research, despite – or because of – this evolving uncertainty. Lynn Spigel (2005) argues: 'Who knows what audiences are seeing – much less thinking anymore? I will leave this issue to the social scientists' (in Wood and Taylor, 2008: 146). This statement captures the essence of this project.

I believe this research contributes to the field by sharing what a small number of focus group participants think about a number of TV shows which share a specific theme. Listening to and interpreting these voices is a central component of the PhD, explored through a framework of textual analysis and genre theory. Through this approach the core research questions were developed and refined, and have been addressed throughout the thesis. How do different genres articulate narratives of surrogacy differently? How, if at all, do these shape perceptions of surrogacy as a practice to viewers, as well as notions of motherhood and family?

In addition, what is also worth mentioning here, which chimes with the work of Wood and Taylor (2008) and Spigel (2005), is that there is still a nostalgia for TV as a medium, with which I too can empathise. I grew up in the 1970s when as a family we would huddle around the one crappy TV set in the kitchen with a temperamental aerial to watch *Doctor Who* (1963-1989) or *Tales of the Unexpected* (1979-1988), which I would be so terrified of that I would end up hiding behind the sofa, peeking through trembling fingers. Despite this, I still loved watching these shows. I can recall the theme music as if it were yesterday – it still makes my neck hair tingle. I also remember my older brothers, without my mother's knowledge, letting me stay up late to watch unsuitable films such as cult American stoner movie *Up in Smoke* (1978), a comedy which featured two men smoking giant spliffs. Through watching TV, I learnt about life outside the isolated family unit in the middle of the sleepy East Sussex countryside.

The media has been, and still is, an integral part of my life. Telling stories through various forms became my career. I've worked as a journalist and researcher for

twenty years – across print and broadcasting. So, yes, stories matter. Audience work matters. For instance, what was it about the genre of the show that made me hide behind the sofa as a kid, yet still give me pleasure in the viewing process? Now I'm curious to explore how and why texts are structured affectively in the attempt to move viewers. Emotion and affect in relation to TV are core to this thesis, and are explored through an examination how emotion is structured in the texts, and interpreted by audiences.

Through this, I also aim to unpack what the stories are saying through the ideologies that shape them, particularly within the historical framework of the time. Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh (1991) have argued that such historical analysis is imperative, particularly in relation to how ideologies of family and motherhood are articulated in popular cultural texts, such as TV. Barrett and McIntosh point specifically to soap opera, a genre that revolves primarily around themes of family. However, I have broadened this focus to include a range of genres which are shaped by similar familial contours. This is specifically poignant in relation to changes in not just the mainstream media, but also reproductive technologies. As Sarah Franklin (1990) has argued, 'popular representations are a powerful force in the social world and cultural construction of reproduction' (1990: 227). Therefore, I believe that this work captures a number of texts and their reception during a moment in time where motherhood, family, and reproduction are in a constant state of fragmentation, but which, as I will propose, are not being accurately reflected through these contemporary narratives.

Like all research projects, I didn't know what data would emerge. This is what makes research like this so exciting. As a feminist project, women's voices within a dialogic textual-audience analysis have inspired the shaping of the chapters, outlines of which will be presented further on. In addition, it is listening to these voices that has informed the theoretical framework, which has resulted in some surprises, particularly the employment of queer theory as an analytical lens.

Exploring the non-normative

This project engages with a range of specialist areas of study – TV and film

studies, maternal studies, cultural studies, and queer theory. Queer theory has made the greatest contribution to the methodology. This isn't a random theoretical framework, but one that has developed over the course of executing the research and analysing the data. The decision to engage with multiple disciplines has strengthened my analysis by facilitating a depth to the project that may not have otherwise been possible.

The inclusion of queer theory as a core lens materialised quite late in the process, post-upgrade, while I was sifting through the focus group data, exploring a range of literature and starting to sketch out the chapters. I had already engaged with some key concepts from within this field that were applicable to the project, such as Sara Ahmed's (2010) work on happiness and happy objects, and Lauren Berlant's (2011) cruel optimism. However, it became clear that this was a field that I could benefit from engaging with on a much deeper analytical level.

Before the writing up phase I read Radclyffe Hall's (1928/2014) lesbian novel *The Well of Loneliness* and Adrienne Rich's (1980) *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*, which Ahmed discusses in her work. This was when I was able to identify similarities between heterosexual infertility and non-motherhood with the lesbian subject positon, but also to get a clearer focus on how the narratives of normative family were being shaped in the texts. This was a critical moment in the PhD process. A fuller discussion of queer theory as an analytical tool will follow in Chapter 3. However, it is important to highlight here that by mobilising queer theory as a lens has enabled me to explore and expose the inherent heteronormativity that I believe structures the narratives in *all* of the texts under analysis, even those featuring same-sex families that are presented as alternative.

Furthermore, as discussed in the chapters, I have also attempted to transcend hetero/homo divisions by identifying similarities on both sides of the binary. Through political scientist Cathy J. Cohen's (1997) core arguments I propose that heterosexual subjects are also regulated and excluded by dominant heterosexual culture, in the context of infertility, voluntary childlessness, and to some extent women who work as commercial surrogates. I will argue that through these representations, and through the participants own experiences, these

heterosexual subject positions are also located on the fringes of the normative (Bérubé and Escoffier, 1991) which might, as highlighted by Annette Schlichter (2004) 'allow for a critical analysis of his or her compliance to the dominant structure' (2004: 546). It is also important to emphasise here, referring to Michael Warner (1993), that the term *queer* is not about defining identities against the heterosexual, but against the heteronormative, which he proposes are two different things. It is this definition, and use of the verb term *to queer,* which helps navigate this thesis.

The queer lens helps to unpick the main narrative themes in the texts, which are overwhelmingly shaped by heteronormative family bonded through romantic love and the genetic tie – the correct picture. This, as pointed out a number of queer theorists, upholds the notion that heterosexual reproduction, monogamy and domesticity is the normative ideal that must be aspired to for subjects to belong in the world, and to *not* be categorised as deviant (Ahmed, 2010; Berlant, 2008; Edelman, 2004; Halberstam, 2011; Warner, 1999). As argued by straight queer theorist Calvin Thomas (2000), there is a lot in queer theory that we straights can identify, given 'surprised perplexity at recognizing [our] own reflections in queer theory's mirror' (2000: 2).

As a heterosexual woman who has experienced fertility issues for fifteen years – and who has, somewhat ironically, had her uterus removed during the late stages of completing this thesis – I too recognise my reflection in this work. It was Sara Ahmed's lectures during my MA at Goldsmiths which first introduced me to many of the core concepts that I have applied, challenged and extended in this thesis. I identified with the discussion of queer identities in the reflection of hetero-norms. I shared feelings of not fitting in, of being on the outside. So, I thank Sara for opening up a new space for me to develop and place my work. I am also pleased that I had the courage to take the leap, with support and critique from my supervisors. Like some of the participants in the focus groups, which will be shared throughout this thesis, I too am unable to identify or relate to mainstream cultural representations of family and dominant ideologies of femininity – of what it means to be a *real* woman. It is the elasticity of the term 'queer' that has enabled me to explore a range of identities in the reflection of familial norms that are positioned

as non-normative.

The range of work within queer theory that I have engaged with has also identified the underpinning anxiety that the narratives aim to placate, which is not just to straighten out – or make invisible – non-normative shapes of the family outside of the nuclear ideal, but a future void of the white genetic child, reproduced through patrilineal descent. If you think this is reminiscent of nineteenth and early twentieth century traditional notions of family – such as domesticity, the cult of motherhood, and the state's intervention in the production and protection of the child – then you would be right. This project identifies how such conventional ideologies are recycled within contemporary cultural forms. Lee Edelman (2004) has described this as the fear of *no future*, a future that is being blocked by those 'failing to comply' (2004: 17), which in his argument describes those who are a threat to the reproductive future, such as gays and pro-abortionists. However, throughout this thesis, I include in this menacing parade the 'reproductive misfit' (Lam, 2015: 112) of the infertile heterosexual woman who must be saved through either technology or romantic heterosexual love in order to perform her reproductive duties.

Family ideology in contemporary context

Barrett and McIntosh (1991) argued for the importance of analysing cultural texts within the historical context of the time. During the timeframe of this thesis, there have been some key events *outside* of the television screen which are important to mention. This includes reproductive statistics, news events, and current political agendas. Although this is not the space for detail, an overview is vital to include to provide historical context to this project. In ten years' time, if a similar project emerges, it is likely to present some different examples.

The overwhelming anxiety that has been identified in the narratives of these texts is the fear of a future void of the white genetic child. As will be explored, such anxieties can be related to the slowing down of biological reproduction due to infertility and women's choices not to procreate. Anxieties are also linked to the fragmentation of normative family, the intervention of technologies and separation of sex for reproduction, and women's pursuit of alternative identities and life paths

outside of motherhood.

According to recent population surveys, more women in Britain (Ons.gov.org) and America (Census.gov) are childless in modern times, and fertility is dwindling. According to the HFEA (Human Fertilisation & Embryo Authority) IVF successes in Britain have risen from 14% in 1991 to 26.5% in 2014. Over 5 million babies have been born through IVF worldwide, 250,000 in Britain alone. However, surrogacy – representations of which are this project's central focus –is also on the rise, which involves embryo transfer through IVF. Figures from the Ministry of Justice Family Court reveal that parental orders in Britain for children born through surrogacy increased to 331 in 2015, estimating 400 in 2017. A parental order is the legal documentation that transfer rights of the child from the surrogate to the IP (intended parents). It is common that one IP has a genetic connection to the child, which differentiates the process from adoption.

Recent data collected by non-profit support organisation *Families Through Surrogacy* (FTS) from 12 overseas surrogacy clinics show an increase of 180% between 2010-2013 of intended parents (IPs) from Britain using their services. In America, 5,000 babies were born from surrogates between 2004-2008. In India, there are an estimated 3,000 clinics, bringing into the country in the region of $400 million per year (*Business Insider,* 2013). The majority of these cases use the IP's egg and sperm, or through donors. Although technologies now enable gestational surrogacy through IVF, where an embryo is made with a donor egg, traditional surrogacy does still exist where the surrogate uses her own egg. A full description of terms is set out below.

Some incidents in America can help to demonstrate this fear of no (white) future. This is relevant as the majority of the texts addressed in this thesis are produced in America, which, as Berlant (2008) argues 'is a place dedicated to the ascendency of generic or normative individuality over any other national story' (2008: 257), and where normativity is reproduced. One key example worth highlighting is the rescue effort in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005. According to a range of news reports, Louisiana's governor Kathleen Bianco authorised the rescue of stored frozen embryos from a fertility clinic based in

Lakeside hospital in eastern New Orleans while the city was in lockdown. State troopers, doctors and trucks were mobilised to save these future children. A number of stories about these 'earliest survivors' (*The Guardian*, 2007) have since emerged in the mainstream media, white children hailed as miracles born from devastating circumstances. However, what has also emerged in the media is while these embryos were being saved, black residents were left to die. As Latoya Lewis, an organiser and employee at the New Orleans Workers' Centre for Racial Justice claims: 'I think Katrina was one of the most modern times where this country showed us how they feel about black people and people of color' (*Huffington Post,* 2015). Furthermore, during the time frame of this research project, the Trump administration's budget cuts to Planned Parenthood and other groups that perform abortions also demonstrates anxieties surrounding reproduction, shown through exercising control over women's reproductive rights.

Reproduction through the growing commercial surrogacy industry, during a time in history when infertility is on the rise, has also become a site for anxiety, a complex issue that has inspired debate from all corners of society. As Miranda Davies (2017) highlights in her work on transnational surrogacy, 'it is not surprising that for journalists, scholars, rights activists, would-be-parents and indeed anyone interested in the evolution of humankind in the twenty-first century, the popularity of transnational surrogacy has become something of a "hot topic"' (2017: 1). Such a hot topic has been explored in cultural representations as well as reflected in inconsistent legal frameworks globally. For example, during the period of this research project commercial surrogacy for foreigners has been banned in Thailand, India, Nepal and Cambodia. India's transatlantic surrogacy service was once open to single people – gay or straight – those in same-sex partnerships, and unmarried couples. This was radically reformed in 2013, now only available to Indian heterosexual married couples. Altruistic surrogacy is legal in Britain, Australia, Greece, Mexico and Malaysia. This is where the surrogate is compensated not through a fee, but through reasonable expenses. A further report by *Families Through Surrogacy* (2017) declares that due to these recent legal changes, commercial surrogacy has shifted to Greece, Laos and the Ukraine. This report also outlines that overwhelmingly, whether commercial or altruistic surrogacy, the practice is only available to heterosexual couples – America,

Canada, Kenya, Laos and Mexico being the only countries where 'all' types of commissioning intended parents are welcome.

The laws surrounding surrogacy are complex, unstable, and continually changing, and ethical debates and news stories continue to make the headlines, primarily with theories of exploitation, tales of hope, heartbreak, lost and won court battles, and denied citizenship cases. One of the most recent surrogacy scandals to break during this PhD process was the Thai surrogacy case in 2014, which dominated global headlines. It was claimed that an Australian couple refused to take home their down's syndrome genetic son Gammy, preferring to keep his heathy twin sister, Pipah. The Thai surrogate mother was given legal custody of Gammy. The drama of the case created a powerful narrative which attracted the global spotlight. This news story followed a similar narrative to the IVF and infertility news stories Franklin (1990) analysed over two decades before. The story connected with the public through the heart-breaking tale of a woman's infertility and a couple's desperation for a child. The winner/loser binary emerged through the divisions of the twins – one healthy, one disabled; one wanted, one rejected. The ending of the story was framed by a twist on the conventional romance narrative – the surrogate fell in love with the baby she was carrying, which the genetic parents didn't want, and kept him. The genetic parents were portrayed as unfit, and surrogacy as a commercial practice was depicted as unethical, immoral and hazardous to children. It came as no surprise that Thailand changed its surrogacy laws in the aftermath of the media outrage. As Franklin has argued, popular representations have force in the social world.

Surrogacy has captured the popular imagination through its growing visibility in popular culture, particularly over the last decade. The popular media have devoted column inches to high profile celebrity surrogacy stories – Sarah Jessica Parker and Matthew Broderick, Elton John and David Furnish, Kelsie and Camille Grammar, Nicole Kidman and Keith Urban, to name just a few. Giuliana and Bill Rancic's surrogacy tale steered the narrative of their reality TV show *Giuliana & Bill,* which is explored in this project. There are also a number of popular fictional TV shows that have emerged after the research for this project was completed.

These include hit TV dramas *The Handmaid's Tale* (2017) and *Top of the Lake: China Girl* (2017). *The Handmaid's Tale,* a contemporary re-working of Margaret Atwood's (1985) dystopian novel, tells the story of a fundamentalist regime in America who apprehend fertile women due to plummeting birth rates, and make them the property of the state to reproduce. Sydney-based TV show *Top of the Lake: China Girl* (2017) is the first popular drama to address transnational surrogacy. The storyline follows Australian couples illegally contracting Thai prostitutes, who eventually flee back home with the intended parents' precious cargo on board. In both shows hostile divisions are created between the fertile and infertile female characters, which as I argue throughout the thesis, are reproduced in the narrative shape of the texts under analysis. Other examples of cultural representations of an infertile future will also be explored for further cultural context. As TV critic Ellen E Jones asks, 'Empty nests: why has TV become obsessed with surrogate mothers?' (*The Guardian*, 2017). A worthy question, and one which I address throughout this thesis.

I hope this work will be considered innovative and informative, with the potential of contributing to existing literature, and to inspire new work across the range of fields of study from which this project has emerged. I now turn to the chapter outlines.

Chapter outlines

The literature review is divided into two chapters. Chapter 2.1 provides a foundation to the narrative of family by examining the ideology of family through the discussion and critique of Frederick Engels' *Origin of the Family* (1994/2001) and its engagement by feminist Marxists. Through this, core themes of domesticity, monogamy, the cult of motherhood and the preservation of the child are introduced which lead into feminist debates on the governance of women's bodies through reproductive technologies and the fixing of infertility. Through this chapter, historical, gendered, social and racial trends are identified. Chapter 2.2 builds on this work by exploring how popular culture (images, advertising, TV and film) decides to – or not to – depict these trends. This is explored through examining the emergence of fetal personhood and fetal visualisation in popular culture – from adverts to Hollywood movies – which leads to new ideals of pregnancy and motherhood, through which a contemporary family ideology emerges. The importance of audience work is addressed here, which is expanded upon in the following chapter.

The *Methodology* chapter (Chapter 3) explains the value of combining textual analysis with audience work while discussing how the focus groups were structured and recruited. The role of the researcher is presented here, which is important in light of the inclusion of queer theory as an analytical tool. A detailed outline of how the texts were sourced is discussed, as is the feminist methodology which frames the thesis.

I want a baby! (Chapter 4) is the first of the four empirical analytical chapters. This chapter examines the desire for a genetic child through a baby hunger that drives the narratives of the American reality TV show *Giuliana & Bill* and the British soap opera *Coronation Street*. The disciplinary practice of reproductive technologies will be explored here in relation to maternal identities that are rendered invisible through ideologies of class and race.

Becoming ordinary (Chapter 5) and *Infertile bodies* (Chapter 6) can be read as a

pair as they introduce two key concepts – *queer straightness* and *straight queerness.* In this chapter, *queer straightness* is explored through the analysis of the American sitcoms *The New Normal* and *Rules of Engagement.* Firstly, through how the homosexual male characters in *The New Normal* are made more accessible by aspiring to heteronormative family ideals, and secondly through how the lesbian surrogate in *Rules of Engagement* is made more feminine, and therefore more heterosexual, through pregnancy. The concept of *queer straightness* will also underpin a discussion of how the depiction of same-sex partnerships and the creation of family through surrogacy both challenge and reproduce hetero-norms.

Infertile bodies (Chapter 6) leads on from the previous chapter by examining the infertile characters in the Hollywood film *Baby Mama* and *Rules of Engagement* by primarily focusing on how the characters are queered in relation to dominant norms. This chapter also examines how divisions are created between the characters through infertility *and* inscriptions of class and race. This is where the concept of *straight queerness* is explained by examining the non-normative, and what has to materialise in the narrative to enable the characters to transition into a normative position – such as natural pregnancy and heterosexual love. How the restoration narrative repositions the characters into the domestic sphere is also included here, which is followed by a discussion of the participants' resistance to conventional notions of happiness and feminine ideals that shape the narratives.

Queer futures (Chapter 7) examines the endings in all of the texts under analysis in relation to the participants desire to see alternative endings and new definitions of womanhood. This will be followed by a discussion of the participants' rejection of the myth of the instant mother-baby bond which is portrayed in the texts, alongside their resistance to the conventional notions of family that are overwhelmingly evident. The concept of love will also be debated here, in relation to kinship formations within gay and black communities that are not so dependent on the genetic tie.

The *Conclusion* (Chapter 8) summarises the core themes identified and

arguments presented in the empirical chapters through the effectiveness of combining audience work with textual analysis, and provides an overview of which genres had the most impact on the focus group participants, and why. An overview of the dominant narratives in the texts in relation to femininity, sexuality and race are also presented here, as are signals to future work which can benefit from the foundations that have been laid throughout this thesis.

Terminologies

BME – Black, Minority, and Ethnic.

Commercial surrogate – a surrogate is compensated beyond medical expenses for a couple or person. Usually in this arrangement the surrogate doesn't use her own eggs.

Embryo transfer – embryos are placed in the uterus with the hope of creating a pregnancy.

Gestational surrogate – similarly to a commercial surrogate, the gestational surrogate is usually compensated beyond medical expenses for a couple or person, but not always, as it is dependent on the country and the state. However, gestational surrogacy means the surrogate doesn't use her own eggs, but either the intended parent's embryo, created through their genetic matter or with the help of a donor/s.

Intended mother (IM) – the woman who enters into an agreement to be the legal mother to a child born through surrogacy.

Intended parents (IPs) – a man and a woman, or a same-sex couple, who enter into an agreement with a surrogate with a contract who under the terms agreed will be the parents to the child. Usually one of the intended parents has a genetic connection to the child, but not always.

IVF cycle – eggs are retrieved at point of maturation and fertilised in the IVF lab to create embryos.

LGTBQ – Lesbian, Gay, Transsexual, Bisexual, Queer.

Parental order – is a legal document that transfers the legal rights from the birth mother in Britain to the intended parents, when a surrogate is used.

Traditional surrogate – this type of surrogacy involves the woman using her own eggs, which she fertilises through either IVF or artificial insemination.

Chapter 2.1: The reproduction of the family

This thesis engages with TV and film studies, maternal studies, cultural studies and queer theory. By examining a wide scope of literature, the following two chapters will explore reproductions of the family through historical, gendered, social and racial trends – through to depictions in popular culture.

The first chapter examines family through social and technological reproduction; the second chapter considers the cultural articulation of family. Both chapters have a particular focus on motherhood and the child. These will be addressed in chronological order as history and theory unfolds, from early debates on the origins of the family through to how soap opera techniques articulate narratives of motherhood and family. The breadth of literature examined across these two frameworks informs the shape of the thesis, its connections and applications to be addressed throughout.

This chapter is divided into two sections. *Family circle* explores the ideology of family through the emergence of monogamy, domesticity, the cult of motherhood and the value of the child in relation to state governance and *Controlling motherhood* explores feminist debates on the oppression and liberation of women's bodies through the intervention of reproductive technologies.

Family circle

> Monogamy was the first form of family not founded on natural, but economic conditions, viz.: the victory of private property over primitive and natural collectivism.

> (Engels, 1884/2001: 79)

Engels' *The Origin of the Family – Private Property of the State* was first published in 1884. This work was integral to the development of feminist theories of the family as it highlighted women's oppression within the home. Influenced by

anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan, whose investigation into kinship and social structures across tribes throughout America was developed into three theories of human progress – savagery (the infancy of the human race, from living in trees to the bow-and-arrow), barbarism (the cultivation of plants and animals), and civilisation (settlements, agriculture and forms of government). Although it was Karl Marx who first became engrossed in these studies, it was Engels who picked up the analytical baton after Marx's death in 1883, publishing this work a year later. The book's central trajectory is to illuminate the path of the family from prehistoric times to civilisation and the sexualised division of labour within a range of family formations over time, in relation to economic progression. Engels embraced Morgan's findings as it substantiated his own argument (Shaw, 1984) which was that the family was as an active unit in constant evolution, developing to a higher stage of social form in relation to shifts in economic and political structures, such as the birth of industry, the growth and impact of private property and the materialisation and intervention of the state.

Through the discussion of the family as it unfolds into its different formations over key historical epochs, Engels' aim was to illuminate women's subordinate role within these structures. Engels proposed there were four key stages of family. In the first, the consanguine family marriage groups were arranged by generations, incest between generations taboo. The punaluan family extended the incest law to siblings. The pairing family saw the shift to multiple wives to one wife, and through less inter-breeding the fitness and intelligence of progeny improved. This then developed into the monogamous family within the patriarchal family, which Engels claimed was founded to assure paternal lineage, and the transfer of property. He argued that this was the result of the abolition of maternal law, where the paternal right of inheritance was ruled. Engels claimed this was a defining moment that was to shape family hierarchy.

Feminism's attention to this text, particularly its critique of bourgeois family and the woman's place within it, is unsurprising. Engels (and Marx) believed that separate male/female spheres occurred naturally between the sexes, even *before* the intervention of paternal law and the rise of the state, based on biological

differences – the woman being the producer of children. As Engels argued: 'The first division of labor is that of man and wife in breeding children' (2001: 79).

For many feminists, Engels analysis of the subordination of women was an early step towards the theorisation of gender, despite its imperfections. It was deemed progressive by its renaissance through contemporary socialists and feminists in the 1960s-70s, as it was the first to address 'the woman question'. Lisa Vogel (1995) argues that despite many of its ideas being rejected, 'it was a starting point for women's liberation theorists' (1995: xii). Richard Weikart (1994) claimed the book was fundamental in the struggle for women's liberation.

Monogamy and the patriarchal family

Engels argued that monogamy was a social arrangement that materialised at the 'dawn of civilization' (Foreman, 1977: 26) through a series of family modifications, which rooted family to economic structures and informed the basis of the patriarchal family. Through chastity, women were forbidden to have sexual relations outside of marriage, unlike the husband. Engels argued that women advocated the transition from grouped and pairing family to monogamy, which he believed was the result of a wide circle of family relations that gradually contracted 'until only the single couple remains, which prevails today' (Engels, 2001: 38).

Most importantly for the discussion here, female monogamy assured men of the continuation of their genetic seed. In previous group family formations, sexual relations were unrestricted – the mothers knew who their children were, but the fathers didn't. Engels argued that genetic assurance didn't materialise as a necessity until the patriarchal family required heirs to inherit this new wealth. Monogamy during this period was, Engels proposed, an oppressive arrangement to reproduce children. In his view, women were the first servants in the house. The woman represented the proletariat in the dominating light of the man – the bourgeois. As Engels claimed: 'The man seized the reigns also in the house, the women were stripped of their dignity, enslaved, tools of men's lust and mere machines for the generation of children' (2001: 70).

It was Engels' and Marx's belief – or hope – that the new socialist working-class family in the future was to be built on the union of sex-love, fading patriarchal monogamy re-emerging as *true* monogamy through a socialist society, as a more equal and loving union, liberated of its artifice (Barrett and McIntosh, 1991; Vogel, 2014; Weeks, 1989). Engels believed true love would flourish once male domination was eradicated due to the removal of the material base. As Barrett and McIntosh (1991) maintain, this was an idealistic view of family, which was not only an inadequate vision of gender equality, but a vehicle by which to romanticise the free love of the working classes to reinforce his and Marx's anti-family position. Barrett and McIntosh (1991) propose that even if monogamy were removed from its economic mooring, the old habits of men would still prevail – such as being unfaithful, paying for sex, paying for porn, incest and rape.

Despite its progressiveness, Engels' work has been widely critiqued by feminists, primarily for women's subordination being explained through the sexual division of labour and ties to monogamous marriage within economic property relations (Gough, 1971; Jenson, 1986; MacKinnon, 1991), the broad assumption of normative heterosexuality (Barrett and McIntosh, 1991; Haraway, 2001), and the ethnographic data used by Engels being unreliable and purely speculative (Brown, 2012; Bryson, 2003; Foreman, 1997; Spriggs, 1997; Weikart, 1994). For many feminists, 'the woman question' was unsatisfactorily answered. The female subject was positioned as passive, biology being viewed as the root cause of her subordination rather than through the construction of gender (Barrett, 1986; Barrett and McIntosh, 1991; Brenner and Laslett, 1989; Ferree, 1990; Jenson, 1986; Mackinnon, 1991), and there being a lack of a more critical explanation through examining state intervention (Brenner and Ramas, 1984; Jenson, 1986). In addition, as political scientist Heather Brown (2012) argues, despite Engels' contribution being of a 'ground-breaking nature', it was also 'marred by an overly-deterministic framework and by an inadequate focus on the social elements of change' (2012: 163). These topics will be addressed further on.

Descriptions and analyses of the bourgeois family in relation to monogamy and the hierarchical division of labour through biology aggravated feminists. For

example, Catherine A MacKinnon (1991) disbelieves the suggestion that women longed for chastity, that sexual intercourse with multiple partners was desired by men, and unwanted by women. She maintains male lust in Engels' argument remains unexplained. In addition, Ann Foreman (1977) proposes that absorbing women's plight into the struggles of the working class with little differentiation was a clumsy oversight, and that the relationship between class and sex required a more nuanced analysis. However, drawing on Engels' analysis and the feminist critiques and extensions, the themes that are useful to mobilise for discussion here through the family ideology rooted in the nineteenth century are monogamy as both a site of oppression and as a vehicle for romantic love; domesticity within the haven of the home, the cult of motherhood, and the emergence of the focus on the child as future citizen – all of which are integral to the development of the modern nuclear family and which resonate with the findings in this thesis.

Gender versus biology in women's oppression

The construction of female monogamy within the patriarchal family as a primary cause for subordination remains unexplained, particularly the notion that it was necessary to guarantee paternity for inheritance of property and that chastity was *wanted* by women. Despite recognising the appeal for socialist feminism to synthesise with Marxist theory due to the central issues of family, housework and personal life, MacKinnon (1991) identifies that such hierarchical divisions inferred an assumptive belief that women's position was naturally placed within the home. MacKinnon claims women had to be reduced to categories for analysis, which becomes problematic for its essentialist and narrow view of the definition of woman, which relegates 'woman' and femininity to family duties (housework, childbearing, childrearing etc.), whereas property and the state is elevated as 'male', masculine. MacKinnon rejects Engels' sweeping generalisations and queries the lack of evidence to justify a man's *need* to overthrow his wife to ensure the inheritance of his wealth as well as any evidence to suggest that women would have been unable to contribute to the cultivation of the land or help tend to the herds. MacKinnon believes that this naturalisation of hierarchy within the household and the exclusion from work outside the home was an act of

subordination in itself, masked through the *appearance* of its address through a theorisation of oppression, indicative of an entrenched chauvinism of Marx's and Engels' day which simply cannot be explained through biology alone. As Rosalind Sydie (1994) highlights in her discussion of socialist theory's explanation of natural women and cultured men, 'how and why has biology been the basis for the creation and maintenance of inequality?' (1994: 123). Therefore, it has been argued that the oppression of women through social reproduction and the manipulation of reality through the ideology of family must be explained through the construction of gender, which is shaped through historical conditions (Barrett, 1986; Brenner and Laslett, 1989).

It is important to highlight here Silvia Federici's (2004) work on the degradation of women during the pre-capitalist era of middle ages in Europe and Colonial America. Federici argues that the demonic figure of the witch and the witch hunt were constructed by the Church and the State to legitimise the persecution of thousands of mainly peasant and artisan women who were gaining economic and reproductive independence. Through this mechanism, Federici claims the aim was to force, and terrify, women to accept the emerging bourgeois patriarchal order. Federici proposes the control and subordination of women was deemed necessary by the State to fuel capitalism, women's bodies seen as essential commodities for biological reproduction.

As highlighted, feminists identified a major flaw in Engels' and Marx's theories, that social reproduction was determined by class relations, rather than gender relations. Gender theory emerged as a theoretical model for feminist analysis in the 1980s, which, through its application here in the discussion of the social reproduction of the family, allowed for a more nuanced explanation of inequalities between the sexes in relationship to power, within the home and in relation to the state. It is also important to highlight that this approach also recognised the performance of human agency in relation to these social and economic structures. As emphasised by Myra Marx Ferree (1990): 'By separating the gender given to specific roles from the gender of the individual who occupy them, the gender perspective provides a model for an authentically structural analysis of family relationships' (1990: 869).

The primary focus here will be debates on the construction of femininity and gender roles within the domestication of the family unit, which emerged during the mid-nineteenth century during the expanse of industrialisation and the rise of the state, and shifting attitudes towards infant mortality and the preservation of the child. In addition, the ideology of separate spheres will be touched upon – private (women, the home) and public (men, the work place) – which although rooted in the biological determinism of Marx's and Engels' theories, is relevant to the discussion as these divisions not only oppressed women through the construction of gender performance, but were later harnessed to gain moral power at the turn of the twentieth century through women's role in the social reform of the working classes (Brenner and Laslett, 1989; Lasch, 1991).

There's no place like home – the rise of domesticity

The most significant change in the family unit through the development of capitalism and class relations, which followed the demise of the arranged monogamous marriage of the upper bourgeoisie, was the emergence of the biological unit, rather than the social arrangement. What has been of specific interest to scholars in this new formation is how this shift created performances of gender within the households, organised through revised notions of 'family' and the 'home', which became ideologically animated as more idyllic configurations. The notion that a woman's place is in the home was first a bourgeois construction that was later adopted by the working classes (Barrett, 1986). The household was no longer dominated by an overpowering patriarch, but viewed as a private domain – a refuge from 'a cold and competitive society' (Lasch, 1991: 6-7). In this picture, the home was portrayed as a place of rest for the male worker, his wife – the nurturer and domestic server – the beating heart of this new cemented, and sentimental, family unit. Barrett and McIntosh (1982) claim Christopher Lasch's (1991) conception of the history of the family was questionable. They argue that due to Lasch's focus on the bourgeois patriarchal family model, he ignored other forms, such as the proletariat and the peasantry. As they propose: 'Lasch sees

the family as the last stronghold of the realm of the private, invaded by public policy and the increasing manipulation of the state' (1982: 1).

Yet, as has been argued by feminists who 'question every aspect of this privatized view' (Ferree, 1990: 867) such divisions of private/public spheres were constructed as a site of oppression, a political strategy to maintain processes of production and reproduction through a distortion of reality moulded through ideological structures (Barrett, 1986; Rapp *et al,* 1979). Women's oppression was not a pre-requisite of capitalism; it emerged through it (Barrett, 1984). Debates on trade union clashes between men and women in the work force during the 1840s-60s, due to women entering the labour market on lower wages, cannot be explored in depth here. However, it is important to highlight how the segregated labour market through the introduction of the family wage, in Britain, specifically, was a critical moment in women's oppression. Women's position in the family was consolidated by forcing them back into the domestic sphere, to depend on men, creating, as proposed by Barrett and McIntosh (1991, 1994) a normative picture of the proper family.

However, as argued by Johanna Brenner and Maria Ramas (1984), the welfare state was not wholly oppressive, as it also mobilised services such as schools and hospitals, which could be viewed as freeing women from responsibilities. In addition, there are also arguments that suggest that the family domain became institutions of support and resistance for women, particularly within working-class communities. Feree (1990) maintains that this was due to women being able to 'confront other forms of social oppression providing a grounding for self-esteem' (1990: 868).

Lasch (1991) described this new site of morality as the 'haven in a heartless world' (1991: 6), which he argued was an ideology of family mobilised by political and economic institutions to justify, and take for granted, 'a radical separation between work and leisure and between public and private life' (1979: 6-7). He argued this glorified the domesticity of home during a period when work was being devalued, the worker staying alive and healthy to participate in the labour process. Lasch describes this through an inference of Marx's theory of alienation, which occurs

when the worker finds himself estranged from the product he is generating. Due to this intensification of alienation in the work force, as argued by Foreman (1977), the family, as an ideology and unit, gained importance. Domesticity became an ideal, which she claimed created a new construction of femininity to enhance their husbands' masculinity, a type of femininity that was construed as passive, delicate, and lovelorn – as articulated through female characters in the feminine form of the novel.

Foreman tackles Engels' proposition that male domination is eradicated once the material base is removed by arguing that women are in fact dominated through the femininity that is shaped through capitalism – she becomes alienated through the relationship with the man who is alienated as a worker, who reinforces his masculinity in her reflection. She is left with no site of refuge or relief (Bruegel, 1978), which structures her oppression. By developing Marxist theory Foreman is challenging ideological constructions of masculine and feminine roles, where Marx and Engels failed, as they were too blinded by romantic conceptions of the new monogamy (Barrett and McIntosh, 1991).

Through the ideal of the home as haven, and constructions of femininity through gender roles, motherhood became sacred during the nineteenth century. As described by Barbara Welter (1966), this was a period in which the 'cult of true womanhood' (1966: 151) emerged, which she argues was an ideology of motherhood that was shaped through women's magazines, gift annuals and religious literature. Welter claims that it is through such ideology that women became hostages within the home.

The cult of motherhood, then, through the ideology of family, came to define white women, particularly those in the middle-classes. The woman became an 'angel of consolation' (Lasch, 1991: 5) to her children, as well as the provider of solace for her husband. This new idea of childhood helped to precipitate the new idea of family. Philippe Ariès (1965) maintains that in the middle ages children were seen as small adults, treated as servants, part of large extended families and wet-nursed by strangers – the culture of childhood not emerging until the seventeenth century, when life expectancy was on the rise. As emphasised by Louis Cain and

Donald Paterson (2012), this advance was consistent with agricultural productivity and the demise of diseases such as small pox and the bubonic plague. Children during this period had no special toys and wore the same clothes as adults. Childhood as a concept developed alongside the emergence of the modern bourgeois family. As Lasch (1991) highlights, children came to be viewed as people with different features, seen as more vulnerable, innocent – in need of protection and nurture, particularly by the mother.

The cult of motherhood

The focus on the child also materialised through the state's response to the crisis of marriage and reproduction at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Jensen, 1986; Lasch, 1991). The falling birth rate was a political crisis in America and Western Europe that aroused anxiety amongst the upper classes. Lasch (1991) highlighted that a key concern during this period was that the working classes would outnumber their superiors, particularly in America. Furthermore, Miriam King and Steven Ruggles (1990) emphasise the hostility towards 'children of the foreign-born' (1990: 348) which they argue contributed to the racial crisis of the time, which was the hysterical fear that high fertility rates within immigrant communities would overwhelm native American families. As claimed by Wendy Kline (2001) and Elaine Tyler May (1997) it was through a speech delivered by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1903 that drew concern to the slowing birth rates amongst whites, describing middle class white women as 'race criminals' (Kline, 2001: 11) for not reproducing, which was their national duty. May (1997) argues Roosevelt helped fuel America's eugenics movement, 'the first systematic and large-scale crusade to achieve reproductive engineering in the United States' (1997: 62).

Therefore, the increase in the black population during this period, due to the aftermath of slavery, was seen as potentially disruptive. Segregation laws were introduced and violence against the black communities rife. Such widespread discrimination was to shape racist rhetoric for the years that followed, such as the flailing black underclass of the 1960s and the crack babies of the 1980s (Beckett,

1995; Briggs and Ortiz, 2003; Dubow, 2001), black mothers as welfare queens (Boyd, 2015; Bridges, 2008; Briggs, 2017; Hancock, 2004; Kaufman, 1997; Roberts, 2015; Schram *et al,* 2003), and black families seen as faulty, producing failures (Rapp *et al*, 1979; Roberts, 2000)[1]. Race and reproduction will be explored later in the chapter.

Through the rise of domestication within the home, not all women viewed motherhood as oppressive. A number of middle class women embraced motherhood to regain power and express agency by practicing a new morality outside of the home. As Johanna Brenner and Barbara Laslett (1989) proposed, this new devotion to motherhood was constructed by these women 'as well as imposed upon them' (1989: 387). Middle class women mobilised the separate spheres of ideology (public, private) to intervene into the public realm through collective action in newly acquired roles as moral reformers of working class families, in both America and Britain. These women embraced and upheld maternal and domestic ideology not to challenge gendered roles within the home – although paradoxically gaining power by emancipating themselves from the home through their altruistic plights – but to civilise working class women, based on their own domestic capital. Jane Jenson (1986) claims that these reformers wanted to encourage working class women to become better wives and mothers through imparting their own skills of cooking and sewing, as well as offering moral instruction. This practice of 'cleaning up' the 'fallen sisters' also included female prisoners (Appier, 1998; Freedman, 1984) and prostitutes (Bartley, 2000; Hobson, 1990; Ryan, 1979; Scoular and O'Neill, 2007; Whiteaker, 1997).

As it has been claimed, this new elevation of motherhood and domesticity was not only a response to a new state interest in child welfare and protection, but a strategy to encourage white middle-class women to reproduce during the decline, to create better babies (Jenson, 1986; Lasch, 1991; Oliver, 2014). This is an ideology of reproduction that some feminists argue describes the ideal type of user of reproductive technologies, which, as I will argue throughout the thesis, is still evident in the depictions of infertility in contemporary articulations of infertility, to be explored further on.

The preservation and protection of the child

Through the moral reformists and emergence of state welfare, reproduction became socialised. At the turn of the twentieth century society and state policy began to intervene in the privacy of the family through its new focus on the child. As pointed out by Lasch (1991) the state was beginning to replace the private family. Lasch also proposed that this shift marked the beginnings of rights for the child. Although child labour is not the focus here, the shift in the social value of children is worth emphasising – from exploited worker to centre of the family – which drives the narratives in the texts under analysis. In the following chapter I propose that there is a link between this new value and the emergence of fetal personhood through fetal imagery.

Jenson (1986) builds on previous ideas of the construction of masculinity and femininity within family structures through a more attentive comparative analysis of state governance between France and Britain. She proposes a more nuanced discussion is necessary in light of what she believes to be too abstract and generalised critiques of the family common in feminist scholarship (Barrett and McIntosh, 1980). This approach resonates with Rayna Rapp's (1979) call for closer racial analysis of the links between different forms of family structures and larger domains through their resistance and change.

Jenson's main focus is on how state policies in both countries aimed to preserve and protect the child over the mother's wellbeing, during the growth of women's paid labour. This resonates (ironically) with Marx's concern with child neglect and working mothers (and not fathers). Marx considered women to be inadequate if they engaged with practices or identities outside of their naturalised maternal role (MacKinnon, 1991). Jenson explores how conditions of maternity and family are shaped through state policy, particularly through the introduction of social policies to produce better babies – future citizens – in an attempt to placate anxieties of the declining population – not just as a labour force, but a combat force amidst the threat of war. The state as parental surrogate developed as an evolutionary process that aimed to reduce infant mortality through the implementation of better childcare and education. Jenson highlights, for example, that in France, due to the

high number of female workers, regulation was particularly prominent. They were the first to enforce maternity leave ahead of Britain, whose breadwinner ideology was in place to enforce family cohesion. France, which Jenson recognises as being more progressive by accepting women's employment, also provided nursing stations in factories, and baby clinics financially rewarded mothers for prolonged breastfeeding. Therefore, British policy was to protect the nuclear family by encouraging male-headed/breadwinning fathers, while French policy was to temporarily 'protect' children from their mothers working/being at work.

This fixation with the healthy baby wasn't just happening in France. Early twentieth century America eugenicist organisations put on child health contests in rural agricultural areas, where babies and their mothers were scored on cards[2] As Alexandra Stern (2002) claims in her study of the Better Babies Contest in Indiana between 1920-1935, these competitions were hugely popular, drawing hundreds of participants to what she described as an initiative of 'race betterment' (2002: 742). These contests were staged by Indiana's Division of Infant and Child Hygiene, and were aimed primarily at the poor white working classes. As Jenson emphasises, these strategies were not implemented to support women, but were an intervention on women's failings as both workers *and* mothers in the reproduction of quality 'national stock' (1986: 17).

Through examining the debates on the origin of the family key themes emerge, which shape heteronormativity – such as the importance of the genetic tie through patrilineage, the domestication of women within the home through monogamy, the cult of motherhood, and the state's value of the child over the mother. These themes are foundational to this thesis, as I will argue that similar themes are reflected in the development of reproductive technologies, to be discussed below, and which have also been identified in the representations of normative ideals of family in the texts that are central to this thesis.

<u>The ideology of family in contemporary context</u>

Unlike radical feminist Shulamith Firestone (1970) who argued that the biological family must be dismantled and women liberated from reproduction for true emancipation, Barrett (1986) and Barrett and McIntosh (1991) claim that despite the demise of the nuclear model, the family still maintains a popular appeal, which is reproduced through willing participants. As they argue in their work on the ideology of family in advanced capitalist societies, the image of the family in modern life still depends on this 'combination of the natural and the moral' (1991: 27). They propose that this construction of the normative family ideal, as pictured through nineteenth century notions of motherhood within the breadwinner family and the home as haven, is entrenched in the ideological structuring of contemporary society, indicative of an ideology of family that moves beyond the narrow definitions of the economic unit and kinship structure. Aspects of the work discussed *do* explore dimensions of family ideology, through gender ideology (Barrett, 1986; Barrett and McIntosh, 1991; Brenner and Laslett, 1989; Ferree, 1990; Jenson, 1986; Mackinnon, 1991), the breadwinner ideology (Barrett, 1984; Barrett and McIntosh, 1991; Brenner and Laslett, 1989; Bruegel, 1978; Fraser, 1994; Land, 1980; Tilly and Scott, 1989) and ideologies of femininity in the preservation of masculinity within capitalism (Bruegel, 1978; Foreman, 1977).

However, what Barrett and McIntosh are able to identify in more modern social contexts is how ideals of family exist, for instance, in school curriculums, advertising campaigns, and holiday brochures. Barrett (1991) claims Stuart Hall's (1973, 77) theory of representation is useful to consider in the examination of how the ideology of family is *represented* and culturally *reproduced* through the cultural products of TV and film. Hall's work on the production and reception of meanings in television texts is expanded on in a discussion of the methodology in Chapter 3. Furthermore, Barrett argues the cultural reproduction of family ideals is an important development, a crucial dimension that requires scholarly attention. It is this form of analysis that captures, more accurately, the work of ideology within historical conditions, but positions the subject as an active participant rather than a passive consumer.

Barrett and McIntosh identify the importance of how family ideology is constructed within the soap opera genre, albeit in brief, through the work of Charlotte Brunsdon (1997). They cite Brunsdon's work on *Crossroads* as a core example of how the family must be analysed as anything other than private, as familialism 'pervades not merely women's soap opera but virtually every cultural genre.' (1991: 130). However, although emphasising cultural constructions of family as being imperative for further analysis, what this approach misses, and which I attempt to expose throughout this project, is the call for a closer examination of the articulation of the ideology of romance. Not just in the making of femininity under capitalism (Foreman, 1977) but in the *making* and maintenance of the normative family through the acquisition of the genetic child. Instead of being progressive, I will argue that the family ideologies that penetrate the contemporary texts under analysis are regressive, in the sense that ideals of monogamy, heterosexuality and domesticity, as understood by Engels and critiqued by feminists (Barrett and McIntosh, 1991; Vogel, 2014; Weeks, 1989) are reiterated in the cultural reproduction of the family. However, as I will argue, broad assumptions of whiteness and heterosexuality are also evident in the feminist critiques, as the ideals of family that drive the texts in focus are shaped around these dominant norms.

Importantly, Barrett and McIntosh also recognise that normative constructions of family that dominate the cultural and political landscape can also cause anxieties and insecurities. They propose that modern life should become more open to alternatives and different family formations. The limitation of this critique of the normative family (Barrett, 1986; Bruegel, 1978; Fraser, 2013) is its primary focus on white heterosexuality – BME (Black, Minority, and Ethnic) communities appear to be predominantly excluded from the critique (Barrett and McIntosh, 1991; Rapp *et al*, 1979; Thompson and Walker, 1989). Barbara Smith (1982) has highlighted how feminism as a political theory has 'struggled to free all women' (1982: 49). In her argument, Smith includes not just women of colour and lesbians, but disabled women, older women, and working-class women. In relation to the charge of racism against white feminist analysis, Barrett and McIntosh faced the most criticism. Despite rejecting these charges, they promised to re-assess their ideas

in an attempt to tackle their own ethnocentrism, acknowledging that their work has spoken from an 'ethnically specific position' (2000: 66).

LGTBQ (Lesbian, Gay, Trans, Bisexual, Queer) families have also been largely omitted from dominant white feminist analysis, but has been explored extensively elsewhere. This body of work on same-sex parenting, lesbian mothers, and alternative LGTBQ families is explored in Chapter 5 through the analysis of the homosexual couple, and lesbian surrogate character, in *The New Normal* and *Rules of Engagement*, with specific focus on the making of fit parenthood in the reflection of hetero-norms. This analysis will expose the heterosexism that shapes the narratives in the texts, presented through the audience data and textual analysis. The exploration of cultural constructions of alternative families on TV and film is still a small field (Brady *et al*, 2017; Brushel in Mc.Neil *et al*, 2017; Cavalcante 2014; Doran, 2013; Kunze, 2013; Walters; 2001; 2012). This work consequently continues, and makes a valuable contribution to, the discussion of family ideology in popular culture.

Fictive kin – race and the genetic tie

Those who have included ethnicity in their discussion of nineteenth century family have highlighted how the breadwinner concept of the family in black communities was not dominant, as most families were supported by women (Brenner and Laslett, 1989; Coontz, 1992; Jones, 1985; Lebsock, 1984; Mintz and Kellogg, 1989). Black women were viewed as labourers rather than defined as mothers (Albers and Medicine, 1983; Amott, 1990; Boris and Bardaglio, 1987; Glenn, 1985; Roberts, 1993). What has emerged as significant, for the purposes of this thesis, is the invention of the notion of fictive kin in black communities.

Although touched upon in the discussion of family ideology (Brenner and Laslett, 1989; Rapp *et al*, 1979) fictive kin has been largely ignored, but has been explored in a body of work that looks specifically at black family formation in America. Herbert Gutman (1977) argued that due to the separation of families through slavery, communities bonded, and terms such as 'brother', 'sister', 'uncle' and

'auntie' were employed to bind unrelated adults together as form of survival, to create a support network to pool resources and provide emotional support. In her observational study of black families in Chicago, Joyce Aschenbrenner (1973, 1975) claims that although the kinship between unrelated adults was core to community cohesion, extended families were bonded through blood and marriage ties outside of the nuclear model, which signified an advancement of family, not just for survival. This, she argues, can be identified through protective mothers, the strength of the parent-child bond, and the responsibility of children shared with relatives and neighbours. A respect for elders is also central to extended family structures, dominant figures such as grandparents and great grandparents often acting as the family lynchpin (Martin and Martin, 1978). Linda Chatters, Rukmalie Jayakody and Robert Joseph Taylor (1993), Harriette McAdoo (1999, 2006) and Carol Stack (1974) explore community and family support in the form of financial, emotional and childcare assistance given to single and married mothers. Stephanie Coontz (1992) also recognises how black communities shared child-rearing, whilst also highlighting how kinship networks supported the most vulnerable in the community – such as orphans, the homeless, and the elderly – rather than allowing them to be institutionalised. In addition, church members have also been recognised as playing an integral role in supporting elderly blacks (Brown *et al,* 2013; Chatters, Taylor and Jayakody, 1986, 1994).

The lack of inclusion of black families in the debates on family ideology has materialised as significant, alongside the debate on LGTBQ families, as the central narrative in all of the texts in focus in this thesis is the desire for a white genetic child acquired through surrogacy. As highlighted by Ferree (1990), race and the family warrant more accurate exploration within feminist research agendas. I have addressed issues of race and sexuality throughout this thesis by examining how the significance of the white genetic tie is represented in the construction of family in the texts, and how black motherhood has been rendered invisible. These issues will be explored in Chapters 5 and 7.

Through discussing the contemporary context of the ideology of family, in relation to its historical foundations as discussed in the earlier section, it has been highlighted that the critique of how family ideology is constructed in cultural texts

is imperative and that the narrow confines of normative family must be challenged, allowing for new shapes to emerge, which includes LGTBQ shaped families and families built on fictive kinship. For example, families are formed through networks of friends, pets and neighbours, and children are raised through same-sex and friendship parenting. This will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

In addition, it has also been argued that race and sexuality in relation to normative ideals of family must also be examined more thoughtfully, particularly by addressing the silences in the texts. However, it is how the contours of family ideology are solidified or flexed through the development and intervention of reproductive technologies, which is also of importance here, particularly in the context of the earlier debates of state intervention and the governance of maternal body and the preservation of the future child. This will be addressed by unpacking a range of feminist debates on the liberation and oppression of the female subject through the practices of IVF and surrogacy, and through exploring how the fixing of infertility through technological 'help' is seen as restoring norms.

Controlling motherhood – reproductive rights, infertility and technology

> Now, for the first time in history, technology has created real preconditions for overthrowing these oppressive 'natural' conditions, along with their cultural reinforcements
>
> (Firestone, 1970: 175)

The state surveillance of the child in the late nineteenth century materialised to reduce infant mortality and to safeguard the production and wellbeing of the 'national stock' (Jenson, 1986: 17). This control of women's bodies as mothers is still evident in the later debates around state power and the reproduction of subjects, which can be identified in the nation's support of heterosexual motherhood, through pro-natal politics. As highlighted by Jenson (1986), France expressed its concern for the falling birth rate by the state intervention on women

workers as mothers, and through the rise of the natalist movement, which Jenson argues was crucial to the construction of gender in this period. Even as recently as 2005, a government scheme aimed at working middle-class mothers in France encouraged a third child by offering additional financial support through the Family Allowance Fund. However, as has been highlighted through racial panic and the fear of being swamped by what was perceived by some as the inferior working classes, not all female subjects have been encouraged to reproduce, and not all babies are desired (Jenson, 1986; Lasch, 1991).

As medical technology has developed, the reproductive rights of women of colour have been, and still are, controlled and compromised. For instance, this has been explored through debates on self-imposed abortions and unwilling acts of infanticide during slavery (Davis, 1983) and the coercive sterilisation and contraceptive implanting of poor black women during the eugenics movement (Aptheker, 1974; Roberts, 1995, 2000; Thomas, 1998). As argued by Dorothy Roberts (1995): 'The black genetic tie was not a valued promise for future generations, but an indelible mark that doomed a child to an inhumane future' (1995: 230)[3]. Although not for in-depth discussion here, female foeticide and sex-selected abortion in India have also been widely debated, particularly the concerns of the tens of millions of 'missing women' (Sen, 1992: 588) as a result of the cultural, social and economic preference of men over women.

Attitudes to sexuality have also evoked prejudice in the *assisted* reproduction of family, particularly lesbian motherhood. For example, as outlined by Gillian Dunne (1998), countries such as Croatia and Hungary do not offer lesbians official insemination services, and in Denmark and Finland, the decision to allow lesbian women insemination is at the hospital's discretion. Global surrogacy laws are continually in flux, with many countries only making the service legally accessible to heterosexual, married couples, and thus excluding same-sex couples and single persons. It has been suggested that these practices in relation to the development of reproductive technologies are symbolic of a new form of eugenics that promotes selective breeding (Macintosh, 2011; Rifkin, 1998) and in surrogacy's case, selective *parenthood*[4]. Although homosexual men and lesbians are dominantly viewed as unsuitable for parenting, qualitative research in Britain

by Polly Casey, Susan Golombok, Sarah Jennings, Laura Mellish, and Fiona Tasker (1983, 1991) suggests that gay parenting is no more detrimental to children's upbringing than heterosexual parenting.

<u>Fitting and misfitting through reproductive technologies</u>

In Carla Lam's (2015) investigation into feminism and reproductive technologies, she explores the body within a material dimension, inspired by Marxist principles, primarily through the notion that lived material realities shape how we think and structure our experiences (also see Grosz, 1994). A core concept she provides for this is the reproductive misfit, which captures the tension between the (reproductive) female subject and the (social) world; flesh and environment, body and world – fitting and misfitting. Lam's work adopts a material feminist approach, which helps her explore the female subject's interaction with material structures and how this affects women's reproduction through technological intervention. Lam unpacks this dynamic by identifying and tackling scientific discourse and culture as masculine, primarily through illuminating the terms employed to describe the pregnant body, as discussed below, as a method by which to normalise the reproductive experience for men who cannot experience reproductive labour.

This masculinisation and domination of modern technology is historically linked to patriarchy and industrial capitalism, which resonates with feminist theories of the masculinisation of the state in relation to domesticity and gender roles (MacKinnon, 1991). As Constance Faulkner (2002) argues, both are 'linked symbolically by themes of control and domination' (2002: 226). In addition, the state has been identified as intervening in fetal rights as a form of masculine control over women's bodies (Dubow, 2011). However, as Lam points out, an observation that has emerged as a core theme throughout this thesis, reproductive technologies which have enabled practices such as surrogacy, have introduced a 'masculinization of motherhood' by allowing women to become fathers by receiving their child 'without labour of pregnancy or birthing' (2015: 33).

Central to this materialist dimension and the domination of the maternal body is how fetal imaging in the 1960s alongside the emergence of reproductive technologies obscured the focus of the female subject, erasing maternal subjectivity and creating a loss of social, cultural and political power. A wide body of work emerged during this period across Britain and America, claiming that through fetal imaging maternal subjectivity is made invisible, the pregnant body constructed as conceptually separate. For example, Franklin (1997) and Rosalind Petchesky (1987) suggest that fetal imagery creates these boundaries by constructing the fetus as autonomous from the mother by being pictured outside of the female body. Barbara Katz Rothman (2000) argues that this conceptual separation from the mother is rooted in patriarchal ideology, shaped by medical technology – pregnant women themselves having a more holistic view. Susan Squier (1996) proposes that fetal imaging turns the female subject into an interchangeable object, void of individual uniqueness. Fetal imaging is explored in more depth in the following chapter.

Radical feminists in opposition to reproductive technologies mobilised science-inspired metaphors used to describe this separation, particularly in relation to the *further* erasure of maternal subjectivity in the fetal/maternal dyad through surrogacy, describing pregnant women's bodies as incubators, apparatus, fetal containers, mother machines and breeders (Corea, 1985, 1988; Scutt, 1990; Stanworth, 1987). However, it has been claimed that the conceptual dividing of body parts through these terms, or similar, have been employed by surrogates as a method to create emotional distance from the fetus. In Tilly Teman's (2005) study of how surrogates divide their pregnant bodies into maps, she identifies how 'they distinguish between parts of the body they wish to personalize and parts they wish to distance, both cognitively and emotionally' (2005: 25).

As I will argue in the discussion of the representation of the surrogate in the reality TV show *Giuliana & Bill*, the surrogate body as object/container is still a concept that is being mobilised, the invisibility of the pregnant body made even more apparent by being elbowed out of the frame altogether during the birthing scenes, the hospital machinery and the intended mother now taking centre stage. This is explored through the audience data in Chapter 4. The dynamic between the

surrogate and the intended mother is also significant in this and the other representations, which will be discussed in the context of the infertility literature further on.

Lam sifts through the extensive body of feminist engagement with reproductive technologies by dividing the work into differing positions on the practice – resistors (radical feminists: oppressive), embracers (socialist feminists: liberators) and the equivocals (both oppressive and liberatory). Building on this framework to frame the literature, resistant feminists believe that reproductive technologies are an extension of patriarchal control, an imposed violence and male plot against women (Corea, 1985, 1988; Rich, 1996; Rowland, 1992; Scutt, 1990; Wacjman, 1991). The embracing feminists argue that biological reproduction is oppressive and that to be disentangled from the process would be liberating (de Beauvoir, 1989; Firestone, 1970) and that technology has the capacity to dissolve the boundaries forged through the Cartesian duality (Haraway, 1984; Plant, 1996). The equivocals embrace science as part of life, and argue that women have the right to take control of their own reproduction through individual agency (Butler, 1990; Farquhar, 1996; Finkelstein, 1990; Franklin and McNeil, 1988; Gupta and Richters 2008; Haraway, 1988; Rose, 1994; Sawicki, 1992). Lam also emphasises how resistant feminists view the social significance of infertility as being recent, 'because we now believe NRTs [new reproductive technologies] can "cure" infertility that we believe it must be cured' (2015: 49).

