

## THE CONJUGALISATION OF REPRODUCTION IN SOUTH AFRICAN TEENAGE PREGNANCY LITERATURE

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### **Abstract.**

*The “conjugalisation of reproduction”, in which childbearing is legitimated only within a marital alliance, underlies some of the pathologisation of the single, female-headed household in the pre-democracy South African teenage pregnancy literature. I utilise a post-structural feminist framework that draws on elements of Derrida’s and Foucault’s work to analyse the conjugalisation of reproduction in South African research. The conjugalisation of reproduction relies on (1) the insidious “unwed” signifier which interpenetrates the term “teenage pregnancy”, allowing the scientific censure of non-marital adolescent re-production without the invocation of moralisation, and (2) the fixation of the husband-wife and parents-children axes of alliance as the main elements for the deployment of sexuality and reproduction in the form of the family. Pregnant teenagers are, in Derridean terms, undecidables: they are neither children (owing to their reproductive status) nor adults (owing to their age), but simultaneously both. Marriage is the authority that decides them, allowing them to join the ranks of adult reproductive subjects.*

Teenage pregnancy and childbearing have been pre-dominantly mooted as a social problem in the mainstream Anglophone as well as the South African literature. In South Africa, researchers have described teenage pregnancy as a “catastrophe” (De Villiers, 1991:231), as an “epidemic” and as “children having children” (Boult, 1992:16) and as “a critical issue” (Ehlers, Maja, Sellers, Gololo, 2000:44). As recently as 2003 Ehlers described teenage pregnancy as “imply[ing] adverse health, social and economic implications for the mothers and their children – and usually for the grandmothers as well” (2003:14). This take on teenage pregnancy remains dominant, despite what has been termed the “revisionist” voice, epitomised by Geronimus (1991; 2003) in the United States and Preston-Whyte and colleagues (Preston-Whyte, 1991; Preston-Whyte & Allen, 1992; Preston-Whyte & Zondi, 1989, 1991, 1992) in South Africa, in which researchers have theorised early reproduction as a adaptive or rational choice under disadvantaged circumstances. These “revisionist” researchers have questioned the ideological assumptions made in the teenage pregnancy/social problem equation, stating that “this selective focus helps maintain the core values, competencies, and privileges of the dominant group” (Geronimus 2003:881) and

that “there is little incentive [for township youth] to strive to achieve what are, after all, largely middle class and, in the South African context, white norms and values” (Preston-Whyte, 1991:22).

In attempting to delineate the contributory factors to and the consequences of early child-bearing, mainstream research often focuses on the teenager’s family of origin or the family which she forms by bearing a child. In both instances, the single, female-headed household is problematised. This type of family formation is seen as contributing to early sexual initiation and pregnancy amongst adolescents (Ellis, Bates, Dodge, Fergusson, Horwood, Pettit, Woodward, 2003), as well as to inadequate parenting on the part of the teenager (Rodriquez and Moore, 1995). Undergirding this research, thus, is the assumption of marriage and the creation and maintenance of a male-female dyad with children as normal and beneficial. The single parent family and the “broken” family are portrayed as rupturing this marital authority, creating family forms that threaten the well-being of children.

The discursive formation that this depiction constructs may be termed, following Foucault (1986), the “conjugalisation of reproduction”. Foucault (1986) talks of the “conjugalisation of sexual relations” in his historical analysis of sexuality. He traces the development of Christian censure of non-procreative sexuality to the condition where the state of marriage coincided with and contained sexual activity. In this paper I analyse the “conjugalisation of reproduction” in the South African psycho-medical literature on teenage pregnancy. I use the word “conjugalisation”, following Foucault, to refer to the state of marriage coinciding with and containing reproduction. It does not refer, as some researchers use it, to “conjugal” relations outside of marriage.

In this paper I indicate how (1) scientific language disguises the insidious signifier “unwed” that occupies and gives meaning to the term “teenage pregnancy”, and (2) single parents or broken families are pathologised against the taken-for-granted absent trace of the nuclear family. Although there are researchers in South Africa (eg Burman & Preston-Whyte, 1992) who have highlighted how conceptions of marriage and illegitimacy have been utilised in culturally inappropriate ways, these sorts of nuanced understandings are generally lacking from the psycho-medical literature on teenage pregnancy.

The discursive processes involved in the conjugalisation of reproduction can be usefully understood in relation to (1) Phoenix and Woollett’s (1991) concept of “normalised absence/pathologised presence”, and (2) Foucault’s (1978) analysis of the “deployment of alliance”. “Normalised absence/pathologised presence” is based on Derrida’s theorising of the absent trace. Derrida (1976, 1978) critiques “Western metaphysics” as being structured in terms of dichotomies or polarities: truth versus error; man versus woman; being versus nothingness; alive versus dead. He notes that the oppositions created do not stand as independent and equal entities. “The second term in each pair is considered the negative, corrupt, undesirable version of the first, a fall away from it” (Johnson, 1972: viii). The first term is given priority, creating a sense of being as presence, unity, identity and immediacy, with the second term always subordinated to it. Language is inherently unstable, but is used to create the illusion of being stable by producing binary oppositions that define each other. This stability depends on privileging the present term, while marginalising the absent one(s). Meaning is a function of presence (words which are written or spoken) and absence (the chain of suppressed signifiers upon which the meaning of the present is based). The present is *always already* inhabited by the absent, and hence is mediated and derivative.

“Normalised absence / pathologised presence” refers to the dependence of discourses of pathology (social and psychological problems) on discourses of normality. In psycho-medical texts, discourses of normality tend to be subordinated to discourses of pathology. They form the absent trace, defining and interpenetrating the pathological presence. In this paper I shall analyse how lack of marital status and female-headed households act as pathological presences in the teenage pregnancy literature with marriage and male headship forming the normalised, taken-for-granted absence.

In the **History of Sexuality Volume 1**, Foucault (1978) talks of the “deployment of alliance” and the “deployment of sexuality”. The deployment of alliance refers to “a system of marriage, of fixation and development of kinship ties, of transmission of names and possessions” (Foucault, 1978:106). The deployment of sexuality “proliferat[es], innovat[es], annex[es], creat[es], and penetrat[es] bodies in an increasingly detailed way, and control[s] populations in an increasingly comprehensive way” (Foucault, 1978:107). It acts in conjunction with the deployment of alliance as the main elements of deployment of sexuality have developed along two primary dimensions of alliance: the husband-wife axis and parents-children axis. This interpenetration of the deployment of alliance and that of sexuality results in the family, which has become “an obligatory locus of affects, feelings, love” (Foucault, 1978:108). The nuclear family, which maintains both the husband-wife and parents-children axes of alliance, constitutes the normalised absence in mainstream psycho-medical writing, the family formation assumed to allow the healthy development of the affectively actualised and responsible citizen, despite the fact that many South Africans live in diverse kinship arrangements. Any family formation that disrupts either the husband-wife or the parents-children axis of alliance (or both), such as the single parent or broken family, become the pathologised presence. The linkage of the husband-wife and parents-children axes of alliance underlies the conjugalisation of reproduction. Marriage and child-bearing have become intricately interweaved, with the absence of one (eg child-bearing outside of marriage) casting the other (eg the ability of a single parent to raise children) into doubt.

#### **DATA AND METHODOLOGY.**

The text used to analyse the conjugalisation of reproduction in this paper consists of published and unpublished South African research and literature on teenage pregnancy from 1970 to 1997. This material was collected for a larger study on teenage pregnancy (Macleod, 1999) through (1) conducting searches on international and national bibliographic data archives, and (2) sending letters to heads of departments of relevant social science, education, and medical departments of all South African universities, and health- and education-related non-governmental organisations, requesting information concerning research conducted in the field of teenage pregnancy in their organisations. The result was a collection of 77 research reports, theses, articles and chapters, 41 of which are published. The published documents appear in local professional journals such as **Nursing RSA**, **Salus** and **Outlook**, local scientific journals such as **South African Medical Journal**, **South African Journal of Psychology**, **South African Journal of Sociology**, and international journals such as **Social Science and Medicine**, **International Journal of Adolescence and Youth** and **The Journal of Social Psychology**, with **South African Medical Journal** attracting more articles (13) than other journals. Eleven of the unpublished manuscripts originated from historically white Afrikaans-speaking universities, 11 from historically white English-speaking universities, 7 from historically black universities, 2 from a bilingual (English and Afrikaans) university, and three from research councils.