If you're white, you're alright

Throughout this feminist body of work on reproductive technologies, a dominant theme is that assistance is only made available to a specific type of user, one who is white, heterosexual, married, and middle class. It has been acknowledged that black women, despite being presumed hyper-fertile, suffer from higher infertility rates than white women (Baptiste, 2014; Briggs, 2017; Ceballo, 1999; Farquhar, 1996; Roberts, 1995, 1996). Rita Arditti (1996) and Dion Farquhar (1996) claim that such a discrepancy, particularly in America, is due to privileges enabled by health insurance that is not so widely available to non-whites, which therefore

constructs the infertile body as white. There is a range of work that discusses discrimination against and lack of accessibility for users who are disabled and/or gay, which includes single people. However, the literature on race and reproductive technologies is the most pertinent to examine in relation to the preservation of white child through surrogacy, which is central to this thesis.

Roberts (1995) discusses race and the genetic tie in the context of white supremacy and limited access to reproductive technologies through the racial hierarchy built on slavery. She argues that whites invented the heredity of race for racial superiority, as seen in the earlier discussion of Engels and patriarchal descent through the genetic line. Her central claim is that reproductive technologies are used 'almost exclusively' (1995: 244) by affluent white people in America, despite there being evidence to suggest that those who most likely suffer from infertility are black and poor. This, she argues, signals the social and cultural (and monetary) value of perpetuating the white genetic tie.

France Winddance Twine (2012) supports this argument, but in doing so also explores the wider global fertility market taking an intersectional analytical approach, proposing that all fertility therapies are structured by racial, class and economic inequalities, which she argues has been neglected by white feminists such as Debora Spar (2006). It is important to note here that this scholarship is informed by the politics of race, poverty and healthcare in America. For example, some NHS clinics in Britain offer free treatment to non-white, non-middle-class patients. Winddance Twine's concerns resonate with Rapp's (1979) recognition of a lack of racial analysis between dominant structures and family, but in this more updated context, between the domains of reproductive technologies and their user. Furthermore, like Roberts, Winddance Twine emphasises the social and cultural value of white babies, and explores discrimination against black women seeking IVF treatment and egg donors by medical professionals, which Roberts has described as 'racial steering', and prejudice against black women by white surrogates who refuse to accept their work (see Goslinga-Roy, 2000). In addition, Winddance Twine addresses commercial surrogacy and the medical tourism industry in India, which she claims is exploiting not just black women, but other women of colour, which Roberts has overlooked[5].

Fixing infertility

There are varying feminist positions on infertility and IVF. Some feminists view IVF treatment as coercive and abusive, pressuring women to conform to dominant ideologies and norms of womanhood through having children (Corea, 1985, 1988; Finkelstein, 1990; Hollinger, 1984; Rowland, 1992; Scutt, 1990). Others embrace technologies as a source of empowerment (Pfeffer and Woolett, 1983), or view it as a method by which to fix/repair infertility by literally constructing biology (Thompson, 2005). In addition, there is a body of work that explores the failure of IVF and the experiences of infertility and childlessness *after* exiting the IVF treadmill (Murdock, 1990; Throsby, 2004).

Karen Throsby's (2004) ethnographic work on the failure of IVF provides a comprehensive overview of gender, technology and the consumption of IVF treatment. Her main focus is to address a gap in IVF research that hasn't been explored – its failure. She argues that all other aspects of the treatment have been investigated, such as involuntary childlessness, surrogacy, adoption, disability and women's experiences of being childless by choice. What is of interest here in the context of this project is how she challenges dominant representations of childless women as being selfish and child hating, or positioned as objects of pity. I will argue that similar conceptions steer the constructions of the infertile characters in all of the texts in focus. Furthermore, Throsby also objects to the social and cultural assumptions that women are defined by their reproductive capacity – the desire for children being seen as natural and inevitable. Through this position she argues that reproductive technologies are socially shaped, normalised, able to 'fix' women's failures, which she likens to feminine transformations through plastic surgery (see also Morgan, 1991). Throsby also tackles issues such as race and infertility and transnational consumerism of technology, which she addresses through the ideology of normative motherhood and family.

My primary critique of Throsby's work is that she provides no in-depth analysis of dominant representations of infertility, only making fleeting reference to portrayals of the ideal IVF user in clinic literature; tabloid headlines of lesbians and post-

menopausal women, and the technological creation of monsters through the sci-fi novel. Her research focuses on qualitative interviews with IVF users. Therefore, this opens up a space within infertility scholarship to explore the dominant representations in more detail, particularly through the analysis of infertile characters and IVF storylines on TV and film. Responding to Barrett's (1986) and Barrett and McIntosh's (1991) earlier appeal for more scholarly exploration of the ideologies of family as articulated through TV and film, this research project extends Throsby's by capturing the work of ideology within a historical and cultural context. As stated by Franklin (1990) popular representations of reproduction have power in the social world. Therefore, they must be examined. I will address contemporary constructions of infertile characters through how female viewers make sense of them in relation to their own experiences. Normative ideologies of motherhood and family are challenged by the focus group participants who request narrative conclusions *not* revolving around the image of the perfect white mother with her miracle pregnancy.

Franklin (1990) addresses cultural articulations of infertility in her analysis of how infertility and IVF treatment is represented in popular news stories. She proposes that discourses of desperateness – which she claims are derived from popular romance narratives – are central to these stories, through the structuring of binaries. As she explains: 'It's a story of winners or losers, of happy endings for some and hopelessness for others… Most importantly, however, it's a story of "desperateness"' (1990: 204). Franklin highlights how alternative users – such as lesbians, homosexuals, singles – are excluded from the desperate infertile couple story, which constructs the ideal user of reproductive technologies and underlines who is fit and *unfit* for normative parenthood. As Franklin explains, the happy ending is only enabled through the intervention of technology if the user is white, married and heterosexual. However, this analysis is constrained by not referring to other mainstream representations or genres, which again, would have been revealing, particularly in light of her drawing on the romance narrative that is so central to the narratives on TV and film. Despite this, Franklin's essay has provided an anchor to my research, particularly through the discourse of desperateness and the winner/loser binary that she argues shapes the stories, highlighting how the family can become complete, normalised, through heterosexual love. This is

a narrative vehicle that has also been identified in the texts in focus, discussed in relation to the romance narrative rescuing the female protagonists from infertility through natural conception, or by delivering them a genetic child through surrogacy. Furthermore, alternative life choices and potential IVF users that Franklin claims are obscured by the white, heterosexual infertile couple story will be addressed further, brought back into vision through a resistance to ideals of normative family that have emerged in the audience data.

Margarete Sandelowski's (1990) study of infertility is also significant in the context of both Throsby's and Franklin's work as she addresses fictional representations of infertility in relation to the lived experiences of infertile women. Sandelowski focuses on the voids that have emerged between fertile and infertile women through categories and labelling, which she argues have been shaped through a culture that 'promotes motherhood and subverts sisterhood' (1990: 34). Sandelowski proposes that the tensions between women are not only evident in the findings in her qualitative data, but endorsed in the fictional articulations of infertility in novels, which she proposes are divisive through creating difference, the result being a threat to female friendship. As she states: 'Labels such as "mother" and "infertile woman," in addition to describing women, also prescribe certain patriarchal standards and expectations for women that defy female unity' (1990: 34).

Through this comparative work she is able to explore the creation of these divisions – in real life, or on the page – which she argues has been fostered through such categorisations. The infertile and fertile female characters in Atwood's novel (and now TV drama) *The Handmaid's Tale* (2017) highlight how narratives shape such divisions. In a society of sparse reproduction, the fertile handmaidens are taken into the homes of the infertile upper-classes to be impregnated by the husbands, in the hope of achieving patrilineage. The wives are pictured as infertile, the husbands' fertility never questioned.

Although Sandelowski includes this text in her discussion through the envious relationships between the handmaidens – who is able to get pregnant, who isn't, perhaps more identifiable for her participants – what she omits is the powerful

hostile interactions between the handmaidens and the wives. The (allegedly) infertile wives are depicted as cold, heartless and violent – jealous of the handmaiden's fertility, and desperate for a child. The tension between the two women drives the story, in both the novel and the adaptation for TV. It's disappointing that Sandelowski missed this in her explanation of 'imperilled sisterhood' (1990: 33). Therefore, I will explore this further throughout the thesis through the discussion of how the relationships between the infertile (intended mother) and the fertile (surrogate) characters are structured in the texts. One example of this, which will be explored in Chapter 6, can be identified in the baby shower scene in *Rules of Engagement*. Sandelowski demonstrates through her qualitative work with women how rituals such as the baby shower ceremony make infertile women feel excluded. This construction of exclusion was detected and discussed by some of the focus group participants. Therefore, following Sandelowski, I will employ the notion of 'imperilled sisterhood' to examine how alienation and exclusion steers the narrative. Furthermore, I will argue that such representations validate divisions between women, which lesbian activist Irena Klepfisz (1999) claims are deeply entrenched in our culture.

This chapter has explored a range of literature that connects the reproduction of the family in the nineteenth century through the rise of capitalism and the state to the reproduction of the family through reproductive technologies in the late twentieth century. Through this, key themes have been identified, shaped by an entrenched heteronormativity – heterosexual monogamy, the cult of motherhood, domesticity within the home, and the value of the reproduction of a child with a genetic tie. Furthermore, this body of work has also revealed the social and political privileges and values assigned to the reproduction of whiteness, and the cultural expectations of normative femininity through fertility, which both divides and devalues women. I now turn to the cultural reproduction of family through narratives in popular culture which, as I will argue, replicates and perpetuates similar themes.

Chapter 2.2: Cultural narratives of the family

The previous chapter examined debates on women's oppression within the family and the rise of the state, the exclusion of alternative families in the ideological accounts of the reproduction of the family, and the intervention of reproductive technologies. The impact of race and sexual identity on access to treatments such as IVF was also discussed, while introducing the importance of both examining and questioning cultural representations of family and narratives of infertility. Building on the discussion, this chapter aims to connect state intervention on the family and the child to narratives of family in popular culture. This chapter begins by examining the impact of fetal personhood and fetal imaging and then explores its influence on representations of pregnancy and motherhood across media platforms, with a particular focus on the maternal as industry.

This chapter is divided into three sections. *Fetal attraction* begins by discussing the emergence of fetal personhood through ultrasound technology and then examines the impact of fetal imaging on how we understand maternity, reproduction and personhood. *Maternal industries* explores the shift to how cultural fixations of pregnancy, motherhood and family have become central to lifestyle commodity consumption, and *Restoring heteronormativity* examines shifts of maternal storylines in the women's film genre in relation to the romance narrative, and the re-domestication of women through motherhood.

Fetal attraction

> It does not seem too much to claim that the biomedical, public fetus – given flesh by the high technology of visualization – is a sacred-secular incarnation, the material realization of the promise of life itself. Here is the fusion of art, science and creation. No wonder we look.

> (Haraway, 1997: 28)

Franklin (1991) argues that the emergence of science and visualisation technologies were fundamental to the shaping of fetal personhood, primarily through the spectacular imagery that was made visible through the development of the ultrasound (Franklin, 1991, 1993; Haraway, 1997). Fetal personhood has become a cultural definition based in biological facts, which Kelly Oliver (1997) argues materialised when the fetus was no longer regarded as a collection of cells and tissue – part of a woman's body – but a small person situated in opposition to it, 'at war with the maternal body' (1997: 25). This emerged through not just the development of ultrasound scans, but practices of genetic testing and nutritional practices. I propose that the state's intervention on the child and the family unit in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries resonates with the emergence of fetal personhood in the 1970s by placing the fetus' wellbeing over that of the mother's. Better, healthier babies and the reproduction of future citizens became a priority – as Donna Haraway stated: 'the promise of life itself' (Haraway, 1997: 28).

Cynthia Daniel (2009) and Sara Dubow (2011) have emphasised the importance of this transition from fetal personhood to fetal citizen through their exploration of state power and fetal rights in America. Both argue that through the fetus being viewed as a little person in utero, it came to be viewed as vulnerable, with rights, that needed state protection. Oliver (1997) highlights that through the fetus taking a more superior position over the mother, 'the mother becomes suspect and responsible for any defects, both physical and psychological, in the child' (1997: 27). Robyn Rowland (1992) identified in her analysis of medical court cases the conflicts that have arisen between doctor and mother – the mother treated with suspicion, the fetus treated as a separate individual. The examples she refers to include forced caesarean sections due to fetal distress where the mothers had to be restrained, and mothers charged with abuse if their child was born with birth defects due to drug and alcohol abuse. Another case Rowland highlights, which demonstrates the state's inferior value of the maternal subject, is when a man forced his hand into his wife's vagina and pushed the fetus into the abdominal cavity, which resulted in fetal death – 'Hollis [the man] was charged with murder – but *not* with assault on his wife' (1992: 125).

The framing of the fetus as a helpless victim to be saved from the danger of its mother (or hosting body, such as a surrogate) evoked wide feminist and philosophical debates, particularly through medical and legal intervention, as not all future citizens are wanted, by pregnant woman or the state. This has been explored through discussions on fetal rights and abortion (Berlant, 1994; Johnsen, 1986; Oaks, 2000; Petchesky, 1987; Rothman, 2000), the biological threat of women of colour (Roberts, 2014) and maternal neglect through drug abuse (Beckett, 1995; Boureaux and Thompson, 2015; deVille and Kopelman, 1998; Flavin and Paltrow, 2010; Lester, 2004; Losco, 1989).

Daniel (2009) and Dubow (2011) claim that the state required the *future fetus* to be protected (white) or stopped (non-white) *before* conception, through pre-natal healthcare, government intervention on family planning and the distribution of contraception. While the American pro-life agenda during this period intended to save the *future fetus* (as it still does now), black women's bodies were being targeted to prevent them, through enforced sterilisation[1]. Roberts (2000) claims this eugenics program began during the mid-twentieth century, targeting those who were deemed less valuable in society, such as poor women, and women of colour – those whose bodies were not seen as fit to be protected by the state. The Black Nationalist movement fought against this prevention for racial progress (Nelson, 2003; Treadwell, 1972).

I argue that the emergence of fetal rights echoes the state's regulation of the family in the late nineteenth century, as discussed in the previous chapter. However, in this context, the state is regulating the female body through reproductive technologies – fixing infertility/making fertility, or preventing it – to ensure the replenishment of a certain type of future citizen, and for predominantly white, middle class women to fulfil their maternal duties. Joanne Finkelstein (1990) and Angela Davis (1983, 1998) propose that the cult of motherhood in the nineteenth century has re-emerged in contemporary attitudes to reproductive technologies. In her discussion of the high cost of the assisted reproduction industry in America, Laura Briggs (2017) also claims that reproductive technologies are steered by the eugenics movement. As she argues: 'ARTs [assisted reproductive technologies] primarily serve to enable the reproduction of a largely (though not exclusively)

white professional class – the very group that eugenics in the early twentieth century worried were not having enough offspring' (2017: 107). In addition, Finkelstein also argues that modern medicine aims to restore infertile women to her 'natural condition, that of a child-bearer' (1990: 14) which she believes reflects the nineteenth century belief that biology is destiny.

This project extends these debates by examining the cultural construction of the female subject's *desire* for the *future fetus*, through a baby hunger (Davitz, 1984; Hewlett, 2002; Kaplan, 1992). This builds on Petchesky's (1987) discussion of how anti-abortion propaganda shows fetal images being saved that are 'younger and younger, and tinier and tinier… the point of vulnerability being "pushed back" *indefinitely*' (1987: 272). I will argue that this vulnerability is being pushed back even further, through the fear of losing the fetus prior to conception. Here it is not just the maternal body that is considered a threat, but also the woman's infertility.

Although this project is not exploring fetal representations, the *future fetus* is taking centre stage as *getting* the fetus (and then the baby) through surrogacy drives the narratives across the texts. This shows how cultural representations have shifted from looking inside the body (fetal imaging) to the fetus then being re-enveloped back inside the body (pregnancy) – which is to be discussed in the next section – to what I will argue is a new phase of cultural work that focuses on the *future fetus.*

Fears of infertility and loss of the *future fetus* are constructed in the texts as the fear of *no future* – or in this context, *no fetus.* Edelman (2004) has argued that this fear of *no future*, which describes the anxiety of a future void of the child, is associated with homosexual sex for pleasure, rather than procreation. Edelman claims that homosexuals are considered a reproductive threat to the future as well as feminists and pro-abortionists. I extend this in Chapter 7 by including the infertile. Here I will develop the notion that the fetus needs rescuing from the hostility of the woman's body, in two ways – through the monitoring of the surrogate body during gestation (the maternal body) and by the fixing of infertility through heterosexual romance. These extensions will be applied through the analysis of the surrogate characters in *Rules of Engagement* and *The New Normal,* and the infertile characters in *Rules of Engagement* and *Baby Mama*. In

the latter, both infertile characters conceive naturally through the heterosexual love plot (Berlant, 2008), which, as I will argue, not only rescues the infertile woman from the shame of infertility, to make her complete as a woman – but also rescues the *future fetus*. The power of heterosexual sex through romantic love trumps technology (Oliver, 2012). In addition, it will also be suggested that it is not solely heterosexual love that rescues the infertile women and which reproduces the future family, but it's the *future fetus* that swoops in to save the day. This will be explored in the analysis of the texts in focus, through what I describe as a delayed conception plotline – to be expanded on in the last section – in which the search for romantic love has been replaced with the search for a child.

Furthermore, the dominance of the male seed is able to tame the hostility of the infertile female body, which creates human pairings fit for normative parenthood (Finkelstein, 1990; Thompson, 2005), unlike homosexuals or lesbians, who are deemed unfit. Valerie Lehr (1999) emphasises that this incompatibility with parenthood is due to gays being viewed as a threat to children, by being 'recruiters of the young' (1999: 143). Kath Weston (1991) believes gays aren't seen as fit for parenthood due to the belief that they are incapable of monogamy. She claims: 'queers have been saddled with a sexuality that is popularly believed to evade the strictures of social control' (1991: 194). Homosexual and lesbian parenthood will be explored further in Chapters 5-7.

I propose that this cultural preoccupation with heteronormativity and the importance of genetic reproduction reflects Engels' (1844) belief that monogamy was constructed as a patriarchal state device to assure paternity for the inheritance of property. I also argue that such heteronormative structures further domesticate 'woman' to her 'natural' position within the home, as a mother and child-bearer, which reproduces the vision of the normative family as the ideal (Barrett, 1986; Finkelstein, 1990; Oliver, 2012).

The cultural impact of the scientific eye

Fetal visualisation technologies made the most public impact through the science photography of Lennart Nilsson in *Life Magazine* (1965). These images presented the fetus in utero – free-floating, as if in space. This captured the popular sci-fi imagination of the time, turning the cameras away from the skies to within the female body (Boswell, 2014). Katz Rothman (1986) described this fetal imagery as a metaphor for a miniature man in space, 'attached only by the umbilical cord to the spaceship. But where was the mother in the metaphor? She has become empty space' (1986: 114). These space-like images inspired narratives of the fetus-as-monster within science fiction and horror genres have been interrogated by a range of feminists, but are not for examination here. Cultural representations of pregnancy will be introduced later on in this chapter.

The image of the fetus marked a shift not just in technological possibilities, but in the way women's bodies were to be perceived scientifically, culturally, and philosophically. Fetal imagery influenced the erasure of maternal subjectivity – the pregnant female body construed as separate. Through visualising techniques, the image of the fetus proliferated across popular culture, and became a topic for discussion in feminist politics. The fetus gained new status by starring in pro-life debates (Petchesky, 1987), film narratives (Berlant, 1994; Kaplan, 1994; Oliver, 2012), and car advertisements (Taylor, 1992).

Berlant (1994) and Petchesky (1987, 1998) describe the fetus' entrance into popular culture through the notion of celebrity. Petchesky explores the anti-abortion documentary *The Silent Scream* (1984) as a piece of ideological propaganda constructed through cultural representation rather than medical evidence. Petchesky claims that the use of video and photographic imagery and manipulation of techniques marked a strategic shift in communicating a pro-life agenda to mass audiences, through embracing cultural trends in American politics. She explores the *potential* impact of visualisation techniques to how women might assign meanings to fetal images.

Berlant approaches the media representation of the fetus as a celebrity more broadly, through the lens of cultural fixation within the pro-life politics of the time, focusing on the complexities of its articulation, rather than audience impact. She draws on the moral responsibilities of fetal nutrition, which positions the fetus as vulnerable. Berlant then applies this to how the fetus has been transposed as a celebrity with a voice through cultural articulation, in not just political documentaries, but movies, home videos and advertisements, entering the 'public sphere of "superpersonhood"' (1996: 178). Berlant unpacks these representations through Pat Boone's fetal song *Let Me Live* (1983) and film *Look Who's Taking* (1989), through the pro-life device of the fetal diary. Citizens materialise through normative white heterosexual sex. As Anne Kaplan (1994) highlights in her analysis of the *Look Who's Talking* films, the fetal voice is heard and personhood is shaped at the moment of conception, 'as if he is fully cognizant from the start' (Kaplan, 1994: 128).

Both Berlant and Kaplan identify how the characterisation of the fetus in these films creates separate mother/fetus plotlines, the (male) fetus holding the most moral power – telling his mother how to live, who to date – which Kaplan emphasises reflects masculine perspectives of reproduction. Kaplan also proposes that the fetus in commercial media is represented as an 'already human, white, and gender unspecified – but presumed male – subject' (1994: 11). Interestingly, Kaplan further suggests that such a representation has materialised during a period in America where 'women have won more freedoms' (1994: 11). She argues: 'How do we account for this? Is the form of foetal [sic] interpellation such as to make it fulfill man's need for a hero? Is the foetus the new savior of mankind, delivering us from the actual messes we have made? Is the focus on it part of man's dream to make the perfect being?... Focus on the foetus may, indeed, indicate a renewed desire to write the mother out of the story' (1994: 209). However, although the desire for the *future fetus* drives the narratives in the texts, in these new articulations the fetus has lost its voice by disappearing from the dual plotline, it only makes an occasional cameo appearance through the device of the ultrasound image or fetal scan, rather than taking the lead role. However, this isn't to say the fetal *presence* is not as powerful.

This fetal ideology of the white male has materialised in films such as comedy *Innerspace* (1987) where a miniature Dennis Quad (Lt. Tuck Pendleton) is accidentally shot into the butt of anxious and effeminate Martin Short (Jack Putter). Berlant (1994) points out that through this union, 'Short is masculinized and heterosexualized by carrying Quaid in his body. Inseminated with Quaid, he gets to be a spy, a policeman, a knight' (1994: 190). I will extend this in the discussion of lesbian character Brenda in *Rules of Engagement* who, through her surrogate pregnancy, becomes constructed as more conventionally feminine by turning into an emotional wreck. The heterosexual intended parents take Brenda into their home to look after her. The fit parents take control of the fetus that is being hosted by the unfit lesbian. Being under their surveillance temporarily heterosexualises her, as I will argue in Chapter 5. Furthermore, the whiteness of the characters is also symbolic, as it assumes whiteness as universal and presupposes a white audience. Whiteness on screen will be explored throughout the thesis, particularly in relation to the perpetuation of the white genetic tie, as introduced in the previous chapter.

Look who's talking – to you

Although this research examines cultural constructions of fetal personhood across a range of TV, film, news articles and fiction, and audience reception of it is discussed – this work does not give specific attention to how genre mechanisms differently articulate fetal representations. Berlant's (1994) analysis lays the foundation for a more nuanced discussion of how mass media narratives invest in a 'women's culture'. In this work, Berlant (2008) argues that this culture creates a genre of femininity that 'cultivate fantasies of vague belonging as an alleviation of what is hard to manage in the lived world – social antagonisms, exploitation, compromised intimacies, the attrition of life' (1994: 5). This work will be evoked throughout the thesis in relation to the love plot.

However, in the work on the cultural representations of fetal personhood, Berlant draws on her own situated experiences of viewing the texts, rather than exploring the experiences of female audiences. No empirical material is presented to

support the analysis. In contrast, the ways in which women emotionally respond to narratives and images in relation to their own experiences and subject positions is central to this project; a breadth of vision enabled through their 'situated knowledges' (Haraway, 1988). This is discussed in Chapter 3, where it is proposed that such a range of perspectives produces a valuable, embodied account of the world. Petchesky discussed women's responses to images of their own fetuses, but didn't produce any empirical data, whereas Rapp (2000) did. This absence in existing work is important to highlight, especially in the context of feminists' concern about the disappearance of women's bodies through the maternal/fetal separation. The perspective of female audiences would have been insightful, and *also* not made to disappear through the exclusion of their voices.

The above discussion has demonstrated how science and imaging technology has shaped fetal personhood, which has become integral to pro-life debates particularly in America, placing the welfare and protection of the fetus over the woman's needs and desires. Furthermore, it has been suggested that this medical and moral surveillance of the fetus and the hosting maternal body also reflects late nineteenth and early twentieth century state regulation of the future child, and that fetal imagery has inspired film narratives.

However, alongside film, the image of the fetus has been (and still is) elevated in advertising strategies to engage with a wider consumer market, to sell not only pro-life propaganda, but cars, snacks music and cosmetics (Lam, 2015; Taylor, 1992; Tyler, 2011). As Janelle S. Taylor (1992) observes in her discussion of fetal images and abortion politics in the public sphere: 'Not long ago a fetus tried to sell me a car… flipping through a recent issue of Harper's magazine, I was both perplexed and disturbed to find myself confronted by a large sonogram image of a fetus, above the logo "Is something inside you telling you to buy a Volvo?"' (1992: 67).

Maternal industries

> Maternity, like femininity, has been thoroughly capitalised – international "maternal markets" trade not only in clothes, beauty products, pregnancy belly casts, photo shoots and foetal film [sic], but in fertility treatments, eggs, fetuses and children.
>
> (Tyler, 2011: 31)

In her work on the public fetus, Taylor (1992) claims that fetal images employed in advertising connote a pro-life position. This resonates with the work discussed earlier that visualising technologies construct the fetus as an individual subject separate from the maternal body, which needs protection. For Taylor, this emergence of the fetal image in public advertising is illustrative of where medical technology and pro-life discourse collide, which she claims is particularly poignant in the Volvo advert she discusses. Taylor suggests that the car creates an even *further* distance between the fetus and the maternal environment. This not only reinforces notions of the mother as potential threat, but also renders maternal subjectivity even more invisible – the female body out of view, conceptually imagined as a holding vessel. Taylor reads the car advert to symbolise the protection of the future child from not just termination, but a potential terrifying crash that could leave the child deformed. As she highlights, car safety is core to the brand's advertising essence. Taylor proposes that such implications create anxieties for the future – *no fetus, no future* – fuelled by 'the political climate of moral horror of abortion which the public deployment of such images has helped create' (1992: 77). Drawing on Mark Crispin Miller's (1988) work on advertising and TV, Taylor claims fears are fostered to stimulate consumption, the Volvo advert using the image of the fetus 'to arouse longings for safety and protection, even as it invokes the specter of death and pain… the tension thus set up will be resolved by buying a Volvo' (1992: 78).

I propose this example illustrates how a car company exists simultaneously with the state's regulation of the reproduction of the family to reduce infant mortality – as discussed in the previous chapter. Importantly, what this work signifies is a shift

not only from viewing images within a medical context to representation in art and science photography and film, but to being exploited to support wider capitalist industries. As Imogen Tyler (2011) has identified, maternity has become capitalised, selling everything from beauty products to children through reproductive technologies. Reflecting on Taylor's (1992) analysis of the Volvo advert, I propose that fetal personhood has been employed as a new technique of selling products to consumers, within the traditional frame of motherhood and family. The main weakness in Taylor's work is a lack of focus on the issues of race and the value of whiteness that is so clearly evident in the advert's concept. Not only is the fetus exploited to sell expensive cars to white people (which marks the fetus as white), Taylor also neglects the fact that the pro-life agenda was/is fundamentally about saving the future white citizen – black women's bodies being targeted through coercive sterilisation to prevent them reproducing.

It is important to highlight how advances in popular culture, specifically through the construction of images in the media, influence these maternal markets. However, I propose that photographs have more cultural power over scientific visualisations. As Taylor (1992) claims, 'the denotative status of ultrasound images is not nearly as deeply rooted culturally as that of photographs (at least not yet). While ultrasound images may "pass" as photographs in some ways, their power to denote the fetus probably depends as much upon attitudes toward medical technology and science, as toward photography' (1992: 75)[2].

Although fetal ultrasound images have penetrated the frame of the family album as a 'Kodak moment' (Han, 2008: 278) I will argue that the more traditional family photographs have more emotive power as kinship objects that signify family ideology (Ahmed, 2010; Hirsch, 1997) and which have a fetishist quality that can 'resurrect the dead or preserve lost love' (Petchesky, 1987: 269). This will be explored further in the analysis of family photographs as a narrative vehicle in Chapter 4. Although this project is not focussed on photography, core moments in fetal and maternal image making (motherhood, pregnancy) in popular culture, to be discussed below, have created powerful cultural waves, which have therefore become crucial to family ideology in the context of maternal industries.

Glamourising pregnancy

In the early-nineties the image of the fetus was knocked off the mainstream stage through the image of a naked, heavily pregnant American actress Demi Moore, which adorned the cover of popular magazine, *Vanity Fair* (1991). This image shot by photographer Annie Liebovitz presented a sexual and hyper feminised visual articulation of pregnancy that, as emphasised by Tyler (2011), re-enveloped the fetus 'back inside the pregnant body' (2011: 76). The image was controversial, evoking reactions from fury to admiration. The magazine sold out, and some grocery stores removed the issue from their shelves in disgust (Hastings, 1996; Jackson, 1993; Longhurst, 2000). Pregnancy became glamorised and flaunted in the public sphere – a spectacle – celebrated rather than hidden. Tyler (2011) ascribes this new visibility to a fascination with celebrity and motherhood, 'an era of maternal femininities' where 'maternity has never been so visible, so talked about, so public' (2011: 22). Meredith Nash (2012) proposes that pregnant images of celebrities in women's magazines are a performance, which is critical to maintain one's 'celebrity currency' (2012: 47).

The Demi Moore image was a critical moment that marked a shift in culture. As argued by Michele Pridmore-Brown (2009), Leibovitz 'not only photographed American culture but also changed it' (2009: 81). I propose that this moment in photography created a similar impact to the publishing of Nilsson's fetal images in 1965. Like the fetus over two decades earlier, this was the first time a pregnant body had been so publicly presented. Sandra Matthews and Laura Wexler (2000) argue that this was the first time a mother (to be) was marketed as a cover girl, 'an object of the gaze packaged to create and play on the desires of the viewer' (2000: 201). Like the celebrity fetus (Berlant, 1994; Petchesky, 1987) the image of celebrity pregnancy soon became 'an obsession in popular culture' (Oliver, 2012: 2), inspiring a proliferation of white sexualised images of famous pregnant female celebrities across popular media – and less famous women – reflecting similar poses. This led to the image of the pregnant female body becoming popularised on TV and on the Hollywood screen (Baraitser and Tyler, 2010; Hilton-Morrow and Battles, 2015; Oliver 2012; Tyler, 2001, 2011).

Following Barrett's and McIntosh's (1991) work on family ideology I argue that this obsession with pregnancy images illustrates a contemporary media articulation of the nineteenth century bourgeois ideal. Norms of family are reproduced through the elevation of white, heterosexual and *fertile* women. In this cultural ideological phase, the ideology of family comes packaged in not the cult of motherhood and the rearing of children, which Barrett and McIntosh identified as being hidden in 'the curricula of schools' and 'in the catalogues of Mothercare' (1991: 28-29), but through what I will call the cult of pregnancy. This describes the public display of the *ability* to get pregnant amassing social and cultural value, and which, as I will suggest, aims to placate anxieties of the possibility of a future void of the child (Edelman, 2004; Gentile, 2011). Although not for detailed discussion here, the trend in the Hollywood inspired blue-line moments on 'Wombtube' (Oliver, 2012: 104) and the fast-growing online community of home birth videos (Mack, 2016) are certainly indicative of this public display of value attached to fertility. Interestingly, Katie Gentile (2011) proposes in her work on pregnancy images in the media that such representations aim to reinforce traditional gender roles and organise culture during a time of upheaval, which I propose resonates with the cult of domesticity that arose in the nineteenth century.

Drawing on debates on infertility in the previous chapter, I argue that these popular images of motherhood and pregnancy further create differences between women (Sandelowski, 1990), and that to be infertile, or childfree by choice, is seen as a failing – unnatural, abnormal. It is worth highlighting here that if a couple suffered from infertility during the early twentieth century, divorces were easily granted outside of court, usually without alimony, as the pairing was categorised as unfit for reproduction – unlike the procreative family (Bruce, 1930; Gray, 2000; Lasch, 1991; Weitzman, 1987).

Therefore, the visualisation of pregnant embodiment, which has eclipsed the fetus, is a further – but more public – reminder of the cult of motherhood and value of reproduction that situates the woman in her natural condition as a child bearer (Davis, 1983, 1998; Finklestein, 1990). As has been stated, clothed pregnant bodies were once viewed by popular culture with disgust and discomfort (Stabile, 1992). Now, like the image of the fetus in advertising (Lam, 2015; Taylor, 1992;

Tyler, 2011), these bodies that are driven by celebrity and consumer culture are also mobilised as a commodity, to sell commodities, the pregnant body propelled out of 'clinics, hospitals and scientific and healthcare manuals' and onto the 'catwalk, dancing in pop videos, acting in soap operas, featuring in advertising campaigns and spectacularly visible on cinema screens' (Baraitser and Tyler, 2013: 7)[3].

As highlighted by Lisa Baraitser and Imogen Tyler (2010), it was Petchesky (1987) who argued that women needed to be restored to the pregnancy scene, due to the separation of pregnant body and fetus that emerged through fetal imaging technologies. As Petchesky stated: 'we must create new images that recontextualize the fetus, that place it back into the uterus, and the uterus back into the woman's body, and her body back into its social space' (Petchesky 1987: 278). There is no doubt that the image of a heavily pregnant Demi Moore achieved this, but what might have surprised Petcheskey is how the images that enabled this shift re-positioned the female pregnant subject within such a sexualised and glamourised frame, to steer a pregnancy consumer culture, 'which includes buying and wearing clothes that emphasise pregnant body shapes, joining pregnancy keep-fit classes, and consuming pregnancy magazines and television programmes on pregnancy and birth. Pregnancy had been "discovered" as a lucrative market opportunity' (Baraitser and Tyler, 2013: 7). Interestingly, although not for expansion here, Robyn Longhurst's (2000) ethnographic work with pregnant women in New Zealand, which focuses on the exposure of pregnant bodies in public spaces, revealed that most of the women interviewed viewed pregnancy as a private matter, not to be displayed so visibly. The majority of women said they preferred to cover up in baggy clothes in attempt to hide the bump, rather than show it off.

It is important to emphasise that these critiques of the public fascination with pregnancy spotlighted here are not meant to shame the pregnant female subject, or to put forth an anti-pregnancy or maternal position, but to shed light on what I believe can and has been read as the exploitation of fertile bodies in the capitalisation of motherhood, for maternal markets and a pregnancy consumer culture (Baraitser and Tyler, 2010, 2013; Tyler, 2011). I believe such a reading

resonates with the resistors' (Lam, 2015) position on reproductive technologies in the sense that they believed women's bodies were being controlled by an industry to subordinate women into the child-bearer position, and to create profit while doing so. As Tyler (2011) stated at the beginning of this section, the capitalisation of motherhood isn't just identified in the marketing of clothes, photo-shoots, the latest movie or beauty regimes, but in the selling of 'fertility treatments, eggs, fetuses and children' (2011: 31), which, fundamentally, is at the heart of the reproductive technologies industry. As I will continue to argue throughout the thesis, popular culture and technology *cannot* be viewed as separate entities, but seen as working together in the shaping of ideologies of motherhood and family under modern capitalism. Therefore, from images of the fetus to the pregnant body, my focus now turns to images of motherhood.

The yummy mummy versus the chav mum

From reproductive technologies and pregnancy being a lucrative consumer market, a new shift in the maternal industries was to follow. As Jo Littler (2013) highlights in her discussion of sexualised constructs of pregnant women – the desirable post-pregnant mother signified the shift from pregnant sexy to mother sexy, which surfaced in the trail of the Demi Moore media frenzy. A new wave of sexualisation of motherhood soon followed, primarily through the British cultural stereotype of the 'yummy mummy'. Littler claims this term describes a mother who is white, heterosexual, thirty-something, hyper-feminine, and in a position of privilege. Where Littler discusses the emergence of the yummy mummy through analysing primarily hen-lit novels (the older and more mum-friendly version of chick-lit), Stephanie O'Donohoe (2006) takes an alternative route in through exploring representation in advertising to sell washing powder, prams, beauty products and breastfeeding. However, both Littler and O'Donohoe argue that the yummy mummy is a brand with both cultural and economic currency across a range of media, to drive consumerism under the guise of maternal aspiration. This will be explored in the analysis of the focus groups' discussion of the intended mothers in the texts, specifically in Chapter 4, in relation to Giuliana in *Giuliana & Bill.*

In contrast to the yummy mummy is the British working class single mother, who has often been described in the media as a chav mum (Littler, 2013; McRobbie, 2004; Skeggs and Wood, 2011; Tyler, 2008). The stereotype of a single mother ignited moral panic within the media and right-wing government, which Beverley Skeggs (2005) argues depicted them as 'the source of all national evil' (2005: 965). Unlike the yummy mummy, these women were seen as abject, producing children at a young age unlike their yummy mummy elders who often delay motherhood due to pursuing a career (Littler, 2013). The chav mum is useful to refer to in this project, as it is a figure that circulates across a range of media (Tyler, 2008).

Unlike the yummy mummy, the chav mum is positioned as a bad mother, portrayed as unrespectable, poor, lazy, cheaply dressed, out-of-shape – symbolic of not just the failure of femininity, but a failure of *everything.* As a single mother, the chav mum is situated outside the normative picture of the proper family. I argue that the stereotype of the chav mum has been shaped by the media to reflect the moral panic around single mothers on welfare – much like America's welfare queen. As proposed by Briggs (2017) in her analysis of America's welfare reform, the (black) welfare queen was a type constructed by the Reagan administration in the seventies, portrayed as lazy, promiscuous and fraudulent. Briggs argues that such a character was shaped through political rhetoric to perform as a 'cover story for reducing government programmes' (2017: 47). Similarly, the chav mum became 'a handy figure for the government to deflect its cuts in welfare provision via the identification of a "social problem"' (Skeggs, 2005: 968). Interestingly, Briggs also highlights that during Clinton's welfare reform in the nineties, the black welfare queen image of the economic parasite was still prolific, despite the majority of welfare recipients at this time being white.

As Angela McRobbie and Sarah L. Thornton (1995) assert, moral panics are used as a vehicle through which daily events are mediated to the public, 'used by politicians to orchestrate consent, by business to promote sales in certain niche markets, and by media to make home and social affairs newsworthy' (1995: 560). Therefore, I propose that the dichotomy of the yummy mummy/chav mum

symbolises a re-awakening of the race crisis that emerged in the late nineteenth century, when the state encouraged white middle and upper-class women to reproduce.[4] Once again, the narrative centres on class, status, race, and notions of what makes a good mother and what are desirable future citizens – i.e. not black or mixed raced crack babies from a broken home[5].

In the context of this project, it is also important to discuss the American equivalents of these British stereotypes – 'the 'MILF' (Mother I'd Like to Fuck) and 'white trash'. This MILF evolved out of porn culture, a female archetype that is white, hetero-sexualised and middle class, with a sexual preference for younger men (Friedman, 2014; Littler, 2013). As May Friedman (2014) points out, the MILF's affiliation with motherhood is a relatively new twist, now reshaped as a 'naughty older mother' (Friedman, 2014: 50). Tyler (2008) proposes that white trash is similar to the white chav as they both signify class disgust, 'a whiteness contaminated with poverty' (2008: 25). Tyler suggests both exhibit a contamination of whiteness through not only an appropriation of American black culture, but through the racial mixing of their children. This reflects America's racist political rhetoric of the 1960s-80s that viewed black mothers as the producers of failures, black families seen as an inadequate underclass.

As has emerged as significant throughout this thesis, white purity through the genetic tie is core to reproductive technologies (Coontz, 1992; Roberts, 1995; Winddance Twine, 2011) and has been identified as central to the normative depictions of family. As I argue in Chapters 5 and 6, ideologies of race and class within family ideals materialise through the stereotype of white trash, which shape the characterisations of both American surrogates in *Baby Mama* (Angie) and *The New Normal* (Goldie). However, it is the construction of Angie in *Baby Mama* as white trash that engaged the focus group participants the most, specifically through the script's dialogue. When Angie is exposed as carrying her own genetic baby and not Kate's (the intended mother), Kate calls her 'ignorant white trash'. Although most of the participants found this distasteful, what this description did was to highlight how differences in relation to class and status between the surrogate and the intended mother has been shaped in the narrative. This is examined in Chapter 6. In addition, I will also argue that the figure of the MILF can

be identified in the depiction of the American intended mothers. This is explored, in the same chapter, in the discussion of Kate's makeover scenes in *Baby Mama*.

I argue these portrayals demonstrate that heterosexual pairing and the value of perpetuating the genetic bond are also shaped by class differences, which aim to infer social and cultural notions of what makes a mother good, or bad. I also discuss how good and bad motherhood is also depicted through stereotypical representations of race and sexuality. For example, although the focus group participants did not directly discuss race in relation to motherhood, what they did was to identify how black characters are often not depicted in lead roles, but are constructed in such a way as to be laughed at. This is explored in Chapter 5 through the discussion of subsidiary character Rocky in *The New Normal* and the adoption storyline.

Furthermore, motherhood and lesbianism is also explored through the participants responses to the portrayal of lesbian surrogate character Brenda in *Rules of Engagement*. Here I argue, based on their responses, how lesbian characters must be hetero-sexualised for mainstream straight audiences. As Kim Akass and Janet McCabe (2006) highlight through their analysis of primetime American TV show *The L Word* (2004-2009), which follows the lives of a group of lesbians and their friends, this includes how lesbians must be placed within heteronormative narratives (in this context, pregnancy and family) and made attractive to straight men, as objects of desire. They argue straight men are the secondary audience of lesbian-themed TV shows after straight women. Through this discussion I argue that lesbians are rarely represented as mothers (Kaplan, 1992). Furthermore, in the discussion of lesbian ambiguity that's played for a joke between the two women in *Baby Mama*, I also claim that the narrative insists that a heterosexual man must appear to restore order (Oliver, 2012).

Vital to mention here is Rich's (1980) work on the lesbian continuum, which recognises the intense relationship between women, a bonding that revolves around not solely sexual relationships (although this is and can be part of it) but an energy between women that is based on emotional and practical support. Rich also highlighted, through the work of black lesbian critic Lorraine Bethel, the

largely undocumented evidence that the lesbian continuum was particularly applicable to bonds between black women, for survival. This echoes not only the discussion of fictive kin the previous chapter, but also Rapp's (1979) claim that there has been a lack of racial analysis in relation to family within black communities.

Therefore, I argue in Chapter 7 that such characters emerge during a period when normative family is under threat; anxieties projected onto a woman who occupies a non-traditional role. As Kaplan argues, such figures 'represent everything that threaten the biological nuclear family' (1992: 199). The protection of the nuclear family will be examined in more detail through the discussion of the restoration narrative below. Drawing on Sandelowski's (1990) work on how representations of infertility divide women, this further emphasises how such portrayals of good and bad motherhood continue to pit women against each other.

Restoring heteronormativity

> The late-twentieth-century reification of mothering, now not as a duty (women no longer *have* to mother), but as in itself *fulfilling*, is something new… Films begin to image satisfaction in mothering, and the choice of mothering over career.

> (Kaplan, 1992: 194)

As Kaplan (1992) highlights, there has been a shift. Women no longer *have* to get pregnant – they *want* to. This can be seen in the growing popularity of reproductive technologies, and in the cultural narratives of family and motherhood that are under scrutiny for this project. As suggested earlier, there is new cultural emergence of the *pre-mother* who is waiting for the arrival of the *future fetus* – the 'maternal subject-in-waiting' (de Benedictis, in Littler and Winch, 2016: 9). To explore the *desire* to become a mother through the *pre-mother* character, in the context of the heteronormative romance narrative (Berlant, 2008), narrative shifts of women's films with a specific focus on female friendships will be discussed.

The first wave of female friendship films emerged in the 1980s, such as *Desperately Seeking Susan* (1985), *Thelma & Louise* (1991) and *Steel Magnolias* (1989). The central narratives of these films were on the value of female friendship outside of the difficulties relating to motherhood, family and marriage. Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young (2007) argued that the chick flick genre which followed in the mid-1990s was the most reflective of postfeminism due to the focus being on independent single women, rather than family and the domestic realm, as seen in *Sex and the City* (TV show, 1998-2004), *Legally Blonde* (2001) and *Confessions of a Shopaholic* (2009). They propose these texts created a new visibility of women in contemporary popular culture by constructing characters that reflect women who participate in consumer culture, through the pursuit of desires *outside* of motherhood – shoes, beauty, holidays, clothes, eating out and alcohol. However, despite this, as Ferriss and Young (2007) highlight, these films still adhere to convention by the majority of the lead characters ending up married and pregnant, which infers the proper destiny for women.

The girlfriend flick marks the next phase in the development of women's films, which also feature the *pre-mother*, which further 'depicts the priority of female friendships' (Winch, 2011: 69). Alison Winch claims the 'girlfriend flick' (2011: 69) is a recent phenomenon, which includes *The Women* (2008), *Sex and the City* (2008), *Bride Wars* (2009) and *Baby Mama* (2008). Susan Berridge and Karen Boyle (2014) also focus on *Baby Mama*, as well as examining *Bridesmaids* (2011) and *Mamma Mia* (2008). Winch studies the genre through the intersection of feminism and postfeminism through exploring the complexities around the notion of sisterhood. Berridge and Boyle (2014) explore lesbian ambiguity and homosocial desire through a comparative analysis of 'girlfriend' and 'bromance' films. In *Baby Mama,* which is a central text in this thesis, both authors have explored the relationship between Kate (the intended mother) and Angie (the surrogate), with a particular focus on the eroticised intensity between them. This work has identified the pastiche of heterosexual romance which underpins the narrative. The two women are shown attending fetal scans, antenatal classes, and despite falling out, Kate is at Angie's side when she goes into labour. Although it has been recognised that their friendship blossoms through pregnancy and

motherhood, away from unreliable men, class has also been recognised as significant in the tensions that emerge between them (Berridge and Boyle; 2014; Winch, 2011).

Berridge and Boyle (2014) examine class more closely by arguing that it is class difference that works to contain the threat of desire, which makes the women incompatible. In contrast, Winch claims that despite these differences, *Baby Mama* attempts to show that two different types of women can relate to each other and become friends, and that it is betrayal that causes the tension between them. Rather than the solidarity of the chick flicks that came before, Winch claims that the girlfriend flick offers a more polysemic reading to audiences by offering 'the female viewer a cathartic space to explore the complexities of women's relationships' (2011: 71). Berridge and Boyle focus more on the series of oppositions that set the characters apart, such as 'messy/neat, unhealthy/healthy, ignorant/intelligent' (2014: 358), which resonates with the earlier argument that binaries are constructed to create divisions between women.

Winch claims that the difference between the chick flick and the girlfriend flick is that the female protagonists *want it all*. Not just a career and material goods, but 'marriage, motherhood, or both' (2011: 71). In *Baby Mama,* Kate has a successful career, and is also desperate for a baby, which she eventually gets by falling pregnant, naturally. Marriage then follows – a ring is put on Kate's figure during the final credits. The girlfriend flick therefore portrays 'a market-driven femininity that is based on possession; on having the solvent husband and the Manolo Blahniks, the naturally conceived baby and the walk-in closet' (Winch, 2011: 71).

Although both Winch and Berridge and Boyle describe *Baby Mama* as a girlfriend flick, I argue it occupies a sub-genre of women's films beyond this. It has a manicured toe in what Oliver (2012) has called the 'mom-com', romantic comedy's older sibling, where pregnancy becomes the vehicle for romance. In the mom-com the narrative *starts* with pregnancy, romance then blossoming through how the characters transform, as seen in *Knocked Up* (2007), *The Back-up Plan* (2010) and *The Switch* (2010). In *Knocked Up*, pregnancy is the result of a one-night stand, in *The Back-up Plan* the female protagonist falls in love after being

inseminated with donor sperm, the couple ending up having their own biological child, and in *The Switch*, the lead character accidentally inseminates herself with her best friend's sperm, who she eventually falls in love with. In all these films, the genetic tie is the glue for romance, which reassures us that 'the nuclear family is still the ideal family' (Oliver, 2012: 44). This has emerged as a central theme throughout this thesis. Through textual analysis and focus group discussion it has been identified that heteronormative images of normative family

are being constructed, despite – or because of – the reproductive technologies plotlines. I will return to this in the discussion of the rescue narrative.

In addition to the lesbian continuum, it is worth mentioning Rich's belief that heterosexuality is constructed as compulsory throughout all aspects of society and culture, particularly in the ideology of heterosexual romance embedded in the images and narratives in fairytales, film, TV, advertising and literature. Rich claimed this has the ability to subconsciously socialise women into heterosexual romance and marriage, distorting any other possible alternatives. Drawing on Kathleen Gough's (1971) critique of Engels' *Origin of the Family* (1881/2001), Rich also argues that characteristics of male power in archaic societies that controlled women to produce children are reproduced. As Kaplan has also argued: 'Twentieth-century culture and its related films stand on the shoulders of nineteenth-century culture and its related fiction. The links are particularly true in relation to women, whose mythic constructs and social roles remained uncannily the same from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century' (Kaplan, 1992: 59). This resonates with Davis' (1983, 1998) and Finkelstein's (1990) claim that the nineteenth century cult of motherhood has resurfaced in contemporary attitudes to reproductive technologies. Building on both Kaplan and Rich, I argue that the texts in focus for this project also reflect this, shaped by a compulsory heterosexuality and a compulsory motherhood (Rich, 1980) that aim to reposition women into conventional roles, through a *desire for* motherhood rather than a duty (Kaplan, 1992). In addition, this project's research design enables the inclusion of an analysis of the audience's reception to such ideas.

Although, as I argue, the heterosexual romance narrative shapes the texts I am to discuss, regardless of genre – Hollywood film, sitcom, reality TV and soap opera

– I identify through my analysis that it is the narrative angle that has shifted, through what Rosalind Gill and Elena Herdieckerhoff (2006) have called a *rewriting* of romance. They claim that writers have revised traditional romance novels for new audiences, which has created new sub-genres of women's literature, such as chick-lit. Applying the idea of the rewrite to film and TV texts, I argue that in contrast to the 'pregnancy first, romance after' narrative of the mom-com (Oliver, 2012), the vehicle for romance in *Baby Mama* is the desire for the *future fetus*, through what I have described as the delayed conception plotline. This is an extension of the 'delayed consummation plotline' (Scodari in Battles and Hilton Morrow, 2002: 92), where the interaction of characters in the narrative is driven by the search for a romantic relationship. In my expansion, the narrative focus is on the search for the *future fetus,* and not the male partner – the primary goal being to achieve motherhood status, through natural pregnancy or surrogacy. A more accurate description of this sub-genre is the *pre-mom-com* as the focus is on the mom-in-waiting. However, although the narratives across all of the texts are primarily driven by the desire for the *future fetus,* the child does eventually arrive, either through the surrogate (*The New Normal, Coronation Street, Giuliana & Bill),* the miracle of natural conception (*Baby Mama*) or both (*Rules of Engagement).*

The love story is and has always been central to women's texts and has saturated popular culture, whether through film, TV, songs, or novels. As Tania Modleski (1982/2007) points out in the second edition of her pioneering work on female readers' relationship to mass marketed fiction: 'Perhaps a few women have been lucky enough never to have been caught up by popular romance, but the majority of us, I suspect, have been less fortunate' (2007: 9). Berlant (2008) explains in her work on women's love affair with sentimentality through the mass-marketed women's culture in America, the love plot is built on ideals of normative femininity, and conventions around the heterosexual couple dyad, 'with the love plot as the vehicle for and object of desire' (2008: 19). In the context of this project, the object of desire is the *future fetus.*

Berlant claims that the love plot creates a fantasy world which women 'experience affectively without being able to live it objectively' (2008: 31), institutions of

heterosexual love enabling the possibility of a path to a better life, through the notion of rescue. As she argues: 'To be needed (by a lover, children, a family, or all of them, in a nimbus of intimate connections) demonstrates your feminine worth' (2008: 171). Once again, maternal femininities are indicative of fulfilment rather than duty (Baraitser and Tyler, 2010; Kaplan, 1992). Furthermore, Berlant also suggests that to live affectively in a sentimental fantasy world is pleasurable for female audiences, as it enables feelings of belonging to a larger world. Janice Radway's (1983, 1991) seminal work on the romance novel also proposes that women use the romance fiction genre to escape from the drudgery, sadness and disappointment of their daily lives, and to identify with a heroine who has a better life. Radway argues through her empirical work with romance readers that audiences respond positively to independent heroines, which highlights 'patriarchal marriage's failure to address their needs' (1983: 68). However, despite this, she discovered her participants found most pleasure in conventional narratives, where the heroine ends up rescued by a man.

What is important to highlight here is the viewing of the texts selected for analysis through emotion and affect, particularly in relation to the research question that asks how and if genres articulate the surrogacy storylines differently, and if this has any influence on the viewer's perception of the practice. Although the feminist scholarly work on film and TV is extensive, I consequently introduce a specific focus on female viewing and emotion and affect in the context of ideologies of motherhood and family, informed by the responses and discussions of women who participated in this project. Kristyn Gorton's (2009) work on TV and emotion asks what it is about a text that can move the viewer emotionally and connect with the story and the characters? The emotional connection to the genres presented for analysis is explored at various points throughout the thesis.

Berlant highlights that women's culture (films, fiction etc.) is a lucrative industry that targets women for profit, capitalist culture influencing emotional lives, as well as material, which I call a capitalisation of *womanhood*. Through this rewriting of the romance narrative – where the *future fetus* is the goal, and not the romantic partner – Berlant's notion of rescue is particularly useful to extend, as it performs as a vehicle to restore norms outside of the conventional boy-meets-girl narrative.

In addition, Oliver's (2012) work on how female characters in Hollywood films are transformed through pregnancy, or in Oliver's argument, 'domesticated' or 'tamed' (2012: 61, 67) is also useful to evoke for this analysis. I will argue, drawing on the audience data that highlights how the narrative closures in the texts all adhere to convention, that the female characters in the texts are re-positioned within the domestic space, as mothers. This echoes the figure of the nineteenth century mother who has been repackaged through the notion of postfeminist domestic pleasure (Gill, 2007; Gill and Herdieckerhoff, 2007; McRobbie, 2004) and returned through the restoration narrative. As Janet Walker (1982) explains in her discussion of Hollywood films that feature strong female characters: 'Often narrative closure itself seems to necessitate the resolution of problems and ambiguities brought up by the desire of women characters to go to work, to be sexual beings, or both. The end of the story becomes the solution of that story when the woman is returned to her "proper" place, i.e., with her husband, at home' (1982: 167). A successful career is not enough, whereas fulfilment through pregnancy and motherhood *is* (Kaplan, 1992; Oliver, 2012; Winch, 2011).

I will argue that this 'renewed sentimentalizing motherhood discourse' (Kaplan, 1992: 195) gains cultural currency by protecting the collapse of the nuclear family from lesbianism, infertility and the threat of childless women. This return to the normative through the convention of the happy ending is explored in Chapter 7. Furthermore, in an extension of the restoration narrative, I also argue how homosexual parents-in-waiting are also 'tamed'. This is tackled in Chapter 5, where I propose the homosexual male characters are restored to the normative in the reflection of the nuclear family model, to make homosexuality and same-sex parenting more palatable to mainstream audiences. In his discussion of gay parenting in *The New Normal* and *Modern Family*, André Cavalcante (2014) argues that while offering a new family form to audiences, the gay characters in these shows have to be domesticated and like heterosexuals 'to embody dominant conceptions of social worth and legitimacy', engaging with 'textual strategies that make them more agreeable or "normal" to viewers who might feel troubled by their presence' (2014: 460).

Through the ideology of family that appears to dominate these popular cultural narratives, this chapter has explored visualising technology and the emergence of fetal personhood, through to the fetishisation of specific types of pregnancy and motherhood in popular culture where certain maternal bodies are elevated over others, shaped by ideologies of femininity, race, class and heterosexuality. I have argued through this body of work that these representations work to divide, and not unite, women, and to fuel consumer culture. I have also suggested that the texts in focus feature what I have called the *pre-mother* character, which, through the restoration narrative, reflects nineteenth century ideologies of domesticity and motherhood which as I claim have resurfaced.

Two factors have been identified as central to these chapters, and most useful in the context of this thesis. Firstly, how and why social and cultural values and ideals of femininity and gender roles attach to normative notions of pregnancy and motherhood, and secondly, how the genetic tie not only symbolises the worth of white purity, but the continuation of the male seed. Furthermore, what is also vital to underscore here is Barrett and McIntosh's (1991) recommendation to explore how ideologies of family are represented and reproduced culturally, particularly on TV, as it is important to capture and analyse such ideologies within the ever-moving historical and cultural context. My primary objective throughout this thesis is to do precisely this.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter focuses on the research project's methodology, methods and analytical tools. I will begin this chapter by presenting the feminist methodology and my role as the researcher, which will explain how I have been inspired to listen to and explore women's voices in their responses to texts with surrogacy storylines. This will be followed by a discussion of the importance of embodiment, the value of exploring genre and combining textual analysis and audience reception – alongside how the texts were sourced and why they were selected. I will also describe how I developed the focus group design, how the participants were recruited, as well as an outline of the analytical tools – discourse analysis, interpretative repertoires, narrative analysis, and queer theory. I will further discuss why these specific tools have been employed for this project, and how they work within the feminist methodological framework. This chapter will also address how the methodology has been shaped by the central research questions which ask how narratives are articulated through varying genre techniques, how these shape audiences' perceptions of surrogacy as a practice, and how these representations reflect women's own situated experiences of living in the world. Any challenges that were encountered during the research process will be reflected upon.

Summary of the research outline: First, texts featuring surrogacy storylines were sourced and selected. These were then analysed carefully through a close viewing process. Detailed notes were taken, the core data of which was inputted into an Excel spreadsheet. Three focus groups were then assembled. During these sessions, the participants viewed a selection of the texts, which was followed by a group discussion. All of the sessions were audio recorded, and transcribed.

Feminist methodology

This project explores the popular cultural representations of surrogacy on TV and film, through textual analysis and audience work. A feminist methodology has been selected. Janet Holland and Caroline Ramazanoglu (2002) emphasise that

feminist social research gives insights into gendered social existence, and that a feminist methodology is concerned with making women's knowledge valid and authoritative. It subsequently makes sense that this project, which makes gender central to its analysis, is driven by a feminist epistemology. Although such an approach leaves the methodology open to critiques of essentialism, the adoption of Haraway's (1988) 'situated knowledges' deflects such claims. Through this concept, partial perspectives of different communities of women and their varied experiences of the world are valued. Knowledge, as Haraway argues, is an instrument of vision. It is this vision through the interpretation of television texts which is of core value to this project. As mentioned in the introduction, Spigel (2005) wants to know what audiences are seeing and most importantly thinking. It is through this feminist methodology that I aim to find out.

Haraway's 'situated knowledges' is a postmodernist revision of Nancy Harstock's (1999) standpoint theory. Standpoint theory is rooted in Marxist mode of analysis, which Harstock argues offers a more privileged truth of social reality – the view from below, as illustrated by Marx's subjugated proletariat, rather than above. Feminist standpoint theory has laid the groundwork for 'situated knowledges', and has made a valuable contribution to feminist theory (Hekman, 1997). However, it is Haraway's insistence on the epistemological value of partial perspectives that has been deemed most valid for this research project. Haraway argues that that there is no single standpoint of women, and that a united standpoint is too essentialist as it focuses on a shared experience of women, rather than opening up a more varied range of experiences. Arguing against more essentialist theories on the production of women's knowledge through their experiences in the world (Harstock, 1999; Stanley and Wise, 1993), Haraway claims that there is no fixed subject, thus enabling subjects to 'join with another, to see together without claiming to be another' (1988: 586). It is through this theory of the female subject that this feminist methodology works, as it is 'insatiably curious about the webs of differential positioning' (1988: 590). It is this differential positioning and different ways of seeing, together, that drives the construction of this thesis, as does Haraway's notion that vision and objectivity is an embodied experience. The exploration into these different perspectives has informed the shaping of this

project's methodology, and informed the selection of the focus group method for this study, which is discussed further on.

In this argument of the validity of different perspectives, it is important to recognise the logic of relativism in empirical research. Holland and Ramazanoglu (2002) argue relativism is useful in feminist research as it helps to tell stories from a feminist perspective, as it 'accepts multiple truths are produced within different ways of knowing and so provide varied ways of making sense of the social world' (2002: 55). Drawing on Patti Lather (1991), both scholars point out that the relative approach in feminist research can be problematic as there is no single reality from a particular culture, or position – whether that be from a gendered, classed or raced position. Despite this, the attempt to explore experiences of the social world from multiple positions is still valid for this project. It is the contrasts between these positions that have materialised through discussion in the focus groups that has helped produce some revealing data. However, it must be noted that it is the researcher's interpretation of this data that is a challenging part of the process. As Holland and Ramazanoglu (2002) emphasise: 'It matters which accounts of reality are believed and acted on; it matters who has the power to determine what counts as authoritative knowledge; it matters how knowledge claims are expressed and what weight they carry' (2002: 57). Although I accept that absolute truth is unattainable, and that there are no fixed criteria for evaluating this knowledge, being able to assign meaning to and make valid the varied knowledge and truths garnered through empirical research is the challenge of being a feminist social researcher.

Role of the researcher

It is important to highlight my position as a researcher in relation to the subject matter that is central to this project. Sharlene Hesse-Biber (2013) argues that researchers become 'part of the power structures that informs the text' (2013: 287). Hesse-Biber proposes that interactions with audiences are vital, as they offer insights that aren't solely those of the researcher's. She also proposes it is possible that some researchers speak from their own experiences, with the

potential to maintain 'a personal connection to their subjects for analysis' (2013: 287). Hesse-Biber uses Angela Haas's (2009) work on infertility and online chat rooms as an example of this. Hesse-Biber proposes that Haas' struggles with infertility led her to explore this area of study, which she argues informed her textual analysis – alongside her self-identification as a feminist. Throsby (2004) in the exploration of IVF, was also prompted to engage with the failure of IVF treatment due to her own experiences of being questioned by family and friends about her choice to live without children. This, she claimed, aroused an empathy with women who were unable to reproduce, for whatever reason. Similarly, my experiences with infertility have inspired me, as a researcher, to explore this area. As argued by psychologist Stephanie Taylor (2001):

> The identity of the researcher becomes relevant to the discourse analytic research in several ways. First, it influences the selection of the topic or research area. The researcher is likely to conduct a project which chimes with her or his personal interests, sympathies and political beliefs… personal links to the topic are not in themselves a sufficient basis for research, but they are a probable starting point to be acknowledged'
> (In Wetherell *et al*, 2001:17).

David de Vaus (2001) also illuminates the value of the researcher's relationships to the subject area, by arguing that, 'researchers' personal experiences can lead to sensitivities not possible without such experiences; personal relevance can be a powerful motivator and source of energy to do the sustained work required for producing quality research' (2001:38). Hesse-Biber is right in her cautious perspective on the researcher's role in textual analysis by proposing that guidelines for analysis must be followed, to 'avoid making generalized statements about the people shown and avoid misrepresenting them and their interests… discussions of the people and ideas represented in texts must be fair and well-reasoned, not finely selected to emphasize some points at the expense of others' (2013: 287). The importance of the audience reception of these texts, and the analytical tools employed to sieve through these findings, are a way to be vigilant of any biased readings through my role as a researcher during the process of analysis. As Pierre Bourdieu (1992) argued, it is being aware of these biases,

through self-reflexivity, that allows the social scientist to be objective. However, as Sandra Harding (2003) points out, pure objectivity in research is unattainable, particularly through the identification of research problems and the formulation of a hypothesis, as the social scientist cannot be void of subjective influences of power, value, politics and morals. Harding claims a more robust and rigorous self-reflexivity through the research process is required for a *stronger* objectivity, 'to understand how our own personal experiences, loyalties, privileges and group memberships affect our research' (Laurel Weldon in Ackerly *et al.,* 2006: 80-81).

Embodiment

The Cartesian binary of nature/culture in relation to bodies created a cultural hierarchy which Judith Butler (1990) describes as promoting 'strategies of domination' (1990: 50). In this dualism, the female body is aligned with nature and reproduction, as opposed to the male body that is associated with the mind and agency. It is understandable that poststructuralist feminist theorists such as Butler fought so ardently to expunge this dualism, which enforces this hierarchical biological determinism. A discussion on the essence of woman being reduced to reproductive capacity, through the possession of a womb, is not made here, but will be explored in Chapter 6. What needs to be addressed here is the validity of the body in feminist theory, through the embodiment of vision enabled by 'situated knowledges', which Haraway insists will offer feminists a better account of the world.

Throsby (2004) and Amrita Pande (2014) are among recent feminist sociologists who have brought the body back into feminist work. Through empirical work Throsby explores the failure of IVF; Pande uncovers the experiences of commercial surrogates in India. Both embrace feminist embodiment as core to their methodology. Throsby argues that experience is, 'mediated by language but also as located in the physical/material, which is crucial given the extensive intervention into women's bodies that IVF entails' (Throsby, 2004: 72). Pande explores women's embodied experience through different forms of labour, such as reproductive and kin labour (gestation, birthing, emotional ties with the intended

mother), which she argues is a more nuanced approach to explore surrogacy by raising the question about 'how a labor market for wombs is created and how the laborers experience this market' (2014: 8-9).

This research project explores focus group responses to cultural representations of surrogacy, combined with textual analysis. Although the participants' bodies are not directly subjected to the intervention that the process of surrogacy entails (egg retrieval from the intended mother, the implantation of the embryo and the hosting of the fetus in the surrogate, and so forth), I argue that their reception and responses to these mediated representations of surrogacy are an embodied experience, rooted in each participant's own experiences of living in the world. As will emerge in the analysis of the audience data throughout the thesis, the participants often engaged with the physical and material in relation to not only discussions of pregnancy, but also in the way they responded to the texts in the viewing sessions. Some reactions were not just emotional, but physical also. This illustrates how affect can be transmitted across boundaries such as the TV screen to create corporeal impact.

For example, Carla (mixed mothers focus group) described feelings of nausea when watching *Giuliana & Bill,* like 'eating a bag of sweets'. This demonstrates how, through camera angles, aesthetics, script, audio and casting (Creeber, 2006; Feuer, 1983; Gorton, 2009; M. Smith, 1995; Williams, 1991) certain narratives can stimulate physical responses from viewers, even if they aren't the ones the text had initially set out to achieve. As Teresa Brennan (2014) explains in her discussion of the transmission of affect in relation to bodily changes in room atmospheres: 'Visual images, like auditory traces, also have a direct physical impact' (2004: 10). As I have argued drawing on Spigel (2005) it is important to know what audiences are thinking. In addition to this, through a body of work on how affect and emotion are constructed on TV and its affective impact on viewers, I also argue that it is important to know what audiences are *feeling*. Furthermore, despite the aim of the reality TV genre to connect emotionally with viewers, to give pleasure, *Giuliana & Bill* was the least liked by the participants. Drawing on the work of Brunsdon (1997) and Jackie Stacey (1993), I argue this shows that the reception of popular texts is not always pleasurable, which highlights the

importance within feminist criticism to recognise resistance from active, rather than passive, audiences. In her discussion of Hollywood cinema and female spectatorship, which is relevant here, Stacey (1993) proposes that the activity of the female spectatorship may involve 'displeasure and rejection or derision of the popular text she has viewed' (1993: 46). This displeasure is explored in the discussion of the participants' responses to the texts in relation to genre, and further highlights the significance of examining the audience reception of popular texts.

Textual analysis and audience reception

As this research project explores the popular cultural representation of surrogacy on TV and film, textual analysis was required. Textual analysis is a method of data analysis that closely examines either the content and meaning of texts or their structure and discourse. These media texts include newspapers, TV programs, radio programmes and blogs. Textual analysis allows the ability to examine how they operate, are constructed, and the ways in which meanings are produced (Given, 2008).

As Franklin (1990) has highlighted, popular representations have a social and cultural power. Critical discourse analyst Norman Fairclough (2003) also claims that, 'texts can bring about changes in our knowledge (we can learn things from them), our beliefs, our attitudes, values and so forth… texts have causal effects upon, and contribute to changes in, people (beliefs, attitudes, etc.), actions, social relations, and the material world' (2003: 8). However, to critically explore the texts selected for this research project, textual analysis alone was not deemed adequate. As Fairclough has argued, effects of texts are mediated by meaning making, which is why the audience reception of the texts, through the focus group method, has been an integral component to the analysis.

It is imperative to indicate at this juncture that although it has been acknowledged that textual analysis alone has its limitations, this is not to undervalue the role of the analyst in the process. Virginia Nightingale (1996) argued that due to the

popularity of reception studies, the role of the analyst disappeared due to 'the heat' (1996: 63) being taken *off* the text and *on* to the audience. Textual analysis, therefore, is not insignificant in this study. It enables a framing that can be enhanced when combined with other methods, as it 'can still offer insight and inspiration' (Creeber, 2006: 84). Only by having an audience to interpret these texts can any meanings be made, as Sharon Lockyer (2008) argues, employing the focus group method in relation to textual analysis is way of acknowledging 'the world that exists outside of texts' (in Given, 2008: 866). This approach belongs to what has been called the 'ethnographic turn' in media studies, which has connected the fields of sociology and media, and which has produced a plethora of studies which have explored women's responses to popular TV in the context of everyday culture and class status (Ang, 1985; Press, 1991; Skeggs and Wood, 2012; Skeggs *et al* 2008; Wood and Taylor, 2008; Wood, 2009).

From the outset of this project Hall's now well-established encoding/decoding model (1973) was deemed appropriate to integrate, in a revised form, into the methods framework. Encoding/decoding is a theoretical audience reception model Hall constructed to identify the different ways viewers interpret mass media texts – as active, rather than passive, readers. Morley has emphasised that Hall's encoding/decoding concept was only intended as a working model designed for further projects, and that it should be viewed as a seminal rather than canonic text (Gurevitch and Scannell, in Katz *et al,* 2003). David Morley's main critique of the model is that the construction and reception of texts are far more complex. For instance, the construction of the encoded textual meanings become blurred through the relationship between producers of the texts and conscious intention of broadcasters; and the decoding process is more influenced along the axes of comprehension/incomprehension than agreement/disagreement (Morley, 2003). However, as Morley has argued, 'despite its limitations, it still has much to offer', and to 'dismiss it now would be foolhardy' (2006: 111, 114). Morley believed that the model's focus on how texts were being received by audiences was an important moment in cultural studies. Gorton (2009) also considers the model still valuable, arguing that 'the codes Hall identifies allow those interested in the study of audiences to consider the various ways in which audiences interpret what they watch and to appreciate the complexity inherent to the relationship between

viewer and screen' (2009: 20).

This was the first time in cultural theory that the role of the reader was considered valuable – a pivotal turning point in audience research. This direction soon ignited a trend in audience studies. Hall proposed that readings of texts are polysemic, that 'meanings do not exist "equally" in the message: it has been structured in dominance although its meaning can never be fixed or "closed"' (Morley, 1980: 10). Therefore, alternative meanings can be made that might not have been initially intended by the producers of the texts through the encoding process. In Hall's model, the decoding process is devised of three key reading categories: dominant-hegemonic (accepts the text's codes as natural), negotiated (partial acceptance, but resists and modifies in relation to own experiences), oppositional (understands the dominant reading but rejects it).

This model may be considered dated as it is over four decades old. However, I argue that it is still useful to employ, as an addition to the analytical framework, while being aware of its failings and applying it through a revised analytical lens. The three categories (dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, oppositional) have proven to be an effective reception framework to loosely draw upon in the examination of the audience data. However, Lisa Blackman and Valerie Walkerdine (2001) have critiqued Hall's model by claiming that it lacks a closer analysis of processes of affect and emotion. They argue cognitive and rational processes have taken precedence, which resonates with Larry Grossberg's (1997) belief that affect is: 'the "missing link" in the understanding of media and ideology' (in Skeggs and Wood, 2012: 13).

There have been debates on whether affect and cognition can co-exist in one system, or are separate systems (Zajonc, 2000). As Misha Kavka (2008) explains: 'affect is opposed to cognition, or in the vernacular, feeling is opposed to thinking' (2008: 29). I have integrated the work on the affective *and* the cognitive processes of texts on audiences. This I justify, following Kavka, by drawing on Brian Massumi's (2002) understanding of how sense and sensation unify both sides: 'Sense itself ushers in the related but ambivalent term "sensation", reminding us that feeling has both external and internal components; a sensation can come

from the way we (physically) register the world or (psychologically) registers the world's impact on us' (Kavka, 2008: 29). This method corresponds with Beverley Skeggs and Helen Wood's (2011, 2012) research design for their work on audiences and reality television, through their methods of textual analysis, texts-in-action, focus groups and interviews, a framework that has helped shape the design for this study. Like them, I too am concerned with affect and textual readings of TV shows, such as Kavka (2008) and Gorton (2009) focus on, *and* with 'audience encounters and interactions with the television through empirical research' (Skeggs and Wood, 2012: 136).

The focus on how the affective and cognitive connect with audiences is also an approach that supports the research question that asks how the mechanisms of different genres impact on audiences. This enables a study of how emotions are constructed in the texts, and audiences' responses to them. This is performed by textually analysing the narrative sequencing of shots, close-ups, character construction, dialogue – and in many cases, sound – all of which aim to elicit responses from viewers through attempting to suture them to the text (Carroll, 1990; Ellis, 1992, 1999; Gorton, 2009; Plantinga, 1999, 2002; Schickel, 2000; M. Smith, 1995; Williams, 1991). Through the focus group design, to be discussed below, affective and interpretative responses from the focus group participants can then be examined; the fundamental aim of this approach is to explore the participants' responses to the texts in relation to their own subject position and experience of the world. As Skeggs and Wood highlight, drawing on Spinoza, which is wholly relevant here and in all work on affect and TV reception, 'affect must always be connected to ideas for it to matter, or be effective' (2012: 159). Such ideas, in this context, in relation to motherhood, fertility, family and heterosexuality, have been unearthed through the audience data and discussed throughout the thesis.

Charlotte Brunsdon and David Morley (1978) applied the encoding/decoding model to *The Nationwide Project* – an ethnographic experiment on audiences in London and the Midlands. Morley later continued this work in his own project, *The Nationwide Audience* (1980) and later became aware of its flaws. One main

criticism he expressed of his own research design was that selecting the texts for the audiences was artificial. However, in relation to this project, where I too have selected the texts for the focus group viewing sessions, I believe this is not a core concern, due to the subject matter. Despite a growth in representations in mainstream TV texts, surrogacy as a topic for research is still niche. I therefore believe my role as a researcher to source and select the texts was essential. In addition, a pre-selection of the material was necessary to ensure the focus group arrangement was to work. It was important to create structured viewing in light of contemporary reception frames, which includes, for example, viewing multiple screens in public spaces, the viewing of texts on portable electronic media, and enhanced viewer control through the remote control and channel-flicking (Ang, 1991, 1995; Bellamy and Walker, 1996; McCarthy, 2001; Uricchio, 2005). Anna McCarthy (2001) calls this dislocated form of audience-text interaction 'ambient' television watching, which she argues causes fragmented concentration. Therefore, the focus group setting with supplied texts was vital, to ensure the participants' viewing was focused.

Sourcing the texts

The texts were sourced over six weeks during July/August 2014 – I was looking for any TV or film text that had a surrogacy narrative. The initial scope, genre-wise, was wide. I embarked on a broad online investigation using Google, inputting multiple keywords related to the subject matter. Films database IMDb was also used. An initial list of texts was compiled, which were then separated into varying genre categories – soap opera, film, documentary, sitcom, drama and reality TV (Appendix 1). A discussion of genre follows below.

Using just search engines soon emerged as insufficient. Therefore, a more focussed approach was embarked upon. To create a more comprehensive list of texts, I approached the Internet as not just as a research tool, but as a cultural space – not just operated for retrieving information, but connecting with others. As argued by Annette Markham (2004), the Internet is, 'an umbrella term for those social spaces constituted and mediated through computer-mediated interactions' (2004: 330). Exploring online surrogacy forums, such as Fertility Friends and Cots,

identified a number of texts with surrogacy storylines. Although I did not directly contact the forum users, useful information was retrieved by what may be considered a method of lurking (Nonnecke and Preece, 1999). The forum users were active in the discussion of TV shows and film, some of who also uploaded relevant links. This process enabled me to locate texts that did not materialise through the search engine approach.

At this point, the timescale of the texts was restricted to 1988 onwards, due to the focus being on the practice of commercial surrogacy, where the surrogate is a gestational carrier – a woman paid for carrying a child who she is not genetically related to. Advancements in reproductive technologies emerged in late 1980s, which influenced narratives in the texts. As highlighted by Oliver (2012) in her work on the images of pregnancy in Hollywood, 'Situating Hollywood films within their cultural contexts, including academic feminism, brings into stark relief the ways in which our desires and fears over new reproductive technologies and women's role in production are projected onto pregnant bodies' (2012: 8).

Once I was confident that the list of texts was fully exhausted, the next stage in the research was to locate the texts for analysis. This was more problematic than initially envisaged – some of the texts were available to stream on platforms such as *YouTube* and on film websites such as *Cultureunplugged.* Some platforms charged a small fee per viewing. Vimeo's streaming of *Breeders...* was available for a fee of $5.99, and documentary sharing platform Jman TV rented films for £1. Some texts were not available online, having either expired from their host platforms, such as the BBC iPlayer, or only being available via mail order, but at a cost. I set forth to procure what was available and what could be sourced within a limited budget.

The documentary *Made in India* was considered essential viewing but due to the expense ($300 for education institutions, $25 for individuals), it was ordered via Goldsmiths' library. *Breeders*... was rented on Vimeo for $5.99. For the documentaries that were considered to be the most important to include, but were not available to stream online, I contacted the production companies by email with a clear outline of the project, and what the texts were going to be used for. Where possible, these emails were followed up by a phone call. Due to a large proportion

of the companies being overseas, the communication was mostly conducted via email. The companies that were contacted include: Berkley Film Foundation, No Code Productions, Magic Lantern Movies, Umbrella Films, RTE Productions, Periscope Pictures, De Films En Aiguille, Pyewackitt Productions, Danish Broadcasting Corporation, Deston Films, National Geographic, Panorama, BBC and True North Productions.

De Films En Aiguille based in France were keen to support the project and sent me a copy of documentary *Naître Père* by post, at no cost. True North Productions based in Leeds, who produced *Addicted to Surrogacy* for Channel 4, located the documentary in their archive. After several email exchanges and one phone conversation to clarify that the film would be used for research purposes only, to cover any ethical issues of consent and exploitative usage, they made a DVD copy for an administrative cost of £10. All of the other companies I contacted either didn't respond, despite a number of reminder emails, or were only willing to send copies of the shows for fees between £50-100, which was outside of my budget. However, a database of contacts for the production companies was created, if it were necessary to revisit them at a later stage. Due to the final content that was available, the genre category of TV talk shows was dropped, as was the episode of *Oprah!* which was considered a key text, was not available. Also, some foreign texts were excluded due to not having subtitles. Although I was initially frustrated that some of the texts I was hoping to include were not available, the result was that the research design became more focussed.

From extensive note-taking I created an Excel spreadsheet which encompassed six sheets: film, documentary, reality TV, sitcom, soap opera and TV drama. Alongside the title of the text under analysis, the episode details and the date the text was viewed was also inputted, three columns were entered – discourse, narrative and representation – the narrative column broken down into the sub-columns of: the goal / equilibrium / disruption / resolution / final equilibrium (Appendix 5). This mapping exercise was to identify dominant ideologies that could be detected in the texts. These emerged as being the ideologies of completeness (the value of motherhood, and femininity through fertility), natural reproduction (normative family), romance (which enable normative family),

heterosexuality (happiness attached to the heterosexual couple dyad, the nuclear family) and whiteness (value of the white genetic child, fear of miscegenation, reproducing the white nuclear family). At this point it was also decided to focus on texts from 2004 onwards, within a contemporary time frame. This was not only to keep within the most recent developments of reproductive technologies, but also to hope that participants might have some familiarity with the texts and the practice of surrogacy, which would support the discussion. Furthermore, the texts were chosen in accordance with the research questions, which ask how narratives of surrogacy are articulated through varying genre techniques, and how do such techniques shape the audience's perception of the practice. Therefore, a pre-selection of the texts was fundamental aspect to the research design. I wanted to present a wide range of genres.

Genre

As a method, genre analysis is core to this study, not replacing what has been considered (Mittell, 2004) the more traditional method of textual analysis, but working alongside it. Each text that has been selected for this study has its own style, with its own set of codes and conventions that belong to its genre – it has its own language. As outlined by Lisa Taylor and Andrew Willis (1999): 'the acknowledgement of the genre is dependent upon an accepted set of generic conventions which enable the audience to key into the text with certain expectations' (1999: 57). These codes and conventions are constructed through the production process – from the style of filming, camera angles, close-ups, soundtrack and program length, through to how the narrative is developed and the style of performance by the actors – all of which contribute to how emotion is constructed in the text and its ability to move audiences affectively during the viewing process (Carroll, 1999, 2005; Feuer, 1983; Gorton, 2009; M. Smith, 1995; Williams, 1991). This ability to evoke – or in some cases, not evoke – emotions from viewers due to differing genre mechanisms is central to this study design as it relates to one of the core research questions, which asks how narratives of surrogacy are shaped through varying genre techniques, and whether these genre techniques shape the audience's perceptions of the surrogacy practice. As

cognitive film theorist Noël Carroll (1999) suggests in his discussion of emotions and film, 'filmmakers have selected out the details of the scene or sequence that they think are emotively significant and thrust them, so to speak, in our faces' (1999: 29 in Gorton, 2009: 79). Although the majority of the texts discussed in this thesis are TV texts, the work on emotion and film is valid to draw upon. Gorton (2009) is right to highlight that television and emotion is still a developing area, therefore 'is necessary to draw on theoretical ideas within film studies in order to think about how these ideas might be transposed to television studies' (2009: 72).

It is important to highlight here the blurring of genre boundaries. As Minna Aslama and Mervi Pantti (2006) highlight, genres are becoming more hybridised, across 'factual programming, fiction and entertainment' (2006: 171). This will be touched upon throughout the analysis. There is also an argument to suggest that ideas about pure genre are now outdated due to the growth of hybrid genres. However, the importance of genre is still valid, even in a blended form, 'as they are still significant in how they operate within mixtures' (Mittell, 2004: xii). A variety of genres have been elected for this study, and for focus, will be referred to through concise categorisations, such as reality TV, soap opera, sitcom, and Hollywood film. My interest in engaging with a wide range of genres is to explore the differences – and similarities – in how narratives of surrogacy are articulated. The rationale for the selection of these genre categories has been discussed in the *Sourcing the texts* section. This study does not set out to perform an in-depth analysis on each genre category to the same intensity as other scholars in the field who have focused on one, such as reality TV (Biressi and Nunn, 2005; Hill, 2004; Holmes and Jermyn, 2003; Murray and Ouelette, 2008; Skeggs and Wood, 2012). This is due to this project aiming to examine differences between genre techniques, through the construction and reception of the texts, to explore which genres have more impact on viewers over others.

The focus group

Sue Wilkinson (1999) argues that feminist methods should be contextual, and the gathering of women's voices shows a commitment to feminist research. Therefore, as women's voices are central to this project, working in dialogue with textual

analysis, the focus group method was deemed an integral component to the research design. It is important to highlight that the focus group has only been employed in this context since the 1990s, since it was re-conceptualised from its former use in marketing and media and communications, where it has been used primarily to explore audience reception (Hesse-Biber, 2013; Munday, 2006).

Audience reception of pre-selected texts through the focus group method has been employed by leading media scholars. For example, the exploration of the reception of BBC current affairs programme *Nationwide* (Brunsdon and Morley, 1978), and the cross-cultural reception of American soap opera *Dallas* (Liebes and Katz, 1990). The focus group as a method for this project – further to the ability to study the reception of the texts – also provides a space to listen to women's voices in relation to their positions on motherhood, which is a key organising factor in the groupings of the participants, to be discussed below. It has been proposed that the focus group situation is a space where participants can share with the researcher, and with each other, their own experiences in relation to a specific topic (Brennen, 2012; Dimitriadis and Kamberelis, 2008; Wilkinson, 2004). Furthermore, as Jenny Kitzinger (2004) argues, the focus group is a research tool that can help explore how media representations might relate to, and potentially influence, the public understanding of certain issues.

Recruitment

I assembled three focus groups – mixed mothers, non-mothers, and pre-mothers. As investment in motherhood was the core rationale for the recruitment, gender was a central factor, which adheres to the feminist epistemology that puts gender as central. The groups were all composed of women. A full description of the participants and the dates and locations of the focus group sessions is documented in the Appendices (Appendix 3). However, a brief overview is presented here.

The mixed mothers group composed of an acupuncturist (Carla), PR consultant (Nadra), jewellery designer (Jackie), secondary school teacher (Carrie), picture

editor (Sonja) and an art restorer (Sally). Two women had children. One woman was bisexual. One woman identified as black Canadian. One woman identified as Anglo Indian. The non-mothers group composed of a TV news producer (Rebecca), a DJ (Laura), a poet (Rachel), a musician (Paula), an events manager (37), an international relocation manager (Charlie) and an HE Outreach Officer (Tara). Two women identified as Anglo Indian. One woman was a lesbian. Two women identified as black British. None of these women had children at the time of this research. The pre-mothers group was composed of six sixth form sociology students at a school in South East London (Rhian, Fay, Rose, Claire, Candice and Jess). Three identified as white British, one as black British, one as Anglo Indian and one Turkish Cypriot. I decided it wasn't appropriate to ask them to identify themselves in terms of sexuality or occupation, due to their age range of 17-18. It is important to emphasise here that the description 'pre-mother' is not employed with the *assumption* that the women are to become mothers in the future, but is a term used to frame the group in relation to their current position to motherhood, as younger women. Therefore pre-mother, in this context, is flexible, used to describe a position of non-motherhood which has the potential to change.

The mixed mothers group is described as mixed as it included non-mothers, mothers and pre-mothers. For example, Carla had undergone two rounds of IVF treatment due to her male partner's infertility, which failed. However, Carla has since had a successful round of IVF which has resulted in Frank, now aged 2. Therefore, in this group context Carla can be categorised as a pre-mother. The non-mothers group consisted of some women who didn't want children, some who were unsure about having children, some who weren't ready to have children due to not having met a suitable partner (who could also be categorised as pre-mothers) – and some who were unable to have children. The pre-mothers group consisted of younger women. I elected this group as they were at a different stage of their lives than the other participants – they were all still living at home with their families and completing their A Levels. I believe this brings an alternative perspective to the discussions of motherhood.

The motivation for these three groupings was that the participants could draw on different positions in relation to motherhood. Through these compositions I aimed

to 'encourage a range of responses which provide a greater understanding of the attitudes, behaviour, opinions or perceptions of participants on the research issues' (Hennink 2007: 6) – the research issue in this study being motherhood and the reproduction of normative family.

It could be queried why I didn't recruit solely participants with some experience of surrogacy, and/or infertility and IVF, due to the surrogacy and infertility narratives that are central to the texts under analysis. I didn't feel this was necessary as the primary focus was to include participants with different relationships to and experiences of motherhood. However, it is important to highlight that some of the participants across the groups did have experiences of limited fertility. As mentioned, in the mixed mothers group, Carla had experienced IVF failure. In the non-mothers group Laura was infertile due to a hormone condition, as was Rachel due to a hysterectomy. This was private information only known to me, and not shared with the other participants.

The sensitivity of the topic also influenced the recruitment. All the participants in the mixed mothers and non-mothers groups were known to me. They all knew about my personal problematic fertility background, and I knew about theirs – if they had one. I also knew about their personal relationship status, which must also be recognised as a contributory factor to non-motherhood. The mixed mothers all knew each other, either through a pre-existing mutual friendship group or having met through a previous session I had run during my MA research. As this group were familiar with each other, I decided to hold the session at my home. The non-mothers group didn't know each other, so I decided to hold the session within the neutral space of a room at Goldsmiths. I didn't know the pre-mothers school group, but they were all familiar with each other, and the faculty representative – to be discussed below. Due to the nature of this group, and due to the focus group research phase taking place during school term time, it was decided the session was to be divided into two shorter parts, and held at the school during their lunch hour. Only students who were interested in the project volunteered to take part.

In advance of the sessions I submitted an ethics form and the necessary documents required to the head of the Ethics' Committee in the Sociology

department, Goldsmiths. With her input and consultation, I created a consent form for all three groups (Appendix 4). This form included my Goldsmiths' mailing and email address and project title. In addition, the form stated that although they were agreeing to the sessions being audio recorded, they were free to withdraw from the study at any time. The form also ensured the anonymity of any citations to be used. For the pre-mothers focus group, parental consent was required, which was confirmed via e-mail from the school's gatekeeper, who helped secure the sessions. The gatekeeper also alleviated any concerns in regard to a CRB check. It transpired after a discussion with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) that I didn't require a CRB check if a teacher was to be present.

The gatekeeper, who was the (female) faculty representative, agreed to be present during the sessions. The fact that the representative was female was also an important factor, not just due to the project's feminist methodology, but also the rapport she had in place with the students. The other two groups were more comfortable as they knew me. I would argue that this group were also more at ease with the presence of a representative with whom they were familiar. Furthermore, the gatekeeper also confirmed that emotional support, due to the potential sensitivities of the subject matter, would be offered to students through their pastoral program, if needed. Ensuring this provision was to be made available to the female students reflected the core values of a feminist methodology by being attentive to the participants' range of experiences, differential backgrounds, and social positioning. A project outline was emailed to all participants in advance. This outline included a summary of the project, an outline of the methods used, and a breakdown of how the sessions were to be structured.

It is important at this juncture to acknowledge here the small size of the study sample. Bigger research projects such as Kitzinger's (1994) AIDS Media Research project undertook 52 focus group sessions, with 351 participants. Kitzinger claimed that this was necessary for the project, due to a wide focus on social context. Such an extensive use of focus groups was not necessary for this study, as this research project has a narrower focus – the analysis of representations of surrogacy on TV and film. However, in relation to arguments of

validity, due to working with a small sample, I recognise that there are limitations to these findings. For instance, the participants are all based in London, during a specific time period (twenty-first century), and within a community of English speaking professionals. Therefore, this study is subsequently reflective of *some* women's experience which cannot be globalised. However, other gender and media focused research projects have also relied on small study groups. For example, Linda Duits and Pauline van Romondt Vis (2009) worked with a small group of Dutch girls aged 12-13 to investigate how young girls make meaning from celebrities. Rebecca Coleman (2008, 2012) worked with girls aged 13-14 from two schools in South London and Oxfordshire, to explore the relation between their bodies and images.

The mixed mothers and non-mothers groups were initially both meant to be mixed. However, several participants dropped out at short notice which resulted in one group of non-mothers. However, as it transpired, the final shaping of these three groups worked well. The mixed groups of women aided participant interaction, which is believed to assist in the 'co-construction of meaning and the elaboration of identities through interaction' (Wilkinson in Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999: 69). Furthermore, despite my efforts to make the groups as mixed as possible in relation to class and ethnicity, the groups were dominantly – but not entirely – white, middle class and heterosexual. However, out of all the three groups, the pre-mothers school group all identified as working-class.

There was also one male participant in the pre-mothers school group, which may appear to conflict with the feminist methodological framework. Due to the risks involved in engaging a gatekeeper, such as controlling access to the participants, there was little I could have done – the gatekeeper informed me the day before the first session took place. My main objective at this point was to secure the sessions. My argument against any issues in regard to allowing his inclusion is that he was part of a pre-existing group, and not a stranger to the other participants – they were peers and friends within the school environment. His presence didn't appear to make any difference to what I believe to be very frank and open discussions in response to the themes in the texts. However, despite this, his

contributions have been omitted from the analysis, as the focus of this project is to listen to female voices.

The focus group design

Focus groups 'focus' on a specific topic that can be discussed collectively as a group. As outlined by Fran Tonkiss (2012), visual cues are often used (video clips, press reports, photographs), as are group exercises. Due to a core research question asking how representations of motherhood, infertility and family reflect women's own situated experiences of living in the world, it was imperative that a selection of clips from the texts chosen for analysis were shown to participants for discussion. The three focus groups were structured around the viewing of the selected texts. Kitzinger (1994) claims that showing clips in the focus group setting helps to keep the session concentrated. This was to construct a collective activity to enable the group to verbally share their thoughts, feelings, ideas and opinions. The clips hadn't been shown to the participants before the session, as the intention was for them to view the clips together. Despite some of the participants being familiar with some of the shows, very few of them were familiar with the surrogacy narratives. The focus group was divided into three sections which incorporated the 'texts-in-action' method (Wood, 2009: 5), the game, Agree/Disagree (Kitzinger, 1994), followed by a group discussion.

Through group discussion, participants were able to draw on their 'situated knowledges' to discuss themes that emerged through the viewing experience, from their multiple standpoints. This method was useful in order to enable the participants to express their different perspectives and experiences, in relation to the themes that emerged from viewing the texts. As Wilkinson (1999) outlines, group discussions work well when participants question and challenge each other, and are not in agreement all the time. Disagreements on various issues surfaced through the analysis, which provided lively data to work with.

Inspired by Helen Wood's (2009) texts-in action method, which observes in real time what women say conversationally back to the television during the viewing

process, I was curious to explore how participants would respond to the selected texts for this project. Wood observed how women 'talked back' to TV talk shows within their home environment, in the '"here and now" through the union of televised and lived environments' (2009: 4). Wood highlighted, through this method, the relationship between textuality and subjectivity, and how female viewers draw on their personal experiences through a self-reflexive response to specific genres. This approach resonated with the central research questions which ask how, and if, different genres articulate narratives of surrogacy differently, and how these representations reflect women's own situated experiences of living in the world.

I slightly modified Wood's method for this project as the viewing processes took place outside of the participants' homes, and it is probable that the participants may have talked back *more* if they had been placed in their own environments. However, this wouldn't have worked in the context of group activity, discussion and interaction. Some groups were more verbally responsive than others, particularly the mixed mothers group who knew each other. The core premise of Wood's method was still adhered to, which was to observe this act of viewing as a way to analyse a more free-flowing response to the texts, in relation to the participants' own experiences in the world as women. I believe this was still effective, as I have done this with particular focus on how the different genres techniques were able to induce emotional responses from the participants. This is discussed in more detail further on and within the analytical chapters. As Wood highlights: 'by looking at them we can begin to see how the text is negotiated while it is *alive*' (2009: 109).

The final method used in the focus group design was Kitzinger's (1994) game of Agree/Disagree. This is where a group of participants discuss various statements, and align them accordingly. I developed this game by using citations from the texts the participants watched during the earlier part of the session. For example, during a scene in *Coronation Street,* Beth Tinker, a character that found the surrogacy arrangement distasteful, delivered the line to a friend in the local pub: 'You never know what love is until you've had a kid'. This was a way to draw the participants back to the text. This triggered a telling debate with all three groups, which inspired

discussions of love and the genetic bond which has shaped Chapter 7. I followed Kitzinger's example of asking participants to read out a statement in turn. As Kitzinger argues: 'the final layout of the cards is not important, it is this process of getting there which is revealing' (1994:107).

At the beginning of each session each participant was given a print out of the running order of the clips we were viewing, with a brief summary of each text. They were asked to write their name on the documents, and make notes in the space provided under each clip title if they so wished. I explained to the participants how the session was to work, and the methods to be used. I also recapped on the research topic to refresh their memories. For the mixed mothers and non-mothers groups the structure of the session was the same. A selection of clips from the chosen texts had been edited together in one piece of film. Some clips, which were unable to be edited in iMovie due format restrictions, were shown as separate files. I managed to show the clips with as little disruption as possible during the sessions. For the texts-in-action method (Wood, 2009: 5) I watched the shows with the participants, which as has been highlighted is useful as it relegates 'the researcher to the background' (Skeggs *et al*, 2008: 12) and made notes of any observations. As far as I was aware my note-taking and my presence in the rooms didn't make any impact on their responses, but this I am unable to guarantee. As Beverly Skeggs, Nancy Thumin and Helen Wood (2008) rightly emphasise in relation to this viewing context, 'the presence of the researcher and the recording equipment all make the viewing far from "natural", therefore must be viewed as a constructed research event, like the interview' (2008: 12). However, the participants all appeared to be comfortable, and engrossed in watching the texts. The mixed mothers and pre-mothers who all knew each other were less shy in their responses than the non-mothers group, who were the most reserved at the beginning of their session. However, they quickly became more relaxed once the viewing session was over, and the discussion component started.

<u>The transcripts</u>

Each session was transcribed using Linda Wood and Rolf Kroger's (2000) orthographical method as it was deemed the most suitable. This method uses conventional spellings and allows the use of description to convey the colour of the focus group setting. This method allowed for a description of laughs, pauses, facial expressions, gasps… all of which are imperative in examining in relation to the motion of affect which not only circulated within the focus group setting, but also in the interpretation of the texts. It was decided that the phonological approach would be too complicated, as it consists of presenting words, 'and other signs through a combination of words, quasi-words, and other symbols' (Wood and Kroger, 2000: 83). The decisive factor was that I had offered to send the transcripts to the participants, so they should therefore be as accessible as possible, which the orthographical approach provides. The phonological approach would simply have made the transcriptions too impenetrable.

Tools for analysis

<u>Discourse analysis</u>

Discourse analysis is a qualitative approach that has become an umbrella term for a 'wide variety of different analytical principles and practices' (Edley, in Wetherell *et al*, 2001: 189). It has been used for this research project to identify dominant themes that have emerged through both the analysis of the texts and the audience data, responding to the texts. As described by Hall: 'a discourse is a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – i.e. a way or representing – a particular kind of knowledge about a topic' (Hall, 1992: 290).

Discourses can be identified through written language, spoken words, and facial expressions – anything that has a force of action. It is what these texts and utterances *do* which is what the discourse analyst is to identify – to recognise 'the performative quality of the discourse' (Wood and Kroger, 2000: 5). The production of knowledge, from talk and texts, is key to this research project, as discourse

emphasises relations of power in connection to a broader social and political context; it examines how ideologies are reproduced through language and texts (Fairclough, 2003). With television discourse in particular, as argued by Hall, we must acknowledge a 'concern with the "social relations" of the communication process' (1973: 3).

With a particular focus on this communication process in the context of discourse analysis, it is also what is *not* being said or included in the text's encoding that is just as important, if not more so. As Hall (1985) has argued: 'Positively marked terms "signify" because of their position in relation to what is absent, unmarked, the unspoken, the unsayable. Meaning is relational within an ideological system of presences and absences' (1985: 109). It is therefore the role of the researcher to examine these silences. As argued by Hesse-Biber (2013): 'Scholars must interrogate cultural texts to reveal traces of the dominant worldview that are embedded in them, as well as the "silences" (what has been marginalized or left out of the text)' (2013: 237). This, she argues, continues to explore what is already there. For example, a dominant silence that has emerged through the textual analysis is the silence of race. In the context of the texts under analysis, whiteness is the dominant racial category. This silence may be due to the participants being mainly white. Despite this, a small number of the focus group participants picked up on whiteness in relation to two of the surrogate characters. A few participants also commented on the lack of representation of black characters. For the most part, however, race and white dominance has been left predominantly unspoken. I will explore the textual silence of race and the value of whiteness throughout the analytical chapters, in relation to the reproduction of the white family through the purification of the genetic tie and notions of white supremacy. This I will argue can be identified in the texts, and through highlighting how reproductive technologies are constructed as *only* being made accessible to a specific category of user, one that is white, heterosexual, and middle class. As highlighted by literary scholar Thomas Huckin (2002): 'Such textual silences must be relevant to the topic and the surrounding context… Analysing the context in sufficient detail should enable the analyst to determine what *could* have been said yet *wasn't* (2002: 353).

Interpretative repertoires

As part of the discourse analysis of the audience data, I decided that interpretative repertoires would be the most suitable technique to frame the data. As explained by Nigel Edley, interpretative repertoires are 'the building blocks of conversation… part and parcel of any community's common-sense, providing a basis for shared social understanding' (in Wetherell *et al,* 2001: 198). Linked with discourse analysis as a concept, interpretative repertoires have been developed to 'do some of the explanatory work of the post-structuralist concept of discourses' (Potter and Wetherell, 1995, in Wetherell *et al*, 2001:202).

Interpretative repertoires have a wider scope of exploring discourses by mobilising ways of talking about objects and events that can bring together differing positions in an exchange. This therefore complements Haraway's (1988) 'situated knowledges' as this further supports the expression of multiple female voices from a variety of subject positions. This will therefore aim to reveal contrary and competing arguments, 'developing together as opposing positions' (Edley in Wetherell *et al,* 2001: 204). Through the employment of interpretative repertoires, key themes were identified to construct the chapters and the core themes within them. The repertoires partly emerged from the language derived from the empirical data, built into familiar phrases, idioms and metaphors, 'out there, circulating in culture' (Edley in Wetherell *et al,* 2001: 204) which can be taken off the shelf, and put back after use, like at a library. Consequently, these building blocks have enabled me to articulate and navigate the way people feel about themselves in relation to the world around them, through their responses to, and discussions of, the texts.

Narrative analysis

Tzvetan Todorov's five stages of narrative was considered the most useful framework to employ for the narrative analysis. The narrative of a text, as argued by Seymour Chatman (1980) is the 'what' of the story, the 'way' of the narrative is the 'discourse'. As Hall argued, narrative and discourse analysis work together in a system of representation (1997). Therefore, through the application of Todorov's narrative structure: the goal, equilibrium, disruption, resolution, final equilibrium,

the 'what' of the story can be illuminated, and connections with similarities and differences can be made across the texts.

In relation to this narrative structure, I have also employed Berlant's interpretation of genre as 'an aesthetic structure of affective expectation' which 'locates real life in the affective capacity to bracket many kinds of structural and historical antagonism on behalf of finding a way to connect with the feeling of belonging to a larger world, however aesthetically mediated' (2008: 4). It is her claim that women's popular culture is marked by the *femininity* of genre which is of particular applicability to this model of narrative analysis, specifically her use of the 'blockage'. For Berlant, the blockage, or surprise, is part of the convention of the femininity of genre, in the sense that it conjures the prospect of failure, and 'moments of potential collapse that threaten the contract that genre makes with the view to fulfil expectations' (2008: 4). Berlant argues that the resolution in the narrative provides a comfort in the utopia of normativity, providing a sense of belonging through the cultivation of fantasies, 'an alleviation of what is hard to manage in the lived world' (2008: 5). I will argue, based on the audience data, that there is some resistance to the blockages and resolutions embedded in the texts – a resistance to ideologies of normative heterosexuality – such as the rescuing of infertility through heterosexual love and monogamy, which emerge as central narrative conclusions.

Queer theory

As I outlined in the introduction, queer theory as a tool emerged through the process of analysing the audience data, and provided a body of work which challenged social, political and cultural norms from a non-normative position that I felt resonated with the material I was exploring. In addition, since the inception of the term 'queer' during the early nineties, to be discussed below, the term has been made more elastic, as a verb, to describe the resistance to the normative. Butler (1993) and Edelman (2004) in particular have called for the term to be deployed from its earlier use to question and reveal the heterosexual norms that dominate our culture.

The term 'queer' was initially a slang term for a homosexual, as a term of homophobic abuse. It was used to describe homosexuals and lesbians as not straight, not normal, not human (Ahmed, 2014; Halperin, 2003). It was reclaimed by New York activist group Queer Nation in the early nineties to celebrate difference as form of political resistance to the violence and homophobia against homosexuals, ignited by the rise of AIDS and HIV in the late 1980s. As explained by queer theorist Anthony Slagle (1995): 'By using the term queer, Queer Nation diffuses the hate and tolerance associated with calling someone queer' (in Rand, 2014: 4). It was also a term that was adopted to create a sense of belonging for those who have been made to feel marginalised by anyone in power. As argued by Allan Bérubé and Jeffrey Escoffier (1991) its aim was 'to bring together people who have been made to feel perverse, queer, odd, outcast, different, and deviant, and to affirm sameness by defining a common identity on the fringes' (in Rand, 2014: 4).

From this activism, a new branch of critical theory emerged. 'Queer theory' was defined by feminist philosopher Teresa de Lauretis, at a conference at the University of California in 1990. De Lauretis coined the term to provide a field for scholars to 'interrogate how sexuality and other differences play a fundamental role in rhetorical practice' (Slagle in Yep, 2004: 129). Michael Warner and Lauren Berlant's (1995, 1998) theory of heteronormativity is central to this project. Ahmed's (2010) concept of straightening devices to minimise signs of queerness is also fundamental, to be discussed further on. Berlant and Warner propose that dominant heterosexuality is a privileged and naturalised state, an ideal – a moral accomplishment:

> Heteronormativity is more than an ideology, or prejudice, or phobia against gays and lesbians, it is produced in almost every aspect of the forms and arrangements of social life: nationality, the state, and the law; commerce; medicine; and education; as well as in the conventions and affects of narrativity, romance, and other protected spaces of culture. (1998: 554-555).

Queer theory as a lens has therefore been employed to explore notions of the non-normative and the normative that have materialised through the cultural representations of surrogacy on TV and film, which, as will be discussed, revolve around narratives of romance and conventions of family. Queer theory as a lens has enabled me to expose an embedded heterosexism that I believe has been constructed in the texts under analysis. The non-normative, in the context of this study, is constructed primarily in the characterisations of the infertile heterosexual females across all of the texts in focus. In addition, this theory of normativity has also informed further discussion on what is deemed acceptable and non-acceptable – normative and non-normative – in relation to the representations of lesbians, homosexuals, and people of colour. Engaging with queer theory has also exposed the hetero-norms that are constructed in the articulations of both heterosexual and homosexual couplings in relation to building families through surrogacy. This further exposes the value attached to the reproduction of white families created through heterosexual love and the genetic tie. As Alexander Doty (1993) has identified: 'within cultural production and reception, queer erotics are already part of culture's erotic centre, both as a necessary construct by which to define the heterosexual and the straight (as "not queer")' (1993: 4). Queer theory can also provide a tool to explore 'a wide range of impulses and cultural expressions, including space for describing and expressing bisexual, transsexual, and straight queerness' (1993: 2).

What I describe as a heterosexual *straight queerness* has emerged as a particular focus for this study, in relation to the representation of heterosexual female infertility and childlessness that is explored in Chapter 6. In this chapter themes of shame, deviancy and alienation have been identified through textual analysis and audience reception. However, a homosexual *queer straightness* has also been identified in the representation of homosexuality and lesbianism, which will be discussed in Chapter 5. Drawing on Ahmed (2010), *queer straightness* is a normalising process that is shaped in the text's narratives and character constructions and positioning, through the employment of straightening devices, such as normative ideals of family, genetically related children, and monogamous relationships. As argued by Ahmed, such devices situate the characters in 'approximation to signs of straightness' (2010: 15). Therefore, a range of work

within queer theory has been mobilised to explore what I will argue are problematic representations of homosexuality and lesbianism, with specific focus on how signs of queerness are minimised through the construction of heteronormativity in the texts' narratives.

Queer readings of mass culture texts, which include both straight and gay characters and narratives, have already been executed in some depth. These readings have explored, for example, cross-dressing in *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* and *Some Like It Hot* (Doty, 1993; Slagle in Yep, 2004) and closet homosexuality in *Seinfeld* (Gantz in Thomas, 2000); a forgetful mother and relationship-rejecting fish in *Finding Nemo* (Halberstam, 2013) and connotations of lesbianism in *Laverne & Shirley* and *Baby Mama* (Doty, 1993; Winch, 2012). I will also employ this method as part of my textual analysis in the reading of the relationship between the Kate (intended mother) and Angie (the surrogate) in *Baby Mama* (in Chapter 6). I propose that queer theory provides a lens to identify non-compliance to dominant norms, which, as I will argue, can be identified in the construction of the infertile female characters. As argued by Kath Browne and Catherine J. Nash (2010): '"Queer research" can be any form of research positioned within conceptual frameworks that highlight the instability of taken-for-granted meaning and resulting power relations' (2010: 4). Cohen (1997) has also argued that the category of heterosexuality must also be recognised in relation to being situated outside of dominant norms, as like homosexuality, she argues, heterosexual bodies are also regulated and excluded by dominant heterosexual culture.

At this juncture, I wish to emphasise that my adoption of queer theory as a tool to explore the representation of infertility in this study has no intention of devaluing the important work queer theory and queer activism has done to challenge inequalities that exist within mainstream heterosexual culture. Through this project I also aim to challenge what Thomas (2000) has described as the 'countless reels of mainstream film and hours of compulsory heterosexual television, that gays and lesbians have suffered through the years without finding any such specific and positive trace of recognition' (2000: 19). However, in addition to this, I will propose that similarities can be drawn between what I have named the *straight queerness* of heterosexual infertility and lesbianism, as I believe these subject positions are

both marginalised through popular cultural representations, and can find a common identity through being 'on the fringes' (Bérubé and Escoffier, in Rand, 2014). As Thomas highlights, and which is relevant here, there is a lot in queer theory for 'us straights to get excited about' (2000: 2).

Despite being a polemical critic of queer theory as a field of study, David Halperin (2003) proposes: 'If queer theory is going to have the sort of future worth cherishing, we will have to find ways of renewing its radical potential – and I mean not devising some new and more avant-garde theoretical formulation of it but, quite concretely, reinventing its capacity to startle, to surprise, to help us think what has not yet been thought' (2003: 343). Therefore, for this project to have employed queer theory as a tool to queer straight research of TV shows with surrogacy storylines must be seen as contributing to an advancement of the field[1]. Berlant and Warner (1995, 1998) were at the forefront of recognising cultural and political fixation with normativity, and the importance of holding a queer lens over popular culture to expose heterosexism: 'It is no accident that queer commentary – on mass media, on texts of all kinds, on discourse from science to camp – has emerged at a time when United States culture increasingly fetishizes the normal' (1998: 345).

Concluding thoughts

Combining textual analysis with audience reception is nothing new. However, employing this dual method in the exploration of the cultural articulation of surrogacy across TV, and film and its impact on female audiences, is. This framework has been devised to present a range of women's voices in the discussion of themes of motherhood and family, which are central to this project. What has emerged as significant through the analysis of the participant discussions is how confident these voices were, a result of the dynamics in the focus group sessions. I believe this is the result of the recruitment being as varied as was possible for this project. Spaces were created where confident people from different backgrounds and experiences of motherhood and non-motherhood were able to argue against each other – and also agree. It was these debates that have provided the most valuable data.

However, it is imperative to acknowledge that no truth claims are made here. It must be emphasised that the analysis, of both the audiences and by the researcher, should be understood as interpretation. To make this interpretation transparent, and to invite further analysis from scholars who I hope will be inspired to build on and contribute to this area of research, substantial segments of the orthographical transcriptions have been embedded throughout the analytical chapters, which now follow.

Chapter 4: I want a baby! Baby hunger and the desire for a genetic child

This chapter examines the infertile intended mothers and their surrogates in *Giuliana & Bill* (and *Coronation Street*). A variety of texts have been engaged with for this project, to explore how different genres articulate the practice of surrogacy through the genre's 'mode of address' (Feuer, 1983: 17). This 'address' describes how audiences are engaged with through the sequencing of camera shots, dialogue, the positioning of actors within the scenes, and in some instances, audio use. This address structures the style of genre and emotion in the text – a key aim being to elicit responses from viewers. This will be explored in this chapter, and throughout the thesis.

Giuliana & Bill has been selected as a key text due to how the hunger for a genetic child steers the narrative. *Coronation Street* as a text is more complex*,* as the surrogacy storyline is one of multiple strands. *Giuliana & Bill* is a reality TV show about real people that follows the relationship and life of E! News host Giuliana and her husband Bill, winner of business game show, *The Apprentice*. A core storyline that emerges in Season 2 is that Giuliana has difficulty conceiving. After several miscarriages and failed IVF, she then discovers she has breast cancer, which halts any further treatment. She and Bill then engage a gestational surrogate to carry their genetic child. Their son Duke was born in Season 5.

Coronation Street is a fictional soap opera which follows character Tina when she becomes a surrogate for her neighbours, Izzy and Gary. Izzy is unable to conceive naturally due to her disability preventing her carrying a fetus to term. Izzy's father engages Tina to be their surrogate, which helps her pay off a debt. After giving birth, Tina exercises her legal rights as the birth mother by reneging on the surrogacy agreement. She bonds with the child, Jake, and keeps him. After much emotional turmoil between the two parties, Tina eventually returns Jake to the intended parents, Izzy and Gary.

In these texts, the desire to acquire a genetic child materialises through what has been described as a baby hunger (Davitz, 1984; Hewlett, 2002; Kaplan, 1992). It has been suggested that baby hunger has affected many professional, educated,

predominantly white women, who have delayed childbearing due to a long period in higher education and/or getting established in a career (Bell, 2010; Briggs, 2017; Hewlett, 2002; Sandelowski and de Lacy, 2002). This resonates with Briggs' (2017) discussion of delayed childbearing, and how reproductive technologies like IVF have 'stepped into the breach, promising that this was a problem you could buy your way out of' (2017: 16). This notion of being able to buy one's fertility, and/or a baby, is explored further on. Economist Sylvia Anne Hewlett (2002) proposes that this baby hunger has an obsessive nature that can disrupt home and work life. Others, such as Susan Faludi (1993), argue that such anxieties are fuelled by the media, through an anti-feminist rhetoric. In all of the texts in focus, baby hunger steers the narrative, as all the female protagonists are infertile, who turn to reproductive technologies as a problem-solver.

Brooke Weihe Edge (2014) describes the infertility storyline in *Giuliana & Bill* as a 'backdoor reality' (2014: 875), when unexpected life occurrences guide the show's content. Edge argues that bringing infertility issues into mainstream viewing is positive, as it 'provides opportunities for informing audiences about infertility and its treatments, and potentially doing the same for other taboo topics' (2014: 873).

In contrast to Giuliana, Izzy in *Coronation Street* is working class. She sews underwear in a local factory. Izzy's desire for a child exhibits soap opera's central themes of motherhood and family (Brunsdon, 1997; Gledhill, 1987; Mumford, 1991, 1995; Williams, 1984). Her character, in relation to her struggles with infertility and miscarriages, demonstrates British soap opera's convention of social realism by making culturally visible social issues in the everyday lives of ordinary people (Couldry, 2002; Dhoest, 2005). This will be explored in more depth in relation to American TV media products further on. However, despite the differences, Izzy is also desperate for a genetic child. For this discussion, baby hunger will be examined through the lens of the disciplinary power of reproductive technologies (Farquhar, 1996; Sawicki, 1992). Michel Foucault (1977) proposed that disciplinary power materialises through the surveillance and monitoring of deviant bodies, such as those in a prison, or mental institution. He believed this form of power is wielded as a rehabilitation tool, aimed to render the individual more productive, and more useful to society. Foucault claimed that only through

this disciplinary process of normalisation could defective characteristics be ironed out.