Table 1 indicates the time periods in which the documents appeared. Most of the research analysed here was conducted prior to the first democratic elections (given the turn around time in write-up and publication, research appearing in the 1995-1997 period would most likely have occurred before, during or soon after 1994). This is a time when racial, gender and class power relations were permeated by Apartheid ideology and practice. For example, Burman and Preston-Whyte point out, pertinently to this article, that “there is a very real danger that State concepts of illegitimacy may be inappropriately transferred to other cultural situations, and this is illustrated in a different way by the situation of African marriages” (1992:xii). Many changes have occurred since 1994, including the liberalisation of marriage laws, legislation banning the expulsion of pregnant schoolgirls and a wider focus in the literature on adolescent sexual health to include HIV/AIDS and the termination of pregnancy. However, the importance of analysing this earlier literature is summed up in Burman, Kottler, Levett and Parker’s (1997) acknowledgement that pervasive notions of self, Other and legitimacy will saturate our ideas and behaviour (be it academic or professional) long after the dismantling of Apartheid. For example, in 2003 Goldblatt comments on how class-based notions of the lazy, undeserving recipient of welfare and gendered notions of child-care responsibilities underlie the myths and stereotypes about teenagers becoming pregnant in order to access the Child Support Grant (Goldblatt, 2003).

**TABLE 1: Time period in which the documents analysed appeared**

| <b>Time period</b> | <b>Number of documents</b> |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 1975 – 1980        | 2                          |
| 1981 – 1985        | 6                          |
| 1986 – 1990        | 29                         |
| 1991 – 1995        | 27                         |
| 1996/1997          | 13                         |

As expected, race appears as a robust signifier in the literature analysed, with the signifiers, “race”, “culture” or “ethnicity” being utilized, firstly, to highlight “differences” in adolescent sexual and reproductive behaviour and, secondly, as explanatory tools. This aspect of the literature is analysed in detail in another article (Macleod and Durrheim, 2002). Importantly, in the context of this article, however, is that the conjugalisation of reproduction is deployed in the literature to both “black” and “white” teenagers. In other words, in this particular aspect of the mainstream research, “black” and “white” teenagers become homogenised into a single category of unwed mothers. For example, of the 14 documents from which extracts are drawn (see later discussion on how these extracts were selected) in this article, nine had “black” participants, two “white” and three were not specified. This is more-or-less the same proportion in terms of the overall documents collected, with 53 of the 77 having “black” participants, 12 “white” participants, five “black” and “white” participants and seven

non-specified (theoretical or review papers).

The data (i.e. all the reports, articles, dissertations and chapters collected) were analysed using what I have termed deconstructive discourse analysis (see Macleod, 2002 for more in-depth discussion). What is analysed in this method is the discursive “event” (Fairclough, 1992), which is simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice and an instance of social practice. The first aim is to analyse the discursive event (in this case research practice) by investigating its prescriptive effects regarding action (effects of jurisdiction) and its codifying effects concerning the known (effects of veridiction) (Foucault, 1991). The second aim is to question discourses by deconstructing them in terms of their claims to presence, and their dependence on absences (Derrida, 1976). Concretely, this translates into (1) reading and re-reading the texts, (2) chunking the material according to themes (marriage, types of families, unmarried status), (3) applying Parker’s (1992) seven basic criteria for identifying discourses (viz. a discourse: is realised in text; is about objects; contains subjects; is a coherent system of meanings; refers to other discourses; reflects on its own way of speaking; and is historically located), and (4) infusing the analysis with theoretical insights which draw on Derrida and Foucault.

In the analysis the data were treated as one body (i.e. with no distinction between documents). In the thematic coding hundreds of sections of texts were collected together under each of the themes. In this way some of the differences between the documents used was lost; however, the formation of patterns (in this case, the conjugalisation of teenage pregnancy) across the documents was highlighted. This, of course, does not mean that this pattern would be evidenced in all the documents utilised, and certainly, as discussed in the introduction, there are some tensions within the literature. However, there were sufficient cases for it to form a dominant pattern in the literature. The most salient extracts were selected as illustrative of the argument formulated in the analysis. Extracts were not selected on the basis of the document from which they were extracted (because, as stated above, they were thrown into one data heap). In some respects, this selection was arbitrary as other extracts could equally well have illustrated the point.