Feminist Foucauldians Jana Sawicki (1992) and Farquhar (1996) argue that reproductive technologies are a disciplinary practice, through the fixing of abnormalities to become a productive and useful subject – in this context, biological reproduction. However, Sawicki and Farquhar also propose that this form of power is not violent, or repressive, as they believe women are not *forced* to undergo treatment. They claim that reproductive technologies' power *incites* desire in active subjects, in their quest to become mothers. However, I argue that through popular cultural discourses this desire is mediated as accessible to a specific category of user, one who is white, heterosexual, married, professional and educated, predominantly in her later childbearing years (Franklin, 1990; Hewlett, 2002). This makes invisible, or renders deviant, other categories of users, which Farquhar describes as 'Other Mothers' (1996: 73) – single women, lesbians, women of colour, disabled women – and homosexuals. This concept of 'Other Mothers' will be applied at points throughout the thesis, primarily in the discussion of disabled intended mother Izzy in *Coronation Street* (this chapter), in the analysis of black adoptive mother Rocky in *The New Normal* (Chapter 5), and lesbian surrogate Brenda in *Rules of Engagement* (Chapter 6). It is important to highlight here that race theorist Patricia Hill Collins (2006) has also employed the term 'Othermother' (2006: 152) to describe women who share childcare in African American communities, a support system between women for survival. This will be explored in the discussion of fictive kinship in Chapter 7.

Franklin (1990) identifies a discourse of desperateness in her study of the social construction of infertility in popular news representations, which in addition to Sawicki and Farquhar will aid these discussions. As Franklin proposes: 'Despite the fact that "desperateness" need not necessarily result from infertility, it is consistently the primary frame of reference within the popular representations of infertility' (1990: 204). Franklin also claims that this form of desperateness echoes those found in popular romance narratives, where in most stories the heroine seeks romance and protection by a man. The romance genre will be discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6. I argue that these discourses of desperateness in

relation to narratives of infertility can be identified in *Giuliana & Bill* and *Coronation Street*, through the characters' desire to acquire a genetic child, through any means possible. Or, in Tina's case in *Coronation Street,* a yearning to keep the child she bonded with through surrogate pregnancy, despite no genetic relation. It is important to emphasise how important media narratives are to the fertility industry, as Farquhar explains:

> Contemporary medical narratives often depend on popular narratives for legitimation as well as for the dissemination of information about new technologies. Popular discourse adapts, reworks and constructs ARTs [assisted reproductive technologies] according to the uses and satisfactions it reports. These representations are often contradictory, sometimes challenging and other times reinforcing dominant conservative views of maternity, family, nature… (1996: 66)

I propose that the winner/loser binary can be identified in these shows' narratives – in this context the genetic mother (intended mother) being the winner, the surrogate being the loser. In addition, I also argue that Ahmed's (2010) 'happy objects' and Berlant's (2011) 'cruel optimism' are concepts that will aid the analysis.

For Ahmed, happy objects are objects that good feelings are directed towards, and to follow their direction will lead us to happiness. These objects are end-orientated, and can be pleasurable by evoking feelings of happiness before the object has been encountered. Happy objects, aside from the genetic baby in this discussion, can also be the vision of the happy family, the family home, and all the objects that reside within it – such as the display of family photographs. However, Ahmed also highlights that these happy objects can also be obstacles to one's happiness, as they preserve the fantasy of what one needs to be happy, and which therefore become unhappy objects.

Berlant's cruel optimism in relation to objects is similar, in the sense that the objects of desire can be both enabling and disabling. For Berlant, optimism can be found in the attachments to not just objects, but to people, places, norms and

practices, which promise, 'a change that's gonna come' (2011: 2). Where Ahmed's happy objects are end-orientated, and symbolic of future stepping-stones into the happy horizon, Berlant's objects of desire are based in the present, as a 'process of emergence' (2011: 7). Berlant believes these objects are cruelly optimistic as they can be obstacles to one flourishing – problematic, risky, toxic. Yet, one remains attached to them. Berlant argues that one can only discover life's contentment when one can let go of the attachment. However, it is the attachments that hold one's optimism for the future, which is when it becomes cruel.

These tensions and attachments to objects of desire are central to these discussions, the objects of desire in this context being the genetic child and the creation of normative family. I argue that these representations reinforce the ideal of the normative nuclear family, which infer that families are only viewed as complete, and normalised, with the addition of children (Benkov, 1994; Lehr, 1999; Nelson, 2007, 2009). These normative ideals also perpetuate the notion that a woman only become whole, and socially accepted, when she becomes a mother. Rich (1980) claims this ideological process into motherhood takes place within a wider framework she calls a compulsory heterosexuality – socially and culturally constructed norms which she argues socialises women into heterosexual romance and marriage, distorting other possible options, such as lesbianism, in the process. Although this will be touched upon here, this will be explored further in Chapter 6.

In addition, what has emerged as poignant by the focus group participants is how the identities of the genetic mother (the intended mother) and the birth mother (the surrogate) are articulated differently, in relation to differing genre mechanisms, and how these mechanisms influence their understanding of the surrogacy practice through the evocation of empathy for key characters. Gorton (2009) highlights the importance of such mechanisms in the ability to connect emotionally with audiences, not in terms of identification with the characters based purely on their shape, but through their engagement with the text. As Gorton emphasises: 'It is not simply that a viewer sees a character and *identifies* with them, rather it is a more complex process in which the emotional situation the character is in elicits

a response while, at the same time, technical devices such as a close-up shot or music aids and develops this connection' (2009: 151). I argue that emotions connect – or as I explore in some cases not connect, depending on the genre – with the female viewers through an affective register, which is created through how emotions are structured in the genre (Carroll, 1992, 1996; Gorton, 2009; Williams, 1991). Furthermore, what has emerged as significant is how these representations also impact on how the participants view their own position as women, as mothers, non-mothers and pre-mothers.

Core themes that have emerged through the analysis of the focus group data are the value of motherhood and family in modern mainstream culture, the impact of choice that reproductive technologies have placed on the infertile female subject, and the sense of entitlement that is attached to certain bodies in this desire to reproduce – some which are visible, and some which are not. What has also materialised as significant is how the audiences were able to identify power imbalances between the intended mothers and their surrogates through not just the construction of the characters within the storylines, but through how they have been positioned on the screen. This, as I argue, drawing on Sandelowski (1990), creates voids between women through how infertility and motherhood have been shaped through culture.

To explore this desire for a genetic child that drives the narratives in both *Coronation Street* and *Giuliana & Bill,* a breadth of feminist work on emotions and affect, media representation, compulsory heterosexuality, infertility, reproductive technologies and race will be drawn on.

This chapter is divided into three parts. *Baby hunger* aims to examine the discourse of desperateness and ideologies of fulfilment in relation to the acquisition of a genetic child and the formation of normative family. *The winner gets it all* explores the impact of reproductive technologies on the female body in the context of disciplinary power and the winner/loser binary, and *Out of the frame* further illustrates this hierarchical division by identifying how privilege, status and power are attached to, and block, certain bodies, through narrative devices and genre techniques.

Baby hunger

> I think that even still in this day and age a lot of women think that's what they need to do. Is that the best answer for them? I don't know.

> (Jackie, mixed mothers focus group, 2015)

Nancy Chodorow (1999) argued that women wanted children to not only add richness to their heterosexual relationships with men, which she believed some women viewed as lacking intensity and meaning, but to recreate their own relationships with their mothers. In response to this, Rich (1980) proposed that Chodorow neglected an important factor in her theory. Rich argued that having children wasn't simply a strategy to fill an empty void, but was the result of dominant social forces, which she called compulsory heterosexuality – a force that directs women into heterosexual couplings, marriage and motherhood. This, she argued, could be identified throughout all aspects of society and culture, particularly in the ideology of heterosexual romance embedded in the images and narratives presented in fairytales, film, TV, advertising and literature. Rich believed this was a form of cultural propaganda that wielded power over women, who were assumed heterosexual. Rich claimed that through this institution of heterosexuality, lesbian existence was blocked, and that to be heterosexual assured men's power over women – physically, emotionally and economically. This blocking of the lesbian existence will be discussed in Chapter 5, where I argue that natural pregnancy is represented as the normative ideal, over the non-normative surrogate pregnancy *and* the abnormality of infertility. In the analysis of *Baby Mama* and *Rules of Engagement* I argue that heterosexual love and the couple dyad enables natural pregnancy, against all odds – a miracle *pregnancy* (natural) rather than the miracle *baby* (technology), which is central to this discussion.

The idealisation of motherhood and the baby as object of desire (the miracle) is the focus here. I argue that this drive towards motherhood, and the desire for and attainment of a genetic child, is also, as Rich (1980) described about heterosexuality, an assumptive norm that is central to a woman's identity, and that

motherhood should be studied as a political institution, like heterosexuality. As Jackie (mixed mothers focus group) explained: 'I think that even still in this day and age a lot of women think that's what they need to do'. This indicates not just compulsory heterosexuality, but what I call a *compulsory motherhood* – the desire for motherhood, like heterosexuality, being the result of a control of consciousness, through cultural propaganda.

Giuliana's quest to become a mother has steered the narrative in *Giuliana & Bill* since the show launched in 2009. Echoing Hewlett's description of baby hunger, which she proposes is the result of delaying reproduction due to women's pursuit of a career, Giuliana took sole responsibility for her infertility. In an interview with *Health* magazine (Spencer, 2012), Giuliana put her infertility down to, 'chasing a career instead of chasing guys' which echoes Hewlett's belief that the more successful the woman, the less likely she is to have a partner and baby. The cameras follow Giuliana and Bill to all the doctors' appointments, offering the audience intimate insights into the ordeals the couple face on the path to obtaining a genetic child. Giuliana has several miscarriages and becomes unwell with breast cancer. During the flashback sequence in 'Meet the Duke' (Season 5, Episode 18), a collection of past clips is shown, illustrating the emotional roller coaster of their fertility journey. In one scene Giuliana is shown disintegrating into tears during a therapy session: 'I just feel like… why are we being punished in a way?' The responsibility of infertility frequently resides with the woman, often resulting in feelings of failure, punished for being defective and unfit for motherhood (Braverman 1997; Edge, 2014; Throsby, 2004). The disciplinary practice of reproductive technologies, which sets out to rectify these failings, will be explored in the following section.

This intimate filming style is core to the aesthetic style of reality TV, which also incorporates monologue-style interviews direct to camera. These methods attempt to provide an authentic frame by enabling viewers to have closer access to the character (Aslama and Pantti, 2006). These monologues are interspersed with the observational documentary style of cinema verité – naturalistic, intimately filmed sequences, often on a hand-held camera (Nichols, 1983, 1991). In these flashback scenes, Giuliana is shown sobbing to news of miscarriages or cancer,

to then being overjoyed at pregnancy news, which is followed, once again, by loss. In the later episodes, leading up to the birth of her genetic son, Giuliana is shown as over-animated, ecstatic.

It has been argued that displays of emotion create an illusion of intimacy, through this blurring of the public with the private, which allows the audience to feel close to their raw, naked feelings (Aslama and Pantti, 2006; Schickel, 2000). However, this 'being yourself' requires a performance as a 'half actor' which always presumes an audience – not acting up for the cameras, but 'acting out' (Kavka, 2008: 97). This construction of intimacy also draws on the documentary's observational mode by showing 'the emotional experiences of individuals' (Nash, 2011: 229).

The genre conventions of reality TV, much like soap opera, imply a female viewer, as the ideological framework encompasses romance, marriage and family life (Brunsdon, 2000; Hobson, 1982). Skeggs and Wood (2012) have argued, extending Jane Feuer's (1983) work on ideology and television, that 'it is not just in the mode of address that ideology operates, but in what that address asks the viewer *to do'* (2012: 228). In the context of the *Giuliana & Bill* footage shown in the viewing sessions, it can be proposed that the address was inviting the viewer to feel through 'emotion markers' (G. Smith, 1999: 18) – textual cues specifically created to prompt an emotional response. This can be identified in Carla's (mixed mothers focus group) response to the text:

> Obviously, there are some moments of real, authentic emotion throughout that show, you know… filming someone finding out they're having a miscarriage is raw. So actually, that is going to, even if you are cynical and scathing, resonate on some level as it's a real thing, it's not acting, and that's why these kind of shows people engage with, as you're waiting for the real emotional crisis because that's the bit that makes it worth watching… You want to see people in pain or in great joy.

> (Carla, mixed mothers focus group, 2015)

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Despite revealing a critical dislike for the show, the emotion markers embedded in the narrative prompted Carla to empathise with Giuliana's display of emotion, which Carla believed to a 'real thing'. This was crafted through the manipulation of affect that the mode of address asked her to 'do' – in this example, asked her to *feel*. As Gorton (2009) argues, in relation to how one's critical judgment of the reality TV genre can conflict with the emotional response: 'Many viewers find themselves crying during lifestyle or reality television despite their critical opinions of the programme… although viewers can be critical of these texts they also find themselves emotionally moved by them' (2009: 110). Alongside demonstrating this tension through her response, Carla was also able to describe the pleasure of engaging with displays of emotion on screen, particularly through reality TV's method of observing people in difficult emotional situations (Hill, 2004).

While sympathising with Giuliana's miscarriage trauma, Carla was also describing the mechanism of the 'money shot' – a term appropriated from pornography by Laura Grindstaff (2002) which she applied to the baring all of emotions on talk show TV. Grindstaff uses this term to describe the moments when the show's participants express their emotions in visible terms, 'for the pleasure, fascination, or repulsion of viewers… Like the orgasmic cum shot of pornographic films, the money shot of talk shows makes visible the letting go, of losing control' (2002: 20). This emotional release frequently emerges in *Giuliana & Bill*, which I propose is an expression of the desperateness of baby hunger. As family and marriage researcher Lois Davitz (1984) explains: 'The drive to have a baby unleashes a whole range of obsessive emotions a woman may never have had to face. When a woman has baby hunger, nothing else is as important to her as this inner drive to bear a child' (in Franklin, 1990: 207).

Drawing on Berlant (2008, 2011), I propose that Giuliana's emotional displays not only reflect the desperateness that drives her baby hunger, but also highlights a discourse of disappointment, through her quest to become a mother. The attachment to the object of desire – the genetic child – being cruelly optimistic as it becomes a source of anxiety by being risky and problematic. In addition, Berlant also states that through this anxiety there is disappointment, which shares the binary with fulfilment, which work together and not as opposites. This is shown in

Giuliana's proximity to the happy object (pregnancy, fulfilment), which is followed by loss, (miscarriage, disappointment).

Berlant talks of the discourse of disappointment in relation to what she calls 'the female complaint' (2008: 13), which she argues drives women's desire to live for normative ideologies of love. This, she proposes, is transmitted through the sentimentally of the romance narrative, which is core to the construction of popular women's texts. Berlant claims that this desire for fulfilment is to be 'a *somebody* in the world, where the default is being a nobody' which can only be achieved through heterosexual love and the formation of family (2008: 3). This correlates with the notion that a woman is not complete until she becomes a mother, a theory that is rooted in the Cartesian nature/culture binary that associates women's bodies with nature, and therefore natural reproduction, an ideology of motherhood that has been entrenched in Western culture as core to woman's natural identity (Charlebois, 2011; Lam, 2015). This is explored in more depth in Chapter 6, alongside the proposition that the search for romantic love is being eclipsed by the search for a baby, the *future fetus* being a happy object embedded with affective value before its arrival. This I argue further illustrates the shift from compulsory *heterosexuality* to compulsory *motherhood*, the possession of the genetic child – and the arrival of the future fetus – symbolising a perfect end (Ahmed, 2010).

The tales of desperateness, which lead to fulfilment, that Franklin identified in popular news stories also reflect Ahmed's notion of happy objects and the happy horizon, while following Todorov's narrative structure which advances from goal to the final equilibrium, which can be seen in *Giuliana & Bill*. The narrative unfolds like this: the goal (get the baby), equilibrium (turning to IVF to help create a family), disruption (miscarriages, breast cancer), resolution (engaging a surrogate to carry their genetic child), final equilibrium (birth of a baby boy, creating a family, becoming a mother). Similar narrative structures re-emerge in the analysis of *Baby Mama*, which is discussed in Chapter 6. As Franklin (1990) explains: 'The plot is structured around the tension between the desperate desire for a child and the biological inability to produce one. It is both an adventure story and a romance, in which a successful fight "against the odds" may end in "a dream come true"' (1990: 203). Although Franklin's analysis is drawn from news stories, the plot in *Giuliana*

& Bill mirrors her findings. It is important to highlight that despite the genre being named 'reality' TV, the articulation of Giuliana's experiences is still *mediated* and *constructed* – its authenticity in relation to soap opera discussed further on.

During the surrogate's labour in a Denver medical centre, Bill's mother and sister are pictured in a sequence of scenes, preparing a hotel suite for Giuliana and Bill's return to Chicago with their newborn son. These scenes provoked an interesting discussion between Laura and Rachel (non-mothers focus group):

> Rachel: I thought it was like, um, very much like… they kept showing the Four Seasons hotel… it felt like it was all about surface. A baby was actually, I thought, just a product. It felt it was something to enhance their life, like their life wasn't complete without a baby. And when they took the picture out, it was all surface, all staging – everything was acquired.

> Laura: A friend of mine went through 2-3 years of IVF and it crippled them financially, she was just like, "I want a baby", and it was weird. When I first met her she never wanted kids, never wanted anything like that, then suddenly she was like (gasp sound) "I want a baby!" People tell you about that, suddenly your biological clock will kick in. I'm like "whatevs", but it actually happened to her.

> Rachel: There are probably millions of women like your friend that I would not attribute any of these criticisms to.

> Laura: I know! I know!

> Rachel: I'm not saying that, that she didn't *want* a baby; I'm just saying that it's being presented on a reality show.

> Laura: Of course! I was just saying we don't actually *know* how Giuliana feels.

Rachel: I think that's a really good point, as I think… in all the American shows it's always *always* about the parents, and never about the baby, it's always me, me me… "I want a baby!" and "I can't have a baby!" What I got as a theme was that surrogacy is just a vehicle to get "what I want".

(Rachel and Laura, non-mothers focus group, 2015)

Rachel stresses the notion that a family is not complete 'without a baby', which, as has been discussed, emphasises the inclusion of a genetic child to create the picture of the proper family (Barrett and McIntosh, 1991). This echoes early twentieth century beliefs that pairings that were unable to reproduce were seen as unfit and unnecessary, divorces granted out of court. In addition, Laura was able to make sense of Giuliana's experiences of infertility, although mediated, by relating the representation of baby hunger to a friends' experience, as well as her own, while recognising the codes and conventions of the reality TV genre. Kristina Engwall and Helen Peterson's (2013) observation about the silent body is identifiable in Laura's description of her friend's baby hunger, in relation to her own feelings of *not* desiring a child. They argue this is when the female subject has no desire to be a mother, yet is still open to the possibility that a dormant maternal desire might wake up. As Laura stated: '… suddenly she was like (gasp sound) "I want a baby!"… Suddenly your biological clock will kick in'.

In contrast, Rachel was more concerned with how the surrogacy process was shaped within the show's narrative. She thought the way in which the gifts delivered to the hotel suite were shown off to the camera was distasteful. She argued that this made the production of a child through surrogacy appear like it was simply an object to be 'acquired' – a lifestyle commodity to be obtained. This resonates with Roberts (1995) argument that images of fertility treatment in the popular media are as constructed as white, 'the blue-eyed, blond-haired baby held up to television cameras as the precious product of a surrogacy arrangement' (1995: 2010). The media construction of such images is discussed in more detail further on. Furthermore, this also reflects what Baraitser and Tyler (2010) have named a maternal market, a multibillion dollar industry, which not only trades in baby clothes and products, but also, 'fertility treatments, eggs, fetuses and

children' (2010: 118). Furthermore, Rachel's observation of the baby as object in the context of consumer culture and the desire for a *specific* type of motherhood also evokes the figure of the yummy mummy – and her American sister, the MILF – in the shaping of Giuliana's character. As both Littler (2013) and O'Donohoe (2006) have argued, the yummy mummy is an aspirational maternal brand with economic currency, steered by white and class privilege. As Littler argues in relation to increasing birth rates in America: 'where there have been no improvements in welfare entitlements, the rise in births is usually simply put down to the wealthy having more babies' (2014: 8).

In her argument Littler highlights the work of Haya El Nassa and Paul Overberg (2007) who suggest that in modern times, kids have become luxury goods. This is precisely what Rachel found the disturbing aspect of wealthy celebrities being able to buy a baby like a 'product'. I propose this, in the context of what has been described as a maternal market, indicates how reproductive technologies in America interconnect with contemporary capitalism, due to the political revolution of neoliberalism that emerged in the late seventies 'in which corporate America and Wall Street have reset government priorities to shrink spending on the well-being of actual humans' (Briggs, 2017: 8-9). This link between austerity and reproductive assistance is explained in more detail below.

Briggs claims that in America reproductive labour (birthing and caring for children/dependents, looking after the home) are irrefutably political. This she argues is because: 'When we are talking about the economy, we are talking about reproductive politics, because families and households are where we live our economic situation' (2017: 4). Drawing on the earlier discussion of Engels, it can be suggested that this echoes his belief that the introduction of private property has created conditions to oppress women. Therefore, this underscores, as I argue throughout this thesis, how nineteenth century notions of domesticity and motherhood continue to re-emerge in contemporary culture, capitalism, and state regulation.

Within political frameworks, Briggs identifies a number of significant issues in relation to the development of family ideology, primarily through addressing 'the

ferocious rise in business's power to define how we live' (2017: 120). Firstly, Briggs maintains that since the eighties, the withdrawal of government support for the family in America and declining wages has been – and still is – fuelled by the politics of racial division, from Reagan to Trump, largely activated through the 'race-based shaming of supposedly irresponsible reproductive behavior' (2017: 189). As has been discussed, this is a rhetoric that has been shaped through the image of the idle and sexually promiscuous black welfare queen of the Reagan era. Continuing divisive politics, the current Trump administration champions white supremacy while promising financial stability through a nationalist agenda.

Secondly, that through this new denationalised responsibility to support the family and low wages, women began to suffer from what she calls a 'structural infertility' (2017: 16). Briggs argues this type of infertility is the effect of women remaining in education and the work place for longer, resulting in the fertility window slamming shut. This she proposes is due to the threat of economic insecurity *and* family unfriendly work environments, which has delayed reproduction. Briggs claims this shift has led to the upsurge in demand for assisted conception, fuelling a billion-dollar industry, the high cost of which not only deters certain types of potential users (non-white, non-abled, non-married etc.) but also feeds into a 'thriving neo-liberal debt market happy to exploit people's urgent desire for children' (2017: 110).

Briggs proposes this 'desire' has resulted in the emergence of fertility financing; bank loans aimed at the less wealthy – much like the over-zealous selling of sub-prime mortgages which contributed to America's economic crash of 2007. This finance offers those struggling with infertility the possibility of acquiring a child – like buying a car – despite the low success rates. This therefore results in more debt on top of the debt already accumulated through attaining an education and a home. Briggs is able to highlight that reproductive politics in America is intrinsically linked with the force of the right-wing movement which develops policies to reduce government support programmes for predominantly non-white poor people as a block to class progression, and a private/public benefits system 'haunted by eugenics' (2017: 107) which determines who has the right to have or not have children. As she identifies: 'Insurers pay for the poor to get birth control and for the

rich to get IVF' (2017: 108)[2]. What is also important to acknowledge here, to expand on the discussion earlier in the thesis of pro-life politics in relation to saving the *future fetus,* is how women's reproductive rights are also being controlled by contemporary capitalism. At the time of writing, the Trump administration's recent assault on affordable sexual health care organisation Planned Parenthood is indicative of this. The government's withdrawal of funding is resulting in women having less access to birth control and abortions – not just in America, but globally – which impacts on their fundamental human rights to decide whether or not to have children; and which, drawing on Finkelstein (1990) I propose is a strategy by which to restore women to their normative biological destiny as mothers.

Giuliani in *Giuliani & Bill* (and the majority of the other infertile characters analysed in this study) is representative of the delayed reproduction that Brigg's emphasises, alongside exhibiting the white privilege which Briggs claims enables access to assisted reproduction – and which fuels its growing demand – through the hunger for a child. In relation to this desire for a child, Rachel and Laura, in their earlier exchange, identified discourses of desperateness and disappointment in the narrative structure, through statements: 'I want a baby' (desperateness, the goal) and 'I can't have a baby' (disappointment, disruption). Furthermore, a discourse of emotional self-interest can be identified through Rachel recognising that surrogacy is being portrayed as a practice to get, 'what I want' – a 'luxury good' to be purchased (Nassa & Overberg, 2007). This describes the subject's feelings of pleasure before the *future fetus's* arrival, value *attached* to the happy object (Ahmed, 2010) rather than having its own value in isolation. As Rachel commented: 'it's never about the baby, it's always me, me, me'.

The desire for fulfilment, which Berlant argues can be found in the safe and comfortable folds of normative family life, can be developed further here, through Rachel's observation of how the picture of Bill as a child with his now deceased father was unwrapped and positioned by his mother and sister during the hotel suite scenes. The framed photograph was placed on a table facing the front door, accompanied by a toy – a symbolic welcome to the new parents when they arrive with their newborn son. This picture is positioned in a close-up shot for heightened emotional impact, which also performs as an 'emotion marker' (G. Smith, 1999:

18) to evoke a sentimental response. Although cognitive theory has traditionally been applied to film, Gorton (2009) argues it is also useful for television analysis. Such emotional mechanisms are constructed in the narrative to invite viewers to feel – they can either accept or reject such invites (G. Smith, 2008).

However, for Rachel, this device didn't work. She felt these scenes were an act of 'staging' and 'surface', which resonated with Carla (mixed mothers focus group) who felt that viewing the show was like 'eating a bag of sweets, you know, you'll watch it and then go "urgh!"' As outlined by Carroll (2008), the audience can only be led by the filmmaker to drink the water 'but the circuit is not completed until the audience drinks' (in Gorton, 2009: 79). Gorton claims this doesn't always happen, which is demonstrated here.

In a later scene where the couple is at the hospital awaiting the arrival of their child, Giuliana, who is holding the camera, interviews an excited Bill. This further illustrates the influence of observational documentary's cinema verité, where the filmmaker's voice can often be heard to create a more situated presence (Nichols, 1991). These scenes will be explored in more depth in the final section. Bill shares his excitement about the imminent arrival of his son by producing a picture of his father from his pocket. He holds it up to the camera and says: 'I've got my good luck picture of my dad that I take to all important events' (Season 5, Episode 18: 'Meet the Duke'). This scene suggests that photographs, more than the fetal image that has widely penetrated popular culture, has more cultural power over scientific visualisations (Taylor, 1992), which 'can resurrect the dead or preserve lost love' (Petchesky, 1987: 269). Furthermore, drawing on Ahmed (2006, 2010) and Marianne Hirsch (1997) I propose these photographs are rooted in modern family ideology which exhibit the value of genetic family cohesion through kinship objects, which includes, alongside photographs, objects such as the kitchen table that families gather around (Ahmed, 2006). The visibility of these objects, Ahmed argues, produce the family as a happy object – as a fantasy of the good life.

Furthermore, the images of the father, and of father and son, are also symbolic of patrilineage, a genetic tie through male descent that is core to patriarchy. Katz Rothman (2000) argues that the development of reproductive technologies is

based on 'the patriarchal focus on the male seed' (2000: 23). However, interestingly, the young women in the pre-mothers focus group didn't share Rachel's interpretation of these scenes as being inauthentic. They *did* accept the invitation to feel – they drank it in. During the viewing session, most of the women responded with comments such as, 'aw…' and 'how sweet!' This might be because they are younger, dependent on their families, and still located within the family home, which has been described as a place of refuge (Lasch, 1991), which could potentially heighten emotional bonds. I suggest that these younger women are yet to experience both emotional and geographical distance from the security of the family home (and their parents) as well as not being able to draw upon the range of experiences available to the older participants.

These photographs represent not just a hunger for the *future fetus* to arrive as a genetic child, but displays the promise of happiness that is attached to the arrival of a very *specific* child – one that is white and male. In opposition to what Ahmed might argue, the kinship object of these photographs, in this context, *don't* do the work of keeping families together, as the family is not yet formed, but they do *do* the work to make families *happen*, as they point *towards* the happiness of the future family that is just over the horizon.

The winner gets it all

> The boundaries keep getting pushed, women aren't allowed, or can't say, actually, it's not going to happen, because they keep changing, the… you know… you can try that, try that, or try that.

> (Carla, mixed mothers focus group, 2015)

As outlined, Franklin proposes that stories of infertility are structured with winners and losers, which infer that there are, 'happy endings for some and hopelessness for others' (1990: 204). Extending this, I argue that the infertile characters in both shows are initially positioned as losers, but are able to transform into winners through the intervention of the disciplinary practice of reproductive technologies,

which enables the characters to achieve their biological destiny as women. As Farquhar (1996) explains: 'If a primary gender norm for women is "mother," then the extent to which reproductive technologies help reproductively impaired women achieve this identity is the extent to which they contribute to keeping women properly aligned in their gender role' (1996: 107). I also show the volatility of the winner/loser positions in these shows through how the narratives unfold, the tensions between the characters, and how the characters re-position.

Despite characters Izzy in *Coronation Street* and Giuliana in *Giuliana & Bill* being situated in different genres, produced in different countries, and portrayed as being from different backgrounds, the goal in the narratives are the same – to get a baby, through any means possible. The characters are driven by the desperateness of baby hunger, the winner/loser binary shaping both narratives. However, I propose this binary is more prominent in *Coronation Street*, due to Tina being a popular character before the surrogacy storyline. Delphine, the gestational surrogate in *Giuliana & Bill,* appears later in the series, with minimal inclusion in the scenes. This has been read as exclusionary by the focus groups, which will be debated at the end of this chapter.

In this discussion, the transformative practice is surrogacy, which makes genetic motherhood possible for Izzy and Giuliana, despite the polarisation of their class. Izzy's character in *Coronation Street* is ordinary and working class – her father is a builder and she works in a factory. In addition to her infertility, Izzy is also an 'Other Mother' through disability. This contradicts arguments by a range of feminists who argue that reproductive technologies are only shown as accessible to the privileged white middle classes through the picture of the white mother cradling her miracle baby (Ceballo, 1999; Farquhar, 1996; Franklin, 1990, Roberts, 1995, 1996, 2000; Throsby, 2004). However, what these representations *do* reflect is the exclusion of black women's bodies from having access, and being in proximity, to these technologies, which will be discussed further on[3].

In both *Coronation Street* and *Giuliana & Bill*, surrogacy is pursued as a last resort, after IVF fails, or in Izzy's case, when she decides not to attempt natural pregnancy after a miscarriage threatens her health. This evidences how the allure

of reproductive technologies maintains the baby as a future goal. Drawing on Berlant (2010) this can be read as cruelly optimistic as it represents a 'cluster of promises' (2010: 23) that offers the prospect of a 'change that's gonna come' (2010: 1). As Carla pointed out: 'The boundaries keep getting pushed… you can try that, try that, or try that… '. This reflects Franklin's (1990) belief that due to the growth of reproductive choices, our choices also expand. Or as Carla stated: 'the carrot is constantly being dangled'. Sonja, Carrie and Nadra (mixed mothers focus group) had a revealing discussion about the desire for motherhood in relation to reproductive technologies:

> Sonja: I think there's a theme through it all, of the society we live in, that by hook or by crook you will have it all, and the judgments which come with that. In previous times, you'd just be childless. This is all new ground, isn't it? Like what you, Lulu, were saying, that there's now a genre of movie called "mom-com". You know, so this whole issue of women waiting until they're older and infertility problems and things like that, and all the different ways there are these days to try and have a baby, it's coming with a whole new set of judgments and, erm, yeah…

> Carrie: It creates so much unhappiness actually, because what it says is you're not really trying, and you're not valid if you don't have a child.

> Nadra: I think that's really bad, yeah.

> Carrie: That's what's interesting for me… 20 years ago it was like, oh, you can't have kids? That's such a shame, but there are a lot of other things you can do.

> Nadra: You can crack on.

> Carrie: Yeah, whereas now it's… you can do this, do this, or this – as that *must* be what you do. Women aren't allowed to get on with that bit now. The misery is when they have to keep trying to attain something…

(Sonja, Carrie and Nadra, mixed mothers focus group 2015)

What can be identified here is a shift in reproductive choices placed on women, through the dawn of reproductive technologies. Where the infertile previously had no choice, technology now *enables* a choice – it incites desire. This can be viewed as a pressure on women to become – or at least to try to become – mothers, for social acceptance and self-esteem. As highlighted by Gena Corea (1988) in her discussion of women's infertility before IVF, and which resonates with the above discussion:

> A few years earlier, a woman could, at some point, however painfully, come to terms with her infertility, go on with her life, find a way to live it fully. Now there is no easy way off the medical treadmill. She may now spend a major part of her adult life in debilitating treatment in experimental programs. There is always a promising new program to enrol in, its low success rate played down, it's "hope" played up. The years roll on (1988: 3).

As Sonja explains, there are now many different ways to have a baby, whereas 'in previous times you'd just be childless'.

Through the discourse of choice, this exhibits a disciplinary power as it both incites a desire in the subject, but also, through the possibilities that reproductive technologies offer, administers a form of social control. Not forcing infertile women to endure treatment, as passive victims, but, instead, inviting them to engage with it, in the pursuit of motherhood (Farquhar, 1996; Petchesky, 1987; Sawicki, 1992). This opposes the argument by resistors (Lam, 2015) collective FINNRAGE (Feminist International Network of Resistance to Reproductive and Genetic Engineering) who claimed that the development and commercialisation of assisted reproduction was exploiting women's bodies by turning them into machines – a form of violence against women (Corea, 1985, 1988; Klein, 1989; Rose, 1994; Wajcman, 1991). The main critique of this perspective is women were seen as the innocent and ignorant victims of men's conspiracy to take over their reproductive potential (Petchesky, 1987; Throsby, 2004).

However, through the focus groups' responses, it can be argued that these infertile characters are in fact *not* being represented as purely active agents, but reflect an element of the resistor's position, where infertile women engaging with technological intervention are viewed as unwitting colluders in patriarchal control over women's bodies. Vulnerable women who have succumbed to the belief that to become a mother, through any means possible, is something, as Carrie stated, that they *must do.* Therefore, this indeterminate tension of power discussed in the focus group data highlights how disciplinary power is the most useful tool to employ in this context. As Farquhar (1996) argues, reproductive technologies are neither evil nor good, that due to Foucault's belief that this form of power has a productive and transformation effect on the body, it can be viewed as both 'liberatory *and* controlling' (Farquhar, 1996: 6). Controlling in the sense that, as Sonja stated: 'by hook or by crook you have to have it all', and liberatory due to there being so many 'different ways to have a baby'.

It has been proposed that the disciplinary practice of reproductive technologies aims to improve the infertile female body, as if the body were a machine to be fixed, rendering it more powerful, productive – more *reproductive.* This is enabled through the infertile woman becoming pregnant through IVF[4], or for the surrogate to carry and deliver a genetic child for the intended parents. The end result is the same – normalising deviancy, fixing abnormalities, which is reflected in the narratives and character constructions in both *Giuliana & Bill* and *Coronation Street.* Both infertile characters transition from non-mothers to mothers, from non-normative to normative, through the intervention of technologies, which mends their infertility. This notion of being fixed has also been identified by Throsby (2004) in her work on IVF failure.

Throsby draws parallels between plastic surgery and IVF treatment, which she argues aims to modify and manage the body – to produce new bodies. Although the surrogacy process doesn't mend the infertile woman's infertility on her physical body, what it does do, through disciplinary medical intervention – for example, egg retrieval – is correct her position as a non-mother through the outsourcing of a fertile woman's womb. The abnormality of her *identity* is fixed through the acquisition of the genetic child – although in some cases donor eggs are also

sourced – rescuing her from what I have argued is a deviant position outside of social norms. As Franklin argues: 'The inability to produce a biologically related child is represented in terms of a sense of exclusion, a lack of self-esteem or a loss of identity' (1990: 205). The infertile heterosexual woman, like the lesbian – to be discussed in later chapters – deemed as unfit for motherhood (Edge, 2014). This can be applied to the representations of the infertile characters in all of the texts under analysis, through the characters' expressions of unhappiness, and how divisions are created between the fertile (surrogate) and the infertile (intended mother) which 'subverts sisterhood' (Sandelowski, 1990: 34). Surrogacy as a non-normative practice is explored further in Chapter 6 through Shelley M. Park's (2006, 2014) discussion of how the adoptive maternal body is also positioned as defective, deviant, which she examines through the lens of queer theory. Park proposes that building families through adoption not only challenges traditional methods of procreation, through what Warner (1993) describes as the goal of heterosexuality, but deviates from the normative. The normative, she argues, drawing on a range of feminist work, is the naturalness of gestation, the genetic tie, and genetic continuity – which resonates with Engel's claim that paternal lineage was of value as it shaped family hierarchy and was an assurance of female monogamy.

Although the majority of surrogacy cases share at least one genetic link to the child (which includes heterosexual *and* gay/lesbian couples)[5] I propose that the adoptive maternal body and the intended mother's maternal body share an affinity with same-sex parenthood, particularly homosexual men, as neither person carries the child. This can be identified in the separation of sex from reproduction – which also applies to lesbian couples – unless children exist from previous heterosexual relationships, *and* the removal from the gestational process, which is viewed as core to women's identity as mothers. As Park highlights, gestation and childbirth are considered a uniquely female experience, watching the body change and the fetus grow, which establishes an emotional connection, which she proposes is deemed only viable through biological motherhood.

As Giuliana says direct to camera, reflecting on her experience of watching the surrogate give birth: 'Watching Delphine push is pretty surreal. Of course, I wish I

could have gone through this whole process myself, but I can't think about that right now'. Rose and Jess (pre-mothers focus group) identified with the value attached to carrying one's own pregnancy, by relating it to their own maternal aspirations. During a discussion of *Giuliana & Bill,* they shared their feelings of being 'really excited about being pregnant' (Rose) and 'I can't wait to have a bump' (Jess), both arguing that there must be a bond between the surrogate and baby as it is their body that is nurturing it and carrying it throughout its gestation. This reflects Charis Thompson's (2005) position that sharing a substance through gestation is more intimate than sharing genetics, being more 'uniquely characteristic of motherhood' (2005: 149-50).

Although this bond is made invisible in *Giuliana & Bill* through how the surrogate is positioned in the scenes – to be discussed in the following section – it drives the narrative in *Coronation Street.* The surrogate, Tina, bonds with baby Jake when she gives birth. As Laura (non-mothers focus group) points out: 'She [Tina] needed the money, but she changed from it being a completely financial process – a very cold, sort of matter of fact thing – to fuck! I love this baby! It totally switched from purely practical to totally emotional'. As Tina says to Izzy when she gives Jake back, after several high drama bust-ups: 'I fell in love with him when I held him, fed him. I knew he was your baby, but I thought he was mine, part of me'. Therefore, in addition, it can also be proposed that it is not just the intended mother who is positioned as non-normative through the process of surrogacy, but the surrogate also, as the gestation of a child of no genetic relation, to hand over at birth, can also be deemed as an abnormal maternal practice. Furthermore, drawing on Gorton's (2009) analysis of emotion in family-centered American TV drama *Brothers & Sisters*, what can also be identified through the construction of emotion in the narrative, as highlighted by Laura, is that outbursts of emotional expression are used as a vehicle for people to sort out their differences, 'however painful and however disparate' (2009: 135). This is seen in the emotional exchange between Tina and Izzy.

What can be identified further in the earlier exchange between Sonja, Carrie and Nadra (mixed mothers focus group) is a social pressure to conform to the conventional roles of motherhood. The way these participants discuss the

construction of the characters infers that motherhood is obligatory, as something one *must do*. This suggests the assumption within compulsory heterosexuality that women *want* to have children, a sacred calling that is core to feminine identity (Rich, 1980; Throsby, 2004); a compulsory motherhood fueled by the belief that the 'happy objects' of the baby and family will 'bring happiness to *us*' (Ahmed, 2010: 26). This echoes the notion that, as Carrie detected through her reading of the texts, 'you're not valid if you don't have a child'.

As demonstrated in the work of Franklin (1990) which can be identified here, this pressure to produce a genetic child might result in emotional *and* physical stress. This is particularly true of IVF treatment as through its cyclical, treadmill-like nature and 'maybe next time promise' (Franklin, 1997: 135) that the infertile female subject finds detachment problematic. This nourishes the hopeful attachment of cruel optimism (Berlant, 2011). This also applies to the surrogacy process, through embryo transfer. As Sonja pointed out: 'by hook or by crook you will have it all'. This can be read in the texts' final equilibrium of getting the baby, and drawing on Ahmed, the *ultimate* happy ending that gives life direction and purpose, enabling a 'happy heterosexuality' (Ahmed, 2010: 90). This illuminates the belief that to *not* have it all, to *not* have the baby, positions the female subject as a failure, as the *loser* – located outside of the natural order. As Carrie identified, the possibility of building a childfree life is the part 'women aren't allowed to get on with', as the growth in options enabled by reproductive technologies means that women have no positive examples or guidelines to help them re-orient onto the life path as non-mothers, but are under pressure to 'keep trying' (Daniluk 1996; Throsby, 2004).

Carrie's statement: '20 years ago it was like, oh, you can't have kids? That's such a shame, but there are a lot of other things you can do' also poignantly echoes Corea's (1988) position from this earlier period when she argued that 'a woman could, at some point, however painfully, come to terms with her infertility, go on with her life, find a way to live it fully. Now there is no easy way off the medical treadmill… There is always a promising new program to enroll in, its low success rate played down, its "hope" played up. The years roll on' (in Scutt, 1990: 3). Drawing on Berlant (2008, 2010) and Franklin (1990, 1997), returning to the IVF treadmill with the desire to find a resolution through pregnancy is perpetuating the

fantasy of normative family. Being in proximity to the object of desire preserves and re-fuels the desire for conventional family life, to belong to a larger world where motherhood and heterosexuality are the norm.

However, as Carrie explained, chasing this happy ending can also cause unhappiness, through continually 'trying to attain something' (read 'something' as the 'baby'). This anguished attachment to an idea of the good life/happy ending, which is wrapped up in the object of desire (the genetic baby), reflects Berlant's (2010, 2012) argument that the object that you *believe* will bring you happiness actually becomes the object that *destroys* your happiness. It's the presence of the possibility of happiness, which is enabled through the disciplinary practice of reproductive technologies ('you can do this, do this, or this'), which sustains cruel optimism.

Izzy (C*oronation Street)* and Giuliana (*Giuliana & Bill*) are depicted as the losers in the story, who need to be rehabilitated in order to fit in, as infertility has rendered them as objects of pity (Baraitser and Tyler, 2010; Sandelowski, 1993), and as unfit to parent (Edge, 2014), until they *transition* into winners when their genetic babies are born. Izzy's situation evoked the most compassion from the focus groups participants. As Sally (mixed mothers focus group) stated: 'Out of all of their points of view, that was the one I thought, "Oh my god, what if I was in that situation?"' This demonstrates what cognitive film theorist Murray Smith (1995) describes as character engagement through the structure of sympathy, which he proposes occurs through an allegiance with the characters. In addition, Rebecca (non-mothers focus group) thought *Coronation Street*'s surrogacy storyline was constructed with the most thought and detail: 'You got the most information about it all – the procedures *and* the feelings and emotions. It looked at it in a really sensitive way'.

In contrast, Giuliana and Bill as characters were evaluated by the participants as being false and self-obsessed. Rachel (non-mothers focus group) described the couple as 'horrible narcissists… it was so fake' as she argued their characters were performing for the audience, 'acting out' for the cameras (Kavka, 2008: 97). Rachel and others in the focus groups felt that surrogacy in the show wasn't being

taken seriously, a storyline employed purely for entertainment value. Ironically, in contrast to a genre named 'reality' TV, *Coronation Street* was viewed as more authentic, despite being fictional. However, due to the mechanism of melodrama that drives shows such as *Giuliana & Bill,* it is important to point out that the genre of reality TV and its relationship to *realism* are distant. As outlined by Peter Brooks (1996): 'the drive of realism is to understand the world by explaining it, whilst on the other hand melodrama forces meaning from the personal situations where language is inadequate and bodily gestures and somatic responses become the means by which the self is revealed' (in Skeggs and Wood, 2012: 95).

Soap opera also employs melodrama, similarly to reality TV, for affective impact, alongside close-up angles for intimacy. However, the emotional connection with the focus group participants was noticeably stronger, primarily enabled through the multiple viewpoints. As Carrie (mixed mothers focus group) stated: 'It was more complex as it looked at it from every angle'. As freelance TV producer John Ellis (1999) explains: 'soap scenes open up major emotional questions to scrutiny… Soaps do so through the combination of empathy that accompanies narrative with a large degree of discussion of any one situation by the whole range of the soap's characters' (in Gorton 2009: 144).

It can be proposed, therefore, that the lack of multiple viewpoints in *Giuliana & Bill* has contributed to the audience perception of the show being 'fake', particularly in relation to the surrogate's representation, whose viewpoint appears to be blocked off, entirely. This will be returned to later on. Furthermore, it can also be proposed that the insincerity felt by participants could also be influenced by the docusoap style of reality TV, which *Giuliana & Bill* integrates into its format. As argued by Stella Bruzzi (2001), the key difference in this hybrid is that entertainment is prioritised over social commentary. Rachel (non-mothers focus group) in particular expressed her dislike to how before the episode of *Giuliana & Bill* had even finished, the E! channel (E! for entertainment) was already plugging the next show. Drawing on Jonathan Gray's (2010) work on television promos, this technique can be described as a '*textual* pull' which as he argues suggests that the '"text" for sale is the entire channel' (2010: 56, 57). This she found extremely distasteful in the

context of the sensitive topics of infertility and cancer that drive the show's narrative.

It is imperative to highlight here the significance of the differences between American and British contexts of the shows under discussion, specifically in relation to how the genre conventions differ within each territory. Despite family being central to both styles of soaps, key differences have been identified[6]. Not just through the distinctions of hi-gloss, excessive and lavish primetime aesthetic versus raw realism (Crofts, 1994; Geraghty, 1991; Hollows, 2012) but through how family melodrama and the maternal characters are shaped in the texts (Geraghty, 1991). I return to this shortly.

Firstly, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, it is important to emphasise that British soap opera attempts to reflect working-class lives. At the time of writing, *Coronation Street* is Britain's longest-running soap opera. Based in Manchester and made by Granada Television, it was first transmitted on ITV in December 1960. *Coronation Street* has become symbolic of British working-class identity, primarily through its influence of social realism. Social realism in soap opera is when the daily lives of ordinary people are used to expose – or to understand and to explain (Brooks, 1996) – current societal concerns. This provides, as argued by James Whittebols (2004), a 'window into the social mood of the time' (2004: 33). This is a primary function of British soaps, which I propose is influenced by documentary's drive to represent current social issues and cultural values (Nichols, 1991).

As highlighted by Christine Geraghty (1994) *Coronation Street* was created during a period of time when the creative fields of theatre, literature and cinema stressed the 'importance of drawing on different kinds of experience based on the lives of "ordinary people"' (in Allen, 1994: 66). The arrival of *Coronation Street* marked an important cultural, social and political moment through its representation of a northern working-class community which featured strong and positive female characters (Feuer, 1982).

This ambition to capture the social mood gives the genre, especially in long-term soaps such as *Coronation Street* and its BBC rival *EastEnders,* a more socio-

realistic nature, based in family life and the community (Ang, 1985; Carson and Llewellyn-Jones, 2000; Geraghty, 1991, 1994). As highlighted by Dorothy Hobson (2002), due to this focus, programmes such as these are able to express the interests of women, as she argues many of its characters are women facing similar issues, particularly in relation to themes of motherhood. Geraghty (1991) also claims that soaps validate the importance of female relationships and provide a space where emotional relationships are tested out.

Geraghty proposes that family in British and American soaps are articulated differently. Not just through the British soap being more community-facing rather than being predominantly situated within the private home, as seen in *Dynasty* and *Dallas*, but through the positioning of and challenge to male authority. A useful perspective to employ here, in relation to the narratives of motherhood and family examined in this thesis, is Geraghty's extension of Laura Mulvey's (1989) distinction between the patriarchal and matriarchal melodrama. As Geraghty explains: 'Mulvey challenged the notion that fifties melodramas allowed a hidden or subversive expression of the problems and contradictions which underpin the construction of the family and the role of men and women within it' (1991: 61). Most importantly to Geraghty, however, is how Mulvey identified that in woman dominated melodrama, the narrative is told from the woman's point of view. This is key in the discussion of soaps such as *Coronation Street*, particularly in light of how the participants in this study exhibited more empathy for its female characters than those portrayed in the other shows. As Gerharty points out: 'our knowledge is gained through her and we are invited to identify with her needs and dissatisfactions' (1991: 62). To explain the differences in how family is articulated in American and British soaps, Geraghty proposes that American soaps such as *Dallas* and *Dynasty* are patriarchal due to how the female characters refuse to be controlled by powerful men, whereas British soaps such as *Coronation Street* and *EastEnders* are matriarchal due to the male authority being bypassed by 'handing emotional and patriarchal control to the mother' (1991: 83). Geraghty claims that female viewers find both pleasurable.

Joanne Hollows (2012) has argued that was is interesting in Geraghty's analysis is how in British soaps matriarchs 'need not be biological mothers, but can act as

a mother to the community' (2012: 93). Therefore, the role of the mother in the British soap genre holds more social and cultural power than in its transatlantic counterpart. However, in relation to the analysis of the texts here, I challenge Geraghty's belief that soaps are built upon female solidarity, as in the context of the surrogacy storyline in *Coronation Street*, the female characters are being pitted against each other, and not united together, which is discussed further below. Despite this, the female participants in the focus groups were able to identify and empathise with *both* female protagonists – the intended mother (Izzy) and the surrogate (Tina) – due to the narrative technique of multiple viewpoints from primarily the woman's perspective.

Regardless of which character evoked the most sympathy from the focus group participants, both Izzy (*Coronation Street*) and Giuliana's (*Giuliana & Bill*) *loser* position is temporary, as they both eventually transform into *winners* when they become mothers, from a position of disappointment and desperation to one of fulfilment, where the fight against all odds results in a dream come true (Berlant, 2008; Franklin, 1990). However, although Giuliana's narrative journey is showered with disruptions, such as miscarriages and breast cancer, Izzy's transition into motherhood is depicted as more problematic. Not only did Izzy, like Giuliana, suffer loss through miscarriage, Tina decided to keep the baby after forming a bond at birth. As Izzy sobs to her partner Gary: 'He was my one and only chance. I don't want another baby. I just want Jake. She's got everything, and we've been left with nothing…' This shows the volatility of who is the winner and who is loser. Furthermore, this also demonstrates how divisions are constructed between the women in the narrative through building tension based on difference and value attached to fertility, which 'defy female unity' (Sandelowski, 1990: 34).

While illustrating what has been described as a problematic and risky attachment to the object of desire, these examples also show the instability of the winner/loser binary that drives the narratives in both texts. I propose that these disruptions are simply narrative stepping-stones to the final equilibrium, and the goal, which is the acquisition of the genetic child. This is when the infertile characters transform into their new position. In the story, there can only be happy endings for some – unlike the loser, the winner takes it all (the genetic baby). Nevertheless, I propose that

the loser in the story is not solely the infertile character – until the happy ending is achieved. The loser is also reflected in the depictions of the surrogates, primarily through how they are framed and positioned on the screen in relation to the intended mothers. This, I argue, constructs what is a hierarchical division between the two bodies. Furthermore, through this exploration, the consideration of 'Other Mothers', particularly women of colour[7], emerges in relation to which bodies are allowed to be proximate to the object of desire, to transform, and those which aren't, to the point when they don't even make it into the frame, at all.

Out of the frame

> I felt uncomfortable watching the first half of the clip as there wasn't a single image of the carrier at all, and I think the first thing they said was "gestational carrier". Then they cut to a clip where she was in the background, and the main focus was on the machine and readings – she was like a prop in the back of the scene. I thought it was horrible treatment of a woman that's gone out of her way to do that for someone else.
>
> (Charlie, non-mothers focus group, 2015)

The focus group participants commented on how the surrogate Delphine in *Giuliana & Bill* was positioned in the scenes, more than on any of the other surrogate representations that were discussed in the viewing sessions. Therefore *Giuliana & Bill* will provide the focus for this section, specifically the hospital scenes in 'Meet the Duke' (Season 5, Episode 18) when the surrogate was in labour. The main reading by participants was that Delphine was rendered the most invisible, through how she was placed in the framing of the scenes, and how this silenced her point of view. I argue that these readings were influenced by the show's core genre conventions, which many of the participants were able to identify. Furthermore, I propose that through the participants' reflections hierarchies of power, status and privilege can be noted.

Charlie (non-mothers focus group) in particular took offence to Delphine's representation during the hospital scenes leading up the birth, as she felt that Delphine was being portrayed as a 'prop' in the background, seen as the holding vessel for the genetic child. Charlie also highlighted that 'gestational carrier', a term often used to describe Delphine, disturbed her. Gestational carrier is a name derived from legal documentation to describe a woman engaged in a commercial surrogacy arrangement, when a woman carries a child not genetically related to her for a fee. Such a description infers that Delphine is viewed by Giuliana as a carrier/object first, and a person/subject second. Charlie also found it discomforting that during Delphine's labour scenes an over-excited Giuliana adopting a doctor role dominated the scenes by pretended to read charts and order drugs, 'the main focus on the machine and readings'. This further illustrates the common thread of infertility narratives, which shows how the shift from conflict (infertility) to resolution (the baby) is enabled through medical terms and processes, which take over the story – the resolution being a medical cure (Franklin, 1990). This is another example of how reality TV characters perform for the camera, to their audience (Kavka, 2008).

As Rhian (pre-mothers focus group) stated: 'she [Giuliana] didn't seem emotional about the situation, she was more excited. She was like, doing it for the TV point of view'. This echoes Rachel's (non-mothers focus group) earlier assertion that Giuliana's hunger for a child was simply driven by a lifestyle commodity to be acquired, to show off to the camera and the wider world. Charlie's discomfort with how the surrogate has been represented sympathises further with the FINNRAGE position, who claimed that emerging practices such as commercial surrogacy were oppressive to women, as they signified men's control over women's bodies, for reproductive purposes. The resistors (Lam, 2015) argued that surrogate bodies are seen as passive containers for reproduction, described as inanimate objects such as incubators, receptacles and vessels – maternal subjectivity erased, made invisible. As Rebecca (non-mothers focus group) expressed: 'It was very cold, with the 3D scan it was like they were treating her like an object'.

During Delphine's labour scenes, Bill is filming Giuliana. The dialogue exchanges occur interview-style from behind the camera. The introduction to the hospital

scenes is framed through the use of a hand-held camera. Moving from a shot of the medical centre, the full screen is blacked out, which momentarily positions the viewer behind the camera. The red 'record' sign flashes in the corner. A close-up of Giuliana's face shows her removing the camera's lens cap: 'Oh wait, hold on, this isn't open'. As introduced earlier, the use of the hand-held camera demonstrates the influence of observational documentary's cinema verité, where the voice behind the camera creates a more situated and intimate presence (Nichols, 1991). It has also been argued that the use of the hand-held camera embodies the human point-of-view, offering the viewer a fly-on-the-wall perspective, which aims to capture moments as they unfold (Bruzzi, 2001; Nash, 2011).

During the filming of this scene, Giuliana has her back to Delphine. There is little to no eye contact, and she barely speaks to her. Delphine remains silent, gazing up at Giuliana from the hospital bed. As Charlie described, Delphine is being portrayed as a 'prop' – an inanimate object, a fetal container. This scene also shows how pregnancy, particularly surrogate pregnancy, has become a managed process, which has shifted from a private to a public experience. In this instance, even more public by being shown on reality TV. Although the fetus itself is not in view, the 'machines' take a centre stage, which are in place to monitor fetal activity and the gestational carrier's labour. This illustrates how technology has been instrumental in the conceptual separation of the fetus from the maternal site, the advent and development of fetal imaging having constructed the fetus as a subject before its arrival, under the control and mediation of professionals.

Delphine's marginalisation in these scenes shows how the fetus has eclipsed the maternal body from the central focal point (Duden, 1993). As Charlie observed, the surrogate is positioned at the 'back of the scene'. This illustrates not only the transposition of personhood from the female subject onto the fetus, which in doing so forms the view of the surrogate body as merely a container, but what Lam (2015) has identified as a new moment in reproductive technologies which alters the women's reproductive consciousness in relation to birth process – through not only the separation of sex from reproduction, but due to women being able to receive their genetic child 'without the labor of pregnancy and birthing' (Lam, 2015:

33). As Paula (non-mothers focus group) highlighted, these intended mothers 'must feel the way a father must feel'. This masculine positioning in relation to how infertile women are constructed in the texts is explored further in Chapter 6.