#### **UNWED: THE INSIDIOUS SIGNIFIER.**

Arney and Bergen (1984), in their Foucauldian genealogical study of “Power and visibility: the invention of teenage pregnancy” highlight a discontinuity in which the morally loaded terms “illegitimate child” and “unwed mother” were recast in the early 1970s in the United States into a single new scientifically neutralised concept of “teenage pregnancy”. Pregnant teenagers were no longer treated as moral problems, but rather as objects of scientific interest. Moral discourse punishes by exclusion, by placing its object (the “unwed mother”, the “illegitimate child”) on the negative side of a moral boundary. Discursive practices synonymous with this would include taking the teenager out of school and sending her away to a home for unmarried mothers. Scientific discourse, on the other hand, is inclusionary, making its objects of knowledge (the “pregnant teenager”, “adolescent sexuality”) visible and subject to unending inquiry. The teenager emerges from seclusion, and is observed, analysed, understood and assisted. The same shift is in evidence in the South African literature, with the first research on “teenage pregnancy” (as opposed to unwed or young motherhood) appearing in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Arney and Bergen state that technologies of rehabilitation, which first appeared in the 1960s “began to break down the barriers of exclusion and, for the first time, pregnant adolescents

became publicly visible" (1984:13). They intimate that in this process the signifier "unwed" disappeared from the lexicon of scientific discourse on teenage pregnancy. My analysis indicates, however, that it has rather become an "insidious" signifier, subtly defining the concept teenage pregnancy. While young, single, reproductive women are predominantly referred to as pregnant teenagers in the psycho-medical literature, slippages between the terms "teenage pregnancy" and "unmarried", "extra-marital" or "unwed" occur, with teenage pregnancy taking on the dominant position of signification. For example, the following two statements appear in studies entitled "A study of *teenage pregnancy* in Paarl East with special reference to socio-economic factors" and "Obstetric complications in *adolescent pregnancies*" respectively (my emphasis):

*Extract 1*

Poverty and a low educational level, as well as ignorance, played a large role in *extra-marital* pregnancy in Paarl East (Petersen,1996: un-paginated, my emphasis, translated from Afrikaans).

*Extract 2*

Only in this way can there be any hope of reducing the incidence of pregnancies in *unmarried teenagers* and, where pregnancy does occur, of eliminating some of the complications noted (preterm labour and anaemia) through early and good antenatal care (Goldberg and Craig, 1983:863).

Pregnant teenagers are assumed to *be* unwed, an assumption which allows for the unproblematic substitution of the "teenage" descriptor in "teenage pregnancy" with "unwed", "extra-marital" etc. as noted above. Consider Extract 2, for example. The study is about adolescent pregnancies (the dominant signification), but the authors express the wish to eliminate the obstetric complications evidenced in *unmarried* teenagers (the insidious signification). The (probably unintended) implication is that married child-bearing teenagers are not prone to the same medical complications.

The removal of the "unwed" signifier from a position of dominance, together with its covert insidiousness, has powerful effects. The scientific machinations concerning non-marital reproduction amongst young women is ostensibly removed from the moral domain. However, the language of "truth" concerning the negative social and psychological consequences of teenage pregnancy (read implicitly as unwed pregnancy) provides a censure of a different kind. Teenagers who conceive out of wedlock are no longer judged according to their marital status, but rather have a plethora of psychological or social problems, all of which require intervention and remediation for the sake of the individual and common good. That it is the unwed status of the teenager that really is of issue is illustrated in the following section in which we see how marriage (prior to conception) renders the pregnancy unproblematic.

### **MARRIAGE: DECIDING THE UNDECIDABLE.**

When a teenager becomes pregnant, she breaches the socially constructed chronology of age. In Lawson's (1993:105) words, she "pollutes the category of *child* and becomes a deviant *adult*". She becomes what Derrida (1976) would call an undecidable. Derrida invokes "undecidables" to disrupt binary oppositions (such as child/adult; truth/error; man/woman). Undecidables slip across both sides of an opposition but do not properly fit either. They undermine the very premise of the binarism by simultaneously including and

excluding the premises of both sides of the opposition. Derrida describes undecidables thus: "It is the 'between,' whether it names fusion or separation, that thus carries all the force of the operation" (Derrida, 1981: 220) and "These 'words' admit into their games both contradiction and non-contradiction (and the contradiction and non-contradiction *between* contradiction and non-contradiction" (Derrida, 1981: 221, emphasis in the original). An example is the Greek term *pharmakon*, which, as a drug, simultaneously means remedy or poison, the cause of an illness or its cure. *Pharmakon* cannot be translated into an unambiguous term allowing the operation of dialectical reasoning. Instead it occupies (and fails to occupy) both sides of the dialectic, thereby threatening dialectical reasoning from within. The pregnant teenager is no longer a child owing to her reproductive status; she is not an adult owing to her age; she is also simultaneously both.

#### *Extract 3*

[N]o more a child, but not yet a woman, and now faced with a woman's role and responsibilities! (Gillis, 1990:121).

This conundrum, this undecidability, is, partially, what generates the endless inquiry, scrutiny and monitoring of pregnant teenagers and their children. The pregnant teenager is a problem; she sits uncomfortably with the dichotomies which structure rightful living.

Marriage, however, puts a different complexion on matters.

#### *Extract 4*

These pregnancies were in fact less problematic because most of the births took place within the context of marriage (Fouché, 1992:1, translated from Afrikaans).

#### *Extract 5*

One third of the adolescents in this study were married and the pregnancies were presumably desired (Ncayiyana & Ter Haar, 1989:232).

Marriage is the authority that decides the undecidable. The husband-wife axis of the deployment of sexuality and alliance is restored, and the pregnancies are relegated to the category of "less problematic" (Extract 4), or "desired" (Extract 5). Concerns regarding the social consequences of early reproduction (e.g. inadequate mothering, the association of early childbearing with socio-economic disadvantage) tend fall away (Extract 4). But, perhaps unintentionally, so can obstetric concerns<sup>1</sup> (see Extract 2).

The ability of the insidious "unwed" signifier to render teenage pregnancy pathological is premised on the portrayal of marriage as invested with certain positive properties.

#### *Extract 6*

[S]ome of the most common problems associated with parent-child relationships of unmarried mothers [are] domination and rejection (Pond, 1987:161).

#### *Extract 7*

[R]esearch in Chapter 4 reveal[s] a more casual type of heterosexual relationship and a tendency among unmarried mothers for these relationships to be superficial and non-committal (Pond, 1987:163).

*Extract 8*

We believe that this high incidence of unwed motherhood ... constitutes [a] disturbing trend because of its implications for future family life and community stability (Ncayiyana & Ter Haar, 1989:232).

*Extract 9*

Teenage motherhood contributes significantly to the downward economic spiral affecting female-headed households and whole communities where early procreation and late marriage (or never married status) have become the norm (Boult & Cunningham, 1993:6).

These extracts portray the unwed mother as interpersonally deficient (her relationship with her parents is poor - Extract 6, and her relationship with her partner is "superficial and non-committal" - Extract 7), and as contributing to poor family life, community instability (Extract 8), and poverty (Extract 9). The converse of this is the assumption that marriage, as a general state, is the basis for "good" family life, community stability, positive economic growth, sound psychological state of mind, and good interpersonal relationships (although researchers may acknowledge that this does not happen in all marriages). Marriage, thus, acts as the normalised absence, defining "unwed" reproduction as pathological.

In sum, the production of a positive knowledge of teenage pregnancy is linked to gendered politics surrounding marital alliances in two ways. Firstly, the deployment of a scientific discourse of "teenage pregnancy" as opposed to a moral discourse of "unwed motherhood" allows for the censure of non-marital reproduction to be disguised, with "unwed" taking on an insidious position of signification. Secondly, the authority of marriage to decide the undecidable pregnant teenager, together with the assumption of marriage, in general, as a positive state, reproduce the interlinked deployment of the husband-wife and parents-children axes of alliance and the conjugalisation of reproduction.