Through Charlie's reading of the hospital scenes indicating a 'horrible treatment' of the surrogate, a hierarchical imbalance of power can be identified. This situates the surrogate, Delphine, as the loser in the narrative, through how she is positioned in the frame. It is important to highlight here that the 'frame' in this analysis can be viewed as symbolic, representing the frame of dominant heteronormative culture, the images and narratives that reside within it being constructed for the mainstream, heterosexual gaze (Cavalcante, 2014, Dow, 1996, 2001). The portrayal of the surrogate also unsettled Jess, Fay and Rose (pre-mothers focus group), particularly in the later scenes when Delphine was close to giving birth:

> Jess: There wasn't much about the baby in there, even when they were at the hospital you barely saw the woman who was giving birth, she was just in the corner of the screen.
>
> Fay: I thought they would've like, included the surrogate more seeing as it's about her surrogacy.
>
> Lulu: So, you thought she wasn't in it enough?
>
> Rose: You didn't see her point of view.
>
> Fay: I don't think she even spoke, did she?
>
> (Jess, Fay, Lulu, Rose, pre-mothers focus group, 2015)

This discussion further illustrates how the surrogate's maternal subjectivity has been erased, particularly through what appears to be the silencing of her character, due to being placed 'in the corner' of the screen which obstructs her perspective through the exclusion of dialogue. As Rose stated: 'You didn't see her

point of view'. This underscores the polarities between the genre mechanisms of *Giuliana & Bill* and *Coronation Street*, where in the latter the multiple viewpoints evoked the most sympathy from the participants.

Delphine's silence during childbirth was also commented on. Rachel (non-mothers focus group) was convinced that sound had been deliberately edited out, and Nadra (mixed mothers focus group) thought that the silence was perhaps due to Scientology's mute birthing practice, despite no indication of the religion. Leading up to the baby's birth, Delphine is continually edged out of the frame, just the top of her head remaining in view, while the camera locks on Giuliana's face, Bill standing behind her. It could be suggested that this central positioning of Giuliana aims to strengthen her role as the genetic mother. Furthermore, it can be suggested the focus on Giuliana's face was engineered to capture her expressions leading up to the biggest money shot of all – the birth of her son. During their reflection of these scenes, Sonja and Carla (mixed mothers focus group) used words such as 'head' and 'dislocation' when discussing the surrogate's invisibility. This further marks the surrogate body as an object, a 'prop', which infers that the surrogate body is being represented, and read, as a machine for reproduction.

In her work on surrogacy and Marxism, Oliver (1989) argued that surrogacy provides a classic example of estranged labour, which she proposed exposes class and power imbalances. Marx believed that the worker is forced, by the drive for survival, to give his [sic] labour in the creation of commodities that 'produces for the rich wonderful things' (Marx, 1844 in Lemert, 2016: 34). Through the realisation of this labour, the worker finds himself losing a sense of the reality outside of himself, and a sense of himself. The estrangement, therefore, coming through the loss of the object he (in this context, 'she') is producing, which becomes alienated when it exists outside of him. Oliver's analysis centred on the hidden power imbalances in surrogacy contracts, proposing that the surrogate is working class or a minority, who provides her services, in exchange for money, for wealthy white middle-class women. Oliver argues that the sole purpose of the surrogate, like the worker in Marx's analysis, is to 'produce and relinquish a flawless product no matter what physical and/or psychological pain she may

suffer' (1989: 106). Therefore, it is possible to argue that the rendering invisible of the surrogate through representation (or lack of) is also a method, aside from constructing her as an inanimate object and blocking her point of view, to silence any indication of her suffering, in order to produce a commodity.

Oliver claims that the language in the contracts masks inequalities by presenting the surrogate as an equal and autonomous agent. She believes that the surrogate's freedom is merely an illusion. I argue that this masking of inequalities and illusion of autonomy is also evident in Giuliana's relationship with the surrogate, Delphine, which has been read by the participants as manufactured and insincere. However, I propose that instead of the language in the surrogacy contracts, it is the use of emotion work, in the form of complements, which aims to disguise the imbalances of power. This is illustrated through one particular interaction with Delphine, when she is at the pushing stage of labour. Giuliana looks down at her and says: 'Delphine, for what it's worth you look really pretty. I swear to God, I've been thinking it all day!' At this point Delphine is fully removed from the frame. Sonja and Nadra (mixed mothers focus group) thought calling her 'pretty' at this stage was condescending, inappropriate, and an insincere expression of emotion, 'so she would get the baby'. As Arlie Hochschild (2003) identifies in her work on the commercialisation of emotions: 'Complementarity is a common mask for inequality in what is presumed to be owing between people' (2003: 85). In the representation of Delphine throughout these scenes, any sign of her being an active subject was quashed by the dominance of Giuliana's presence. However, as pointed out by Sonja (mixed mothers focus group) the genre mechanisms of the text contribute to the imbalance of power between Giuliana and Delphine:

> If they focused too much on the surrogate mum, they would risk losing the audience's sympathy, and it's all about portraying them as these great guys who've gone through a lot and still, you know… at the end it's about seeing Giuliana and Bill with the baby.
>
> (Sonja, mixed mothers focus group, 2015)

Sonja's comment resonates with the earlier discussion of how characters are constructed to engage emotionally with viewers, by evoking a sympathetic response. Once again, Sonja's reading of the text demonstrates how these genre techniques have failed. The focus group participants found the show distasteful, most sympathy directed towards the surrogate and her depiction, rather than Giuliana's fertility journey – the antithesis to how the participants related to the intended mother, Izzy, in *Coronation Street.* Although some participants were sympathetic towards Giuliana's situation, her character was not received warmly. As Tara (non-mothers focus group) explained:

> For me it [*Giuliana & Bill*] encapsulated the notion of privilege and entitlement. At no point was it like, maybe this [motherhood] isn't for me. So yeah, she had gone through this amazing journey, but for a lot of people they would've just said, you know what, I can't afford to do this, it's not meant to be. So, it's privilege.

> (Tara, non-mothers focus group, 2015)

Although Tara didn't directly refer to race in her statement, what can be identified here is the proposition that reproductive technologies are only viewed as accessible to a specific category of user, which in the majority of these representations are white, educated, heterosexual married couples, such as Giuliana and Bill who have the benefits of white privilege. Although character Izzy in *Coronation Street* can be described as an 'Other Mother' due to her disability, she also benefits from white privilege, despite being working class. Izzy is also heterosexual and partnered at the time of the arrangement (they later break up). Therefore, this marks her as normative – she fits the ideal user category for assisted reproduction.

As has been argued by Roberts (1995, 1996, 2000) the value of perpetuating the genetic line is to preserve racial purity, enabled through the disciplinary practice of reproductive technologies, which Roberts argues America, in particular, is obsessed with. This is evident in the absence of women of colour from representation in the texts explored in this chapter. Myths of the bond of the

genetic tie will be explored in Chapter 7. Therefore, it can be proposed that through this exclusion, beliefs of racial purity are being reinforced, which reflects the dominant medical and media discourse that constructs infertility as white and heterosexual, technology made accessible to married, heterosexual couples. As aforementioned, Roberts claims that white women are shown as the primary consumers of reproductive technologies with images of 'white babies, usually with blond hair and blue eyes' (2009: 786). Roberts argues this through an IVF story in the *New York Times* (1996) which pictures a fertility clinic director surrounded by seven white children, contrasted to news stories of accidental black babies born to white women through wrongly inseminated black sperm, 'intended to evoke revulsion precisely because of their race' (2009: 787). Throsby (2004) also highlights how images of the perfect mother and miracle child on TV and fertility clinics adverts are constructed as white and in heterosexual partnerships: 'the poster family for IVF' (2004: 2).

'Other Mothers' outside of this category of user are constructed as deviant, positioned outside heteronormative culture. However, this exclusion of women of colour, specifically, from the frame of assisted reproduction is ironic. According to experts in the field of race and reproductive technology, black women are one-and-a-half times more infertile than whites (Allen, 1991; Arditti, 1997; Briggs, 2017; Farquhar, 1996; Lam, 2015; Roberts, 1995, 1996, 2000). As Briggs (2017) highlights in her work on reproductive politics in America, in addition to this not only are African American women 'about half as likely to use ARTs' but they are also 'twice as likely as white women of matched economic class or age to lose a child in its first year of life, an epidemic of infant mortality increasingly documented by public health experts as an effect of racism' (2017: 16).

It can therefore be argued that cruel optimism and its objects of desire are more problematic, *more* risky, for some bodies than others; happy objects and the happy horizon placed out of reach. By rendering the black body invisible also points to Cohen's (1997) argument that black heterosexual bodies are excluded from dominant white heterosexual culture. This will be explored further in Chapter 7. Alongside the surrogates in these representations, it is the 'Other Mothers' that

have been positioned as the real losers in the narrative, both in and out of the televisual frame.

Chapter 5: Becoming ordinary: making homosexuality more palatable

This chapter explores the representations of homosexual and lesbian characters, in relation to the surrogacy plotline, in *The New Normal* and *Rules of Engagement. The New Normal* follows the journey of homosexual couple Bryan and David as they build a family through surrogacy, and *Rules of Engagement*, whose lead characters, heterosexual couple Audrey and Jeff, engage their lesbian friend Brenda to be their surrogate. This chapter's primary argument is that through the narrative vehicle of surrogacy, and the employment of the conventional sitcom formula, the homosexual characters in *The New Normal* have been constructed to present a specific type of homosexuality which is more palatable to mainstream audiences – white, affluent, masculine, and situated within a monogamous, loving relationship.

In the analysis of the lesbian surrogate in *Rules of Engagement*, what will be of focus is how the character's masculine traits transform to become more conventionally feminine through the pregnancy process, which results in the lesbian being depicted as becoming more of a woman from a previous non-woman masculine position. This, I argue, reflects Monique Wittig's claim that 'lesbians are not women' (1992: 57) due to lesbianism as a concept not being wholly recognised ideologically, socially, legally, or politically within heterosexual culture. Furthermore, the butch-femme model that originated in lesbian culture, in relation to the construction of femininity and masculinity within the couple dyad, will also be evoked to explore the positioning of the homosexual characters, in relation to what is, and what isn't, deemed acceptable in relation to same-sex parenting. Butchness in relation to the lesbian character will be explored through the transition from masculine to feminine traits, through pregnancy.

To explore how the raced and gendered sexualities of the characters have been constructed within the texts, I employ the concept *queer straightness*, which I have devised to describe how the creation of family through surrogacy, and the process of pregnancy, aims to makes the gay characters more palatable to mainstream audiences. This, as I propose, is enabled through the narrative's 'happiness scripts', which 'can be thought of as straightening devices' (Ahmed, 2010: 91).

Through these devices, I argue that the gay characters are re-aligned in the normative; positioned in proximity to signs of happiness – and therefore signs of straightness – such as the reproduction of genetic children, women's experience of pregnancy, the family home, and the couple dyad (Ahmed, 2006, 2010). As Ahmed (2010) claims, these signs are symbolic of the straight line of normative heterosexuality: 'ways of aligning bodies with what is already lined up' (2010: 91). I propose that the *queer straightness* that shapes the texts' narratives does so to situate the characters as socially accepted, happy, and *normalised*. These characters are constructed to embody a category of homosexuality that is recognised and deemed appropriate by mainstream popular culture, to a 'world that has already decided what *is* acceptable' (2010: 106).

Furthermore, what will also be explored is how the deviancy of same-sex sexual intimacy has been disciplined through the love plot, which not only steers the monogamous relationship of the homosexual couple in *The New Normal*, but also, in *Rules of Engagement,* is central to the narrative of the lesbian body carrying a child to support heterosexual love and reproduction. I argue that normative sexuality is inferred, through which narratives of sentimentality, romance and domesticity materialise, which are rooted in late nineteenth and early twentieth century ideologies of family. In addition, the desire to create a family in the reflection of normative heterosexuality will also be discussed.

Through dialogic textual-audience analysis, I argue that the representations articulate a good homosexuality, which not only aims to construct the 'normal gay' (Seidman, 2004: 14) but also obscures explicit sexual intimacy between same-sex couples, beyond hand holding and a peck on the mouth. Therefore, the family home, as a sign of straightness (Ahmed, 2010), which are central settings to both texts, signifies that the love for a *future fetus,* and the *future family,* eclipses the romantic love narrative. Becoming parents not only rescues the characters from deviancy, but resolves, or placates, anxieties of homosexual intimacy and the threat that same-sex desire may endanger the genetic line of descent. The way the gay characters have been presented in both *The New Normal* and *Rules of Engagement* suggests that mainstream popular culture *only* accepts homosexuality and lesbianism if it is packaged in a more heteronormative form.

Sitcom conventions and the use of comedy as a form of social and cultural power will also be addressed, with a particular focus on the use of the stereotype, in relation to how ideologies of race, gender and family are shaped in the texts. The concept of *queer straightness* will also underpin a discussion on how the construction and depiction of same-sex partnerships and the creation of family both challenge and reproduce heterosexual norms of the nuclear family. The concept of *queer straightness* will be unpacked in this chapter by drawing on a range of queer and feminist work on homosexual and lesbian experience and media representation, queer families, heteronormativity and emotions and affect.

This chapter unfolds over three sections. *Just your (stereo)type* explores the representation of homosexuals and same-sex parenting, with a focus on the use of the stereotype and humour as its key genre device. *Crying like a girl* examines the representation of lesbianism in the context of pregnancy, motherhood and conventional notions of hetero-femininity, and *Fitting in* will show how the characters' sexual identity is disciplined to become more acceptable through being situated within a heteronormative narrative framework.

Just your (stereo)type

> They're obviously making a programme about gay people as there aren't enough. But then they're making it really stereotypical.
>
> (Rose, pre-mothers focus group, 2015)

Rose (pre-mothers focus group), who was responding to clips from *The New Normal,* pinpointed the fact that there are still very few representations of 'gay people' on fictional TV when compared to the saturation of heterosexual representation across popular media. However, TV shows, specifically sitcoms, that feature gay characters are continuing to grow. According to the latest report by American LGBTQ media monitoring organisation GLAAD (2016-2017), despite only 4.8% of LGBTQ characters being represented across scripted primetime

television, in the shadow of their straight counterparts, the numbers are continuing to increase, although slowly. The majority of this 4.8% representation belongs to white homosexual men. Lesbian and bisexual characters, although much less present, have increased, particularly on cable and online television. Shows such as *Orange Is the New Black* (2013-present), which is based on the true story of a bisexual white upper class New Yorker who goes to prison for drugs trafficking, features the largest proportion of leading lesbian, transgendered and bisexual characters on one show. It is also the most-watched original series on online subscription-based TV portal, Netflix.

The first lead openly gay character who appeared on primetime American sitcom in 1998, was Will Truman in hit show *Will & Grace* (1998-2006, 2017-present). Since then, homosexual characters have appeared in numerous popular primetime shows including *Sex and The City* (1998-2004), *My So-Called Life* (1994-1995), *Glee* (2009-2014), *True Blood* (2008-2014), *Ugly Betty* (2006-2010), and *The Simpsons* (1989-present). However, the representation of same-sex characters in the context of building a family is still relatively new. Aside from representations in films such as lesbian family flick *The Kids Are All Right* (2010) and the passing-as-straight closet movie *The Birdcage* (1996), television representations are sparse, with same-sex parented families having only emerged in TV dramas such as hospital hit *Grey's Anatomy* (2005-present), family shows *The Fosters* (2013-preset) and *Brothers & Sisters* (2006-2011), and in sitcoms *Modern Family* (2009-present) and *The New Normal* (2012-2013). The homosexual characters in *Brothers and Sisters* and *Modern Family* create families through adoption. In addition to the adoption storyline, *Brothers & Sisters* also features a surrogacy storyline, which appears in the final season. *The New Normal* was cancelled after one season. This was due to a drop in the ratings, which Christian campaigners OneMillionMoms.com, a division of the American Family Association, claim was the result of their ardent campaigning against the show's narrative. They believed the show promoted a decline in social values and morals by aiming to redefine marriage and family structures (Huffingtonpost.com, 2016). *The New Normal* is the only primetime show to feature two lead homosexual characters in a committed and monogamous relationship, with a surrogacy storyline at its centre.

As Rose stated, she thought that the representations of homosexuality in *The New Normal* were 'really stereotypical'. Therefore, the sitcom convention of the stereotype, and the use of humour, will provide the focus for this section. I argue these genre conventions frame a range of ideologies in the texts, shaping ideals of family, sexuality, race and gender. Furthermore, although *The New Normal* is of key focus, references to – and analyses of – other sitcoms such as *Modern Family* and *Will & Grace* will be referred to, to support the argument.

The analysis of the audience data revealed both positive and negative readings of how the homosexual couple is represented. Both positions will be examined. However, what is important to highlight at this juncture is that the focus group participants detected more negative representations of the key lesbian character Brenda in *Rules of Engagement*, also referencing the minor lesbian characters in *The New Normal*. This will be treated separately in the following section.

The classic sitcom structure encompasses a recurring cast of characters based around the family unit, who perform within a 20-30-minute time slot. Although *The New Normal* appears progressive by depicting a same-sex couple creating a family through the non-conventional route of surrogacy, the core narrative framework is built on 1950s sitcoms, which focus on the traditional family unit. The show also borrows from the later formation of family that consists of unrelated adults, such as hit shows *Cheers* (1982-1993) and *Friends* (1994-2004).

The central cast of characters in *The New Normal* includes the homosexual couple (David and Bryan), the gestational surrogate (Goldie), Goldie's grandmother (Jane, or 'Nana'), the surrogate's daughter (Shania), and Bryan's personal assistant (Rocky). This set of characters updates the traditional sitcom formula of blundering dad, queen-of-the-nest mother, cheeky boy and bubbly girl, and best friend (Mills, 2005). However, I argue that this set of characters, with a specific focus on the central father/mother formula as it re-appears in the construction of the two gay characters as soon-to-be-parents, situates them as normative by positioning the rest of the cast as non-normative. Bryan and David are white, educated, wealthy men in a monogamous long-term relationship. David is a

gynaecologist, Bryan a TV writer. They share a beautiful home in an LA suburb. In contrast, the surrogate, Goldie, is positioned as working class and financially desperate, which drives her to surrogacy.

Hailing from the Midwest, Goldie displays the region's characteristics, shown to lack 'the kind of sophistication, culture, and cosmopolitanism that define Bryan and David's lifestyle' (Cavalcante, 2014: 8). Her grandmother Nana is offensive and disapproving. She hurls hyperbolic racist and homophobic slurs in almost every scene to every character, with lines such as: 'lesbians look like ugly men', 'what are you doing helping these salami smokers?' and 'I feel like I just woke up and ate some black and gay stew!' (Episode 1: 'Pilot'). Rocky, Bryan's personal assistant (the black character) is African American, and is marked by racial stereotypes. Rocky is characterised as loud, abrasive, is prone to stealing, lying, and is incapable of moving her career beyond being an assistant. When Bryan promotes her to TV producer at his company, she fails (Episode 13: 'Stay-At-Home-Dad). Rhian, Rose and Fay (pre-mothers focus group) interpreted the representations of the homosexual characters in *The New Normal* as positive, in the context of the supporting characters:

Rhian: At least it's not negative.

Rose: Yeah, true, it's not.

Lulu: You don't think it's negative in any way?

Rhian: I think because that… what was her name, Nana, was represented as an evil person. Whatever she says is wrong. So, they're not represented negatively.

Fay: She *is* wrong, but she generates a laugh out of the pure shock of what she's just said. It's like, "wow, I can't believe it!" which makes you think it's wrongful what she's just said. It's rather the shock factor than "wow, that's so funny!"

Cavalcante (2014) describes this as 'anxious displacements' (2014: 456). This is when 'the dynamics of anxiety and symbolic excess are projected away from LGBTQ characters onto those in their orbit' (2014: 3). In his analysis of both Bryan and David in *The New Normal* – and also Mitch and Cam in *Modern Family*, who adopt a child – he claims that these representations are shown as positive in the way that the cultural anxiety of same-sex parenting, and homosexuality in general, is averted away from the queer bodies and projected onto the other characters. The recipients of these anxious displacements, outside of the main cast of characters, include Shania's (the surrogate's daughter) school friend Wilbur, who is part Latino, and his promiscuously portrayed white single mother who doesn't know who his father is. This minor character is significant as she embodies traces of the white trash stereotype by indicating a class disgust through being poor and having a mixed-race child (Tyler, 2008).

Wilbur, who is also presented as promiscuous, is reprimanded for making inappropriate sexual advances to Shania (they are both 9-years-old). Alongside the depiction of the slutty single mother, the stereotypes of the supporting characters reflect sitcom's genre convention of mocking vulnerable groups. Brett Mills (2009) has identified a number of these groups – the coon, the lecherous Italian and the battle-axe mother-in-law, who he claims appear frequently on sitcom line-ups. In *The New Normal* these stereotypes are constructed through Rocky (the coon), Wilbur (the lecherous Italian) and Nana (the battle-axe mother-in-law), who Rhian described as the 'evil one'. Calvacante argues that Nana is positioned in the narrative to receive the most anxious displacement by being painted as a relic of the past through her extreme bigotry. She was also the key supporting character that Rhian, Rose and Fay commented on. However, I propose that the construction of Nana's character is inserted into the narrative as a deflective device. Through the use of humour to provoke audience laughs, she performs as a narrative decoy by distracting viewers to *not* read what I believe to be more serious racist and misogynistic undertones in relation to how the gay couple is shaped in the text. Rose (pre-mothers focus group) shared her concerns of racial stereotyping in popular media:

I was speaking to my teacher the other day, and she was basically saying how she finds it difficult to find films that have black people playing a main serious role, and a lot of the time black people are played as, in a comedic way, so people can just laugh at them. I think some gay people probably would be offended that they were just put in a comedy, rather than a drama – a show with a serious side.

(Rose, pre-mothers focus group, 2015)

Through a discussion of racial representation through the stereotype, Rose was able to recognise similar issues of how gay characters are represented, demonstrating a comparison between minority groups that has been widely documented (Fejes and Petrich, 2013; Lucas and Raley, 2008; Moritz, 1989, 1999). Although Rose didn't provide a more nuanced reading of race in her reflections of *The New Normal,* she was able to hint towards deeper textual issues of dominant ideologies of power and race. For example, her statement 'so people can laugh at them' reflects concerns of how black characters have been represented on screen since the 1920s. Donald Bogle (2016) argues that the early character types of 'the coon, the tragic mulatto, the mammy and the brutal black buck' were stereotypes constructed to 'stress inferiority' (2016: 4). This was done, Bogle claims, through poking fun out of them. Terry Jones and Robert Staples (1985) highlight how concerns shifted from first getting blacks on the screen, to how they were depicted. Despite the increase in visibility throughout the 1980s they argue that: 'the people who control what is shown on TV seem to believe that whites feel most comfortable with blacks playing the roles of fools, maids clowns, funny men and small time hustlers' (1985: 10). This claim can be identified in the portrayal of the African American female character Rocky in *The New Normal.* One scene in particular demonstrates this (Episode 19: 'Blood, Sweat and Fears') where Rocky struggles to look after her newly adopted baby daughter, Nikki.

Rocky becomes flustered over getting Nikki dressed, and is unsuccessful in braiding what is shown as unruly black hair. The surrogate's young daughter Shania takes over child-care and shows Rocky how to be a mother, not only

through her calm caretaking skills, but also her improbable expertise in black hair management. The symbolism of this scene is striking. In her work on race and adoption, Katz Rothman (2005) claims that for white adoptive mothers of black children (as she herself experienced), the fixing of unruly black hair is political. It is a test that one passes or fails, as well as a sign of taming – representing slavery – and is of curiosity to white people. Black hair, Rothman argues, is 'loaded with meaning' (2005: 207).

This inability to manage her adopted daughter's hair therefore positions Rocky as a failed mother, a common representation of black motherhood in popular culture, especially when constructed as a black single mother. As Adrienne McCormick (2010) highlights: '… when we see black mothers who are not "moral compasses," they fail to balance motherhood, work, and sexuality – as the white mothers do – and are more likely to appear as failed mothers than as supermothers' (2010: 149). By swooping in to rescue Rocky from being a bad mother, I argue Shania not only embodies this notion of the white super mother, but through this act of rescue is also symbolic of the white saviour narrative, a trope that has also been identified in *Modern Family*, through the white homosexual couple adopting a child from Vietnam (Cavalcante, 2014).

Furthermore, Bryan, as Rocky's boss, provides her with an income, and inspires her to become a parent, too, albeit not a *real* one. Building a family through adoption is seen as outside of normative white family discourse (Park, 2006; 2013). In addition, drawing on Briggs (2017) and Dána-Ain Davis' (2009) discussion of race and reproductive politics in America, I argue that Rocky is not able to achieve normative maternal status due to America's cultural and political logic that believes that 'women marked as being of color, poor or low income women, and single women do not have fertility problems that should be addressed' (Davis in Briggs, 2017: 109). Rocky's (possible) infertility is not spoken of in the narrative, and access to assisted fertility treatment, or commercial surrogacy services, is not considered. However, despite this, Rocky adopting an African American child ally with two important things: that there are a much larger proportion of African American children in the care system awaiting adoption, and that blood ties within black communities are deemed less important in the creation

of families than they are in white America (Roberts, 1995). Extended kinship structures will be explored in Chapter 7.

Rocky's subordinated relationship with Bryan, her adoption of a child, alongside both men's relationships with the surrogate, Goldie, constructs idealised images of white Americans (Hughey, 2014), which further signifies white privilege. This emphasises, in the context of race and reproductive technologies, who has access to assisted reproduction, and who doesn't, and who is allowed into the representational frame, and who isn't. Both are core threads throughout this thesis. As Ahmed (2010) identifies: 'Black and working-class women are not even entitled to be proximate to the fantasy, though they may be instrumental in enabling others to approximate its form' (2010: 51).

With Rose's sympathy towards the gay characters, and Rhian and Fay interpreting Nana's polemical outbursts as 'wrong' and 'evil', the portrayal of the central gay characters in their quest to build a family through surrogacy has been positioned predominantly positively. During the viewing sessions of *The New Normal,* the majority of the participants in the focus groups, including the lesbians, giggled at Nana's tirades. As Fay identified, the character 'generated a laugh out of pure shock'. This appeared to be unsettling for her, as she detected a tension between how it feels to laugh out of 'pure shock', or because something is funny. As Mills (2005) explains: 'viewers have yet to discover *how* they're meant to laugh at blacks, females or gays in contemporary comedy without inadvertently supporting power structures which keep these groups subordinated' (2005: 148). I propose this generation of shock demonstrates how emotions are constructed in the narrative, through the sequence of scenes, dialogue and characterisation, which connects with the viewers to the point where certain emotions can literally be yanked out of them (Gorton, 2009; Williams, 1991). Linda Williams describes this method as 'jerking', in relation to melodrama and horror genres, but which can be applied here. She employs this term to explain how the audience is manipulated, though 'an over-involvement in sensation and emotion' (1991: 5). Where Williams talks about tear jerkers or fear jerkers, the participants' reaction to Nana's extreme outbursts could be described as shock jerkers – the stifled giggles indicating feelings of shame. However, it is important to note that this response could also

have been the result of being situated in the more unnatural viewing experience of a focus group, away from a more relaxed and private home environment.

The shock-induced giggles, which spread within the groups, might be described as the contagion of affect, to incite shock (Ahmed, 2010; Gibbs, 2001; Probyn, 2005). Gorton explains: 'As Williams points out, these texts' ability to "jerk" emotion from us lead to their cultural devaluation and to the perception that they are not "good" for us, and, I would argue, a sense that we should feel ashamed or even angry if they have managed to make us cry or scream' (2009: 79). Many of the participants regarded *The New Normal* as an inferior media artefact, which reflected a similar response to realty TV show *Giuliana & Bill* as discussed in the previous chapter. It was described as 'crap… I didn't like the way they developed the characters, the dialogue, the way it was filmed' (Laura, non-mothers focus group), and 'cheesy… I didn't like the way the cameras were zooming around' (Rose, pre-mothers focus group). Although *The New Normal* attempted to integrate the more realist cinema verité style of observational documentary through the 'zooming around' of what meant to appear as hand-held cameras, a common feature of reality TV, the result was not convincing. Instead of emotionally engaging with viewers, many of the participants disengaged.

However, through the evocation of the shock emotion, and through the genre technique of anxious displacements, Bryan and David's queerness is eradicated, minimised. I argue this legitimises gay parenting, which positions them as good, acceptable homosexuals. I propose this method of eradication resonates with what I have named a *queer straightness*. Despite homosexuality being normalised by positioning the characters in proximity to signs of straightness/happiness – such as family and children – and the anxiety of difference is displaced onto the surrounding characters, these representations are still problematic as they are both progressive and regressive, which I propose reinforces negative images of homosexuality. Carrie (mixed mothers focus group) believed that 'dealing with a gay couple makes it more palatable for the audience'. Here she is describing that the practice of surrogacy is more easily understood as a more viable option due to two men's reproductive restrictions. Furthermore, what can also be identified in her comment is that for homosexuals to be positioned as central characters on a

primetime TV show, particularly as soon-to-be parents, being in a couple makes *both* homosexuality and gay parenting more acceptable, and less deviant, for mainstream audiences.

The couple dyad is central to both the love plot, and normative personhood. What is of interest here in the context of *The New Normal* is how the coupling of homosexual men in relation to creating a family with a genetic bond, makes them, as Carrie observed, more palatable. I argue the couple configuration has drawn on the mother/father dualism that is central to the sitcom formula. I believe that the emergence of this dualism within the articulation of same-sex relationships encapsulates traditional notions of femininity and masculinity, in relation to parental roles within the family home. This I explore through elements of the butch-femme model, which although belongs to lesbian culture, has explanatory value here. This model has been used to describe gay male masculinity, but the use of butch-femme to describe the dynamic of homosexual relationships has not been used to same extent (Ward, 2008). Sally R. Munt (1998) has described butch-femme as gender characteristics that express one's identity through the performative – creating ways to look, and be looked at, as a conceptual way of speaking. The butch-femme binary is complex, and has been a contentious category within lesbian culture, primarily critiqued by lesbian feminists in the 1970s-80s for aping heterosexuality (Halberstam, 1998; Munt, 1998, 2008). I argue that traces of this model appear in the construction of the homosexual couple, which I propose produces, or speaks, an acceptable mode of homosexual parenting by drawing on the gender stereotyping of mother/father roles. This, I also believe, in support of the butch-femme critique, also mimics hetero-norms.

David, is fit, masculine, successful and good-looking, which I argue positions him as the butch in the pairing. Fred Fejes (2000) claims that by constructing gay male characters in this way makes them more accessible to mainstream heterosexual audiences. Fejes claims this is done by portraying homosexual men as 'young, white, Caucasian, preferably with a well muscled, smooth body, handsome face, good education, professional job, and a high income' (2000: 15). As stated earlier in the chapter, the emergence of homosexual couples as parents has only recently become visible on primetime television and film, which further shapes them as

ideal, normal types of homosexuals. As Guillermo Avila-Saavedra (2009) argues in his discussion of the increasing visibility of homosexual characters in the American popular media: 'Homosexual images are presented in a way acceptable for heterosexual audiences by reinforcing traditional values like family, monogamy and stability. Most of the erotic connotations of homosexuality have been eliminated' (2009: 8). This erasure of homosexual eroticism is discussed towards the end of the chapter.

As well as being shaped as the more masculine of the couple, David is also characterised as possessing fewer gay traits than his partner, Bryan. David's only friends are the straight men he works with. Bryan teases him relentlessly for his lack of popular cultural gay knowledge, and in the flashback scene which showed how the pair first met, in a gay bar, David appears 'straight' and out of place. In contrast, Bryan's character is constructed as more effeminate, although not depicted as the 'swishy effeminate queen' (Walters, 2001: 61) character that frequently appears in sitcoms. Homosexuality and effeminacy, much like lesbianism and masculinity, is a trait that has been integral to gay male stereotyping since the 1960s, when homosexual characters first appeared on TV (Dyer, 1977, 2012; Gross and Woods, 1999). It can be argued that such stereotyping is rooted in late nineteenth and early twentieth century models of gender inversion, where it was believed that gender traits in homosexuals and lesbians were reversed (Martin, 1997; Sedgwick, 2008).

Bryan's character is positioned in the feminine role, as the femme, through conventional articulations of normative feminine ideals, such as the disciplinary practice of dieting, the desire for family and marriage, and an unquenchable thirst for shopping (Bartky, 1991; Dowling, 2003; Friedan, 2010). In one scene, Bryan (although David also tries it on) is shown sporting a 'milk man' – a vest with built-in nipples (Episode 15: 'Dairy Queen'). This version of femininity can be viewed as an imitation of heterosexual femininity, which situates a non-masculine gayness in the shadow of heterosexuality (Battles and Hilton Morrow, 2002; Butler, 1991). Through this femme positioning, in the reflection of David's butch persona, the pair also mirror a similar butch-femme dynamic that is evident in the portrayal of Mitch and Cam in *Modern Family*. Mitch performs the more masculine

role by being a successful lawyer in a hetero-dominant space, and Cam is a music teacher who stays at home to look after their adopted baby. Peter Kunze (2013) claims that the writers of *Modern Family* constructed the dynamic between the two men in the reflection of the heterosexual couples, 'so that the heterosexual norm is reinforced and idolized' (in Demory & Pullen, 2103: 108). Like Bryan, I argue that Cam's character is positioned as the 'femme' through the display of overly camp character traits, and how he has been situated as the primary caregiver within the family home.

However, it is Bryan's positioning as the mother, the femme, in the relationship with David, the butch, which is troubling. Although there has been a strong argument made in lesbian culture that butch-femme is subversive, not mimicking but highlighting the excess of heterosexuality for erotic sexual play/desire (Butler, 1990; de Lauretis, 1994; Roof, 1998), I believe that Bryan's femme character is assimilating into the heterosexual model rather than subverting it. As Butler (1990) argues, butch-femme aims to destabilise identities, not conform to heterosexual terms. I argue that the materialisation of butch-femme within the characters of David and Bryan is doing the opposite.

The character constructions in *The New Normal* not only perpetuate an acceptable homosexuality, but also, due to being situated within the mother/father sitcom binary, are misogynistic, as they also reinforce normative ideals of femininity and gender roles within discourses of family. Furthermore, through anxious displacements and the use of the stereotype, the surrounding characters are positioned as deviant, particularly working-class women (Goldie) and women of colour (Rocky).

Crying like a girl

> She turned more into a woman, into a straight woman. She turned more girly. That's what she said.
>
> (Rachel, non-mothers focus group 2015)

The focus of this section is to explore the representation of the lesbian identified character Brenda[8] in *Rules of Engagement*. A key storyline that emerges in seasons 5-7 is that after several years struggling with infertility, lead character Audrey and her husband Jeff search for a surrogate to carry their genetic child. Jeff's best friend Brenda volunteers her services. During the early stages of pregnancy Brenda struggles with sickness, and splits from her partner. The couple move Brenda into their home until the baby is delivered. Brenda agrees to be their surrogate in the episode entitled 'Les-Bro' (Season 5, Episode 8), a title that has clearly been derived from the homophobic lesbian slang 'lesbo'. This title portrays Brenda as a masculine woman, a common stereotype used to identify members of lesbian subculture.

Like Bryan in *The New Normal*, whose femme persona was constructed by drawing on normative feminine traits, Brenda's character is drawn from cultural stereotypes that are core to normative masculinity. Her character dresses in jeans, plaid shirts, and the laughter track chuckles on queue when she tells Audrey she shops at Bloomingdale's men's shoe department. As Tara (non-mothers focus group) surmised from reading Brenda's character: 'Apparently, as a lesbian you don't have any woman traits, which was very stereotypical'.

Although it has been argued that the sitcom convention of the stereotype is used to lampoon members of minority groups, and acts as a tool to uphold dominant ideological norms (Mills, 2005, 2009), it has also been proposed – particularly in relation to gay stereotyping on TV (Dyer, 1993) – that humour is a way to publicly expose and explore difficult subjects, which in this context can include reproductive practices such as surrogacy. As previously emphasised, sitcoms often employ stereotypes of the effeminate male and the butch female to make fun of lesbians and gay men, which preserves negative stereotypes. However, as Carla (mixed mothers focus group) pinpoints, lesbian characters are more prone to ridicule: 'Everyone can still laugh at lesbians, right? It's the thing on telly'. This illustrates how lesbian sexuality is played for laughs on mainstream television (Moritz, 1989, 1999). Furthermore, this also demonstrates how humour can – but not always, depending on the text and the context (Douglas, 1968) – be exposed

as far from trivial by its ability to shape identities, social relationships and social interaction (Lockyer and Pickering, 2008).

Like Jeff, Brenda likes drinking beer and watching sports, frequent activities the pair share which binds their friendship, leading up to the pregnancy. Their friendship sparked when they met on their local softball team. As identified by Rebecca Feasey (2008) in her work on masculinity and television advertising, but which can be applied here, drinking beer is positioned as core to normative masculinity by representing camaraderie. Jeff is a classic representative of dominant notions of masculinity by being constructed as the 'jock' – white, heterosexual, with a naturalised supremacy over women. He assumes a hierarchical position through the subordination of others, by gay baiting and making misogynistic comments (Charlebois, 2011; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

Throughout the show, Jeff makes comments about Brenda such as 'she's not my wife, she's a lesbian' (Season 7, Episode 13), and 'we have a mutual fondness for a nice rack' (Season 5, Episode 14). These statements exclude her from the category 'woman' by positioning her as masculine. However, although Brenda's character is derived from stereotypes of normative masculinity, her character has not been portrayed through the commonly adopted trope of the butch lesbian. Although Brenda's character is shaped through mannish traits, she wears make-up and has long groomed hair, which are the conventional markings of normative femininity – codes that must be adhered to by lesbian characters to feature on primetime TV and to avoid audience alienation (Lewis and Scanlon, 2016; Moritz, 1989, 1999). Drawing on the work of Susan J. Wolfe and Lee Ann Roripaugh (2006) and Martin Zeller-Jacques (2011) I propose that Brenda is performing within what the programmes have constructed to be a post-lesbian environment, where 'a certain type of lesbian is accepted' (Zeller-Jacques, 2011: 104).

In contrast, the butch lesbian is constructed with a more muscular or larger frame, short hair and no make-up. This is a stereotypical image which Judith Halberstam (1998) describes as 'identity in excess', which she argues is troublesome as it makes, 'lesbianism readable in the register of masculinity' (2008: 177) This

correlates with the notion that lesbians are not, and cannot be, feminine, as they are unable to have 'any woman traits' (Tara, non-mothers focus group). During the viewing session of *The New Normal*, Carrie (heterosexual) and Jackie (bisexual) (mixed mothers focus group) were both irritated by a scene that showed the surrogate's grandmother 'Nana' was revolted by seeing a butch lesbian couple who she described as 'ugly men' strolling in public with their baby (Episode 1: 'Pilot').

> Carrie: Yeah, that's right, that's how lesbians are *always* portrayed.

> Jackie: That's a lesbian couple? Right… of course, the butch lesbian couple.

> (Carrie and Jackie, mixed mothers focus group, 2015)

Jackie, who identifies as bisexual, was particularly perturbed by the butch lesbian representation. She stated how much it annoyed her 'how lesbians were always stereotyped' in this way. Richard Dyer (1977) claims in his work on the representation of gays in film that such stereotypes *do* exist within subcultures, and are therefore representatives of these minority groups. Yet, despite Brenda's masculine traits, which are still problematic as they are built on the stereotype of lesbian masculinity, it could be argued that her character is challenging the image of the butch lesbian, by being constructed as what Halberstam (1998) describes as a 'barely butch' – a representation of the everyday lesbian who may not appear conventionally butch, but 'might do something considered to be traditionally male' (1998: 217-218). In Brenda's case, this is drinking beer and watching sports.

However, in relation to the surrogacy storyline, what *is* revealing is how Brenda, as a barely butch, is assimilated into heterosexual culture, by being taken into the heterosexual couple's home – the heterosexual couple being the central point where 'the world unfolds' (Ahmed, 2006: 85). Brenda is integrated into their friendship circle, as what appears to be the token gay person[9]. This she disrupts through pregnancy, which in addition disturbs the lesbian subject position through the social and cultural assumptions that pregnancy and motherhood are located

within the heterosexual domain (Calhoun, 2000). Brenda is not positioned on the outside, as the deviant butch lesbian, a character often situated in prison (*Prisoner: Cell Block H, Bad Girls, Caged! Orange Is the New Black*), but on the inside of dominant heterosexual culture.

For a lesbian to be assimilated into dominant heterosexual culture is only made possible by not only reducing signs of gayness (Moritz, 1989, 1999) but by also erasing any references to a vibrant gay community which the characters may be a part of. This is also seen in *The New Normal*. I propose this absence supports heterosexual dominance (Cavalcante, 2014; Walters, 2001, 2012). However, the butch lesbian is positioned as non-normative by failing to assimilate, often rendered invisible through death, misconduct, shame or scandal (Halberstam, 1998; Kuhn, 1982; Moritz, 1989, 1999).

Brenda's character is portrayed as more acceptable through not only the barely butch image of the everyday lesbian, but also through her ability to get pregnant, which, drawing Ellen Lewin's (1993) work on lesbian motherhood, makes her lesbianism more tolerable by straight communities. In this representation, however, pregnancy is temporary – Brenda has no desire to be a mother, to be discussed below. Brenda's character could be viewed as a form of progression in representation on one hand, by breaking down homophobic stereotyping of lesbianism and making visible more varied lesbian identities. Or, it could be viewed as erasing what has been argued as actual representations of a type of lesbian masculinity (Dyer, 1977; Halberstam, 1998) in favour of a version that is more agreeable for mainstream audiences, also seen in the characters of Will in *Will and Grace*, and David in *The New Normal*.

Brenda is portrayed in *Rules of Engagement* similarly to the lesbian characters in *The L Word*. It has been argued that the *L Word* lacks a range of diversity by the characters being white, middle class and femme (Lewis and Scanlon, 2016), and positioned within heterosexual narratives such as domesticity, romance and reproduction, for heterosexual audiences (Wolfe and Roripaugh in Akass and McCabe, 2006; Lee and Meyer, 2010). However, as pointed out by Ron Becker (2006) in his work on gay television in straight America, some mainstream

networks and their advertisers were keen to target a very specific gay audience, one that is white, affluent and well educated – which does not reflect the diversity of gay communities. As Becker argues: 'gay material was used to target a significantly larger audience of socially liberal, urban-minded professionals' (2006: 177).

In relation to gay articulations in mainstream culture, Amy Villarejo (2003) highlights in her analysis of lesbian images in film how lesbian chic has 'crept into national culture and commodity culture' (2003: 7); a new visibility that has emerged to help sell cultural products such as film, books, photography and video. However, as proposed by Wolfe and Roripaugh (2006) in their analysis of the *L Word,* this type of visibility has caused anxiety amid lesbian viewers, through a pandering to the heterosexual gaze, the result of which they claim are inauthentic depictions of lesbian identities. As lesbian journalist Winnie McCroy expressed in her review of the *L Word* in LGBTQ newspaper *The New York Blade* (2004):

> 'If lesbians have to choose between remaining invisible to the mainstream, or being represented by Showtime's clipped and plucked lesbians, I choose invisibility. After all, real lesbians will still remain invisible, at least until our lives become more than a marketing tool or cottage industry or pud fodder for Joe Sixpack' (in Akass and McCabe, 2006: 44).

Brenda in *Rules of Engagement* is a *visible* mainstream lesbian, a barely butch character positioned within a central narrative of family and reproduction, that is *just* feminine enough for audiences to read as a woman with a viable uterus (which defines womanhood). However, Brenda's characteristics are also masculine enough to not create anxieties in relation to the ethics of surrogacy, and any potential claims on the baby. I argue, therefore, that the representation of Brenda in relation to motherhood draws on the social and cultural notions that view the lesbian as not a *real* woman, which, alongside lesbianism and motherhood, is discussed further in Chapter 6. I propose that through this depiction of lesbianism the mother-child bond is eradicated – Brenda is not depicted as a *real* mother, either. As Rebecca (non-mothers focus group) commented:

People just assume that normal people wouldn't necessarily want to say…
"OK you can borrow my womb for a bit and I'll have a baby for you". It has
to be for some other reason.

(Rebecca, non-mothers focus group, 2015)

I propose that this 'other reason' Rebecca is describing is the lesbian body, which is positioned as non-normative by associating 'normal people' with normative heterosexuality. This further suggests that the lesbian is not considered a real woman, positioned outside of the category 'woman', and is therefore able to loan her body as a container. Through this commentary, the resistors' (Lam, 2015) feminist critique of reproductive technologies can be evoked, where it was argued that women's bodies were thought of as holding vessels, fetal containers – maternal subjectivity made invisible. As the only lesbian surrogate depicted in the material under analysis, Brenda appears the most emotionally unattached to, and disinterested in, the baby she carried and delivered, with no interest in being a mother, either. This articulation resonates with the notion that lesbian mothers are seen as unfit mothers – women who are monsters and freaks who threaten the structures of heteronormative culture (Allison, 1996; Sourbut, 1996; Throsby, 2004).

The changes of Brenda's character traits through the experience of pregnancy were of particular interest to the focus group participants, especially one scene (Season 5, Episode 20: 'Beating the System'), where Brenda, newly pregnant, meets Jeff in the local diner. She has an emotional meltdown after a bout of morning sickness. In tears, she turns to Jeff and sobs: 'Thanks a lot Jeff, you've turned me into a frickin' girl!' As the 'jock' Jeff is presented as being emotionally distanced – he struggles to show empathy. As soon as Brenda leaves the diner, he turns to his friends and says: 'I've never seen her so unreasonable and cranky, she's being really wifey'. Carrie, Carla and Sonja (mixed mothers focus group) chose to discuss this scene in relation to sexuality, pregnancy and femininity:

Carrie: For me, I think the lesbian surrogate is really interesting as it's this
idea that the pregnancy hormones made her somehow feminine.

Sonja: Yeah, yeah, yeah…

Carla: But that meant being mental, and emotional – a pain in the arse.

Sonja: Yeah, and crying… because, if you're a gay woman then you're as hard as nails, and you're not going to cry.

Carrie: You're not really a woman.

(Carrie, Carla and Sonja, mixed mothers focus group, 2015)

These comments resonate with Halberstam's (1998) argument that lesbianism cannot be read as anything other than masculine in mainstream culture, which draws on conventional notions of masculinity (Sonja: 'if you're a gay woman you're as hard as nails, and you're not going to cry'). Furthermore, what can also be recognised is how the experience of pregnancy, as a heterosexual narrative – as also seen in *The L Word* – performs as a straightening device, which develops from Ahmed's (2010) argument that being in the proximity of signs of straightness (in this context, pregnancy, family) minimises signs of homosexuality/lesbianism. The pregnancy hormones have, as Carrie stated: 'made her somehow feminine' (which reads as straight). Pregnancy has removed Brenda from the non-normative, deviant position of the lesbian – who's not a *real* woman – and has re-positioned her as nearly normative, or as described by Kate McNicholas Smith and Imogen Tyler (2017) the 'lesbian normal'. The lesbian normal, in their explanation, is a carefully crafted popular cultural articulation of modern feminine lesbianism, made acceptable for mainstream audiences, 'which affirm ideals of hetero-patriarchal, white, middle-class femininity' (2017: 3). Brenda is positioned on the right path paved by compulsory heterosexuality, a default patriarchal structure that disciplines women's sexuality to channel them into the institutions of motherhood and marriage (Ahmed, 2006; Rich, 1980).

Although Brenda is not the genetic mother, and is not to be the child's caretaker, Rich's (1980) argument that motherhood, like heterosexuality, is a political institution is worth considering. Rich proposes that the two are inextricably linked through what she argues is a societal force that traditionally privileges male power over women. Rich also claims that through this force, lesbianism becomes obscured. Brenda's lesbianism is made more invisible, albeit temporarily. Although she does not become romantically partnered during this period – her lesbian desire is blocked, which will be discussed in the next section – she is taken into the heterosexual couple's home when she becomes pregnant. I argue this socialises her into the heteronormative sphere, which again positions her in proximity to signs of straightness, to kinship objects that as Ahmed (2006) argues, *do* the work of family. As Jeff pinpoints after Brenda's emotional outburst in the diner, she has transitioned from his drinking buddy to being 'really wifey'.

Symbolically, there is a scene (Season 5, Episode 20: 'Beating the System') where Audrey discovers Jeff is not running errands, but has, instead, retreated to his office to escape Brenda's mood swings. Audrey admits she too is struggling with Brenda's emotional outbursts. The pair therefore hide out in the office. This suggests that Brenda, through her new feminine identity, has shifted to the wife, and the wife has shifted to the buddy, which indicates that Audrey has been situated in a more masculine position, like the father, as she is removed from the gestational role. This notion of the paternal positioning of women is discussed further in the following chapter. Pregnancy, therefore, has made Brenda a *real* woman, which has been proposed is the basis of being female (Brooks, 1999). It can be argued, then, that this transformation conforms to normative notions of hetero-femininity, through the excess of emotions that have surfaced through pregnancy. These emotional characteristics have traditionally been associated with normative notions of 'womanhood', specifically in relation to heterosexual women (Rueling in Martin, 1994): lesbians, like men, being 'as hard as nails'. Women have also been historically linked to what has been constructed as a natural femininity, rather than cultural masculinity, as informed by the Cartesian binary of nature/culture, which positions normative femininity with the naturalness of reproduction.

Brenda's character highlights this gender construct through transitioning from masculine to feminine, non-woman to real woman, rational to irrational. Not only does this construction depict femininity as weak under conventional notions of femininity, which is demonstrated in this text, but it also points to what has been described by feminist scholars as an unsettling experience of pregnancy, where the female body is split, doubled, and the female subject is no longer experiencing herself, as herself (Kristeva, 1980; Young, 1984). In this context, Brenda no longer feels like a lesbian, she feels straight. This counters Ahmed's proposition that happiness-causes, such as 'the family, marriage, whiteness' (2010: 112), promise happiness to the deviant queer. This appears as not the case in this representation – Brenda's proximity to social norms have, in fact, made her unhappy. She dislikes the changes in her emotions, she dislikes not being able to drink beer, she dislikes feeling more feminine, and she wants the baby out of her body and into Audrey's arms, as soon as possible. This accentuates the heterosexist belief that lesbians are not fit to be mothers, viewed as socially and culturally incompatible with motherhood. The lesbian can't be shown as *wanting* to be a mother as motherhood is a natural, normative desire, which the lesbian, who is positioned as non-normative, should be excluded from, due to being viewed as an inferior parent, a freak, monster, a threat to heterosexual structures.

In addition, it can also be proposed that the experience of pregnancy, which is symbolic of conventional heterosexual ritual, has transported Brenda's lesbian body into what could be described, drawing on Foucault (1967) and José Muñoz (2009) as what I call heterotopic straight time. According to Foucault, the heterotopic space is an in-between space, such as the prison, which he argued is a parallel space (also a ship, asylum) which requires a form of membership. Foucault argued that these places are constructed to control undesirable bodies, which therefore makes the concept of utopia possible. For the purpose of this discussion I argue that the lesbian is the deviant body, and utopia is dominant heterosexual culture. Within this framework I argue that the through the experience of pregnancy the deviant body of the lesbian enters the straight time (Muñoz) of heterosexual reproduction – pregnancy representative of a heterotopic space (Foucault), the straight time being the temporal heterosexual sphere that Brenda enters.

Muñoz proposes that the queer is already in straight time and wishes to step out of it, into a queer futurity. I suggest in this analysis that the queer – in this context, the lesbian – steps into the straight time of pregnancy. I propose that the body of the deviant lesbian (heterotopic space) is a vehicle by which to produce future subjects for a future world (utopia). Through her desire to be a surrogate, Brenda has not been able to resist straight time's pull into heterosexual reproduction, which could be read as a desire for validation, to be recognised as a good homosexual (Ahmed, 2010; Seidman, 2004). This resonates with Ahmed's argument of how one dwells in one's body, and how one inhabits spaces, can act as an orientation device (Ahmed, 2006). Therefore, this transition through pregnancy, regardless of the lesbian surrogate not carrying her own genetic fetus, can also been read as men's power over women, through the impregnation of his seed (the future) – the female body being the material component (the space), the male seed providing the creative power, giving it life and force (Colebrook, 2003).

Rachel (non-mothers focus group), who is lesbian-identified, read the scene that indicated the shift in Brenda's character traits from masculine to feminine through pregnancy, differently:

> This shows the typical male ideal about how a lesbian woman just needs a good seeing to by a man, and she'll become feminine, and not liking dick, basically – that's what this means.
>
> (Rachel, non-mothers focus group, 2015)

Although it appears that Rachel has misunderstood that the surrogacy arrangement in this narrative is executed through the non-coital method of embryo transfer, and not the natural method of sexual intercourse, she is signalling towards the radical lesbian feminist perspective that the true essence of being a 'woman' is to be penetrated by men (Radicalesbians, 1970).

Furthermore, through her comment, the common popular cultural and societal belief that lesbianism is just a temporary phase can also be identified. This

frequently emerges in and is constructed by media representations, inferring that lesbianism is due to either the lack of men, or not being able to 'get' a man (Ahmed, 2006; Freud, 1977). As Rachel highlighted, it is through the carrying of the male seed that Brenda will 'become feminine' (again, read as straight), which re-aligns the female body into the normative dimension of heterosexuality (Ahmed, 2006). However, despite Rachel's reading – similarly to the lesbian being portrayed as happy, rather than unhappy – it transpires that in this character portrayal, it is heterosexuality, and not lesbianism, which is the temporary phase. The first thing Brenda says after the baby was born was: 'Thank God, I can drink again!' (Season 7, Episode 13: '100th'). This symbolises a return to her former masculine femininity, and a return to happiness. This was the final scene that featured Brenda. From this moment on she was erased – once her services were completed. Not killed off, dishonoured or sent to prison, or as Ahmed also outlines, 'turn straight, die, or go mad' (Ahmed, 2010: 89), but excluded from heteronormative membership, which is a common lesbian narrative in popular culture (Dyer, 1977, 1990; Kaplan, 1998; Stacey, 1993).

In the very final scene of the final episode of the show, the characters are pictured together, happily sharing the news that Audrey has fallen pregnant naturally, despite being told she was infertile. During Brenda's labour, Audrey discovers she is pregnant. This final equilibrium in the narrative suggests that the desired outcome is natural pregnancy through heterosexual sex, with the lesbian out of sight. Although Brenda's heteronormative membership was temporary, so was the lesbian visibility on a primetime TV show, which was only enabled through the device of pregnancy as a normative journey, and as the central plot device built within a heterosexual narrative (Oliver, 212). Brenda's role was to enable a 'happy heterosexuality' (Ahmed, 2010: 90) through her own sacrifice. As Patricia White (1999) states in her work on lesbian representation in Hollywood cinema, the lesbian character has shifted from being the uninvited guest to being invited. But in the end, in *Rules of Engagement,* the invited guest was uninvited once more and shown the door.

Fitting in

> It's not a gay or straight thing – the concept of family not being a family unless there are children involved.

> (Sonja, mixed mothers focus group, 2015)

In this statement, it can be suggested that Sonja is inferring that to be viewed as a proper, normative family, children must be included in the family frame. She has identified a societal and cultural shift, through the reading of *The New Normal* and *Rules of Engagement,* that the aspiration of the family ideal is not either gay or straight specific, but is pertinent to all, whether it be the homosexual couple in *The New Normal*, or the heterosexual couple in *Rules of Engagement.* As Sonja states, it is no longer a 'gay or straight thing'. Sonja's reading of the portrayal of both sets of couples supports the notion that in order for a family to be complete, it is necessary that the couple have children, otherwise they are not considered a *real* family (Benkov, 1994; Burke, 1993; Lehr, 1999; Nelson, 2007, 2009). Furthermore, Sonja's interpretation also suggests a belief that the child is the lynchpin of reproductive futurism – without the baby being central to the family unit, there is *no future*, no community, no national sanctity (Berlant, 1994; Berlant and Warner, 1999; Edelman, 2004; Muñoz, 2009).

However, what Edelman (2004) has posed, is that despite the dominant belief that reproduction is associated with heterosexuality, members of the LGTBQ community are not exempt from being able to resist its appeal. As Muñoz (2007) argues, and which is useful to evoke here, there is a pull into what he calls straight time – as mentioned above – which is the here and now of everyday life, shaped by heterosexual reproduction. It is possible to suggest that this reflects, in part, the desire to be hetero-ordinary that far right gay commentators such as Andrew Sullivan (1995) have ardently fought for, proposing that some homosexuals *want* to avoid signs of gayness, and wish to be seen as ordinary – to be seen as straight(er). For Sullivan, to be ordinary is an aspiration, an accomplishment, to escape deviancy, isolation, and shame. He believes this has allowed him to integrate into mainstream society:

Once I found the strength to be myself, I had no need to act myself. And it came as no surprise that once I had become more open about my homosexuality, these mannerisms declined. So my clothes became progressively more regular and slovenly; I lost interest in drama; my writing moved from fiction to journalism; my speech actually became less affected (Sullivan in Lehr, 1999: 9).

To be ordinary in these terms means to become part of a respectable community, resulting in meaningful social cohesion (Ahmed, 2006; Berlant and Warner, 1998; Sullivan, 1995; Warner, 1999). This desire to assimilate into the mainstream – in this discussion, through the creation of family – is demonstrated in a conversation between Carla, Carrie and Jackie (mixed mothers focus group):

Carla: It's a societal thing… Having kids is hard fucking work – everyone says that. There's this sort of buying into the ideal, that means you fit in some way, and that now includes gay men, lesbian women.

Carrie: And it normalises gay people.

Jackie: Because it makes them more acceptable.

(Carla, Carrie and Jackie, mixed mothers focus group, 2015)

Not only have these women recognised in these texts that the social and cultural value of the family with children is a socially constructed ideal, which requires 'buying into', they have also described that it is only by following the heterosexual narrative that homosexuals and lesbians are able to 'fit', and become accepted, into normative culture. This process of normalisation includes mimicking the conventional family structure (which can also be viewed as challenging it, to be discussed further on) through monogamy, the sentimentality of the couple dyad, and the stability of the family home (Avila-Saavedra, 2009) Therefore, it can be suggested that those who do not assimilate/conform to such a narrative are positioned as deviant, moored at the margins of normative culture, viewed as

unnatural, bad citizens (Ahmed, 2010; Rubin, 2011; Seidman, 2004; Warner, 1999).

As has been discussed throughout this chapter, I propose that the narrative and characterisation in *The New Normal* and *Rules of Engagement* have been assembled to present a respectable version of homosexuality, enabled through an allegiance to the family ideal. What emerges is what I have named a *queer straightness*, which is where the characters' homosexual and lesbian traits and identities are normalised, straightened, which aims to soothe anxieties surrounding social differences by creating gay characters that are less threatening to mainstream culture. I argue this has been implemented primarily through the romance narrative, which shapes normative discourses of family and civilises sexual desire (Berlant, 2010; Berlant and Warner, 1999; Evans, 2003).

By doing so, this also disciplines, or blocks, non-normative sexual practices by erasing same-sex intimacy through representation. In the context of the popular cultural articulations of homosexuality and lesbianism in this discussion, this emerges in *The New Normal* and *Rules of Engagement* by positioning the gay characters as parents – or in Brenda's case, pregnant – on primetime TV. While these representations may appear progressive, I propose they are also regressive, as heterocentricity drives the narrative structure and characterisation. David and Bryan in *The New Normal*, and Brenda in *Rules of Engagement* are positioned as acceptable *only* if sexual intimacy is made less visible than their heterosexual counterparts. Although the focus group participants didn't specifically pinpoint this division in relation to sexual intimacy, some described clear differences in how the characters were presented in relation to reproduction. Tara (non-mothers focus group) made a poignant observation:

> I think if I was a gay man and I was in that position I'd be a bit pissed off about that. It trivialised it [surrogacy] and made it, not… trying to divorce what heterosexuals' relationship are with children and what gay couples' relationships are with children.
>
> (Tara, non-mothers focus group, 2015)

Tara's comment implies a separate treatment of the heterosexual and homosexual characters relationship to the building of the conventional construct of family. This can be developed further by identifying what I propose is a separate treatment of same-sex sexual intimacy on screen, which insinuates what *is* and *isn't* acceptable for mainstream viewing (and therefore, mainstream culture). For gay intimacy to be included on and seen as acceptable for primetime television, for heterosexual audiences, it must be presented as less passionate and less sexual than normative heterosexuals (Bruni, 1994; Moritz, 1989, 1999; Rubin, 2011), to the point where it is non-existent – if it is to be represented at all. Drawing on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990), this articulation of gay identity performs as a form of closeting, through silencing – an act of power which is rooted in the stigma of intimate same-sex relations.

In *Rules of Engagement,* Brenda's lesbian identity and sexual practices are submerged, or blocked, through the surrogate pregnancy that caused the break up with her sexual partner – normative heterosexual rituals, such as pregnancy, stopping sexual deviancy. Drawing on Marguerite J. Moritz (1999) analysis of lesbian representations on American TV drama *Hotel* (1983-1988) it can be suggested that this separation of Brenda from her lover performs as a term of acceptance for a lesbian character to be represented culturally – not through the death of the sexual partner, as Moritz describes in *Hotel,* but the death of the sexual relationship as the result of heterosexual dominance. This can be identified through the surveillance and control of Brenda's body, not only through the insemination process but also throughout the period Brenda is taken into the intended parents' home. It can be argued that this demonstrates a disciplinary power through the exertion of a dominant heterosexual power over an LGTBQ body. Drawing on Foucault (1977), the surrogate's body can be described as a docile body, a body that 'may be subjected, used, transformed and improved' (1977: 136). This is illustrated through the constant surveillance of Brenda's body, to optimise the body's capacities, to make it productive – to produce a child to enable a happy heterosexuality. The heterosexual couple's family is completed (normalised) while the lesbian surrogate remains uncoupled, and a non-mother (deviant).

Similarly, Bryan and David in *The New Normal* invite the surrogate into their home during the term of her pregnancy. They swap her fast food diet for organic food, which also implies class differences, to be discussed in the following chapter, and are horrified when they discover she has sex with her ex-partner: 'If I broke your baby, I promise I'll make you a new one!' (Episode 16: 'Dog Children'). They too are exerting dominant heteronormativity over their surrogate, as they are adhering to the sameness of heterosexual norms. This reflects Lisa Duggan's concept of *homonormativity*, which is 'a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption' (Duggan, 2003: 50). Although the surrogate, Goldie, in *The New Normal* is heterosexual, it can be argued that she is also positioned as deviant due to being an uneducated and unskilled single mother. Like Brenda in *Rules of Engagement,* she too is enabling what I call a *happy homonormativity* for the homosexual men, by providing them a child.

As has been discussed earlier in this chapter, gay men make up the majority of the representations of LGTBQ characters on primetime TV. Queer media scholars who have explored these representations have highlighted that relationships between men are reduced to moments of male bonding, a peck on the cheek, a passionless embrace (Aslinger 2013; Battles and Hilton-Morrow, 2010; Moritz, 1989, 1999; Lucas and Raley, 2006). This dilution of sexual intimacy is most prevalent within the sitcom, due to the genre's stricter boundaries, which are set in place to attract, and seek approval from, what has been described as the mainstream heterosexual gaze (Cavalcante, 2014, Dow, 1996, 2001). As American TV columnist Gail Shister expressed about the lack of same-sex sexual intimacy shown on popular TV shows: 'Sure, it's OK to be gay; it may even be OK to have kids. But it's not OK to have sex' (in Frutkin, 1995: 31). This reflects the homophobic notion that homosexual sexual acts should be kept in private, unseen, left to a shady existence (Foucault, 1998; McKee, 1996). It can be argued that this also illustrates what Foucault described as a shift in thought in the nineteenth century, that viewed homosexuality as an identity, rather than purely a

sexual act – and what emerged was a newer category of person, a species, which formed the divisive binary of heterosexual/homosexual (Foucault, 1998; Sedgwick, 2008). This therefore signals that heterosexual sex is situated as the desired norm, erasing same-sex sexual presence, perpetuating a heteronormativity that asserts sameness to an idealised white, middle class, heterosexual norm (Duggan 2003; Richardson 2005; Warner 1999). Heteronormativity saturates every aspect of the social and political sphere, from law and commerce to education and the media. This signifies what is deemed as correct behaviour, which is at the core of the institution of heterosexuality (Ahmed, 2004; Berlant and Warner, 1998; Rich, 1980).

Although Rich's proposition of compulsory heterosexuality centred on men's power over women and the rendering invisible of the lesbian possibility, her proposal that the idealisation of heterosexuality acts as a societal force for social acceptance can be applied here. What has been identified in previous analyses of the gay male couples in both *The New Normal* and *Modern Family*, is that as gay parents they are only permitted to be like the straights as far as being positioned in a marriage-type relationship, as good neighbours, with social worth and economic status (Cavalcante, 2014; Kunze, 2013), which as Jackie (mixed mothers focus group) observed, 'makes them more acceptable'. These images of the 'normal' homosexuals portrayed in these texts typifies the beliefs of the far right gay movement that emerged in the United States post-Stonewall riots (1969), and in the trail of homophile organisation the Mattachine Society, whose primary manifesto was that integration into dominant heterosexual society was key to achieve normative status.

This turning point in far right gay activism was led by white, educated, economically mobile gay men whose desire for normativity was dependent on regarding sexuality and the sex act as irrelevant in the fight for equal rights (Warner, 1999). This echoes Foucault's observation of the shift from the genital sexual act to identity. However, sameness and equality are not evident here. Unlike the gay couple, the straight couples in *Modern Family* are often shown in intimate sexual situations. It took a Facebook campaign by the show's gay fans for the producers to include a kiss between the two men (Hilton-Morrow, 2015).

Even then, when it did happen, the kiss was a peck on the mouth. Over two decades earlier, in 1989, hit American TV drama *thirtysomething* (Season 3, Episode 6: 'Strangers') showed two men in bed together, after sex. As Frank Bruni (1994) recalls: 'Protests from viewers and sponsors made ABC pull the episode from syndication, never to be broadcast again' (1994: 328). As argued by Alan McKee (1996): 'Gay people have been visible as people, but not as gay. Homosexuality is proclaimed rather than performed; tongues are used to make passionate speeches, but not to deep-kiss gay lovers' (1996: 58).

This fear of showing intimacy between gay couples emerges in the narrative of *The New Normal.* David and Bryan's sexually intimate relations are regulated, despite the pair being situated within a monogamous relationship, with a desire for marriage and children – normal homosexuals who are 'the good and acceptable face of the movement' (Warner, 1999: 66). However, how the kiss presents itself in various scenes throughout the series is symbolic of a new form of acceptable homosexuality, which has been situated within the heteronormative family framework. The kiss, as argued by McKee, is powerful because as it is a signifier embedded with multiple connotations. In *The New Normal*, however, I argue the kiss signals a form of good homosexuality, one that is non-sexual and located within the narrative of family.

There are a number of key scenes that illustrate this. In the first bedroom scene, Bryan and David are dressed, sitting on their bed, picking out their egg donor and discussing who, out of the two of them, should provide the sperm. Soon after, they are pictured lying on the bed in an intimate embrace. They kiss, briefly (Episode 1: 'Pilot'). The second kiss takes place in the nightclub where they first met, which they revisit in an attempt to capture their lost youth. The kiss arises during a nostalgic discussion of love, family, and growing old together (Episode 2: 'Sofa's Choice'). The third kiss appears in a baby clothes section at a shopping mall (Episode 3: 'Baby Clothes'), and the fourth when David recounts the moment when he heard the baby's heartbeat for the first time: 'When we heard that heartbeat yesterday I don't think I've ever loved you more' (Episode 4: 'Obama Mama'). As McKee states: 'the kiss is a communicative act: it says something… it speaks to the people watching you kissing' (1996: 51).

In *The New Normal* the kiss is symbolic of romantic love, which is core to the heterosexual love plot, and which only emerges during sentimental scenes where the future child, embedded with hope and promise, is central. When David proposes to Bryan (Episode 6: 'Bryanzilla') he does so in front of the surrogate, with a 3D ultrasound scan of the fetus in utero. David says to Bryan, while down on one knee, which mimics heterosexual ritual, 'I want our baby to be able to say: "I was there when my daddies got engaged"' This scene illustrates how the technology of fetal imaging has created a visual culture of pregnancy that views the female body and fetus as conceptually separate, which, as has been argued, reduces the female body to a container, and positions the fetus as a subject, before birth. Moments before the proposal, the surrogate Goldie says: 'Just pretend I'm not here'. This further marks her as merely the container, which, as argued by a wide range of feminists, renders her invisible.

This kiss, therefore, is not only the signifier of true love, but is representative of an unthreatening and sentimental love that is deeply rooted in the narrative of family[10]. Berlant (2008) proposes that the sentimentality of the love plot is a project of femininity, which aims to centre women in the ideology of normative love. This she proposes is structured through the story of family and romance, which the woman must be emotionally invested in, as Carla (mixed mothers focus group) stated, 'buying into' the ideal, a fantasy that one must be invested in to be happy, to be included, to be valued.

Extending Berlant's argument, it can be proposed that the romance narrative between the two gay men in *The New Normal*, in the context of building a family though surrogacy, is an example of how, as she says, popular culture has reinvented the love plot as a figure of optimism which is transformative. On the premise that one is wholly invested, normative love then has the power to 'rescue you from your life and give you a new one' (2008: 171). In *The New Normal,* normative love has been positioned as a central genre device, mobilised in ways that not only mould an acceptable version of homosexuality, but in doing so also rescues the homosexual from the shame of deviant sexual practice, promiscuity,

non-procreation – and realigns them on the straight path through conforming to heteronormative ideals. However, what has been identified, in the analysis of *The New Normal* in particular, is a shift from what has been described in shows such as *Will & Grace* as a twist on the delayed consummation plotline, which is where the interaction of characters is driven by sexual tension and the search for a romantic relationship. Where classical Hollywood narratives once centred on the male lead's desire to consummate the relationship and the female lead's desire to be wed, which was later adopted by the sitcom, the relationship between Will and Grace provided a new twist, separating possible lovers through sexual orientation (Battles and Hilton-Morrow, 2010; Scodari, 1995). I argue that this trope has been reinvented further, now replaced with what I call a delayed conception plotline, where the search for a sexual partner, or romantic love, has been replaced with the search for a child, through any means possible, even before the relationship is legitimated by marriage. In the final episode in *The New Normal*, the wedding between David and Bryan is played as a joke. As David says to a friend who showers him with confetti as he walks down the aisle: 'I'm pretty sure that's for after'. This both apes and mocks the heterosexual wedding ritual. However, the marriage is also blocked. Before the two men say, 'I do', Goldie's waters break which stops the marriage.

Despite challenging the nuclear family model through an attempt to destabilise heterosexual privilege through the construction of family built on not just same-sex parenting, but the alternative reproductive practice of surrogacy, the gay characters in *The New Normal* are not convincingly progressive. This is because they present a version of homosexuality that does not rupture the heteronormative fabric of mainstream society, but does the work to maintain it. Even so, it must be acknowledged that the portrayal of Bryan and David are contributing to a new archive of images that McKee noted as absent two decades ago. In 1996, McKee believed that society found images of men kissing men on TV screens unthinkable, and even more unthinkable was that such kissing was able to signify 'the romance, the closeness, the dreams of relationships, which structure heterosexual television narrative' (1996: 70). As self-identified bisexual Jackie (mixed mothers focus group) stated, in response to the representations of homosexuality and lesbianism in both *The New Normal* and *Rules of Engagement*:

'I think it's better than not showing anything, I think things have come a long way, but it does still feel very stereotyped to me… this isn't real life for everybody'. Jackie's sentiments echo those by 1950s lesbian fiction writer Vin Packer who was forced by her publishing company to change the happy ending (the two women ending up together, romantically) of her lesbian pulp fiction novel *Spring Fire* (1952) as the publisher's believed it would promote lesbianism. In the re-write, one of the lesbian characters has a nervous breakdown and ends up in a mental institution, and the pair break up – a common lesbian trope where the characters either 'turn straight, die, or go mad' (Ahmed, 2010: 89). Packer agreed to the change to enable 'a new book about us' (in Ahmed, 2010: 89). It seems remarkable that this 'better than nothing' response to media texts is still being expressed 65 years later.

Although heterosexual privilege has not been wholly challenged, and familial norms have been reproduced by adhering to the discourse of romantic love, at least these representations show advancement, with fewer portrayals of homosexual men as criminals, child molesters and predators (McKee, 1996; Lucas and Raley, 2006). However, this new representation of homosexuals and lesbians is still precarious. As the research has revealed, to be acceptable, one has to be a certain type of gay man, situated within a monogamous couple dyad, adhering to conventional feminine/masculine gender roles – or, in the lesbian's case, a barely butch who is placed under surveillance for heterosexual reproduction. As highlighted by Dustin Bradley Goltz (2011), inclusionary practices, such as stretching heteronormativity to include gays, can also be exclusionary. I argue representations such as these exclude and make deviant any other forms of homosexuality, whose aspirations, or economic or racial status, do not permit them into the normative sphere – rent boys, drag queens, hookers, nelly boys, bulldaggers and welfare queens (Cohen, 1997; Warner, 1999). However, the category of heterosexuality must also be recognised in relation to being situated outside of dominant norms, as like homosexuality, heterosexuality is not monolithic. Heteronormative ideals can also alienate and make deviant heterosexuals who can't, won't, or who are unable to, assimilate, which positions them as non-normative, at the peripheries of normative culture. This perspective will provide the basis for the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Infertile bodies: Rescuing infertility through the heterosexual love plot

The previous chapter explored how the homosexual and lesbian characters in *The New Normal* and *Rules of Engagement* transform into a normative position through the employment of 'happiness scripts' (Ahmed, 2010: 91) which I have argued, through characterisation, narrative, acting and the script, embody conventions of heteronormativity. In this chapter, the concept of *queer straightness* that was employed previously to explore the representation of homosexual and lesbian characters will be transposed into a *straight queerness*. This concept has been constructed to describe the straightening (Ahmed, 2010) of heterosexual-identified characters that I argue are situated in a non-normative position by being infertile.

Both *queer straightness* and *straight queerness* are concepts that have been formed to aid the exploration of normalising techniques, which I propose emerge in the narrative structures under analysis, in relation to creating a family through surrogacy. This will be achieved in this chapter by examining how the lead infertile heterosexual female characters in *Baby Mama* and *Rules of Engagement* are depicted as being non-normative. I propose that both characters are, through the straightening narrative device of heteronormative love and family, *rescued* from their infertility, *and* any possibility of being culturally recognised as a lesbian subject. Both characters' infertility is cured – they discover they are pregnant naturally when their surrogates go into labour. I argue that this transformation from infertile to fertile repositions them within the normative.

Straight queerness was introduced in brief by Alexander Doty (1993) in his discussion of the use of the term *queer* to 'describe a wide range of impulses and cultural expressions' (1993: 2). This diversification of the term from its original identification within queer politics also supports Butler's (1993) call for the term to be 'redeployed, twisted, queered from prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes' (1993: 228). Although Butler claimed that 'exposing the naturalized status of heterosexuality' (1993: 231) wouldn't necessarily lead to its subversion, to view queer as resistance to the normative, by being positioned as non-normative, best explains its mobilisation in this

chapter. As Edelman (2004) states, queer is a verb term that can describe anyone 'failing to comply' (2004: 17). Therefore, queer as a tool to explore the non-normative will be employed as the primary analytical lens in this chapter.

Cohen's (1997) call for a coalition politics also plays a central role in these discussions as she argues that queer politics has not destabilised categories of identity, but has in fact reinforced them through strengthening the divisions between heterosexuality 'and everything "queer"' (1997: 438). Cohen identified that the impact of power on the identity of marginalised subjects on both sides of the hetero/homo binary has been left unexamined. She also claims that New York LGBTQ organisation Queer Nation's activism against heterosexual oppression during the 1990s failed to acknowledge that non-normative practices of family and reproduction *also* exist within those who are labelled heterosexual. Cohen proposed that heterosexuality should not be viewed as monolithic, and that heterosexual subjects are also regulated and excluded by dominant heterosexual culture[1], who, like lesbians and gays, can also be viewed as gender deviants by failing to conform to traditional gender roles (Calhoun, 2000).

Therefore, this chapter aims to introduce new ways of thinking about what is positioned as non-normative in popular culture, which includes the 'normative category of heterosexuality' (Cohen, 1993: 439). Explaining how and why the construction of infertile bodies in these texts, despite being white and heterosexual, are positioned in opposition to norms will accomplish this. However, as will be explored, the prospect of occupying this oppositional space for transformational potential, to enable the lesbian, the uncoupled, and the infertile to emerge in the narrative, is shut down. This is demonstrated through the narrative facilitating the transition of infertile to fertile – and in *Baby Mama*, the protagonist's narrative journey from single to coupled. Therefore, I have extended Doty's term of *straight queerness* to describe the effect of these normalising devices, and to show how the construction of infertility in these texts share an affinity with the non-normative (the queer) by being positioned at the margins of social norms.

The concept of *straight queerness* will be developed primarily through the engagement of queer and feminist work on compulsory heterosexuality, lesbian existence, emotions and affect. This body of work also underpins a queer reading of *Baby Mama,* led by a 'masculinization of motherhood' (Lam, 2015: 33), a key theme that has emerged as noteworthy in the audience data. This reading has been implemented to further illustrate how the infertile characters have been positioned as non-normative.

By exploring this notion of masculinisation, I argue that the relationship between the single infertile character Kate, and her surrogate, Angie, can be read as sexually ambiguous. This reading demonstrates how the love plot performs as a straightening device, as a form of rescue, not just from infertility but also the possibility of lesbian sexuality, the narrative closure returning the female characters to their proper place – the home, motherhood and family (Kuhn, 1982; Moritz, 1989, 1999; Walker, 1982). This approach also reflects an openness to possible erotic nuances in texts which helps to explore a heterosexism that exists at the core of contemporary television (Gantz in Thomas, 2000; Sedgwick, 2008).

This chapter unfolds over three sections. *You're not a real woman* aims to explain this affinity of heterosexual infertility and lesbian subject position at the margins of dominant social norms. *There's nothing queer about it* offers a queer reading of the texts in relation to gender norms and compulsory heterosexuality, and *Someday my prince will come* will illustrate how the heterosexual love plot rescues the infertile characters by making them fertile.

You're not a real woman

> You're not a real woman until you've had a child.

> (Laura, non-mothers focus group, 2015)

Characters Audrey in *Rules of Engagement* and Kate in *Baby Mama* are both infertile. Due to the failure of IVF, they turn to surrogacy. Audrey is married, and Kate is single. Both are depicted as straight. Kate employs a surrogacy agency and uses donor sperm. Audrey's husband's friend, Brenda, who is a lesbian, offers her surrogacy services. Audrey and Kate are white, successful middle-class women in their late thirties. Audrey is a magazine editor, Kate a VP of a grocery chain. Both narratives infer that they have put their careers ahead of starting a family. *Baby Mama's* opening scene shows Kate in her workplace. Her voice-over discloses: 'when people got pregnant, I got promotions'. This reflects the common character trope of the childless career woman, which also emerges in film *Baby Boom* (1987) and in TV series *Ally McBeal* (1997-2002). As explored in Chapter 4, this hunger for a child (Davitz, 1984; Hewlett, 2002) has struck a growing number of professional women who have the funds to explore fertility options such as IVF and surrogacy, who are now being reflected in popular media characterisations, such as the infertile characters in *Baby Mama* and *Rules of Engagement*. Due to being infertile I propose they are depicted as unhappy failures – positioned as non-normative. Such feelings have been identified as common amongst women whose treatment has been unsuccessful, a sense of failure which drives the discourse of desperateness which is amplified in media narratives (Franklin, 1990; Throsby, 2004).

The baby shower scene in *Rules of Engagement* emerged as significant in the audience data, and will provide the focus for this section. This scene shows Audrey as being isolated from what is culturally marked as a heterosexual ritual/life milestone for women (Griffin, 2009). When she stands to address her guests, the surrogate Brenda announces that the baby is kicking. Audrey's friends turn their backs on her and face the surrogate, an action that indicates a public shaming of the isolated subject, through a bodily level, who is left feeling out-of-

place and insecure in one's surroundings (Gorton, 2009; Probyn, 2005). Laura (non-mothers focus group,) detected the bodily tension between Audrey and Brenda, and identified Audrey's positioning as non-normative:

> There was only one thing that struck me that had some truth in it, and it was at the shower thing, when she [Audrey] tries to stand up to talk and Brenda goes, "It's kicking!" and everyone's attention turns to her, and you think, shit, it must feel really weird, as you know… to not be able to have… she must feel so jealous, but you have to contain jealousy and it's like, not healthy is it, it's storing up all that emotion, you gotta let it out, she probably wanted to scream, and say "but you're all here for me! It's my baby!"

> (Laura, non-mothers focus group, 2015)

What Laura is demonstrating through her response to the characterisation and the narrative in this scene is what cognitive film theorist M. Smith (1995) calls 'emotional stimulation' (1995: 97). This is when the viewer observes the behaviour of a fictional person, and projects themselves into the scene and their situation, which enables the viewer to guess the emotions the character is experiencing. As Laura described: 'she must feel so jealous', 'it must feel really weird', 'she probably wanted to scream!' Gorton (2009) explains: 'In the cognitive model, spectators relate to the emotions the characters experience rather than identify with the characters themselves' (2009: 78). Laura did not see an image of herself reflected back through the character of Audrey, but was, instead, able to empathise with, or relate to, the *emotions* the character is shown as experiencing, constructed through scene sequencing, composition and acting, by the sitcom writers and directors (Carroll, 2005). Drawing on Greg Smith (1999), this baby shower scene which Laura described had 'struck' her, illustrates emotion markers that have been engineered in the text – textual cues that aim to elicit 'brief moments of emotion' (1999: 118, in Gorton, 2009: 80). It was up to Laura, as the viewer, to accept or decline the text's invitation to feel (Geraghty, 2003). She accepted.

In this baby shower scene, and in relation to how emotions are constructed in the texts, I argue, drawing on Ahmed (2010), that the fetus is being depicted as an

object embedded with affective value, promising happiness before it's been experienced. 'Everyone's attention' turns to the surrogate and the kicking fetus, which illustrates how, as a 'happy object', the fetus is encircled by feelings of happiness by being 'what good feeling is directed toward' (2010: 25). As has been identified through this thesis, the goal in the narratives is to get the baby and become a mother, through the intervention of the disciplinary practice of reproductive technologies (Farquhar, 1996; Sawicki, 1992). As Ahmed argues, objects are not just physical or material, such as the fetus in this context, but 'anything that we imagine might lead us to happiness, including objects in the sense of values, practice, styles, as well as aspirations' (2010: 29). Within this discussion this describes the aspiration of motherhood, and the creation of normative family. By recognising that Audrey was 'storing up' negative emotions in response to the happy feelings directed to the surrogate's fertile body, Laura points to how shame is employed to differentiate the two bodies, which underscores the polarised non-normative/normative positions. What is also evident in this scene is how divisions have been formed between the women through tension – fertility, infertility – at an event that can be painful for infertile women. As Sandelowski (1990) has highlighted through her work exploring fictional narratives with infertile respondents, the baby shower is a ritual that stir difficult feelings of exclusion and hostility. Sandelowski recalls from her discussion sessions with her participants that they 'described similar feelings of coercion in maintaining a façade of cheer for other women's pregnancies and guilt over the feelings of rage and envy that lay behind the façade' (1990: 36). Although in this narrative the surrogate Brenda is carrying Audrey's genetic child, the emotional structure of the scene is similar. What is interesting about this scene is that the heterosexual character is positioned as non-normative, and the lesbian as normative. This twist, however, is temporary – the disruption stage in the narrative. The resolution/narrative closure is Audrey falling pregnant naturally, and the lesbian surrogate happily relinquishing the child. This conforms to heterosexist notions of normative motherhood, to be discussed further on.

Audrey is isolated through what can be read as a public shaming of her inability to carry her own fetus, witnessed by the guests at her baby shower in the text *and* by the individual viewer (Ahmed, 2010; Probyn, 2005; Sedgwick, 2003). Her body

language displays an affective embodiment of shame – her eyes look down, she holds her arms close to her body – she looks uncomfortable and uncertain (Ahmed, 2010; Sedgwick, 2003). As seen in Elspeth Probyn's (2005) observations on TV and shame, I propose that the emotion constructed in this scene articulates a shared shameful moment, aired for literally 'all to see' (2005: 86, in Gorton, 2009: 61). As Skeggs (1997) identifies: 'Shame involves recognition of the judgment of others and awareness of social norms: one measures oneself against the standards established by others' (1997: 122). Paula's (non-mothers focus group) response to this scene reflects this: 'It's that part of motherhood that they miss out on, getting all the attention, it must be really difficult'. As viewers in this moment, both Laura and Paula were able to share this shameful moment as they were able to project themselves into the scene and empathise with the character's emotions. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the emotional engagement between viewer and the screen (Gorton, 2008, 2009). As Probyn (2005) argues, it's not just what affect *is*, it's also what it *does*. In this scene, shame alienates Audrey in the space, and positions her on the outside of social norms. She is depicted – and read by the participants – as unhappy in contrast to the happy surrogate. This is a technique that employs the happy/sad binary that steers the sitcom formula, which also illustrates its convention of mocking vulnerable subjects (Mills, 2009).

While Audrey can been read as *feeling* shame through being positioned as non-normative, it can also be argued that she is *being* shamed through these genre devices. Audrey has become 'out of line with an affective community' (Ahmed, 2010: 41) by disturbing normative heterosexual ritual. Therefore, it can be proposed that happy heterosexuality is bound up in the ability to reproduce. This has been identified as a dominant theme in the audience data, as Laura (non-mothers focus group) stated, somewhat annoyed by how Audrey is shown in this scene: 'You're not a real woman until you've had a child'. Paula (non-mothers focus group) and Carla (mixed mothers focus group) both identified the categorisation of 'woman' and value in relation to motherhood:

> Paula: There's this kind of underlying thing that in order to be a woman, you have to have a baby.

Carla: It creates so much unhappiness actually, because what it says is you're not really trying, and you're not valid if you don't have a child.

(Paula and Carla, non-mothers, and mixed mothers focus groups, 2015)

As Barbara Brook (1999) highlights: 'In numerous discourses, to be a "real woman" is to be "fertile"' (1999: 46). This belief has been widely contested by feminists as it posits the ideology that to be a real woman one has to be able to conceive, naturally. For example, Rich (1980) argues that throughout history, childless women – alongside single women and widows – are seen as deviants, as they aren't assuming the natural role expected of women, as wives, mothers, caretakers. Psychologists Pamela Ashurst and Zaida Hall (1989) have identified anxieties in relation to feelings of incompleteness and motherhood, in their work with distressed women, arguing that: 'When a woman has a child, she confirms for herself and others that she is a complete woman, fertile and capable of the biological task of creating and perpetuating life' (1989: 97). This suggests that to be infertile (or childless by choice) is unnatural, and as Laura, Paula and Carla have all recognised in their interpretation of the texts, is to be *less* of a woman. This discourse echoes the essentialist hierarchical Cartesian binary of nature/culture, which aligns women's bodies with reproduction. Lewin (1993) argues in her discussion of the range of feminist debates on motherhood and women's oppression: 'All of these perspectives tend to conflate motherhood and womanhood, as though they were interchangeable, mutually defining, as though the status of woman could be entirely understood with respect to the meaning of motherhood' (1993: 5). Rachel's (non-mothers focus group) reading of how the infertile characters were situated in the surrogacy narrative was enlightening:

I think that's to do with a societal pressure, like, back to, again, you're not a real woman until you've had a child, so you're somehow broken. You've tried everything, but you're still broken. The surrogacy thing is just a stepping-stone to you becoming a real woman. And if it works out [natural pregnancy] then surrogacy's forgotten. At the end, you've got a baby, that's the main thing. I think that's what all those shows are about.

By deciphering the dominant encoding in the texts as implying that an infertile woman isn't viewed as 'a real woman until you've had a child', this echoes Lam's (2015) description of a 'reproductive misfit' (2015: 112). Lam claims this term applies to women who, due to their infertility, are viewed by dominant culture as oddities, who, if they wish to become mothers, have to utilise reproductive technologies to transcend the limitations of their bodies. This term was extended from disability theorist Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's (2011) concept of *misfitting*, which she employed to describe how vulnerable subjects struggle to interact with their environment on a daily basis, the 'dynamic encounter between flesh and world' which produces 'a coherent narrative of how inferiority is assigned and literal marginalization takes place' (2011: 592, 601). Misfitting explains whether such encounters are either harmonious, or disjunctive. To fit or misfit is not fixed, but changes over time, in relation to changes of body and environment, and barriers which are created through social attitudes and identity formations (Alcoff, 2006; Garland-Thomson, 2011; Lam, 2015).

Further to the concept of misfitting – 'broken' due to infertility – what can also be identified in Rachel's response is a description of the desire for the object of the genetic child, as has been discussed in Chapter 4, which can be both enabling and disabling. Enabling in the sense that it brings the 'woman' closer to the object that signifies the promise of happiness, driving her forward, and disabling in the sense that it gets in the way of happiness, by being cruelly optimistic (Ahmed, 2010; Berlant, 2011). Rachel's comment: 'If it works out then surrogacy is forgotten' implies that the representation of a baby born through surrogacy is not the ideal outcome. As also commented on by Charlie (non-mothers focus group): 'It [the natural pregnancy] makes surrogacy seem less important'. This suggests that the value of a *real* baby born through *real* pregnancy overshadows the value of a baby born through surrogacy. As it emerges in the texts' narratives in focus here, Kate in *Baby Mama* falls pregnant naturally after discovering the surrogate isn't carrying her genetic child. Audrey in *Rules of Engagement* is delighted to acquire her genetic child delivered by her surrogate, but the story concludes with her falling pregnant naturally – the desired happy ending. Charlie accurately

described this moment: 'At the end it's like ta dah! You can get pregnant anyway'. The genetic connection, therefore, is not enough, which points to the belief that natural motherhood is a woman's ultimate fulfilment, as 'the core of normal, healthy feminine identity' (Gillespie, 2003: 225). Unless they become natural mothers, they misfit – they *fail.*

Much like the 'woman' category in relation to motherhood, it has been proposed through a range of feminist and queer literature that the lesbian has also been viewed as not a *real* woman through the lens of dominant culture, but is, instead, the figure of the *failure* to become a real woman. As Wittig (1992) argued:

> For what makes a woman is a specific social relation to a man, a relation we have previously called servitude, a relation which implies personal and physical obligation as well as economic obligation ("forced residence", domestic corvée, conjugal duties, unlimited production of children, etc.), a relation lesbians escape by refusing to become or stay heterosexual (1992: 20).

Like the infertile reproductive misfit, the lesbian also misfits – often portrayed as non-normative by not adhering to conventional feminine ideals, as discussed in the previous chapter. As identified by participants Carrie, Jackie, Carla, Sonja and Tara (non-mothers and mixed mothers focus groups), the lesbian – in this discussion, Brenda in *Rules of Engagement*, and the butch couple with a baby in *The New Normal* – are depicted as either overtly masculine, or with unemotional masculine traits which are transformed through pregnancy.

The lesbian has been marginalised through what Rich (1980) has described as a compulsory heterosexuality, a force disseminated through cultural propaganda (magazines, film, literature) that socialises women into the institution of marriage. Rich argues that *only* under this institution of heterosexuality are men and women recognised as *real.* Therefore, I propose that the representations of the infertile characters in these texts share similarities with the lesbian subject position, due to how they have been situated on the outside of social norms. Furthermore, I suggest that this marginalisation also highlights an oppression – and failure – of

women (and men) of *other* categories. As Berlant (2008) identifies, failure is associated with gays, lesbians, and those who are, 'unhinged or unhitched, who live outside normative loops of property and reproduction' (2008: 172). Therefore, it is possible to propose that the cultural articulations of infertility in these texts are constructed through the notion that like the lesbian, the infertile woman also disrupts the concept of the normative category 'woman' at its very core, and is also excluded.

It is worth mentioning at this juncture, as seen in the work of Cheshire Calhoun (2000), and which has been discussed in Chapter 5 in relation to Brenda's pregnancy in *Rules of Engagement*, that lesbianism and motherhood are seen as incompatible, culturally. Calhoun proposes that lesbian motherhood closets the lesbian subject through the social assumption that motherhood is located purely in the domain of heterosexuality. However, it is important to emphasise at this point that single infertile heterosexual women, as illustrated by Kate in *Baby Mama*, share the *other* category of the reproductive technologies user outside of the white, married, heterosexual couple who dominate popular narratives of infertility. According to Farquhar (1996), these 'Other Mothers' (1996: 73) also include lesbians, those with disabilities, homosexuals, and women of colour.

Calhoun argues motherhood masks the subject's lesbianism, as a form of refuge. Therefore, by deflecting the lesbian charge through motherhood, the lesbian subject is brought closer to the category 'woman', and becomes more accepted, tolerated, by heterosexual communities (Calhoun, 2000; Lewin, 1993; Polikoff, 1990). Hence, it has been argued within lesbian activism that refusing to have children, or to give up custody of children during a divorce/separation, is a political manoeuvre by which to refuse participation in compulsory motherhood, the aim being to destabilise the myth of women's fulfilment through motherhood (Burke, 1993; Calhoun 2000; Klepfisz, 1999; Lehr, 1999). However, in contrast, some lesbian feminists promote lesbian motherhood, for equality and inclusion, as a form of resistance to the nuclear family kinship model, to allow the natural desires traditionally permitted to heterosexual women (Benkov, 1994; Lehr, 1999). Arguably this is a result of lesbian motherhood being depicted as non-normative, lesbians seen as unfit for motherhood (Allison, 1996; Sourbut, 1996; Throsby,

2004). The debate on lesbian motherhood is complex, and divisive within lesbian feminism, and has a more nuanced treatment elsewhere (Calhoun, 2000; Card, 1995; Griffin and Mulholland, 1997; Lewin, 1993; Lehr, 1999; Park, 2014; Weston, 1991).

Halberstam (2011) identifies in her work on queerness and failure that there are only winners or losers within the conventions of dominant heterosexual society – homosexuals and lesbians only becoming winners by assimilating into dominant culture through obedience to hetero-norms, such as marriage and family. In her work on the narratives of IVF in news stories, Franklin (1990) has also recognised the winner/loser binary. As also explored in Chapter 4, Franklin argues these stories are constructed around those who get the baby through IVF, and those who don't. Franklin identified in her analysis that the infertile couple stories only find a resolution within the norms of heterosexual marriage. Therefore, the transition from loser to winner (infertile to fertile) through the final equilibrium of natural pregnancy that is constructed in the narratives of both texts is key to this analysis. I argue that this is enabled through the love plot and the formation of the monogamous couple dyad, to be explored further on.

It can be suggested therefore, that the representations of infertile characters are creating a clear divide between 'those who breed and those who do not' (O'Brien, 1983: 193), which further demonstrates how voids between women are shaped through culture (Sandelowski, 1990). As will be expanded upon, Sedgwick (1990) has argued that Western culture has been structured around the heterosexual/homosexual definition, which is universalising and minoritising, which she proposes has shaped cultural discourse through the imbalance of power. It is also the rigidity of this binary that implies what is inside or outside power structures, what is seen as natural and unnatural (Fuss, 2013). The fertile/infertile binary performs similarly, to both universalise and minoritise, fertility viewed as natural, and infertility as unnatural[2] – much like the deviancy of same-sex desire and coupling and the possibility of building families outside of the heteronormative family unit.

Furthermore, despite the feminisation of the lesbian character in *Rules of Engagement* through pregnancy, as discussed in the previous chapter, and the narrative conclusions of natural pregnancy in both *Rules of Engagement* and *Baby Mama,* the portrayal of the infertile character's relationship to the surrogacy process demonstrates how reproductive technologies have 'altered human's understanding to nature, with paradoxical consequences, especially for women (Lam, 2015: 118). Although temporary in both cases, constructed as the disruptions in the narratives, it can be argued that these articulations destabilise the nature/culture binary by removing the intended mothers from the gestational process.

There's nothing queer about it

They [the intended mothers] must feel the way a father must feel.

(Paula, non-mothers focus group, 2015)

Paula's response to how the intended mothers are portrayed across all of the texts under analysis resonates with Lam's (2015) discussion of how intended mothers are removed from the reproductive process through the intervention of reproductive technologies, such as egg donation and surrogacy, which, as she claims, allows women to feel like fathers. Lam describes this as 'a new model of birth appropriation by modelling women's material processes of reproduction on men's' which she argues 'most clearly represents the new masculinization of motherhood' (2015: 33). I propose that this masculinisation drives the surrogacy narrative in *Baby Mama,* and is central to the construction of the protagonist Kate, who is infertile and wishes to acquire a child through the services of a surrogate. As a result of this, a queer reading will expose what I believe to be deeply embedded heterosexist and misogynist ideologies that are ingrained in the text.

As has been suggested, compulsory heterosexuality is articulated through the narratives and scripts that shape our lives. As Ahmed (2004) outlines in her work on queer feelings, a dominant script is that heterosexual coupling is the ideal, and

to deviate from this formation would result in unhappiness. The opening scenes in *Baby Mama* inform us that the character of Kate is unmarried due to pursuing a career. As she reveals in the voiceover: 'I made a choice'. Kate later explains that one day her desire for children just suddenly awoke within her: 'I just woke up one day and I felt like every single baby in the street was staring at me'. This reflects the medical and cultural discourse that proposes that voluntary childlessness is just a temporary phase, which will eventually be grown out of (Bartlett, 1994 Campbell, 1999; Engwall and Peterson, 2013). Drawing on Oliver's (2012) work on pregnancy and Hollywood film, I propose this articulates social anxieties of the career woman in relation to motherhood, the primary fear being that the woman will choose a career instead of a baby.

Kate goes on numerous first dates searching for a partner, and after no success she turns to adoption, which fails. She then tries sperm donation and IVF, which is unfruitful. Like Audrey in *Rules of Engagement*, Kate is depicted as unhappy. She wants a child, and a partner, and is distraught by not being able to get either. This reflects Ahmed's (2010) work on unhappy queers, where she proposes 'such unhappiness is directed toward those who are not living to the right ideas' (2010: 95-6). As Kate's mother says to her during a family meal: 'Not everyone is as tolerant of your alternative lifestyle as we are'. Kate is depicted as being incomplete as a woman, as she is not only infertile, but also single. If, as Ahmed proposes, the horizon is shaped by the heteronormative nuclear family, then it can be suggested that the infertile characters in both *Baby Mama* and *Rules of Engagement* are not being permitted to be anything *but* unhappy until they acquire their genetic child, which, in these representations, is only achievable through heterosexual coupledom.

To *not* become a natural mother is to be not whole/real, which, as I have suggested, shares an affinity with the lesbian subject position through the failure to be a real woman. Therefore, infertile characters, such as Kate, *have* to be positioned as lacking, until they are re-positioned in approximation to the happy objects of heterosexual romance and the genetic child; objects that 'accumulate affective value as signs of the good life' as they circulate (Ahmed, 2010: 38). I propose that if childless characters were positioned as happy, they would be

viewed as what Ahmed describes as a 'feminist killjoy' (2010: 25) who causes a disturbance by *choosing* to move away from the happy objects, finding them unhappy. The lesbian surrogate, Brenda, in *Rules of Engagement*, can be described in this way. As discussed in Chapter 5, Brenda became unhappy by being positioned in the proximity of social norms, such as motherhood and family. During a discussion of pregnancy with the younger women (pre-mothers focus group) after the viewing of the texts, Rhian shared a similar stance by declaring she didn't want, or like, children. The room went silent, and her peers gasped and giggled in shock.

> Rhian: I knew I was going to get that reaction.

> Lulu: Was that difficult to admit?

> Rhian: Well, I always feel that people are going to attack me, so I don't like saying it to people.

> (Lulu and Rhian, pre-mothers focus group, 2015)

This moment illustrates what has been described as the contagion of affect (Gibbs, 2001) within atmospheres, where 'bodies can catch feelings as easily as catch fire: affect leaps from one body to another, evoking tenderness, inciting shame, igniting rage, exciting fear' (in Gorton, 2009: 60). In this moment, Rhian's peers caught the feeling of disgust, which altered the room's atmosphere to one of discomfort. However, this transmission of affect didn't last. After a few moments, Candice quietly explained that their reaction wasn't an attack, and admitted that she had friends who had shared similar feelings. What is evident here is what psychologist and affect theory forerunner Silvan Tomkins (1992) described as the impact of humiliation theory, where the subject in a public space becomes paranoid to negative affect (such as disgust) – anticipating reactions before they happen. As Rhian expressed after the room's atmosphere quickly altered: 'I knew I was going to get that reaction'. Through the negative reaction to her disclosure, Rhian exposes what she infers is her failure to conform to the feminine ideal of being a mother, or more of *wanting* to be a mother which infers she is 'failing to

comply' (Edelman, 2004: 17) to hetero-norms. This illustrates how childless women are viewed, with 'doubt, suspicion and even disgust' (Engwall and Peterson, 2013: 377). This response was evident in the reaction of her peers, even if for just a few moments.

Although Kate in *Baby Mama wants* to be a mother, she is still positioned as non-normative. After a medical examination, Kate's doctor informs her that she has a 'one in a million chance' of getting pregnant. This characterisation and narrative structure reflects Franklin's (1990) claim that in the discourses of infertility in news stories, the medical expert is constructed as key in the movement in the narrative from conflict to resolution, as the only hope. Franklin also identifies how this resolution only emerges in the context of heterosexual union, specifically marriage, which chimes with the proposition that what we think are new stories, such as the narratives of surrogacy in *Baby Mama* and *Rules of Engagement*, are in fact simply repeating conventional notions of family values and women's role in reproduction (Moritz, 1989, 1999; Oliver, 2012). As explained by Moritz: 'Like history, Hollywood has a way of repeating itself' (1999: 317).

As a single and infertile woman, Kate does not fit into the impressions of ideal coupledom carved out by compulsory heterosexuality (Ahmed, 2004; Rich, 1980). Kate's character could even be described as perverse as she is contesting heteronormative assumptions by opposing 'what is expected, or accepted' (Merck, 1993: 2, in Ahmed, 2004: 78). Therefore, it can be argued that the narrative is implying that a woman who is single *and* infertile is to be located even further outside dominant social norms, unfit to parent and unable to comply to norms (Edelman, 2004; Edge, 2014), which further expresses what I have named a *straight queerness.* Kate exhibits all the stereotypical traits of a professional woman going through baby hunger (Hewlett, 2002) – a woman who has put her relationships and motherhood on hold in the pursuit of a career, the result being dwindling fertility and a desperation to have a child, through any means possible.

Kate's character draws heavily on the spinster stereotype. The spinster was originally an honourable term used to describe women who spun yarn, its meaning changing in the 1600s to describe an unmarried woman. Its meaning then took on

a far more negative connotation in the mid-eighteenth century, when marriage became more idealised socially and culturally, in the reflection of 'the new reverence accorded to wives' (Coontz, 2005: 147). The spinster has been prominent in film and TV, commonly represented as single, overweight, frumpy and emotionally unstable (Mustard, 2000; Rosenthal, 2002). Key examples include contemporary version Bridget in *Bridget Jones Diary* (2001) (big knickers, failed romantic, socially awkward, emotionally unstable) and the more traditional stereotype Charlotte in *Now, Voyager* (1942) (drab, insecure, overweight). Despite being created almost 60 years apart, Bridget and Charlotte both transform for the sole purpose to win the love of a good man. Lesbian connotations have also been linked to the spinster stereotype (Jeffreys, 1986; McKenna, 2002). I argue that Kate, who is emblematic of the new spinster, is perpetuating this stereotype within a similar narrative.

For context, the narrative in *Baby Mama* unfolds like this: the goal (get the baby), equilibrium (engage the surrogate, surrogate gets pregnant), disruption (surrogate is pregnant with her own baby, not Kate's, the two women fall out), resolution (Kate falls in love, gets pregnant), final equilibrium (Kate and the surrogate are best friends again, both have their own babies). During the initial equilibrium stage, the surrogate, Angie, moves in with Kate after she splits from her boyfriend, who, it later transpires, is the father of her baby. The two women bond and Angie, in an attempt to feminise Kate before a girls' night out – the aim being to meet a man – dresses her in what is a culturally marked sexually alluring outfit: a clingy low cut short dress and high heels. Kate abandons her glasses and is heavily made up. This echoes the spinster transformation moment that reinforces traditional feminine ideals. Kate's romance with the love interest, Rob, sparks at this point when she shows up at his workplace, tipsy. The pair start dating, and she eventually wins the man and later becomes pregnant naturally – lucking out with her one chance out of a million. Kate transforms into a more feminine ideal, 'dressing for male titillation' (Rich, 1980: 639), her new appearance also adopting MILF-like (Mother I'd Like to Fuck) qualities, despite not being a mother. However, as Friedman (2014) has highlighted, the MILF's connection with motherhood is fairly recent, having initially inferred being sexually available, signalled through body-revealing clothes.

Therefore, it is possible to suggest that Kate had to transform into a MILF to become a viable 'maternal subject-in-waiting' (de Benedictis, in Littler and Winch, 2016: 9) to become eligible for fertility, the pre-mother to the *future fetus* she was searching for. Through this, Kate's newly transformed body has therefore been re-aligned within the normative; norms of femininity are repeated. This construction, or re-shaping, of conventional femininity, through transformation, thereby illustrates what is deemed appropriate desire between men and women (Ahmed, 2006; Bartky, 1991). She is no longer unfit for potential motherhood as she now qualifies as a good mother through complying to normative gender roles and aspirations of sexuality (Edge, 2014; Feasey, 2012, Siedel, 2013).

When the Kate and surrogate Angie cohabit, it can be proposed that Kate is taking the role as a 'social mother' (Peach, 1998). As Deborah Mustard (2000) explains in her work on spinsters in film, women who are not biological mothers often become social mothers 'when they fill a generic mothering role when called upon' (2000: 2). Mustard is referring to spinsters who take care of an elderly parent (*Marvin's Room*, 1996), or an unwanted child (*Baby Boom*, 1987). The surrogate character, Angie, is represented as simple, child-like – she sticks her gum underneath the antique coffee table and is unable to negotiate a baby-proofed apartment. Kate's character can be read a social mother by taking care of Angie like a child. However, in the context of the narrative of family, and the desire for a genetic child, this relationship can be read as sexually ambiguous, as is connoted in how the characters are portrayed and interact. I argue this reveals a heterosexist and misogynistic ideology. As highlighted by Doty (2000), one can't *assume* all film characters are straight unless clearly coded as homosexual or lesbian. Furthermore, through a queer reading, embedded power relations and presumed meanings can be examined and de-stabilised (Browne and Nash, 2010; Gantz, 2000). By being single and childless, Kate has fallen off the heterosexual line. Throughout the film, the connotation of a lesbian partnership is conveyed through comedy, in relation to building a family. This resonates with Doty's (1993) analyses of TV shows featuring women living together, which, despite the characters being marked heterosexual, 'hint at the possibility of lesbian lifestyles – at least as far as possible within a dominant ideology' (1993: 44).

Kate and Angie are not the first characters situated in an ambiguous relationship in a popular TV show. Doty (1993) explored the on-screen relationships of the central characters in *Laverne & Shirley* (1976-1983) and *Kate & Allie* (1984-1989). Doty claimed these characters invite a queer reading, often through cases of mistaken identity, or straight characters that 'jokingly play with suggestions of lesbian desire' (1993: 43), all of who, through eventual heterosexual coupling, are able to deflect the lesbian charge. The lesbian connotation in *Baby Mama* follows this. Two women share a domestic space, one of who is pregnant. The narrative infers that the worst thing that can happen in this text is not just to *not* get the baby, but for the women to form an authentic lesbian relationship, or perhaps even worse, end up childless and alone. However, this anxiety was not reflected in the audiences' position on same-sex relationships in relation to building families. As Fay (pre-mothers focus group) stated in response to the differing representations of same-sex coupling across the texts: 'Love is love, it doesn't matter if it's between two women or two men, or a man and a woman. It's natural. It's got nothing to do with gender'.

Following Doty (1993), Rich's concept of the 'lesbian continuum' (1980: 648) is useful to evoke, as the relationship between the two women is not distinctly steered by sexual desire. It appears to be more about the forging of relationships as a potential source of power, 'to embrace many more forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support' (Rich, 1980: 648-649). This notion of a lesbian continuum emerges at numerous points. These include Kate taking Angie into her home, and supporting her through the pregnancy (the pregnancy being fake at this point) after her break-up; Kate escorting Angie to the embryo transfer and the antenatal classes; and Kate encouraging Angie to go back to school and be independent, without a man. Angie urges Kate to have more fun in her life.

As noted by Winch (2011) in her analysis of women's films between 2008-2009, which she calls 'the girlfriend flick', she claims *Baby Mama* 'attempts to portray the difficulties women face, such as unreliable men, balancing a career, and a desire

for motherhood' (2011: 69). Winch further argues these films celebrate supportive friendships with women over romantic relationships. However, Kate and Angie's bonding is illustrated through a pastiche of heterosexual romance, for audience laughs. At their first antenatal class they are mistaken for a couple. This is shown as a shameful moment by being assumed lesbian (Probyn, 2005). Kate and Angie swiftly put the record, and their sexuality, straight. Further in the narrative, after Angie's lie about being pregnant with Kate's fetus has been discovered, the women have an emotional bust-up in a car scene. This provoked an interesting response from Carrie and Sonja (mixed mothers focus group), which was stimulated in the focus group discussion by revisiting the scripted dialogue: 'Angie: You think you're better than me? Kate: Oh, I'm certain I'm better than you'.

> Carrie: Right yes, that was Tina Fey's [Kate] character saying, "I'm certain I'm better than you".

> Sonja: So why did she think she was better than her?

> Carrie: Because she's rich?

> Sonja: Yeah, she was sitting in her car, she was a professional woman, and she had the accoutrements of wealth and success.

> Carrie: And, also Tina Fey's character had sort of, you know, moved her in and invested into the relationship, and was encouraging her to go to college… and this woman was basically trying to fleece her, so I agree, I think she was better than her.

> (Carrie and Sonja, mixed mothers focus group, 2015)

Although the focus group participants weren't reading the characters' relationship directly as lesbian, what did emerge was an acknowledgement of an intense dynamic between the two women, which surfaced through what Geraghty (2003) calls 'emotional explosions' (in Gorton, 2009: 75) – a device in the narrative structure that constructs an emotional connection with the viewer. Tension

between the women is built further in this scene when Angie turns to Kate and says: 'Okay, we're being honest now? Here's one. I can have a baby and you can't. And that drives you crazy'. This accentuates Sandelowski's (1990) argument that fictional representations of infertile women 'promotes motherhood and subverts sisterhood' (1990: 34) by pitching women against each other by an ability to procreate, naturally.

Carrie and Sonja have identified the power imbalance between the two characters. Kate has money and is successful. Angie has nothing apart from the fetus Kate is willing to pay $100k for. What is revealed in this exchange is one of the genre's key conventions. By Carrie reading that Angie was trying to 'fleece' Kate by lying about the baby for money, she is inferring that betrayal between two women is worse than losing trust in a man (Winch, 2011). As seen in the work of Winch, lying about being pregnant, and/or being pregnant by someone else – in this case, Angie's ex-boyfriend – is the ultimate betrayal. This disruption in the narrative borrows from melodrama, which is core to soap opera. This is created through editing, music, camera angles, acting and the sequence of scenes, which portray high emotions, moral opposition, scheming and suspense. Due to its ability to manipulate the viewer in the evocation of emotional response, and its 'lack of aesthetic distance' (Williams, 1991: 5, in Gorton, 2009: 79), melodrama has been deemed of a lower cultural status, seen primarily as a woman's genre (Gledhill, 1987; Neale, 2000).

Melodrama, of the more dramatic and less comedic incarnation, emerged in the 1950s through the work of filmmaker Douglas Sirk, and has been traced even further back to sentimental novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth century (Elsaesser, 1973; Willemen, 1971). This inferior cultural position implies that women's social position is also viewed as lower status, female concerns seen as having lesser value (Gledhill, 1987). I propose this view of women's social position is evident in *Baby Mama*, through how the infertile characters have been constructed within the narrative. This has been illuminated through what has been described as the feminisation of the genre, shaped in relation to discourses of family and motherhood (Brunsdon, 1997; Gorton, 2009; Moseley, 2001). For

example, through the rom-com emerged the mom-com, motherhood being the primary goal, ahead of romance.

This can be identified in Fay and Rhian's (pre-mothers focus group) comments in relation to this particular narrative drive:

> Rhian: In *Baby Mama* she didn't have a partner. There was no love at first but she wanted a child *to love.*

> Fay: And she was excited when she found out, even though she didn't have a partner.

> Lulu: So, the baby brings the love to her?

> Rhian: Yeah… It's like, when you get to a certain stage you need a baby, otherwise your life is pointless.

> (Rhian, Fay and Lulu, pre-mothers focus group, 2015)

This response demonstrates what I have named the delayed conception plotline. However, although Rhian and Fay are able to recognise this love-desire for a child is the primary goal in the storyline, through what has been earlier described as a baby hunger, both participants are aware that such notions are an expectation, and not what either of them believe in – the notion of completeness through motherhood being a myth perpetuated by popular narratives (Klepfisz, 1999). Myths circulating in popular culture and in everyday life of what is required to be fulfilled as a woman are explored further in Chapter 7.

The mom-com, therefore – or in this context what should be more aptly entitled the *pre-mom-com* due to the pursuit of the *future fetus* – evidences the fetishisation of the maternal that has saturated popular culture. As Halberstam (2012) has identified in the happy endings of romantic comedies, the female orgasm has to date been the 'frothy white dresses' and 'over-the-top cakes' – the 'consummation of all the hopes and dreams that young women have been offered

along the way to adulthood' (2012: 116). The delayed conception plotline therefore describes the shift from the celebrative conclusion of the wedding, to the celebrative conclusion of the baby. This is symbolic of the inscription of femininity, what it means to be a *real* woman: to be a mother.

Laura Mumford (1995) claims that although the paternal plotline is soap opera's defining characteristic, there is potential for more maternal-centred plots to emerge through the growing popularity of reproductive technologies, as the genre is watched predominantly by women. As Mumford explains:

> Although adoption and adultery have been the soaps' traditional solutions to characters' fertility problems, changes in the social and technological relations of reproduction will no doubt mean changes in fictional "solutions" as well… It is easy to imagine a future maternity plot whose central mystery is whether a pregnancy was the result of an embryo transplant or "normal" conception (1995: 103).

Baby Mama demonstrates this shift, as the plotline introduces surrogacy as a fertility solution. The melodramatic device of the paternal plotline, therefore, has progressed to a maternal plotline. In the context of this text, this infers a betrayal between the two women. Not who is the daddy, but who is the mummy. In the latter part of the film, the two women go to court to legitimise, through blood tests, which of them is the genetic mother, clarifying whether the pregnancy is the result of, as foreseen by Mumford, an embryo transplant or normal conception. This can be read as infidelity outside of their played-for-laughs relationship, as previously highlighted, while also alluding to the bigger maternal question in relation to the surrogacy as a practice. The legal mother of a baby born from surrogacy differs globally due to inconsistencies in the law.

Due to the ambiguous nature of their relationship, the car scene when Kate drops Angie off at a hotel after their bust-up can be given a queer reading, though how they have been positioned, literally. The object of the car idealises heterosexual romance, an intimate space which has become commonplace in popular cultural representations (Ahmed, 2006). It can be suggested that this scene is a break-up

scene, a trope frequently employed in romantic comedy, which is followed by a make-up scene (McDonald, 2007).

In *Baby Mama*, this emerges in a later scene when the surrogate Angie goes into labour, and Kate is there to support her. In the car scene, an angry and emotional Angie says to Kate: 'So you're done with me now is that it? You don't need me anymore?' It appears Angie is performing the role of the jilted lover. The power dynamic between the two women is being played out through the adoption of masculine and feminine roles. Sonja described Kate as a 'professional woman' who has the 'accoutrements of wealth and success'. Carrie read Kate as superior to Angie, due to 'investing' in the relationship by moving her into her home, and encouraging her to study, which suggests the 'giving of practical support' (Rich, 1980: 648). Sonja and Carrie read Kate's traits as masculine through her economic and professional position. These traits are reinforced through how she is seated behind the wheel. As queer media scholar Katherine Gantz (2000) proposes, through her analysis of a car scene featuring two men in hit American sitcom *Seinfeld*, this demonstrates a parody of the heterosexual dating scene, and that being seated behind the wheel is representative of masculine power.

Paula's (non-mothers focus group) statement of: 'They [the intended mothers] must feel the way a father must feel' has further explanatory power here to explore how Kate's masculine characteristics within the narrative have been formed, in relation to, and in relationship with, Angie, her surrogate. Kate and Angie's characters have been developed through the heterosexual dyad of father/mother, masculine/feminine. This is a dualism that has shaped the sitcom formula, which, alongside soap opera, has also influenced film comedy. As has been explored in more depth in the analysis of male same-sex parenting in *The New Normal* and *Modern Family*, as discussed in Chapter 5, hints of the lesbian concept butch-femme also re-emerge here, through the binary division of father/mother into masculine/feminine. This illuminates the masculinisation of Kate's character by her being removed from the conception and birthing process – until she falls pregnant naturally as the final equilibrium.

It is important to emphasise the imbalance of power that is created through the construction of these binary hierarchies, as the rigidity of the boundary is restrictive, as it subordinates one over the other, excludes one over the other (Fuss, 2013; Sedgwick, 2008). Sedgwick argues that the emergence of the heterosexual/homosexual binary has been hugely influential on the organisation of Western culture, even beyond homosexual identity and culture, socially organising identities and definitions into two category polarities, particularly in relation to gender, class and race, which is poignant in relation to the discussion of the representations of parental roles and gender identity in these texts.

As I have suggested previously, butch-femme as a concept materialises in the characterisation of same-sex couples, to reinforce what is deemed as an acceptable mode of parenting, through the stereotyping of gender roles. Through the representation of both female (although ambiguous) and male same-sex couples explored in this thesis, I further propose that this mimics heterosexual culture rather than subverting it. The masculine/feminine, butch-femme traits/traces also emerge through how the characters are dressed, perform, and their professional and economic status. Before Kate's feminine transformation, her style was masculine, frumpy – a dress code in line with the construction of the spinster stereotype.

Although her character is culturally marked female by having long hair, her look appears more androgynous rather than overtly masculine, which suggests that the character's sexual identity is more ambiguous than clearly coded lesbian. As Brenda Weber (2009) highlights in her work on TV show transformations, the purpose of the makeover is to eradicate any ambiguities, which also includes erasing shame, which as has been argued must be evoked for the makeover transformation to take place (Doyle and Karl, 2016; Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2004; Peck, 1995; Skeggs and Wood, 2012; Walkerdine, 2011). Kate transforms into a woman that will be desired by men (which erases the shame of infertility and spinsterhood) becoming a female body that adheres to the codes of conventional femininity (Bartky, 1991; Weber, 2009). Towards the end of the film, Angie also transforms (erasing the shame of poverty, class) when she is now situated as an (almost) equal to Kate, as friends, when they are pictured together with their

children at Angie's daughter's first birthday party. I return to this scene in the discussion of rescue later in the chapter.

In contrast to Kate's character, Angie has bleach-blonde hair, and dresses in a more feminine, but less expensive fashion style. Carrie (mixed mothers focus group) was able to position Angie within the feminine category by describing her character as 'white, virginal and blonde'. Nadra, in the same group, detected similarities between the surrogates in both *Baby Mama* and *The New Normal*, who she described as dumb blondes that 'look just the same'. These descriptions of race and hair colour point towards the value of whiteness in the construction of conventional femininity (Dyer, 1993, 1997; Loyo, in Everett in 2007). Aside from the blonde stereotype in popular cultural representations inferring idiocy, blonde is also a category that marks the subject as white. Interestingly, however, in the case of the two surrogate characters, they are positioned as subordinate to the primary characters, but in relation to fertility which infers femininity. However, whiteness doesn't always denote privilege – the white surrogates in these two texts are also positioned as subordinate through the class divisions that have been constructed between them, shaped by the stereotype of white trash that marks the characters as inferior, as well as the divisive tensions between the fertile and infertile that have been shaped in the narrative (Sandelowski, 1990; Tyler, 2008).

Berridge and Boyle (2014) argue that it is the class division that has been created between them that obstructs any lesbian possibilities, as it is class that marks them as incompatible. During the baby shower scene in *Baby Mama,* during the melodramatic reveal moment when Kate finds out Angie has been lying about her pregnancy, Kate calls Angie 'ignorant white trash' which is symbolic of class disgust (Tyler, 2008). However, all the participants in the focus groups were appalled at this statement, as Tara (non-mothers focus group) explained: 'I was really shocked when there was this whole thing of, you know, "ignorant white trash", and you know, low life… that was their [*Baby Mama's*] running theme of socio-economic hierarchy of who carries a child and who pays for that person. That was really prominent'. Angie's character embodies the white trash stereotype not just through the character's poverty inferred by the surrogacy arrangement, but through the cheapness of her clothes, lack of education, dishonesty and

ignorance of fetal neglect through nutrition. For example, both Angie in *Baby Mama* and Goldie in *The New Normal* eat junk food, which the intended parents attempt to rectify. This reflects how the stereotype of white trash demonstrates an appropriation of racist American political rhetoric which views blacks as a failing underclass who neglect their fetuses.

As has been touched upon in Chapter 4, race and infertility has been identified as significant in the discussion of what has been represented in all of the texts under analysis, and what hasn't. As emphasised by scholars in the field of race and reproductive technologies, the medical and media discourse of infertility is constructed as white, heterosexual, married and middle class. In the context of this chapter, the constructions of the infertile characters Kate in *Baby Mama* and Audrey in *Rules of Engagement*, imply that reproductive technologies are only accessible to the white, middle classes, bodies that are *permitted* and supported to transform – to be rescued – to reproduce racially pure children of the future (Roberts, 1995, 1996).

It is imperative to mention how the black characters in these texts are positioned to enable the future happiness of the white characters. Drawing on Berlant (2008) I propose this characterisation within the narrative idealises white sentimentality. In *Baby Mama*, Oscar, the black doorman, supports the lead white characters by providing committed, emotional support. He was the first to discover the surrogate Angie was lying about the pregnancy, encouraging her to do the right thing and come clean. As Carrie (mixed mothers focus group) stated in response to the character: 'Doormen are always wise, aren't they?'

The character of Rocky in *The New Normal* also plays a supportive role. As the lead character's personal assistant and best friend, Bryan's needs are placed ahead of hers, which infers subordination through ideologies of both race *and* gender. I propose these representations are constructed through heterosexist, sexist, and racist ideologies that emerge through conventional notions of family values, fit parenthood, whiteness, femininity, and women's role in reproduction. The character of Kate, in particular, has been situated in opposition to the patriarchal status quo, by being depicted as single and infertile, which, as has

been argued, positions her as non-normative. As Oliver (2012) argues, for a woman in a film storyline to have a career, but not the baby, is the worst thing that can happen.

Someday my prince will come

> The worst thing is not to get the baby, or not to have a baby. That doesn't happen there, in that world, because there's always a way, and that's really weird, that's really weird as it's creating this kind of stick we are supposed to be beating ourselves with.

> (Carla, mixed mothers focus group, 2015)

Oliver's evaluation of how an independent professional woman is positioned in the narrative as devalued, unless she has a child, can be clearly identified in Carla's statement. As Carla describes, the worst outcome possible is to not get the baby, which materialises in the disruption moment in the narrative structure, when Kate discovers that her surrogate Angie has lied about carrying her genetic fetus. Through Carla's description of 'that world', what can be recognised, drawing on Berlant (2008), is a constructed and mediated fantasy of the normative. Through this fantasy world, as Carla has identified, 'there's always a way'. The final equilibrium in the narrative is when Kate falls pregnant naturally, and acquires the *real* baby she desired, enabled through the device of the heterosexual love plot. This unfolding of the narrative therefore relocates the infertile character from a non-normative position, to a normative one. This highlights further that heterosexual women have more reproductive options than lesbians. As previously mentioned in relation to groupings of persons who use technologies for reproductive freedom, heterosexual women *can* utilise procedures such as IVF and surrogacy, whereas lesbians *must* – it is their *only* choice.

Berlant claims that sentimentality shapes the ideology of heterosexual love through textual intervention, that it is circular as it drives the repetitive motion of heterosexual love through the stories that are told, with their promises of redemption. In the context of this discussion, this is reflected in the transition from

infertile to fertile, lesbian ambiguity to heterosexual clarity, non-normative to normative – outside to inside. This narrative pattern has been detected in all of the texts under analysis, and will be explored further in Chapter 7. This repetition of impressions, as seen in the work of Ahmed (2006), allows the *right type* of bodies (white, middle class, heterosexual) to 'extend into spaces that have already taken their shape' (2006: 425). These are spaces that have been shaped by compulsory heterosexuality. Berlant argues that women's culture in America, specifically, markets particular notions of femininity to female audiences, which aims to 'span fantasy and experience and claim a certain emotionality amongst women' (2008: 5). This ideology of the normative, in this analysis, is that to be feminine is to be heterosexual *and* to be a natural mother, which is enabled through the love of a man. As Klepfisz (1999) describes in relation to her own experiences, childless women – particularly those who don't marry – are stigmatised, characterised as cold, unfeminine, unnatural. This is an accurate description of Kate's character, pre-transformation and positioned as sexually ambiguous. Furthermore, this description also illustrates the tropes of women in popular representations who have *rejected* motherhood, particularly within the thriller and horror genres. Drawing on film noir's femme fatale (Grossman, 2009; Hanson, 2007; Kaplan, 1998), this character of the childfree *monstrous* woman is presented as emotionally unstable and dangerous – Catherine in *Basic Instinct* (1992) (who kills her lover with an ice pick during sex), Hedy in *Single White Female* (1992) (who kills her roommate's husband by gauging out his eye with a stiletto heel) and Alex in *Fatal Attraction* (1987*)* (who kills her ex-lover's family's pet rabbit and self-harms). The two characters that are killed off as the narrative's final resolution are either connoted to have lesbian tendencies (Hedy, *Single White Female*) or were characterised as bisexual (Catherine, *Basic Instinct*). These endings reflect the common killing off of lesbian characters in popular culture, as touched upon in Chapter 5. As seen in the work of Edelman (2004) and Oliver (2012), this choice to non-procreate signifies a bleakly populated future – the undoing of life itself. The infertile woman as a reproductive threat is explored in the following chapter. Popular representations infer, then, that a woman who chooses *not* to have children is deficient and non-normative. Therefore, I believe that the narrative in *Baby Mama* aims to reinforce the value of conventional normative femininity and

heterosexuality, that women are better placed in heterosexual partnerships, placing moral importance on the building of family through natural procreation.

As discussed, the narrative in *Baby Mama* plays with the lesbian joke. Kate is single and wants a baby. The disruption in the story is the possibility of *not* getting the baby, which is resolved through Kate becoming pregnant naturally through the love of a man. As Berlant (2008) has argued, the heterosexual love plot is motivated by the desire for normativity, where narratives invest in specific ideas of femininity – in this analysis, notions of fertility, heterosexuality and whiteness. Berlant's concept of the blockage, in relation to the love plot, is useful to mobilise here to examine this disruption stage, primarily to explore how both lesbianism *and* infertility are rendered invisible in the narrative. The blockage is central to the genre's successful execution, as it conjures the prospect of failure. It is the threat that, 'x might *not* happen... which allows absorbing but not shocking anxieties to be stimulated and vanquished.' (Berlant, 2008: 19). This disruption, or threat of failure, is an integral narrative device, as the resolution and final equilibrium follow, to overcome anxieties and enable the heteronormative happy ending. In *Baby Mama*, as emphasised by Carla, the 'x' is to 'not get the baby', which I argue symbolises the failure to become a *real* woman. However, Carla was unable to recognise that alongside not getting the baby, the worst thing that could also happen is to become a lesbian, or remain single. I propose that the lesbian charge has been submerged through the love plot, which, as argued by Winch (2011), steers the narrative to the resolution stage, 'where heterosexual men provide relief from the scrutinizing gaze' (2011: 77).

Although Kate's character is not lesbian-identified, her masculine traits and infertility situate her within this blockage in the narrative, which Berlant also describes as an 'interruption', which is when the subject's – or in this discussion, character's – world is fragile and vulnerable, the fantasy of the good life placed out of reach. Through Kate's characterisation, she is displaying, drawing on Berlant, a 'feminine fraying' (2008: 18) when femininity becomes undone, and heterosexuality is in crisis. I argue that this fraying provides the tension point in the blockage/disruption in the narrative of *Baby Mama*, which I propose appears in the ambiguous relationship between Kate and Angie. The love plot and the

makeover, as previously discussed, rescue the characters and erase all ambiguities, Kate being repositioned as feminine through her desire to be a mother, and her longing to be sexually attractive to a man. Her femininity has been re-orientated on the straight line. She is now facing the right way towards heterosexual happiness (Ahmed, 2006, 2010). Kate has transformed from loser to winner, through the shift from infertile to fertile – the stigma disappears. Kate has corrected her failing by not resisting the constraints of compulsory heterosexuality that, as pinpointed by Cohen (1997), can be viewed as a system of dominance that seeks to 'normalize our sexuality, exploit our labour, and constrain our visibility' (1997: 440) – acting as a blockage to the lesbian possibility (Ahmed, 2006; Rich, 1980).

What has been represented as non-normative (masculine traits, single, infertile, two women living together, surrogacy) has transformed into the normative (heterosexual pairing/love, natural pregnancy, femininity) which is, as Berlant proposes, the utopian dream as marketed through women's popular cultural texts. In these texts, the couple is the central focus, and is core to normative love (Ahmed, 2006; Berlant, 2008). Through Kate's transformation in the narrative, the monogamous heterosexual couple is deemed as legitimate, performing the work to maintain hierarchy within the institution of heterosexuality (Ahmed, 2010; Berlant, 2006; Berlant and Warner, 1998; Duggan, 2002; Foucault, 1998).

In addition, in the context of *Baby Mama's* central surrogacy storyline, the insertion of the heterosexual couple in relation to romantic love and reproduction is also a vehicle for placating anxieties surrounding new reproductive technologies – primarily the creation of babies through non-coital methods. As Oliver (2012) identifies: 'While we are used to seeing sex without love in contemporary Hollywood films, we are not used to seeing babies without sex… Uncoupling sex and reproduction causes so much anxiety that, often in the most contrived ways, these films manage to bring them back together' (2012: 69). This statement also highlights further anxieties in relation to female sexuality, as through this 'uncoupling' what also emerges is the threat of the lesbian possibility, a threat *to* heterosexuality and to normative womanhood, all of which *must* be submerged in

the narrative in the central pursuit of natural, genetic reproduction, which is evident, if not over-determined, in all of the texts discussed in this thesis.

Berlant claims that the love plot acts as a form of disappointment management for female audiences through the cultivation of fantasies. This, she argues, enables women to belong to a larger world, to experience love affectively as a form of diversion. This resonates with Radway's (1983, 1991) work on the female readers of romance novels, where she argued, through her audience data, that the fantasy of romance allowed the reader to escape from their everyday lives. As Berlant argues, which echoes this, it's the fictional love plot that 'transports people somewhere into a *situation* for a minute' (Berlant, 2008: 31). This notion of transportation further reflects Gorton's (2009) earlier proposition that audiences wish to *feel* something through how they connect with and relate to the narrative, and to experience the emotions the characters are portrayed as feeling, particularly through the episodic flow of sitcoms and soap operas. As Gorton explains: 'A text's ability to move us emotionally is not simply an aesthetic value but also a political one. The presence of emotion in popular television move its viewers to feel a sense of connectedness and belonging that is repeated in each episode' (2009: 78). Although the two texts under discussion are a film and a sitcom, the strategies are akin to how women are portrayed on primetime American television, in relation to methods of production and modes of representation (Kuhn, 1982; Moritz, 1989, 1999).

The fantasy in *Baby Mama* and *Rules of Engagement* is that women's infertility can be magically cured through heterosexual love. Not only does love rescue Kate from her life as a single, childless woman, but it also saves her from the lesbian possibility. As Berlant highlights: 'The modern love plot requires that, if you are a woman, you must at least *entertain* believing in love's capacity both to rescue you from your life and to give you a new one' (2008: 171). In this analysis, the love plot and the couple dyad has enabled Kate (*Baby Mama*) and Audrey (*Rules of Engagement*) to become natural mothers. They have been able to shed their old bodies and claim better, fertile ones, transforming them into the conventional feminine ideal.

Through this notion of rescue, it can be argued that the love plot in *Baby Mama* is a contemporary re-working of the classic fairytale narrative that drives most love stories. Kathleen Barry (1985), Valerie Walkerdine (1984) and Rich (1990) have argued that the fairytale narrative presents a version of heterosexual romance to pre-adolescent girls as a form of social conditioning. This, they claim, acts as a form of indoctrination that beams out of comics, TV, advertising, films and songs. Walkerdine argues that comics in particular offer a happy ever after situation in which 'the finding of the prince (the knight in shining armour, 'Mr. Right') comes to seem like a solution to a set of overwhelming desires and problems' (in McRobbie and Nava, 1984: 163). In these tales, Walkerdine proposes that getting the man (the prince) is the final solution. I propose that the narrative in *Baby Mama* is doing the same thing. The beautiful girl (Kate, post makeover) gets a reward for her good deeds (trying to help the surrogate) and is eventually taken out of her misery and is freed by the prince (Kate's love interest Rob rescues her from a life of lesbianism and childlessness). Therefore, this implies that the heterosexual line is only stable if female bodies are constructed for men. As Ahmed (2006) argues, such bodies point *towards* men, and are occupied by men (penetration).

Through the device of the rescue narrative, Kate's career path has also been thwarted. She is shown at the end of the film at Angie's daughter's first birthday party, surrounded by the kinship objects (Ahmed, 2006) of children's toys, party food and balloons, seated in a children's play area. Drawing on Ahmed (2010), this scene displays a 'ground of happiness', where the 'happy folk' are – Kate finally has 'what they have' (2010: 112). This is the antithesis of how her character was introduced at the film's beginning. Through the impact of heterosexual coupling and pregnancy, Kate's character has not only been straightened, she has been domesticated. Through her lesbian ambiguity and infertility being cured through the love of a man, she has been restored to her proper place within the traditional family structure, a common narrative resolution in cinema, as a form of restoration (Cook, 1978; Kuhn, 1982; Moritz, 1999; Walker, 1982). Annette Kuhn (1982) explains that this is executed in several ways: 'a woman character may be restored to the family by falling in love, by "getting her man", by "getting married", or otherwise accepting a "normative" female role' (1982: 34, in Moritz, 1999: 317)[3].

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However, the final resolution is not just about being rescued by the prince, but is, in addition, about being rescued through the normalisation of natural conception, which has been enabled through the love interest character (Rob, *Baby Mama*) or a stable male partner (Jeff, *Rules of Engagement)*. In *Rules of Engagement*, as has been previously discussed, despite Audrey and Jeff acquiring a genetic child through surrogacy, it is not the American dream of a conventional family. Therefore, the final equilibrium is when Audrey faints during the surrogate's labour, and discovers she is pregnant – a scene also mirrored in *Baby Mama*. The difference being Kate's surrogate was birthing her own genetic child, and not Kate's. As identified by Sonja (mixed mothers focus group):

> Maybe it's not a happy ending, maybe it's not good enough that the surrogate mother has given birth to a child for you, maybe that's not good enough, maybe that's not the fairytale.

> (Sonja, mixed mothers focus group, 2015)

What can be identified in Sonja's statement is how the fairytale narrative is integral to the construction of the texts' narratives, specifically in relation to the social and cultural value of normative reproduction that materialises in *Rules of Engagement*. Laura (non-mothers focus group) also pinpoints, like Sonja, how the text suggests that to have a child through surrogacy is not enough:

> It's not necessarily a sad ending if they can't have children, because we knew that from the beginning that they couldn't. If they have a child through surrogacy, they've got a child. It doesn't mean they have to get pregnant by natural means to conclude the story, to complete her as a person and as a woman.

> (Laura, non-mothers focus group, 2015)

Like Sonja, Laura is pointing to a shift in the narrative, through the affective value attached to the arrival of a baby procured 'by natural means'. She argues that the narrative 'concludes the story' by completing the characters through this

transformational process. By rejecting the dominant codes embedded in the narrative, what can be revealed is how audiences (in this sample) believe that such an ending should not be wholly representative of a feminine desire for normative reproduction. Through both Laura and Sonja's responses, what can be acknowledged is that heterosexual love and natural motherhood are being depicted as essential to normative femininity (Berlant, 2008). Kate in *Baby Mama* has transformed to not just get the man, but the baby, too – her primary desire. There has been a narrative shift. It is no longer about 'the moment of bliss that is signified by the first kiss' (Walkerdine in McRobbie and Nava, 1984: 176). The final resolution in these texts is not the arrival of the prince after all, but the arrival of the baby.

However, Carla (mixed mothers focus group) takes a position that is oppositional to Berlant's claim that the cultivation of fantasies through women's texts creates feelings of belonging. As described in the introduction of this section, Carla highlights how the fantasy of the heterosexual love plot 'in that world' creates 'this kind of stick we are supposed to be beating ourselves with'. Rather than finding comfort through the affective device of sentimentality and the cultivation of fantasy, she finds discomfort. She *doesn't* belong. The narrative is encoded with the ideology of fulfilment, that to become a natural mother is to become *whole.* Carla's response indicates that her discomfort places her *outside* of belonging, contrary to Berlant's argument that the love plot offers a point of identification that can enable a sense of fitting in. Berlant emphasises the sense of belonging that is constructed through mass-mediated culture only relates to those who are already situated as conventional.

In the discussion of how infertile characters are portrayed in these texts, culturally shaped notions and expectations of what is deemed normative and non-normative in the context of womanhood, motherhood, family and femininity have been presented. Specifically, how a woman must be characterised to fit in, through 'accepting a "normative" female role' (Kuhn, 1982: 34 in Moritz, 1999: 317). Through textual analysis and audience work, a number of core ideologies have been identified: completeness, natural reproduction, romance, heterosexuality

and whiteness. However, what has emerged as significant through the audience analysis is how the participants have mostly rejected the dominant narratives of family and motherhood in both *Baby Mama* and *Rules of Engagement*. As Laura stated: 'It's not necessarily a sad ending if they can't have children'. Therefore, a discussion of the participants' resistance to the texts, while also recognising their astute reflexivity to the genre mechanisms and a desire to see alternative happy endings, will be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 7: Queer futures: chosen families and alternative intimacies

The texts that have been discussed throughout the analytical chapters, and which will be re-visited in this chapter, are *Coronation Street, Giuliana & Bill*, *Rules of Engagement*, *The New Normal,* and *Baby Mama*. Other popular cultural texts will also be referred to, to illuminate key points.

The primary focus of this chapter is to acknowledge and explore the focus groups' resistance to the dominant narratives of motherhood and family in the texts, through their varying positions in relation to motherhood. Furthermore, their reflexivity to genre techniques will also be discussed, particularly through their desire for more alternative happy endings that don't depend on the arrival of a genetic child. The participants' acknowledgment of different forms of love, outside of the genetic tie and mother-child bond will also be discussed. Throughout this chapter I argue that the cultural articulations of love and family in relation to the surrogacy storylines are problematic for the participants in my study, and thus result in resistant readings of the texts.

This chapter is divided into three parts. *Normal service has resumed* explores the participants' desire for alternative happy endings and more tolerant cultural articulations of identities outside of natural notions of motherhood, where babies are conceived through heterosexual sex, without the use of reproductive technologies. *It must be love* unpicks the myth of blood ties and the mother-child bond through a discussion of the wider range of love connections outside of the traditional family unit, and *Queering kinship* explores the possibilities of new family structures built on these connections to provide transcending counter-narratives of family, for future cultural articulations. A range of queer theory, emotion and affect, and race and reproduction scholarship will be drawn on to underpin the analysis.

Normal service has resumed

> I think it's interesting why they [the infertile protagonists] have to get pregnant too at the end. It's as if people can't quite cope with the idea of women who can't have children.
>
> (Carrie, mixed mothers focus group 2015)

As explored in Chapter 6, the infertile female characters in *Baby Mama* and *Rules of Engagement* are portrayed as incomplete as women, until they become positioned as normative by becoming natural mothers, and situated within a heterosexual couple dyad. Carrie's statement above suggests that most audiences, or 'people', would struggle with an ending that isn't conventionally happy, where the disruption in the narrative (infertility) hasn't been restored, fixed, through heterosexual romance and the formation of the normative biological family unit. Carrie's response also implies that she, as a viewer, is situated against the mainstream, which infers a resistance to the texts.

A discussion between Carrie, Sonja, Carla and Jackie (mixed mothers focus group) further indicates a displeasure of viewing these happy endings in the texts:

Sonja: They're saying it's better if you do it yourself.

Carla: Yeah, I think it's reinforcing that it's natural and normal to have children.

Sonja: In a natural and normal way.

Carla: It shows you how the story went, but the final point is to reinforce… see that, enjoy that, but this is the message.

Sonja: Yes, but don't worry, normal service has been resumed.

Jackie: Yeah, it ends up being conventional.

Sonja: It's a bit of a cop out really, isn't it?

(Carrie, Sonja, Carla and Jackie, mixed mothers focus group, 2015)

In addition to demonstrating an annoyance with how both *Baby Mama* and *Rules of Engagement* conclude, this discussion also illuminates how female audiences are active, and not passive, in being able to reject a dominant narrative within a text (Fiske, 1989; Radway, 1987; Skeggs & Wood, 2008; Stacey, 1993). However, in doing so, it is clear that the participants are also displaying a recognition and understanding of how the function of the happy ending is an integral part of the genre's narrative, to provide pleasure to the audience through fantasy. Or, as Oliver (2012) argues, to quell anxieties 'with reassuring tales of white career women getting babies before it's too late' (2012: 18). As Carrie stated: 'people can't quite cope with the idea of women who can't have children'.

In addition, Rachel (non-mother's focus group) was also able to identify the genre mechanisms of the sitcom and the mom-com, in relation to the viewing experience and the happy ending: 'People watch those shows for a reason, they want that ending before they've even sat down to the opening credits'. Ien Ang (1995) argues that the happy ending is integral to the feminisation of genre, which provides pleasure through an escape into fantasy, which both Berlant (2008) and Radway (1983, 1992) also claim aims to transport the female viewer into an imagined world, a distraction from the reality of everyday life. Furthermore, Rachel's statement resonates with Gorton's (2009) argument that some female viewers select texts of a certain genre based on how they *want* to respond emotionally, such as 'preparing for a good cry' (209: 129). However, as evidenced in the above discussion, not all viewers find pleasure, or escape – the participants are irritated, arguing that such endings are 'a cop out' and 'conventional'. I propose that inferring that 'normal service' is resumed through the narrative closure of natural pregnancy suggests that comfort can be found in what is being presented as the utopia of normativity (Berlant, 2008). As the participants' responses indicate, such a presumption of what is deemed normative and happy does not take into consideration a range of possible narrative outcomes that might be received positively by audiences. As Laura (non-mothers focus group) expressed through her displeasure in how the infertile characters were portrayed, in relation to the happy ending:

It's great that these fictional characters can get pregnant, but it's kind of a shame that it can't be left as you can't have kids, you know what I mean? That happens. There really are people who can't have kids and they don't get pregnant even if they try, and it doesn't just happen. Be good if they just left it… it would be interesting if someone wrote that into a story instead of doing the nice Hollywood ending.

(Laura, non-mothers focus group 2015)

What is interesting about Laura's statement is that she describes the happy endings in the texts as 'Hollywood' endings, which shows how she is reading the endings in relation to the cliché and convention of a specific genre, one that has been, as claimed by James MacDowell (2013), constant, persistent and ubiquitous in conventional cinema. As he proposes: 'It is not simply that most Hollywood films have interchangeable "happy endings," but that *all* do' (2013: 3). It has been widely argued, particularly through feminist and queer theory – as touched upon in the previous chapter – that the happy ending, which is rooted in myths and fairytales, is perpetuated in popular culture through a compulsory heterosexuality that packages happiness within the heteronormative (Ahmed, 2010; Franklin, 1990; Halberstam, 2011; Rich, 1980). As Barry (1985) argues, heterosexual romance embedded in the storylines of TV and film is a Western concept and universal ideology that sets out to indoctrinate women from an early age. However, as is evident in the audience data, it doesn't work on *all* women.

Ahmed (2010) has identified the heteronormative shaping of narratives as what is constructed as a heterosexual happiness, which suggests that 'heterosexual love becomes about the possibility of a happy ending; about what life is aimed toward, as well as being what gives life direction, a purpose, or as what drives the story' (2010: 90). The happy endings in the texts indicate compliance to hetero-norms, which through the flow of the narrative structure re-position the infertile characters as normative. This is facilitated through the final equilibrium of natural pregnancy and heterosexual love. By staying on the heteronormative path, it has been proposed that the infertile characters, like the homosexual characters in *The New Normal*, are rewarded with happiness for remaining in the approximation to, or

moving towards, signs of straightness – pregnancy, family, heterosexual romance (Ahmed, 2006, 2010). As Ahmed (2010) identifies in her analysis of TV movie, *If These Walls Could Talk 2*, where sperm donation has enabled the happy ending of pregnancy for a lesbian couple, 'the promise of the child becomes the promise of happiness' (2010: 113-114). It is the promise of happiness wrapped up in the arrival of the *future fetus* that drives the narratives in all of the texts in focus, regardless of the gendered pairing of the parents. As the representations suggest, as long as there are two (white) parents, settled within a monogamous, loving relationship, and preferably married – 'straight! gay! Over 65! doesn't matter! (Briggs, 2017: 125) – then the reward of happiness is reaped through the production of a genetic child.

In all of the texts that have been explored that feature infertile female characters – Izzy in *Coronation Street,* Giuliana in *Giuliana & Bill,* Audrey in *Rules of Engagement* and Kate in *Baby Mama* – the ultimate goal, and final equilibrium, regardless of genre, is the acquisition of the genetic child, preferably through normative heterosexual sex within the romance narrative. As pinpointed by Rhian (pre-mothers focus group) in her discussion of *Baby Mama*, but which applies to all of the infertile characters in the texts regardless of whether they had a partner or not, they 'wanted a child to love'. This desire eclipses the romantic love narrative in favour of maternal fulfilment. In addition, this narrative also shapes popular constructions of infertility (Franklin, 1990). Heterosexual romance is necessary, but it's not the narrative's primary drive. As further illuminated by Laura (non-mothers focus group), the narrative closure of these stories is natural conception, which she felt was not representative, or tolerant, of the complexities of fertility that affect women (and men) in the real world. As she stated: 'There really are people who can't have kids and they don't get pregnant even if they try'. This attachment to reproducing the genetic child demonstrates the fetishistic fixation of heteronormativity which places heterosexual procreative relations above all other forms of sexual expression (Barrett and McIntosh, 1991; Edelman, 2004).

Although Edelman (2004) claims, persuasively, that in the context of right wing social and political beliefs, queers, feminists and pro-abortionists are to blame for future reproductive ruin, he has made an error by omitting the threat of female

heterosexual infertility as he automatically ascribes women to the 'site of the unqueer' (Halberstam, 2011: 119). This association of women with biological reproduction is essentialist. In addition, Edelman also disregards same-sex familial desires as assimilationist, rather than having the potential for resistance (Ahmed, 2006; Calhoun, 2000). The notion of challenging norms through gay marriage and family will be explored towards the end of this chapter. Drawing on the audience data and the textual analysis I argue that the infertile woman is being portrayed as a 'reproductive misfit' (Lam, 2015: 112) – a threat to the heterosexual reproductive future through the non-production of genetic children. In the cultural articulations under analysis, reproductive technologies – such as surrogate pregnancies enabled by embryo transfer – have become a tool by which to enable loving couples only, straight and gay, acculturation into the acceptable heterosexual mainstream.

At this juncture, it is important to re-emphasise that the appropriation of the signifier *queer* and queer politics by heterosexuals to critique the heteronormative can be seen as problematic. Suzanna Walters (1996) argues, justifiably, that a heterosexual queer position is one of privilege, which she finds disturbing as it is not defined by sexual choice or gay identity, but a desire to identify with a broader concept of queer that denotes the non-normative. As I have previously stated, drawing on Browne and Nash (2010), adopting a queer lens for research is useful as it can expose deeply entrenched meanings and related power structures, which I believe I have done so throughout this thesis. Furthermore, it is important to reiterate that queer is a verb that has been mobilised in these discussions to not *identify* as queer, but to explore similarities between queer subjectivity and heterosexual infertility, while also challenging what is being constructed in these texts as normative. As argued by Schlichter (2004) drawing on Butler, the term can 'express an affiliation with anti-homophobic politics' *and* critique and subvert 'the practices of heteronormative normalization' (2004: 547) which in this project describes heterosexuals who are not complying to normative practices of family and reproduction.

This notion of non-compliance can be identified through how Sally (mixed mothers focus group) was able to recognise how normative family and female fulfilment

through motherhood is constructed in the texts' narratives is also reproduced in her own lived experience as a single, white, middle class, heterosexual, childless woman in her early forties:

> A while back I was at a drinks party with some older people, and they were like: "So, are you married?" No. "Got a partner?" No. "Any children?" No. I was like: "hello! You know, actually my name is Sally, and would you like to learn something about *me* rather than these add-ons?"

> (Sally, mixed mothers focus group, 2015)

Sally's experience demonstrates how her identity is viewed by social peers as incomplete, which is also reflected in the work of Klepfisz (1999). Klepfisz argues that dominant notions of what it means to be a 'woman' are myths, created through cultural mediation, that are hard to escape from in daily interactions with individuals and structures:

> This is a powerful myth that is nurtured by everything around us, fostered by the media, by popular literature, by parents, by questionnaires we fill out for jobs… Are you married? No. Do you live alone? Yes. How many members in your household? One. It is a myth perpetually reinforced by the assumption that only family and children provide us with a purpose and place. Bestow upon us an honour, respect, love, and comfort (1999: 97).

This resonates with the earlier argument that the heterosexual romance narrative is prolific throughout popular culture, and that motherhood and normative family is constructed in everyday life to provide refuge through convention. As Carla (mixed mothers focus group) claimed in the previous chapter, the happy endings in these texts isolated her, rather than as has been suggested, made her feel a sense of belonging (Berlant, 2008). For her, there was no point of identification, as they created 'this kind of stick we are supposed to be beating ourselves with'.

Reproductive technologies, therefore, through this core narrative, do not symbolise liberation from reproduction, which Firestone (1970) claimed would

make women more fulfilled and equal to men, but quite the opposite. The driving narrative in these texts suggest that to find fulfilment as a woman is *within* and not *outside* of the normative folds of natural motherhood and the conventional family structure. The articulations of reproductive technologies in these representations do not exhibit the potential to dismantle the biological, nuclear family, as many feminists argued Firestone hoped for, but aims to build and reinforce it, ignited through the fear of *no future*. However, it has been suggested, through Deborah Halbert's (2004) attentive reading of *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970), that Firestone did in fact infer that reproductive technologies *also* had the potential to subordinate women, rather than liberate. She proposes that Firestone indicated it was the underlying gender roles within the family structure and normative expectations of the woman as mother and child-bearer that needed to be challenged. As Halbert argues, Firestone was implying that: 'Technology alone will not liberate women and men, instead there must be a transformation in the way sex-roles are understood, a transformation that can only take place if technology is used to give women choices other than childrearing' (in Merck & Sandford, 2010: 31). This argument resonates with Robert's (1996) claim that 'rather than disrupt the stereotypical family, they [reproductive technologies] enable couples to create one' (1996: 936).

Films and TV shows radiate dreams and fantasies, and in some texts, for some audiences, authentic representations. However, as highlighted by the focus group participants, they also show inauthentic portrayals, which arouse discomfort, rather than comfort. The audience data suggests that although it was perceived as positive to see characters that *do* become pregnant naturally, there should be representational space to accommodate alternative happy endings that don't have to rely on such conventional narrative conclusions. The participants wanted to see more realistic and positive storylines and portrayals of women outside expectations and experiences of motherhood, which are complex. This includes exposing the myth of the mother/child bond, which the mothers in the focus groups claim isn't always love at first sight, as is depicted in the texts.

It must be love

> I find it a real falsehood… it didn't happen to me, and I know everybody's different, but there's this mythology, that these shows perpetuate, that when you see your baby, you fall in love.

> (Carrie, mixed mothers focus group 2015)

Across the majority of narratives that feature the birth of a child, regardless of genre, there is a love-at-first-sight moment between the mother and baby, even if the pregnancy was unwanted, or uncomfortable, and regardless of whether the child is born with or without a genetic connection. Drawing on Oliver's (2012) work on pregnancy in Hollywood film, this 'love spell' is due to the growing romanticism of conception and pregnancy within the mom-com genre. These moments in the narrative suggest that a woman finally becomes whole, completed. As Rachel (non-mothers focus group) declared in response to what she believed the texts were saying: 'You're not a real woman until you've had a child'.

However, the compulsory love spell between the mother and genetic child, as has been recognised by mothers in the focus groups, is not always reflective of real life. As Carrie (mixed mothers focus group) explained in relation to her own experience as a mother: 'it didn't happen to me'. Carrie and Sonja (mixed mothers focus group) also had a revealing discussion about the mother-child bond, which further dismantles the fantasy of the maternal love spell that drives the narratives:

> Carrie: That wasn't my experience.

> Sonja: It wasn't mine, either.

> Carrie: I was just so tired… I know I'm not supposed to say that.

> Sonja: It's definitely a gradual process. Well, it was for me.

Carrie: It's mythologising this bond with the baby, which it might be for some women, but I think for a lot of women it isn't.

Sonja: I'm really glad you said that, as before I had my son, I read a book… luckily, I read lots of books… and at least one of them said that if you don't get overwhelmed with maternal love when you first see your child, then don't worry, it comes in in different ways, and at different paces for people, so don't panic. I was convinced I wouldn't be one of those weirdos that… and I wasn't. But, it was definitely a process that started about two days in, and then grew and grew and grew… and then in the end you're besotted.

Lulu: So, do you think that the romance in these shows is between the mother and the baby?

Carrie: Yeah. We don't see the surrogate or the mother going "take it away for God's sake!" do we?

(Carrie, Sonja and Lulu, mixed mothers focus group 2015)

This above discussion infers that the notion of falling in love with your baby at first sight is a myth, perpetuated by such representations. We see this happening in *Waitress* (2007), where diner employee Jenna discovers she is pregnant when she leaves an abusive marriage. She is so distraught about the pregnancy she names a pie after it, the 'Bad Baby Pie'. When the baby girl arrives, Jenna falls in love with her immediately. She no longer has the husband, but she has the baby. In mom-com *What to Expect When You're Expecting* (2012), character Wendy is in discomfort throughout her entire pregnancy. She constantly chases the facial baby glow of pregnancy, the one that as she declares, 'they promise you on the cover of those magazines'. At the film's conclusion, she finds it not radiating from her complexion, but wrapped in the baby in her arms. I propose that these narratives are perpetuating a pro-life agenda through what the research findings have indicated is a culturally constructed myth of the baby-mother bond, the baby representing a future full of hope, promise, happiness, and the good life to come (Ahmed, 2010; Berlant, 1994; Edelman, 2004)[1].

The texts that have been discussed throughout this thesis include similar scenes. Tina, the surrogate in *Coronation Street,* bonds with baby Jake moments after giving birth, despite not being genetically related to him, 'I fell in love with him, when I held him… I thought he was mine, part of me'. The love spell of the mother-baby union also appears in *Rules of Engagement, Baby Mama*, *Giuliana & Bill* and *The New Normal,* with the two dads *and* the surrogate being portrayed as being weak-at-the-knees. The only character shown to have no maternal feelings towards the baby is Brenda, the lesbian surrogate in *Rules of Engagement.*

What is evident in this discussion is that both Carrie and Sonja shared feelings of shame for admitting their experiences did not mirror those represented in the texts. These feelings are identified through comments such as 'I know I'm not supposed to say that', 'I'm really glad you said that…' and 'I was convinced I wouldn't be one of those weirdos…' These responses reflect a similar stance to that of Carla, a childless participant in the same group who also struggled to relate to the texts' narratives and character constructions. Furthermore, Carrie and Sonja's responses also reflect the feelings of isolation, deviancy and shame that have been identified in the representations of the infertile characters, particularly Audrey in *Rules of Engagement*, as discussed in Chapter 6. Sonja's response to these texts reveals a similar position. The 'weirdo' as she described in this context is not the infertile woman, but the woman who does not form an immediate bond with her child.

Carrie and Sonja are both mothers in monogamous relationships. Like the infertile characters that are shamed through genre devices, both Carrie and Sonja, as viewers, have also been shamed, excluded from the narrative by what is being culturally presented as expected social norms. It is interesting to highlight here the possibility that the 'weirdo' could be describing Brenda in *Rules of Engagement,* despite Carrie's assertion that none of the intended mothers or surrogates were shown as rejecting the babies at birth. During the birth scene, Brenda was shown as being more interested in the ordeal being over and cracking open a beer than gazing lovingly at the baby. 'Weirdo' applied in this context, therefore, can be read as reinforcing the notion that lesbianism and motherhood are socially and culturally incompatible.

The love bond between the mother and baby that is constructed in the texts is shaped through a fairytale narrative, much like the narrative of romantic love that dominates the texts. It can be argued that this ideal of love endorses a set of norms that do not reflect social reality, particularly in relation to heterosexual communities, as the traditional family unit is breaking down. This is evident in soaring divorce rates, spouse abuse, abandonment and promiscuity (Evans, 2003; Weston, 1991). Families are being combined, and extended familial relationships formed.

Drawing on studies of gay and lesbian family formations and poor black urban communities, these new formations can be described as fictive, or chosen families. These extended kinship networks reach beyond the boundaries of the nuclear family unit, to be explored in more detail below. What these formations of family evidence, which is not made visible in the representations under discussion, is that love, as a concept, is more complex and elastic than is being articulated. Love can describe the feelings that drive heterosexual sexual partnerships with the primary aim to procreate, viewed as 'kinship's ultimate referent' (Weston, 1991: 33). Love can also describe close bonds with persons with no genetic tie, as well as deep connections to animals and even the joy of material objects, and the experience of sensory pleasures such as taste, touch, smell and sound. As Mary Evans (2003) explains:

> We love ice cream just as much as we might love our cat or the person we live with. We are, as people in our culture – very active as 'lovers' of objects, situations and even people. But the extent to which the same word is used to cover a multitude of possibilities should also warn us of the conceptual confusion around the idea. It is possible, therefore, that we love too much and too widely and that we have reached a situation where it is difficult to distinguish between different types of love, and the different contexts in which we might love. (2003: 22).

It is possible to suggest, then, that this notion of loving too much, and this cultural obsession with love and the genetic tie, can make way for a range of other positive

emotions which fictive kinship can be built on – such as support, intimacy, and friendship (Rubin, 1993; Weston, 1991). Meaningful family structures can be *made* that undermine the nuclear biological unit, not to be viewed socially, culturally or politically as false, or lesser than this elevated ideal (Calhoun, 2000; Carsten, 2004).

It has been proposed that the cultural constructions of love in mainstream texts, such as those under discussion, have been composed to offer female audiences a sense of belonging in the social world through the sentimentality of romantic love – the loss of which being unimaginable (Berlant, 2008; Evans, 2003). As Evans (2003) queries: 'Is love an emotion or an expectation? Dare we entertain a world without love and could another vocabulary, in which words such as care, commitment and desire were more often used, actually make us happier? (2003: 2-3). A line delivered by *Coronation Street* character, ladies' underwear machinist Beth Tinker, who is horrified at the surrogate arrangement, provoked discussion within the focus groups. During a scene in local pub the Rovers Return, where the surrogate Tina eventually returned to work, Beth whispers to her drinking partner across the table: 'You never know what love is until you've had a kid'. Paula, Rebecca, Laura and Rachel (non-mothers focus group) had a lively debate:

Paula: You *can* love someone who's not your child.

Rebecca: You can love a pet; you can love another human being.

Laura: I think it's a different type of love.

Rachel: Yeah, I agree with that.

Rebecca: Yeah, a different type of love, *but* I think that comment sounds a bit superficial.

Laura: It's verging into the superiority complex of mothers, that patronising kind of "you won't understand".

Rachel: But… who's that directed at? Because there are fathers in the world... Do you hear fathers saying that they've never loved anyone like that, when they've left their kids and not paid any maintenance? I don't think they'd agree with that. So, again, it's an idea of what a woman should be thinking.

(Paula, Rebecca, Laura and Rachel, non-mothers focus group, 2015)

This discussion reflects on, and in doing so rejects, the myth of the mother and child bond, which infers that childless women are incapable of experiencing maturity, to be responsible, or have the ability to truly care, if they haven't had a child. This upholds and perpetuates dominant notions of femininity that suggest that to be a mother is to be natural, womanly, whole. The non-mothers in this group believe that the love they can feel for other human beings, or for pets, can be just as meaningful, while recognising that this form of love is a 'different type of love'. What has also been identified is the gendering of the concept of love as being central to women's experience, which is constructed in popular texts and performed through female identities (Berlant, 2008; Evans, 2003). As Rachel highlights through identifying the gendered differences between the mother and father roles, in relation to the love bond with a child: 'it's an idea of what a woman should be thinking'.

Other participants, including the mothers, also rejected this statement. Not only did the mothers share the reality that women don't always love their own children (Carrie: 'It's that whole mythology around maternal love… you can hate them more than any other person'), but both mothers and non-mothers talked about the love they felt, and still feel, for pets, step-family, and friends' children, and that the feelings associated with love are not, as has been constructed in the texts, so inflexible, fixed, but which have many shades[2]. Sonja was able to describe how love as a feeling mutated in relation to how she felt about her partner, her horses, and her son. Although she recognised the love for her child as being powerful, Sonja also empathised with and related to Jackie, who has no children, and is bisexual. Jackie shared the feelings of love she felt for her nieces, and her friends'

children:

> Jackie: Well, I feel that about my nieces, and kids that I've looked after for eight years.

> Sonja: I actually felt like that about horses I looked after when I was a kid.

> Jackie: I love them to death.
> Sonja: And that you'll always love them, and nothing would ever stop you from loving them.

> Jackie: Even when technically they aren't my kids.

> (Sonja and Jackie, mixed mothers focus group, 2015)

This illustrates that bonds of love can, and are, formed with a range of beings, animal and human, with no biological or romantic connection. The relationship between animals and humans, as illustrated by Sonja's love of her horses when she was a child, is particularly revealing. This love attachment to animals, which has been noted as acutely strong in relation to horses (Birke and Hockenhull, 2012, 2016; Charles, 2014, 2016; Charles and Davies, 2008; Smart, 2011), shows how animals become deeply embedded within family lives. Nickie Charles (2014) has described these human-animal kinship bonds a 'multi-species household' (2014: 12). Charles has proposed such kinship structures can be called a post-human family, where humans and animals co-habit – animals considered valued family members (Charles, 2014; Fudge, 2008; Haraway, 2007). This exchange between Jackie and Sonja also demonstrates how women from different subject positions, situated on opposing sides of the binary – heterosexual/lesbian, mother/non-mother – are able to relate to each other's experiences of meaningful love bonds, which indicates the potential for a coalition politics which will be explored in Chapter 8.

The findings in the audience data infer, in opposition to what is being portrayed in the texts under analysis, that deep love connections can be developed with a

range of subjects, across a range of communities, that do not have to rely so obsessively on the genetic tie. As Warner (1999) and Halberstam (2011) suggest, straight culture can learn from gay culture; in this context, particularly through the intervention of reproductive technologies that can bend and reshape the contours of family. Interestingly, this reveals a tension – reproductive technologies can be used to reinforce normative heterosexual families as well as make them. As Warner argues: 'against assimilation, one could insist that the dominant culture assimilate to queer culture, not the other way around. Straight culture has already learned much from queers, and it shouldn't stop now' (1999: 74).

Queering kinship

> I'm very open-minded about the family and all its permutations, but I still think that our society isn't very tolerant. It may become more normalised over time, but right now I think it's quite difficult.

> (Carrie, mixed mothers focus group 2015)

Although Carrie was responding to how the narratives in the texts concluded through the normalisation of the family unit, her comment was also referring to how same-sex parenting must be construed to become accessible, due to social and cultural intolerances to identities and practices of family outside of the heteronormative, as discussed in Chapter 5. What is important to highlight here, is how such intolerances have been integral to the resignifications of family (Butler, 1993) that have emerged through gay and black communities, which, I argue, drawing on Warner (1999), straight culture could learn from.

Historically, gay and black communities have created an alternative version of family to create bonds between social and political allies, but which have also strengthened communities, for survival. For example, gay communities in the 1980s developed new family connections through the impact of AIDS, by caring for the dying (Calhoun, 2000; Weston, 1991), and also through new articulations of kinship which surfaced through ball culture in America, an underground drag scene that emerged in Harlem as far back as 1869, but which became more visible

in the 1930s (Chauncey, 1995). Initially a space for white gay men to socialise, ball culture later became popular within black and Latino LGTBQ communities in the 1960s-1970s by providing a safe environment, and a space of resistance, at a time when homophobic hate crime was rife. With a strong link to high fashion and dance music, ball culture became more visible, globally, through artists such as Madonna, whose hit record *Vogue* (1990) brought the scene's dance style 'voguing' to mainstream culture[3]. The same year the now critically acclaimed documentary *Paris is Burning* (1990) was released, which captured ball culture in 1980s New York. The film encapsulated how the LGTBQ community of primarily blacks and Latinos expressed their identities in response to the white, heterosexual and middle-class mainstream.

Within ball culture 'houses' were created to symbolise family structures. These new families acted as a support network for the LGBTQ community, many of whom were African American youth affected by HIV/AIDS[4], who had been ejected from their homes (Arnold and Bailey, 2009). These 'house' categories were headed by the figure of the drag 'mother', who would mentor the newcomers, the 'children', and often provide them with a home and shelter. In her analysis of *Paris is Burning* and ball culture, Butler (1993) argues that the resignification of kinship relations is 'not a vain or useless imitation, but the social and discursive building of community, a community that binds, cares and teaches, that shelters and enables' (1993: 137). Ball culture, she claims, is the frame that houses these new sets of kinship relations.

Ball culture is not central to this discussion, so cannot be explored in depth. However, its structure as a community is important to mobilise in relation to the emergence of alternative formations of family, through the resignification of family categories, and how these responses to normative discourses are problematic. Butler (1993) claims that through the appropriation and redeployment of these terms, kinship relations can be reformed that function as an oppositional discourse, which exhibits the potential to transcend the traditional family unit through a subversion of norms. However, it can be suggested that even through a re-interpretation of family, the dominant hierarchical, heteronormative structure is still imposed. This is a pattern that has also been identified in the formation of

same-sex parenting and marriage, where family structures have been modelled on heterosexual norms such as lifelong monogamy, rituals and heterosexual romance (Folger, 2008), as discussed in Chapter 5. I argue, drawing on the audience data, that a wider range of alternative family structures must be recognised, that illustrate a critical rethinking of family that involves a network of friends and family in a 'plurality of intimate and familial norms' (Calhoun, 2000).

Through the long history of black communities in America, extended kinship structures have been formed to act as familial networks, not just for emotional support, but for the pooling of resources to survive. What materialised through these communities was a counter-narrative of family, also recognised in the drag families of ball culture. Terms such as 'sister' and 'brother' were appropriated by feminism during the Civil Rights Movement as a mark of respect for political allies; terms that were initially employed within black communities as a gesture of racial solidarity to make meaningful – make as *real* as blood ties – non-biological connections. As Roberts (1995) claims: 'blood ties are less significant to the definition of family in the Black community than they have traditionally been for white America' (1995: 214).

The complexities of this appropriation into white feminist culture are important, specifically in relation to the notion of extended kinships networks. It is important to emphasise that these terms are implicit to black culture. As civil rights activist Pat Rosezelle (1995) outlines, the origin of the sister/brother terms are a legacy from slavery, when as the result of the fragmentation of families, new families were created and new allegiances and bonds were formed. As she argues: 'When people are bastardized, raped, and fragmented from their families, they have to create a family' (in Friedman & Weiss, 1995: 139). Furthermore, Rosezelle emphasises that 'sister' and 'brother' are not only terms of respect – which signify community, solidarity and affection – but are used as a political act, to acknowledge a connection to those who have been disrespected through racism.

It is understandable that the appropriation of these revised kinship terms by white culture, particularly white feminism, can be viewed as problematic despite good intentions, through the imbalance of power and privilege (Lugones and Rosezelle,

1995)[5]. However, while acknowledging this, the notion of 'fictive kin' is useful to mobilise in the discussion of alternative family formations, which includes non-biological family memberships within gay communities. Weston (1991) describes these alternative family memberships as 'chosen families' (1991: 116) which she argues is a concept that aims to act as a contrast to heterosexual biological units. However, as Calhoun (2000) correctly points out, such formations are derived from the fictive kinship of historical black culture, and which also 'characterizes the reality of many heterosexual families who fail in various ways to construct a nuclear family around a procreative married couple' (2000: 150). However, through the utilisation of these structures it is imperative to emphasise there is no intention to retract from the tenor of their origins, but they have been employed to illustrate how family structures can, and have, functioned in meaningful ways, in different forms, outside of the convention of genetic ties, which are rendered invisible in these texts.

Extended kinship structures and meaning attached to non-genetic bonds of love have emerged as significant to all of the focus group participants, regardless of their differing positions to motherhood. Even the younger group of women recognised the value of kinship outside of the genetic bond. As Rhian (pre-mothers focus group) stated: 'I don't think it matters if you give birth to the child or not, even when you adopt a child you love it as much as if you've given birth to it. I think it's about your mindset, and how you love them as they grow up'.

Tara (non-mothers focus group) talked about how meaningful bonds were formed through the breaking up of her once normative family unit, into a new, alternative shaped family structure:

> I love my stepbrother even though he's not… and I say he's my brother. And he doesn't look like me, but I always say: "yeah, he's my brother". It's how you form bonds and love people.
>
> (Tara, non-mothers focus group 2015)

Tara described the love she feels for her stepbrother, with the same value as if he

were a blood-related brother, regardless of there being no family resemblance. She regards her love for him as real. Tara's example demonstrates the reality of heterosexual families that re-form through combining families post-divorce or separation, which results in an extended family that features a mixture of genetic and non-genetic relations (Calhoun, 2000; Park, 2013; Weston, 1991). This also applies to the re-structuring of the nuclear family when a parent comes out as gay.

These revised family structures disassemble long established notions articulated through popular culture, politics and law that infer that biological ties are associated with straight families (real families, normative), which positions non-genetic family formations as weaker (unreal, non-normative), such as chosen families within the black and gay communities (Park, 2013). However, interestingly, with the growing popularity of same-sex couples opting for surrogacy arrangements, having a genetic connection is still not enough to assimilate into the normative, as has been shown through the discussion of the texts – natural pregnancy through heterosexual love having been identified as the most desired outcome. As the recent changes in surrogacy laws in India and Thailand have dictated, only heterosexual couples now need apply. Gay couples and single persons are prohibited from the process. It is important to highlight that it is only a short time ago that same-sex relationships have been recognised by the legal system. Homosexuals and lesbians are still excluded from marriage in some countries, and as Calhoun (2000) has emphasised, not long ago gay and lesbian parents have been viewed by the courts as harmful to children.

The invisibility of extended and/or chosen families in these texts' narratives exposes a core anxiety of a woman remaining uncoupled and childless. The concern surrounding this outcome expresses the fear that reproductive technologies are separating sex from reproduction *and* that the biological nuclear family unit is under threat, due to the more alternative kinship structures that are becoming continually more visible socially, yet are not being articulated through mainstream contemporary culture. This is evident in the construction of familial norms in relation to the genetic connection, the purification and preservation of whiteness and white privilege, and the heterosexual romance narrative, which shapes all of the texts in focus.

Where Oliver (2012) has proposed that the anxieties of separating sex from reproduction are placated by narratives bringing them back together, I argue, inspired by the audience data, that we have now witnessed a further shift, that narratives are attempting to reconcile the breakdown of conventional heterosexual family, not just by reassuring us that men are not obsolete in the reproduction process, but by keeping alternative family formations out of the frame – unless, like the homosexual couple in *The New Normal*, they conform to hetero-norms. As Franklin (1990) argues, any forms of kinship outside of the traditional biological unit – adultery, single parents, illegitimacy, gay – is named and stigmatised as a 'lesser form of parenthood' (1990: 222). I argue that this is precisely what the narratives of these texts are doing by rendering alternative families invisible. They are also positioned as the losers in the story – as family outlaws. As Calhoun (2000) explains:

> At the same time that gay men and lesbians were publicly claiming to have genuine marriages and families of their own, it was becoming increasingly clear that heterosexuals were deviating in multiple ways from the conventional model of the two-parent, nuclear family. As in previous periods, constructing lesbians and gay men as dangerous outlaws to the family, diverting attention from heterosexuals' own choices to create multiple, new family arrangements that undermine the hegemony of the traditional family. In addition, the equation of heterosexuality with family values and homosexuality and lesbianism with hostility to the family serves to motivate loyalty to a traditional conception of the family. It also renders suspect some of the alternative family arrangements that heterosexuals might be inclined to choose, such as supportive, family-like relationships between women involved in single parenting (2000:153-4).

I believe this diversion is reflected in the texts, which also resonates with Cavalcante's (2014) concept of anxious displacements, which is where excess anxiety is projected away from homosexual characters onto those in their orbit. I propose that through the post-modern family being situated outside of the representational frame, excess anxiety is being projected away from the

conventional family unit, which is in decline, and onto any other alternative formations, situating them so far outside of the nuclear family frame that they disappear from view within mainstream popular culture. As seen in the work of Halberstam (2012), this perpetuates the notion that despite its flaws, heteronormativity is being articulated as the 'only game in town' (2012: 61).

As highlighted in the previous chapter, ideologies of completeness, natural reproduction, romance, heterosexuality and whiteness have been identified in the analysis. However, in addition, and which will be central to the discussion here, is how the three focus groups (mixed mothers, non-mothers, and pre-mothers) have predominantly taken an oppositional position to the texts' narratives. I argue this is a form of resistance to the dominant discourses that have been identified.

What has also emerged, through the participants' discussion of love in relation to the attainment of a genetic child, is an eagerness to represent a wider range of creating families that do not *have* to be driven and created by genetic reproduction and the traditional family unit, but families that are created through more expansive notions of love. I argue that this is significant, as what has been identified in the audience data is a desire to embrace a counter-narrative of family, one which has been described by queer family scholars as fictive kin (Calhoun, 2000)[6] and chosen families (Weston, 1991).

Drawing on the participants' resistance to the core discourses in the texts, I argue that the cultural articulations of love and family in relation to the surrogacy storylines must be revised. Conventional family structures do not have to be positioned as aspirational for heterosexuals, homosexuals and lesbians to be deemed as respectable, moral citizens; and happy endings don't have to rely on the miracle of natural pregnancy or the building of family based on the genetic tie. It is also acceptable to portray positive female characters outside of motherhood.

Therefore, I propose that there is a desire for the dominant cultural space to articulate a more progressive, non-normative vision of family, alongside, but not necessarily instead of, the more traditional family unit, which as I have argued, has been constructed in the popular texts under analysis. I suggest, inspired by

the research findings, that these alternative families can be built on a community of loved ones, not purely confined to the monogamous heterosexual couple dyad and the normative nuclear family unit, but built on a range of *connections* and alternative intimacies (Calhoun, 2000; Halberstam, 2011; Lehr, 1999; Weston, 1991). These 'chosen' families can include friends, lovers, couples, singles, mothers, non-mothers, gay, straight, genetic and non-genetic children, step families – even neighbours and animals (Halberstam, 2011). I argue this non-normative vision of family reflects more accurately the shift in kinship structures that exist in modern life, and which make valid, and normative, a range of identities for women (and men) which are not purely shaped through compulsory heterosexually.

I also propose that this research has revealed a space for a coalition politics between heterosexuality and homosexuality, categories that have tended to be so rigidly divided. Cohen (1997) has argued that heterosexuality should not be viewed as monolithic, and that heterosexuals can also feel marginalised by dominant ideologies of normative family and reproduction. While recognising that heterosexuality is a privileged identity position in comparison to homosexuality and lesbianism, I argue that the audience data supports this position.

Furthermore, through highlighting similarities, and by illuminating how oppressed subject positions of race, class, gender and sexuality have been made invisible, or subordinated, in the representations in focus, I propose that space must be made in the representational frame to include a range of kinship structures that are not solely focused on racial purity, and genetic bonds. I argue that the alternative intimacies that have emerged in queer and black culture would be helpful to draw upon for more varied cultural articulations of family, and that these kinship formations can transcend and dismantle the perpetuation of the myths and fantasies of normative family, which are embedded in these texts – narratives that imbue dominant ideologies of white classed privilege anchored in the preservation of the genetic tie.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This chapter discusses the main conclusions of this research, and from this, will examine the wider implications for further research. I outline the key themes that have emerged through the analysis of surrogacy narratives in popular mainstream TV and film, primarily through the ideologies of heterosexuality, completeness, whiteness, romance and natural reproduction, which have materialised through the audience data. I explain, by drawing on these findings, how these texts are shaped through beliefs surrounding femininity, motherhood, infertility, sexuality and family. I argue, due to this, why research in this area is important, and why it deserves further study.

Picture imperfect

The initial aim of this study was to explore how the participants made sense of the practice of surrogacy through its representation on popular platforms of TV and film. One of the central research questions selected to support this aim asked what the narratives of surrogacy in the shows selected for analysis represent in relation to patriarchy, motherhood and family. The findings presented in Chapter 4 offer some enlightening responses to this. Focusing on two texts, *Giuliana & Bill* and *Coronation Street*, the participants discussed how the surrogates and the intended mothers were positioned in the visual frame (on the screen), how they were constructed as characters within the narrative, and what this implied in regard to the imbalance of power between them. In the context of this chapter, this was recognised through how the surrogate Delphine in *Giuliana & Bill* was represented, with the participants stating that her lack of physical voice and increasing disappearance off the screen inferred quite unashamedly that she was being positioned as subordinate to the intended mother, Giuliana.

Through the participants being able to acknowledge the disparities of privilege and power between the two characters due to how they were portrayed, a specific type of user of reproductive technologies was identified – white, coupled, heterosexual and middle class. This is significant as this specific type presented in the texts is

also reflected in the ideal category of the user that is constructed through media and medical discourses of infertility. By identifying this ideal user, it was argued that subjects positioned outside of this constructed ideal were marginalised from dominant representation through race, social class, sexual orientation and marital status. The audience data showed that the surrogate Delphine was underrepresented in the narrative, and on the screen. Therefore, I was able to conclude through textual analysis that an inclusion in the frame would disturb the norms of conventional family that the texts were aiming to reinforce. It can also be proposed that such norms also drive the reproductive technologies agenda, despite notions that technologies, when embraced by same-sex parents, are able to bend norms by creating new formations of family. This was identified through the participants recognising how the representations worked to attach value to the genetic connection, heteronormative (and homonormative) monogamy, and women's role in reproduction, either through adopting a maternal identity (as the intended mother) or through assisting the production of a child (the surrogate). The ideology of racial purity, although indistinctly pointed to through the audience data, was identified primarily through textual analysis.

Furthermore, the complexities of engaging with reproductive technologies that arose in the discussions between the participants also emerged as noteworthy, explicitly in relation to the wider implications of the pressures put on women's reproductive obligations that they were unsettled by. The main difficulty that was identified in the texts by the participants was the lack of alternative choices outside of motherhood represented to mainstream television audiences, which became a dominant theme throughout the project. Despite the participants showing an understanding of the transformative disciplinary power of reproductive technologies, the fundamental message they pinpointed – that they understood as being core to these two texts, and throughout all of the texts in focus – is that the goal of the narrative for the female characters is to get the baby, no matter what, 'by hook or by crook' (Sonja, mixed mothers focus group). However, as they highlighted, this was conditional on the female subject being of a privileged status, which allows them access to reproductive technologies.

As was identified by both participants and the textual analysis, this privileged status was predominantly white, heterosexual, and middle class. This therefore helped precede the primary conclusion in this chapter that certain classed, sexually orientated and raced bodies are excluded from representation, situated outside of normative white heterosexual culture which steers the narratives, positioning them as deviant, non-normative. This finding is important as such representations illuminate which bodies are considered culturally compatible with motherhood and family, and which are not, which as aforementioned also reflects the central beliefs inferred through medical discourses. As Franklin (1990) proposes: 'popular representations are a powerful force in the social world and cultural construction of reproduction' (1990: 227).

Race in relation to reproductive technologies has also emerged as of core importance in this thesis. Scholars in this field, particularly Roberts (1995; 1996; 2000), have explored the way images of the practice are constructed and mediated to denote white privilege through policies and news stories, which Roberts has argued is symbolic of the preservation of the genetic tie, which signifies the importance of racial purity. The genetic tie in relation to acquiring a child – through surrogacy or natural pregnancy – is also a core theme that has been identified as significant throughout this thesis. I believe the discussion of how certain bodies are excluded from the representational frame, alongside how black bodies are articulated within the texts – in relation to reproductive technologies, maternal abilities, and the support of white happiness – has engaged with and developed Roberts' work. As Roberts highlights in her discussion of the genetic tie as a social import, which I believe deeply resonates with core themes of race within this work:

> The genetic tie plays a role in constructing several dimensions of identity; it helps to define that person, the family, and the nation. It may inspire an intimate bond between a parent and a child, as well as constitute a legislated prerequisite for inclusion in an entire race of people (1995: 211).

Like Roberts, and to some extent, Oliver (2012), who has explored representations of race and pregnancy in Hollywood films, I too have been able to

identify and discuss racial subtexts, but through exploring contemporary texts, and their reception, with a specific focus on surrogacy. Furthermore, Roberts' proposition that a more alternative vision of family is possible outside of the genetic tie, inspired by black communities, has also been engaged with inspired by the research findings – to be discussed further on.

I feel for you

Two of the central research questions asked how, and if, narratives of surrogacy are articulated differently due to the varying techniques of each genre, and what impact these techniques may have had on how the participants understood the practice. The texts that were selected for the focus group viewing sessions included sitcom, documentary, drama, Hollywood mom-com, reality TV and soap opera – a wide range of genres specifically chosen for this purpose. However, documentary and drama were excluded. This was decided upon to narrow the focus for the thesis; analytical attention paid to not only more popular mainstream texts, but to those texts with stronger surrogacy storylines.

Although the findings from the textual analysis and the audience data for these two genres have not been used here, they are not wasted, as this is still deemed valuable material which can be mobilised for a further project on genre at a later date. In addition, the research work that was undertaken on these genres, particularly documentary, was utilised for the genre analysis component of this project, which was valuable, as it materialised that its core techniques have influenced the body of work in focus, specifically *The New Normal*. Participants detected the appearance of what looked like the use of a hand-held camera 'zooming around' (Rose, pre-mothers focus group), a technique from cinema verité that is intended to create a fly-on-the-wall perspective.

What surfaced as meaningful in the audience data was how effective the genre techniques actually were in evoking emotional responses from the viewers, particularly by enabling a connection with the main characters. It was interesting to establish which genre techniques were successful in generating emotional and

empathetic responses from the participants, and which weren't, in relation to how the different genres constructed emotions in the texts. This was established by analysing the narrative building of shots, sequences of scenes, camera work, acting style, positioning of characters, dialogue and close-up shots. Through this analysis what emerged as significant was how this worked – or how it didn't work – on the viewers. As Carroll emphasises: 'Through critical prefocusing we could say that the filmmaker leads the horse to water. But the circuit is not completed until the audience drinks' (in Gorton, 2009: 79).

During the discussion of *Rules of Engagement* and *Giuliana & Bill*, participants showed they were much more able to relate to the emotions expressed by the leading female infertile character Audrey in *Rules of Engagement*, through 'emotional stimulation' (M. Smith, 1995: 97) than with Giuliana in *Giuliana & Bill*. This is where the viewers are able to project themselves into the scene and empathise with the character's situation. Although both of these shows were the least liked by viewers, *Giuliana & Bill* was the most disliked – the participants viewed the couple as narcissistic, and the production of the show insincere and distasteful. This therefore indicates a failure of the construction of emotional stimulation in the text. Although this is a reality TV genre, it did not paint an empathetic picture of surrogacy to the participants, primarily due to what they believed was a disrespectful under-representation of the surrogate, as discussed in the previous section. It was not just how she is physically positioned on the screen/within the frame, but through a distinct lack of vocal presence. In short: the audience refused to drink the water.

In contrast, *Coronation Street* aroused the most compassion and understanding of the surrogacy practice out of all of the texts that were viewed, particularly being able to empathise with the infertile character, Izzy. The participants identified key genre differences between the shows, and formed more meaningful emotional connections with the text through how the genre techniques articulated the practice. This emerged through how the narrative structuring and characterisations were able to communicate the complexities of surrogacy, principally by identifying the maternal power struggle between the two women – the surrogate (the birth mother) and the intended mother (the genetic mother). The

focus groups believed *Giuliana & Bill* – as a show and as characters – to be insincere, fake, and at times nauseating to watch, 'like eating a bag of sweets' (Carla, mixed mothers focus group). In contrast, *Coronation Street* was thought of as more sensitive to the issues, by not only showing multiple viewpoints of the characters involved, which is one of soap opera's central genre devices, but also through how information on the practice was incorporated into the narrative through the scripting. As explained by Rebecca (non-mothers focus group): 'You got the most information about it all – the procedures *and* the feelings and emotions'.

A key finding, therefore, is that soap opera's techniques of executing the surrogacy narrative was the most successful in being able to encourage the participants to be the most sensitive and empathetic to a representation of the practice, despite the TV show being fictional. This was primarily due to the way empathy for the characters are shaped through its narrative devices of exploring emotionally complex issues through multiple viewpoints, which are able to engage audiences through the structure of sympathy. Furthermore, it can be argued that this effective engagement with the characters is also the result of the serial form of the soap opera – where characters are shaped over longer periods of time – the melodramatic women-centred direction of the genre which magnifies the disruptions and resolutions of the storylines, which keep the viewers hooked, and the reflection of elements of real life, that can be complex.

Although all of these genre elements can also be identified in the production of *Giuliana & Bill,* the impact was not as fruitful. It can be suggested that this is due to the characters having already been recognised as celebrities prior to the show, with the narrative focus purely on them, and not the surrogate, and the differences in the production of the show due to it being a more docusoap style of reality TV show, which prioritises entertainment value over more meaningful social issues (Bruzzi, 2001). For example, the hosting network E! is a celebrity and entertainment news channel which flags up its other entertainment shows during airing. It was this, specifically, that some of the participants thought was distasteful in relation to the practice of commercial surrogacy deserving a more sensitive representation.

Playing it straight

A key research question asks what the narratives of surrogacy represent in relation to notions of not just motherhood, but family. It has been identified that narratives in all of the texts revolve around a central notion that a couple must have children, ideally genetically related to at least one parent, to complete their family – to be considered a *real* family. As Sonja (mixed mothers focus group, 2015) emphasised: 'It's not a gay or straight thing – the concept of family not being a family unless there are children involved'. What Sonja highlighted, which materialised as a core finding in the research, is that conventional notions of family are also embedded in the central narratives of *The New Normal* and *Rules of Engagement*, which feature homosexual and lesbian characters. Also, to some extent, in *Baby Mama*, due to the lesbian connotations between the intended mother and the surrogate.

It emerged in the audience data that representations of homosexual men, such as characters Bryan and David in *The New Normal*, must be seen to express a desire for a genetic child, within a monogamous relationship, to be viewed as normal. As Jackie (mixed mothers focus group, 2015) pointed out: 'it makes them more acceptable'. Through this recognition of how same-sex relationships are normalised in the narrative, it was argued that to become normal, to be ordinary, was a desire that had to be exhibited by a homosexual to be able to assimilate into the mainstream, to be part of an acceptable community – to be tolerated. *Queer straightness* was a concept I introduced and applied to the analysis to describe this process of straightening. Extending Ahmed's (2010) work on straightening devices, which defines how certain scripts of happiness are used to align bodies within compulsory heterosexuality, *queer straightness* demonstrates a direction, or a set of behaviours and living practices, which homosexuals must embrace to avoid being considered unnatural.

The key conclusion here was that the notion of homosexuality as a lifestyle – sexual practice removed from view, to be discussed below – is only tolerable if presented as showing an allegiance to the family ideal: two parents, romantic love, a genetic child, and a family home. I believe this to be a poignant revelation that

has been identified in the data – a process of normalisation that doesn't challenge straight culture, but mirrors it – the primary aim to placate social anxieties of homosexuality (and lesbianism), under certain terms. As has been revealed through this research, for LGBTQ television representations to be accepted into the mainstream, the character constructions and the narratives within which they reside must adhere to the heteronormative – to traditional notions of family. In short, queers must behave to make it onto primetime television and film. As Warner (1999) highlights in relation to heterosexual dominance and media representations, but which can now be applied to these more contemporary cultural articulations of homosexuality and family:

> People are constantly encouraged to believe that heterosexual desire, dating, marriage, reproduction, childrearing, and home life are not only valuable to themselves, but the bedrock on which every other value in the world rests. Heterosexual desire and romance are thought to be the very core of humanity… It is the one thing celebrated in every film plot, every sitcom, every advertisement (1999: 47).

While it is important to acknowledge the argument that such representations might challenge, or destabilise, conventional ideals of family, by exhibiting a resistance to dominant norms, they are problematic as such narratives reproduce norms and mainstream values. For example, the final equilibrium of *The New Normal* mirrors the endings of the other texts under analysis. This idea of the sexual disciplining of gay characters to enable reproduction was also identified in the representation of the lesbian surrogate, Brenda, in *Rules of Engagement.* By becoming a surrogate Brenda is removed from a lesbian relationship and relocated into the heterosexual couple's home, where she is monitored during her pregnancy. The couple acquires the genetic child that they were so desperate for, to become a *real* family – happy, complete. Therefore, despite bending norms by inserting gay characters into conventional family structures, the norms flex back into a similar shape, although slightly distorted. Furthermore, what has also surfaced as noteworthy in relation to this idea of straightening gay characters to make them more acceptable, primarily to mainstream heterosexual audiences, was that to do so, sexual intimacy between same-sex couples has to be eradicated, disciplined,

through the notion of monogamy, domesticity and romantic love, which is placed at the forefront of the narrative. Sexual intimacy is obscured to pave the way for the child. This is a concealment, which I believe can only be aided by the separation of sex from reproduction. Gay visibility is therefore only tolerated as long as it is acknowledged as an identity, and not performed as a sexual act.

It was also proposed that this normative shape, created by impressions of heteronormativity (Ahmed, 2006) had been formed through how the homosexual characters have been constructed in relation to normative notions of parenthood and family. I decided one way to explore this was through detecting traces of the lesbian concept of butch/femme in the construction of the homosexual characters. Through this pairing of gender traits, it was argued that conventional gender roles were adhered to (masculine/feminine, man/woman, father/mother) to make same-sex parenting more palatable to mainstream audiences. Employing butch/femme as a flexible concept worked as an analytical lens, as the masculine/feminine roles in relation to the construction of same-sex couples also re-emerge in the ambiguous relationship between the two women in *Baby Mama.* This performance of masculine/feminine traits which surface through the father/father and mother/mother roles have been drawn from a 'masculinization of motherhood' (Lam, 2015: 33) inspired by Paula's (non-mothers focus group, 2015) response to all of the representations of the intended mothers in the texts: 'They [the intended mothers] must feel the way a father must feel'. This statement describes anxieties in relation to maternal identity and position within the traditional parental frame, and refers to how the genetic mother has been removed from the gestational process. This statement materialised as particularly poignant throughout the whole thesis, as it clearly signifies a shift in the maternal role, and therefore, as argued, also creates a space to reassign gender traits, as seen in the performances of gender in the texts.

A main finding in relation to the changeability of gender traits, which was established as important to the participants, was how the use of the stereotype in the sitcom genre is employed to reinforce notions of femininity in relation to pregnancy and motherhood. Where it was supposed that femininity and masculinity are performed through the butch/femme model to make homosexual

parenting and coupling in *The New Normal* more digestible to mainstream audiences, a similar manipulation of character gender traits were also noted by the participants as important, particularly in relation to Brenda, the lesbian surrogate in *Rules of Engagement*. Brenda's shift from being portrayed as unwomanly to womanly, from masculine to feminine, through the pregnancy process was also argued to be a device by which to placate mainstream audience's anxieties of the disruption of normative reproductive processes.

Through the participants recognising how the stereotype works in the portrayal of lesbianism (and homosexuality) I was able to identify how conventional notions of femininity in relation to pregnancy and motherhood are reinforced, which I argued points to how heterosexist ideologies are embedded in the texts. This feminising, or as I have named them, drawing on Ahmed (2010), this *straightening* of the masculine lesbian through pregnancy provoked negative responses from many of the participants, regardless of their sexual orientation. However, it was the bisexual participant Jackie (mixed mothers focus group), who expressed how she thought the inclusion of lesbian (and homosexual) characters is better than no representation at all, and does in fact indicate an advance. Disappointingly, this finding echoes similar responses to compromises of lesbian representations made by writers of lesbian novels in the 1950s, such as *Spring Fire* author Vin Packer. This reflects feminist film theorists' beliefs that the narrative closure may be less important than making visible marginalised lives.

Although this idea of compromise in relation to lesbian representation warrants further exploration through audience research, to be discussed further on, what is important to focus on here in the context of this particular thesis is how lesbians are represented as culturally incompatible with motherhood. Brenda in *Rules of Engagement* is shown as having no interest in becoming a mother to her own genetic child, or wanting to keep the baby she is carrying for someone else. Kate and Angie in *Baby Mama* do not form a lesbian relationship and become same-sex parents to a child. The final equilibrium in the narrative is that they have their own genetic babies through normative heterosexual relationships, whether they remain coupled or not (the surrogate Angie splits from her partner but he remains in the parental picture). Through the initial search for texts that feature surrogacy

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storylines only the hit American medical drama *Grey's Anatomy* has a brief lesbian couple surrogacy storyline, which ends up with the couple divorcing (and no baby). This was not selected for focus group viewing as the drama genre was removed for focus. These representations show how ideological dominant notions of femininity are repeated. The findings in this thesis illustrate how the female-only audiences have resisted the dominant heterosexist encodings in the text's narratives in relation to lesbian (and homosexual) representations *and* representations of heterosexual female infertility.

All woman

A poignant finding that emerged through the research was how the participants not only rejected notions of femininity that are shaped in the texts, in relation to norms of motherhood and heterosexual coupling, but were also irritated by how the infertile/childless characters are positioned within the narrative. Focusing primarily on two key texts, *Baby Mama* and *Rules of Engagement*, the annoyance felt by viewers was that to be considered a real and complete woman, one has to become a mother, situated within a heterosexual couple dyad. Laura (non-mothers focus group) believed the texts were trying to say: 'You're not a real woman until you've had a child'. It was clear that for many of the participants that the necessity for the narratives to conclude in natural pregnancies, or in the acquisition of a genetic child through surrogacy, was exclusionary to other feminine identities. The defaulting to a normative image of family was also regarded as 'a cop out' (Jackie, mixed mothers focus group). This was due to the narrative not allowing space to explore more alternative endings. As pointed out by Carrie (same group): 'It's as if people can't quite cope with the idea of women who can't have children'.

What emerged as significant was how some of the participants were able to discuss their own experiences of feeling alienated and positioned as non-normative in their everyday lives, in relation to normative feminine ideals of motherhood and family, when discussing how the stories concluded. This was most revealing in relation to the key research question, which asked how the

representations of motherhood reflected women's own situated experiences of living in the world. Sally's (mixed mothers focus group) openness about her own experiences as a single and childless heterosexual woman, in particular, illuminated how heterosexual romance and specific notions of heteronormative motherhood are central to shaping some women's life narratives – as this research has revealed is evident both on and off screen. Just as the characters in the texts evoked social anxieties that needed to be placated with normative solutions, Sally also shared how during social engagements she would often be grilled about her identity as a woman in relation to motherhood and a monogamous heterosexual relationship, as if these attributes were seen as necessary for having social value and a primary requisite of femininity. Recounting a social event, she said: 'I was like, "hello! You know, actually my name is Sally, and would you like to learn something about me rather than these add-ons?"' In this statement Sally was describing herself as *already* whole and completed, anything outside of her already shaped identity was an added extra, which conflicts with the ideology of completeness which underpins all of the texts' narratives. Most importantly, these findings reveal how such notions of what it means to be a woman, which are shaped through the heterosexual romance narrative, are myths; myths which are prolific throughout popular culture. What has been identified in this thesis is that these myths are still being perpetuated through the characterisation and narrative construction in these contemporary texts. Like the non-mothers portrayed in the stories, Sally also felt she was being positioned on the outside of social norms.

Although the participants read the infertile female characters as heterosexual – and read the clearly signed lesbian characters as lesbian – a correlation between how the infertile characters are constructed and the lesbian subject position was drawn. This was due to identifying similarities between the two subject positions through how they both disturb the category 'woman', by being seen as incomplete. As I argued, the lesbian is also viewed as non-normative – seen as a failure to become a real woman, and a threat to heterosexual reproduction. Although this comparison was a risky approach to take, I believe it was an important one to make. My aim was to make it transparent in the discussion and analysis of the findings that the parallels drawn between the two positions in no way detract from the far more serious exclusionary practices (access to reproductive technologies,

parental legal status, cultural representations) which have, and still do, face lesbian women in modern life. This comparison was inspired through the participants' discussion of how the intended mothers on the screen are removed from the gestational process, which positions them as fathers. This created the narrative space for sexual identities and gender roles to perform more ambiguously in the texts, particularly seen in the portrayal of the two women in *Baby Mama*, which played with lesbian connotation. The core of the film's narrative focussed on the pair sharing a domestic space and the expectation of a child – despite the surrogate's pregnancy initially being faked – with no stable male partners present. Therefore, a queer reading open to possible erotic nuances in texts was deemed necessary, primarily by my own textual analysis in dialogue with the participants' responses, to unearth any heterosexist ideologies embedded in the text.

The analysis was able to reveal how all sexual ambiguities *and* infertility are erased through how the stories concluded – heterosexual romance, natural pregnancy. Drawing parallels between lesbian sexual identity and heterosexual infertility adds richness to the findings, and offers a progressive contribution to the field of queer media theory. However, I also recognise that this proposition should also be viewed as the instigator of a conversation that can, and should, be developed further, continuing to expand the use of the term *queer*, and to use it as a device to describe those who fail to comply to norms, which, as has been outlined, includes subject positions on both sides of the hetero/homo binary. This notion of failing to conform to norms chimes with Halberstam's (2011) work on queerness and failure. Halberstam (2011) argues that the winners in the story are always the white nuclear families – lesbians and homosexuals situated as the losers, the failures. To be represented as incomplete – in this discussion, as a lesbian or infertile heterosexual woman, as depicted in the representations under analysis – signifies loss, unhappiness. However, as Halberstam points out, there is strength in failing, in losing. Through failure she believes new possibilities open up – new pathways. Interestingly, this stance is reflected in Throsby's (2004) qualitative work on IVF failure, where it was only after some of the women in her sample stopped IVF that confidence was regained, and prosperous new

beginnings blossomed, primarily in being able to pursue and actualise their career ambitions.

Furthermore, the ideology of completeness – that a woman is not viewed as complete until she has become a mother – also resonates with how reproductive technologies function through a disciplinary power (Farquhar, 1996: Foucault, 1977). As discussed earlier in this chapter, it has been proposed that disciplinary power has the potential to have a transformative effect on the body, that is both 'liberatory and controlling' (Farquhar, 1996: 6). Controlling in the sense that, as described by Sonja (mixed mothers focus group) reproductive technologies puts additional pressure on women to reproduce, and liberatory through there being so many different options to consider. The participants recognised that the representation of surrogacy in the narratives performed as vehicle by which to enable the infertile female characters to become mothers by obtaining a genetic baby born through surrogacy. Any other lifestyle choices, such as deciding to not have children/become a mother, were blocked. All of the infertile female characters were portrayed as desperately wanting to have a genetic child, and were able, through the narrative, to use reproductive technologies to assist them. They were also able to have access to another woman's body to gestate their genetic child, to facilitate their maternal desire.

As the participants detected, the worst thing that could happen in these stories was for the female characters to 'not get the baby' (Carla, mixed mothers focus group), which would position them as failures by not conforming to feminine ideals, particularly if they chose a career over motherhood (Oliver, 2012). It was this obsessive drive to become a mother through any means possible that disturbed the participants the most. The audience data revealed that a heterosexual woman could not be imagined as anything other than a mother, domesticated and settled within a normative family unit – restored to a normative female position (Kuhn, 1982). 'Normal service', as Sonja described, had to be resumed at the end of every narrative. It was these dominant encodings in the texts that the participants rejected, as many felt that they would like to see different endings that are less conventional, with the female protagonists not getting the baby as the narrative conclusion. As Laura (non-mothers focus group) stated: 'It's great that these

fictional characters can get pregnant, but it's kind of a shame that it can't be left as you can't have kids, you know what I mean?... It would be interesting if someone wrote that into a story instead of doing the nice Hollywood ending'.

For the characters, it isn't just heterosexual love that rescues them from their infertility, but reproductive technologies also. 'By hook, or by crook', for the stories to be complete, the heterosexual women have to become mothers, which, as it emerged, is a desire that eclipses the romance narrative. In these stories, having a baby and becoming a mother is the dominant desire – more important than getting (or keeping) the man. As Rhian (pre-mothers focus group) pinpointed in her response to *Baby Mama*: 'There was no love at first but she wanted a child to love… otherwise your life is pointless'. Moreover, I argue one of the most significant aspects of this research project is how infertile heterosexual women are pictured as a reproductive threat to the future, which as pointed out by Carrie (mixed mothers focus group) is a core anxiety that shapes the narratives in all of the texts, one which she claims assumes that audiences would find it difficult to accept.

We are family

The participants oppositional reading of the majority of the texts under analysis is revealing in the sense that it exposed that a range of women, from a variety of different positions on motherhood, want to see different endings with a more progressive narrative shape to a woman's life, in relation to the normative path of motherhood and family. It was recognised by the participants that a woman's happiness and fulfilment should not be solely wrapped up in obtaining the happy object (Ahmed, 2010) of the genetic child, to become a mother. The participants also believed that alternative life paths should be made visible, positively, rather than portraying infertile/childless women as failures, and not wholly feminine, which is what these texts suggest. As Laura (non-mothers focus group) argued: 'It's not necessarily a sad ending if they [the intended mothers] can't have children, because we knew that from the beginning that they couldn't. If they have a child through surrogacy, they've got a child. It doesn't mean they have to get pregnant

by natural means to conclude the story, to complete her as a person and as a woman.' It was also felt by the participants that the emphasis was more on the characters' desire to transform into the mother identity through the acquisition of a child, rather than on the child itself. This was interpreted by some participants as selfish, and only enabled through a position of privilege – those who could afford to access reproductive technologies. This was particularly evident in the discussion of *Giuliana & Bill*, where it was felt that the baby was simply another object that was purchased to show off to the cameras.

A key finding in the research, in response to how the narratives in all of the texts under analysis are driven by the desire to acquire a genetic child, was the debunking of the myth of the love-at-first sight mother-child bond. As I have argued, the drive to become a mother by acquiring a genetic child has displaced the romantic love narrative from central focus – the search for love, and the romantic notion of falling in love, is now attached to the baby, rather than the man. It emerged as significant that Carrie and Sonja, the mothers in the focus groups, were not able to relate to the notion of the instant love-bond with the child at birth, and even throughout motherhood later on. They believed their experiences of motherhood were not reflected in the representations. They too felt excluded, similarly to Sally (mixed mothers focus group) who, due to being single and childless, explained how she felt positioned outside of dominant norms. Both Sonja and Carrie believed that maternal love is changeable – not instant or even presumed – but an affection that grows slowly over time. The mothers also expressed that there were moments when they didn't bond with, or even particularly like, their children at all. It was evident that admitting these feelings made them feel ashamed. Talking openly about these difficult issues in a women-only space offered a sense of relief, regardless of being in a mixed group of mothers and non-mothers. This demonstrates the value of employing the focus group as a method for this research project; as such a space can enable women to share their life experiences within a safe environment, through group conversations (Dimitriadis and Kamberelis, 2008; Wilkinson, 1999). This was noted as particularly meaningful as such expressions of motherhood are rarely made visible culturally in stories about family, and are a taboo, socially. As argued by Shari Thurer (1994), the good mother is a cultural invention, a myth, and that

most mothers feel guilt and shame about their maternal experiences in the shadow of such idealised constructions of motherhood that dominate cultural narratives. I was able to identify that the 'love spell' between mother and baby at birth is a motif adapted from prolific use in heterosexual romance narratives. The mothers in the focus groups clearly recognised these moments, and the mother-child bond, as being based in myth. As Carrie somewhat bravely stated: 'It's that whole mythology around maternal love… you can hate them [the children] more than any other person'. It's worth emphasising further how the lesbian surrogate is the only character in the texts that is depicted as having no emotional bond with the baby at the birth, which further emphasises the notion that motherhood and lesbianism are not compatible, and how a good mother must be heterosexually shaped in the narrative to be perceived by TV producers as acceptable to mainstream television audiences.

Furthermore, in relation to the baby love bond, the participants also rejected, regardless of their maternal status, race, class, or sexual orientation, the belief that authentic kinship bonds can only be formed through a genetic tie – whether that is a child produced through normative heterosexual love and natural pregnancy, or bonds with siblings and family members. Through the audience data I was able to identify how the narratives across all of the texts in focus imply that the genetic tie is symbolic of what it means to be a *real* mother (and father), a *real* child, a *real* family, which also has to be wrapped up in a white bundle, as the discussion of race, reproductive technologies and the genetic tie also revealed.

In response to these ideologies of normative family, heterosexuality, romance, whiteness and natural reproduction that were recognised in the texts, what emerged as insightful in the audience data was how meaningful attachments of love can be formed outside of the genetic bond, through a variety of kinship connections. In response to a scene in *Coronation Street* when character, Beth Tinker, delivers a line that expresses the belief that a person doesn't know real love until they've had their own child, the participants promptly discarded this notion through being able to share their own experiences of genuine and meaningful love that was not conditional on a genetic tie with a child. Many of the

participants were able to talk about their love bonds outside of their romantic relationships and/or genetic children, with humans and animals which they considered part of the family. This aspect of the research I found the most revealing, particularly as the value of the genetic tie with a child, in relation to the discourse of real family and real love, was identified as a fundamental goal throughout all of the texts selected for this project. There were some exceptions to this. Tina, the surrogate in *Coronation Street* – unlike the lesbian surrogate Brenda in *Rules of Engagement* – still fell in love with the baby, even though she was not genetically related to him. The participants believed the act of gestation and the birthing of the child created the close bond, as many of them also felt this was something they too would struggle with.

Through these discussions of more alternative forms of love, outside of genetic connections, a refusal to accept conventional notions of family was detected. What became apparent through this was the value of counter-narratives of family, which I was able to liken to the alternative kinship models that exist in urban poor, black communities and gay subcultures, which are described as fictive, or chosen families. A key research question asked: what do narratives of surrogacy represent in relation to patriarchy, motherhood and family? It has been made evident that the narratives of surrogacy, in the context of the value of the genetic tie, aim to perpetuate normative ideals of family through ideologies of heterosexuality, romance, whiteness and natural production – which in relation to the surrogacy storylines was positioned as the more preferable reproductive route – that shape the characterisations and narratives in the texts. However, it has transpired that the participants opposed this. Female viewers in my sample wished to see protagonists in the stories that might remain infertile, or childless, and still be situated in the 'proximity to okayness, without passing some test to prove it' (Berlant, 2008: 9). In this context, the test is falling pregnant naturally within a monogamous heterosexual relationship, or becoming a mother through surrogacy. Furthermore, the participants also wished to see a wider cultural acceptance and reflection of more alternative kinship structures, and to acknowledge different, but equally as valuable, forms of love that function outside of a genetic bond. The way the participants, from a variety of different subject positions, talked about how they loved their friends' children, their step siblings, or

their pets – as well as their own kids – was truly reflective of how love as a concept is more complex and elastic than has been articulated. This opposes the core encoding in the texts, that the genetic tie had to be created to make a family normative and complete. It has been evidenced here that this is not the case. It is important to note that there are left-of-mainstream cultural projects that *do* reflect alternative formations of motherhood and family. However, in the popular mainstream texts with surrogacy storylines that have been examined for this project, these have not been found.

Future work

To conclude this thesis, I would like to signal new research possibilities based on this project's contributions. This will include a discussion of not just how and why as a researcher I may wish to continue the research, but how the findings that I have collated may inspire other social scientists to pick up the analytical baton, in numerous possible ways, to expand upon what has already been realised.

Firstly, inspired by Cohen's (1997) call for coalition politics between heterosexuality 'and everything "queer"' (1997: 438), I believe this project has highlighted how divisions between identity boundaries need to be destabilised, and that further recognition is necessary to illuminate that non-normative practices of family and reproduction exist on both sides of the hetero/homo binary. In the texts that have been analysed for this thesis, such family formations have not been represented. Cohen has argued that such divisions must be destabilised rather than strengthened. The narratives in these texts are doing their work to reinforce norms of family through normative notions of femininity, family, masculinity and race, which in doing so strengthens these boundaries, even if they appear, at first sight, progressive. The audience data gestures a desire for a weakening of these divides, through representation; that notions of family, motherhood and a feminine identity can transcend those which are being shaped as the ideals through the narrative conclusions. I believe that future research can be developed through exploring further the similarities that have been drawn between the representations of marginalised subjects on both sides of the

heterosexual/homosexual binary, which I propose has potential to open up a new space for discussion within queer and feminist politics.

In addition, in the context of the discussion of how certain bodies are excluded from dominant representations – in relation to motherhood, reproductive technologies, and family – throwing a wider analytical net outside of solely surrogacy storylines would be revealing. Therefore, further research focusing on the cultural exclusions of these bodies would be worthwhile. Such a project would explore more deeply the cultural anxieties of motherhood outside of the preferred dominant maternal poster girl of the white, middle class, heterosexual woman – specifically lesbians, the disabled, and women of colour. This could further expose notions of what are considered acceptable representations of motherhood and reproduction in mainstream popular culture.

Furthermore, the representation of lesbianism and motherhood has emerged as being problematic, particularly in the context of normative notions of desirable femininity. Although this thesis has touched upon these issues by producing responses from lesbian and bisexual participants, it is not a lesbian-focused project. However, what *can* be highlighted is that further work is needed that addresses concerns of lesbian maternal representations more extensively. Not through textual analysis alone, but through audience reception with lesbian audiences. As one of the research questions asked, how do representations of motherhood, infertility and family reflect women's own situated experiences in the world? If motherhood and lesbianism isn't made visible, or is only shaped through certain heteronormative ideologies, then this sector of the female community is being excluded from dominant representations of family, which this research shows. Although this body of text-audience work on lesbian representation is growing (see Gilbertson *et al*, 2009; Lewis and Scanlon, 2016; Hallam and Marshment, 1994; Mckenna, 2002; Moore, 2009; Stacey, 1993) it is still an underdeveloped area, particularly through audience studies. As highlighted by Ruth Lewis and Julie Scanlon (2016), who have studied women's experiences of viewing lesbian representations on screen:

Scholarly analyses of the representation of LGBTQ characters on screen are plentiful. Less plentiful are qualitative empirical studies examining audience responses to representations of LGBTQ characters on screen. Such audience studies can afford an important insight into how audiences use such representations within their lives (2016: 3).

What has also surfaced as a prominent theme throughout the thesis, is what I have described as the delayed conception plotline. This is an extension of the term 'delayed consummation plotline' (Scodari in Battles and Hilton Morrow, 2002: 92), where the interaction of characters in the narrative is driven by the search for a romantic relationship. In this revision, the search for love has been eclipsed by the search for a genetic child. This plotline has been a central narrative driver in all of the texts under analysis. However, as a consumer of popular culture, I have noted that such a plotline is also becoming increasingly prolific in narratives across a variety of genres, from a variety of different medias. I believe this indicates additional research outside of surrogacy storylines would contribute further to the field of maternal studies. In addition, as highlighted in the Introduction chapter, a number of popular TV texts featuring surrogacy storylines have emerged since this research was completed, which warrant analysis – specifically *The Handmaid's Tale* (2017) and *Top of the Lake: China Girl* (2017). I therefore intend to pursue this research in separate projects.

Finally, I feel it is imperative to emphasise that the premise of this thesis is not to argue for the abolishment of the family, or for the liberation of women by removing their role in biological reproduction (Firestone, 1970), but to challenge the norms pervaded by the ideology of family and to make a space for alternative families, or no families at all. The 'should' in the ideology of normative kin-based families (Rapp *et al,* 1979) should be changed to 'shouldn't have to'. Family formations are now more diverse outside of the aspirational nuclear family model, which *should* be more widely reflected in popular culture. Furthermore, infertile subjects, as seen in the characters in the texts – or women who *choose* to live childfree – should be seen to be able to pursue alternative paths outside of normative motherhood without the anxieties and insecurities of not fitting in to dominant social norms.

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<u>Appendices</u>

Appendix 1: List of texts

Appendix 2: Description of the shows

Appendix 3: Description of the focus groups, locations, dates and list of participants

Appendix 4: Consent form

Appendix 5: Themes/coding

Appendix 1: List of texts

Sitcom	Soap
Rules of Engagement (E! 2009-2014) *The New Normal* (NBC, 2012-2013) *Friends* (NBC, 1994-2004)	*Coronation Street* (ITV, 1960-present) *Doctors* (BBC, 2000-present)
TV drama	**Reality TV**
Brothers & Sisters (ABC, 2006-2011) *The Good Wife* (CBS, 2009-2016) *Drop Dead Diva* (Lifetime, 2009-2014) *Grey's Anatomy* (ABC, 2005-present)	*Giuliana & Bill* (E! 2009-2014) *The Little Couple* (TLC, 2009-2016) *Kourtney & Kim Take Miami* (E! 2009-2013) *The Only Way Is Essex* (ITV2, 2010-2014, ITVBe, 2014-present)

Documentary	Film
Google Baby (HBO, 2009)	*The Brothers Solomon* (Revolution Studios, 2007)
Paternal Instinct (Cinemax, 2005)	*Baby Mama* (Relativity Media, 2008)
Breeders: A Subclass of Women? (CBC, 2014)	*The Surrogacy Trap* (Incendo, 2013)
Was That My Baby Crying? (NDTV, 2008)	*The Surrogate* (ABC,1995)
Addicted to Surrogacy (Channel 4, 2009)	*Filhaal* (Dharma, 2002)
Naître Père (De Films En Aiguille, 2013)	*Born to Be Sold* (Ron Samuels, 1981)
Made in India (PBS, 2010)	
Miniseries	
Baby M (ABC, 1998)	

Appendix 2: Description of the texts

Genre: Reality TV

Giuliana & Bill (E! 2009-2014)

Giuliana & Bill is a popular American reality TV show that follows the lives of E! News anchor, Giuliana, and her husband Bill Rancic. The show is driven by the couple's desire to have a child. Giuliana suffers several miscarriages and failed IVF treatment. She also discovers she has breast cancer, which she survives. The couple contract gestational surrogate, Delphine, to carry their genetic child. Their son Duke is born during Season 5 (2012).

Genre: Sitcom

The New Normal (NBC, 2012-2013)

The New Normal is an American sitcom that tells the story of LA-based homosexual couple Bryan and David as they contract single mother Goldie, a waitress from Ohio, to be their surrogate. Goldie and her young 8-year-old daughter Shania move into their home during the pregnancy. The cast includes Goldie's grandmother Jane, and Bryan's assistant and best friend, Rocky. The show was cancelled after one season.

Rules of Engagement (CBS, 2007-2013)

This American sitcom follows the lives of two heterosexual couples and their single heterosexual friend. The focus of this show for this project is the surrogacy storyline, in relation to married couple Jeff and Audrey. The couple are unable to conceive a child, naturally, due to Audrey's infertility, therefore they engage Jeff's best friend, Brenda, who is a lesbian, to be the surrogate. Due to pregnancy sickness, Brenda moves into the couple's home for the duration of her pregnancy. At the end of the season, during the last ever show, Brenda gives birth. Soon after, Audrey finds out she is pregnant, naturally.

Genre: Soap

Coronation Street (ITV, 1960-present)

A surrogacy storyline emerged in 2012, which ran until June 2013. Couple Gary and Izzy were unable to have a child of their own due to Izzy's disability disallowing her to carry a fetus to term. Their neighbour, Tina, needed money to pay of a large debt. Izzy's father Owen pays off Tina's debt under agreed surrogacy expenses, which is legally permitted in Britain. In addition, Owen also provides Tina and her partner Tommy with somewhere to live during her pregnancy. However, after giving birth to a boy, Jake, Tina bonds with the child and refuses to relinquish him to his genetic parents. In Britain, as the woman who gives birth to the child, Tina is the legal birth mother, despite not having a genetic tie. After weeks of feuding, Tina eventually decides to give Jake to Izzy and Gary.

Baby Mama (Universal, 2008)

Successful businesswoman Kate has been unable to find Mr. Right, and has been told by doctors she is infertile due to having an abnormal uterus. Kate is desperate for a child, so she contracts Angie from a surrogacy agency. Angie and her common-law husband, Carl, lie about the pregnancy as a scam to get paid the $10,000 fee. Angie breaks up with Carl and moves in with Kate. Angie then discovers, to her surprise, that she *is* actually pregnant, but with her and Carl's baby. Kate falls in love with Rob, who she meets through work. Despite falling out over the fake pregnancy, Kate is with Angie when she goes into labour, where she too discovers she is pregnant. The women remain friends.

Appendix 3: Description of the focus groups, locations, dates, and list of participants

3.1 – Description of the focus group structure

The session was divided into three sections: texts-in-action (Wood, 2009), a group discussion of the texts, followed by a game, Agree/Disagree (Kitzinger, 1994). The texts-in-action section of the group was when the participants were observed by the researcher viewing a number of clips from texts selected for analysis, as outlined in Appendix 2. The participants were given paper and pens if they wished to make notes and scribbles. The group interview was led by semi-structured questions, to help the participants discuss the clips in the order that they were viewed. This was then followed by a game called Agree/Disagree, which is where the groups were encouraged to put statements pulled from the clips into two columns. This method had been tested in a previous project.

All sessions were recorded using an iPhone – the audio files have been transcribed and stored on an external hard-drive.

Group 1 – Mixed mothers

This session took place on 24/1/15 at the researcher's home. The group were composed of women who all knew each other, and the researcher.

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Social class	Sexuality
Jackie	39	White American	Jewellery designer	Middle-class	Bisexual
Carla	42	White British	Acupuncturist	Middle-class	Heterosexual
Sonja	42	Anglo-Indian	Picture editor	Middle-class	Heterosexual
Carrie	43	Black Canadian	Secondary school teacher	Middle-class	Heterosexual
Nadra	38	White Irish	PR consultant	Working-class	Heterosexual
Sally	41	White British	Art restorer	Middle-class	Heterosexual

Table 2: Group 1 – mixed mothers

Group 2 – Non-mothers

The session took place on 7/2/2015 at Goldsmiths College, University of London in New Cross. The group were composed of women known to the researcher, but unknown to each other.

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Social class	Sexuality
Laura	37	White British	DJ	Working-class	Heterosexual
Tara	38	White British	HE Outreach Officer	Middle-class	Heterosexual
Rebecca	37	Anglo Indian	TV news producer	Middle-class	Heterosexual
Paula	22	Black British	Musician	Working-class	Heterosexual
Charlie	27	White British	International relocation manager	Middle-class	Heterosexual
Rachel	41	Black British	Poet	Working-class	Lesbian
Tanya	37	Anglo Indian	Events manager	Middle-class	Heterosexual

Table 3: Group 2 – non-mothers.

Group 3 – Pre-mothers

Due to term time schedules, this session was split across two parts on 27/2/15 and 22/4/15 during the school's lunch break. The group were composed of participants known to each other, but not to the researcher. The sections occupation and sexuality were omitted due to what was deemed relevant and appropriate.

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Social class
Rhian	18	Anglo Indian	Working-class
Fay	17	White British	Working-class
Rose	18	Turkish Cypriot	Working-class
Claire	18	White British	Working-class
Candice	17	White British	Working-class
Jess	18	Black British	Working-class

Table 4: Group 3 – pre-mothers.

Appendix 4: Consent form

CONSENT FORM

Full title of Project: Surrogacy – a new reproductive freedom?
An analysis of the representation of surrogacy across the popular media platforms of film and TV.

Name, position and contact address of Researcher:

Lulu Le Vay
Sociology Department
Goldsmiths, University of London
Lewisham Way
New Cross
London
SE14 6NW

Please initial box

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason. ☐

I agree to take part in the above study ☐

Please tick box

	Yes	No
I agree to the texts-in-action/group interview being audio recorded	☐	☐
I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications	☐	☐

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____
Name of Researcher   Date   Signature

Appendix 5: Themes/coding

Notes from the textual analysis sessions were divided into genres film, documentary, reality TV, sitcom, soap opera and TV drama, and condensed into an Excel spread sheet. Alongside the title of the text under analysis, the episode details and the date the text was viewed was also inputted. Three columns were entered – discourse, narrative and representation. The narrative column was broken down into the sub-columns of – the goal / equilibrium / disruption / resolution / final equilibrium. This mapping exercise was employed to identify key dominant discourses in the texts.

Genre			Discourse	Narrative	Representation
Reality TV					
Title	Episodes	Watched			
Guiliana & Bill	Season 5/Ep 12	6.8.14	Having a baby is the best moment of your life. Surrogacy is a last-resort option. Having a husband and a family is 'having it all'. Pregnancies are something to celebrate. The man is the head of the family. A woman who does not carry her own child is less maternal. Having a successful pregnancy through surorgacy is a miracle. Being thin is something to celebrate. A new baby can help advance careers. Family is priority. The surrogate is not family. A male child is prefered. The continuation of the genetic line through the father is of utmost importance. Italian women are natural mothers. The husband is a better parent. The prefered baby nurse in the USA is black. The husband is the authority. Every woman wants to experience pregnancy. The newborn baby knows its genetic mother. Surrogacy is the greatest gift a woman can give. Family resemblance is important. Being a surrogate is a job. A male sibling is the prefered choice. Surrogacy is a positive experience. Becoming a mother is the most natural thing in the world. Babies bring happiness and wholeness to a chldless family. It is possible to 'have it all'.	The goal – a baby/creating a family Equilibrium – technology and medicine helping an infertile couple have a family Disruption – failed IVF and then breast cancer. Resolution – turning to surrogacy and the engagement of a gestational carrier Final equilibrium – birth of baby, creation of a family, becoming the parents so desperately wanted to be.	Babies = happiness, joy. Family = wholeness, happiness, love / Pregnancy = gift, miracle / Thinness = success, value
	Season 5/Ep 13				
	Season 5/Ep 15				
	Season 5/Ep 16				
	Season 5/Ep 18				
	Season 5/Ep 21				
	Season 6/Ep 9				
	Season 6/Ep 21				

Notes

CHAPTER 2.1

1 Kelly Oliver's (2012) analysis of teen pregnancy in film *Precious* (2009) provides a good example of this. Precious is raped by her father, which produces 'reject' children with downs syndrome. Precious's mother is a 'welfare queen', who also abuses her, 'and if that is not enough, has AIDS' (2012: 16).

2 These competitions were run primarily by maternal feminists of the moral reform era, who dominated maternal medicine and childcare before male science took over.

3 An extreme example is Nazi eugenics, where those subjects identified as being 'lebensunwertes leben' (life unworthy of life), such as homosexuals and those with disabilities, were sterilised or killed in the promotion of the Aryan race.

4 For a wider debate on creating parents, rather than babies, see Charis Thompson (2005).

5 There has been an upsurge of literature on transnational and cross-racial surrogacy which has emerged due to surrogacy's growing popularity in India, and its increased visibility in the popular press (Harrison, 2016). A breadth of work examines the industry more closely from a global perspective, but this is not for exploration here.

CHAPTER 2.2

1 It is important to note that it is not just black women's bodies that have been intruded upon by state intervention – for a comprehensive discussion on forced abortion in China due the one child policy, see Jing-Bao Nie (2005).

2 Taylor rightly notes here that ultrasound images will become more advanced over time. Since her time of writing 3D and 4D scans are now available, which provide real-time development of the fetus which can be recorded and uploaded into a DVD, to be played on mobile devices or at home, which 'enables you to watch all the action in the comfort of your own home, or share on your mobile device, whether they're yawning, smiling or sucking their thumb' (Thelondonultrasoundcentre.co.uk).

3 The image of a heavily pregnant celebrity still has massive cultural impact, but across more contemporary platforms. Where Demi Moore graced the cover of *Vanity Fair* in 1991, which boosted magazine sales and subscriptions, R&B singer Beyoncé's pregnancy image posted on Instagram in February 2017 became the most liked image on the social media platform in its history, having chalked up over 11 million likes (at time of writing).

4 Oliver (2012) also connects the encouragement of white middle class reproduction in the nineteenth century to Sylvia Ann Hewlett's (2002) beliefs that 'young, middle-class, college-educated women have a duty to themselves and to their "nation" to have children while they can' (2002: 226).

5 In her work on class and gender Skeggs (1997) highlights how such conceptions around the welfare mother and crack babies in America have been recycled in Britain to describe working class single mothers as being a threat to the social order, through Conservative party politics in the mid-nineties.

CHAPTER 4

1 This is particularly significant in light of the current rise of xenophobia that has emerged in the rhetoric of both Brexit and Trump campaigns. It is also important to note, in light of this, that the majority of the shows in focus have been produced in America.

2 Briggs highlights the stark inequalities between American private insurance and Medicaid, which is the state health program that provides coverage for the vulnerable (disabled, elderly, pregnant women) and those who are categorised as low-income. 'Private health insurers in more than ten states are required to provide infertility treatments to their employees, but none of those states provide it as a Medicaid benefit. Although the U.S. Supreme Court has concluded that private

employers need not cover employee's birth control, Medicaid mandates it – without a co-pay – and also covers sterilization' (2017: 108).

[3] It is worth highlighting that although Giuliana is of Italian descent, as an Italian American she is categorised as white (Guglielmo and Salerno, 2003). Therefore, for the purpose of this analysis, she is to be considered white.

[4] It is important to note here that this discussion of IVF and surrogacy is reductive for focus, and that the processes can be far more complex – such as egg donation, egg donation *and* sperm donation, or three people IVF for mitochondrial disease prevention.

[5] A favourable route for lesbian couples is to share biological motherhood through the gestational mother receiving a donor egg from her partner, through an IVF process called ROPA (Reception of Oocytes from Partner) (Fosas *et al*, 2010).

[6] There has been debate over the definition of American and British soap operas, due to term being taken from the soap companies who targeted the female viewers of daytime American TV. However, despite the blurring of boundaries within the contexts and organisations such as the British Film Institute attempting to describe *Coronation Street* as serial drama, Geraghty (1991) argues that both American and British daytime shows are situated within the soap category. Not just due to daytime scheduling or appeal to female viewers, but 'the presence of stories which engage an audience in such a way that they become the subject of public interest' (1991: 4).

[7] The representation and inclusion of 'Other Mothers' in the form of lesbians and homosexuals will be explored in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

[8] Brenda is also the name of a popular lesbian dating app.

[9] Throughout *Rules of Engagement* homosexual connotations are made towards two male characters – wealthy real estate business owner, Russell, and his Indian personal assistant, Timir. In the final season, Russell forgets to renew Timir's work visa, and the pair get married.

[10] Tor Folger's (2008) qualitative research on same-sex families in Norway identified a discourse of heterosexual romantic love – lifelong monogamy, the couple, heterosexual ritual – was core to how same-sex families shaped their family lives. According to his research one informant was surprised he ended up in such a conventional life – with a family, living in the suburbs, talking over the fence, just like the other dads. As Folger argues: 'The traditional family life he lives represents a radical breach with earlier norms, and it may be seen as both conventional and unconventional at the same time' (2008: 144).

CHAPTER 6

[1] In her discussion Cohen (1997) was referring to the intersection of race and heterosexuality, and the exclusion of black heterosexual bodies from dominant white heterosexual culture. However, in the context of this chapter her argument against the monolithicity of heterosexuality is still relevant. In addition, her racial perspective on heterosexuality is also useful to consider when exploring the construction of the infertile bodies in the texts as white, coupled, and middle class.

[2] LGTBQ communities can also be included here due to being neglected from cultural narratives of infertility (Walks, 2007).

[3] This narrative is also evident in *Baby Boom* (1987) where highflying management consultant J.C. Wiatt (even her name is masculinised) who has no time for romance, suddenly inherits an estranged relative's small child. She leaves her career to look after the child, moves out of the city, sets up a gourmet baby food business and falls in love.

CHAPTER 7

[1] Abortions are rare in mainstream texts, as are miscarriages, unless they are situated within what are construed as non-normative conception settings. In *What to Expect When You're Expecting*

(2012), all characters end up with a baby (which includes adoption), apart from Rosie. Her pregnancy from a one-night stand results in miscarriage, which suggests that sexual relations situated outside the social institutions of monogamy and marriage disallow, 'the development of "wholeness"' (Lehr, 1999: 69); those who are not '"supposed" to' reproduce (Briggs, 2017: 126). As Edelman (2004) points out, American militant pro-life organisations have not only targeted women who abort their fetuses, but the queers, too. In 1997, radical group Army of God were responsible for bombing a gay nightclub and an abortion clinic in Atlanta – both viewed as practicing queer behaviours. Although the character Rosie didn't have an abortion, the message was clear, she was being punished for conceiving as a result of sexual pleasure, outside of a secure loving relationship.

[2] An example of a film which demonstrates this love bond with a non-genetic child, is American film *What Maisie Knew* (2012), based on a novel by Henry James (1897). After divorcing, the biological parents neglect their child, which results in the two new partners on both sides forming a bond with Maisie. The story ends with the two partners falling in love, and taking Maisie into their care. Although the narrative is still steered by the heterosexual love plot and infers the value

[3] Voguing is a dance mimicking being in a Vogue magazine cover photo-shoot.

[4] HIV/Aids in predominantly heterosexual African communities has also impacted in a similar way within reshaping family, its victims also subjected to shame, stigmatisation, and ejection from the family home (Ankrah, 2007).

[5] Lugones and Rosezelle's (1995) debate on feminism and the term 'sisterhood' is a good example of what Rich (1988) has described as a 'white solipsism' (1988: 116), which is the inability to relate to the non-white experience through an unconscious belief that one race is more superior over another.

[6] The concept of 'fictive kin' is an anthropological term, which has been used to describe kin that has historically been viewed as not real, due to not having a blood connection, such as a godparent or adopted child. Weston (1991) proposes that although the concept lost popularity in the social sciences, it has become a valid and useful term by which to describe the gay communities who have chosen their families, especially due to mainstream society's resistance to accept these new formations as authentic and as valuable. This has been identified through how the media articulate these kinship bonds, using phrases such as 'pretended family relations' and 'so-called family' which are 'recurrently applied to lesbian or gay couples, parents, and families of friends' (Weston, 1991: 106).