**THE NON-CONJUGALISED SINGLE PARENT AND "BROKEN" FAMILIES.**

As previously noted, Foucault (1978) indicates that the interpenetration of the deployment of alliance and sexuality has resulted in the family. The single parent and "broken" families, however, disrupt the husband-wife axis or both the husband-wife and parents-children axes of the deployment of sexuality and alliance. They both incorporate and are given meaning by the "unwed" signifier. As such, they are forefronted in relation to social problems such as teenage pregnancy, becoming the pathologised presence, with the nuclear family (which maintains both the husband-wife and parents-children axes of alliance) constituting the normalised absence.

The single parent family, either in the form of the family of origin or of the family formed by the teenager bearing a child, is pathologised at a parental and at a social level.

*Extract 10*

The single parent may also want to go out and enjoy life, and feel that the child became a restrictive aspect in life. These feelings can be conveyed to the child, leading to unhappiness (Keogh, 1988:31).

*Extract 11*

Not infrequently the mother herself has a history of a teenage pregnancy. Where a local teenager has been reared by a single parent (unmarried, widowed or divorced), she is more likely to become sexually active than if she comes from a family of married parents (Nash,

1990:310).

*Extract 12*

When it is recalled that some two-thirds of these girls live in single-parent families ... it can be assumed that the future well-being of these infants may well be in jeopardy for financial reasons (Boult & Cunningham, 1992a:163).

*Extract 13*

The pregnant girls were more likely to come from lower socio-economic classes, from families with less frequent church attendance, and from one-parent households with the mother as head (Craig & Richter-Strydom, 1983b:454).

*Extract 14*

[T]eenage motherhood ... interfere(s) with schooling and may produce households headed by women, often resulting in poverty and unfavourable social conditions for both the teenage mother and her child (Buga, Amoko & Ncayiyana, 1996:95).

In Extracts 10 and 11 the parenting abilities of the single parent are called into question - she resents the child and passes on unacceptable sexual values thus ensuring an intergenerational transfer of deviance. The interdependence of the husband-wife and parents-children axes of alliance means that the single parent, in rupturing the husband-wife axis, places the parents-children axis of alliance in jeopardy. Furthermore, the normative frameworks that allow for the specification of certain behaviours as revealing problematic parental traits remain hidden (the normalised absence). For example, the assumptions made in Extracts 10 and 11 are that "good" (implicitly read as married) mothers do not resent their children, do not go out but rather stay at home with their children, and model conjugalised sexual and reproductive behaviour.

The association between single female-headed households and lower socio-economic status in Extracts 12, 13 and 14 reflects the unproblematised link made in general psychological texts (Roseneil & Mann, 1996). It is stated as an unfortunate fact that is of concern to the teenager, her child and society in general. However, there are a number of unexamined effects of the uncritical usage of this association. Firstly, the assumption that female-headed households are always single-parent families (or that single-parent families are necessarily female-headed) belies the hegemonic view that (1) there needs to be a head of a family, and (2) men are naturally the "head" of two-parent households. The label "male-headed" is seldom, if ever, applied to any type of family (nuclear or otherwise). Male "headship" is the assumed, the normalised absence. When female-headed families are foregrounded, as in single parent families, they are pathologised as they imply men's loss of their familial and sexual roles within the family (Alldred, 1996) - the husband-wife and parents-children axes of the deployment of alliance are ruptured. Secondly, the effect is to pathologise women in their single parent status. For example, in Extract 13 lower socio-economic status, single female parents and less frequent church attendance are drawn together in a problem category. The question arises as to why less frequent church attendance is mentioned (as opposed to, for example, less frequent attendance at sporting events or cultural dances). The posing of the research question concerning church attendance appears to centre around the assumption of an association between moral responsibility, good citizenship and church attendance. Therefore, the implication is that these young women (from lower socio-economic status, single parent families) fall short of

the moral ideal through a lack of religious fibre. In Extract 14 single female parent families are associated with unfavourable social conditions. What these conditions are, is not specified. However, the single female parent in some way appears responsible for these conditions.

The use of the single female parent family/lower socio-economic status association as an unfortunate but real fact has important gendering effects. The conditions of possibility under which single female parent families tend to join the ranks of the poor are not examined (especially the gendered conditions of possibility, such as the discursive fixing of proper childcare arrangements which restricts women's time available for income generation). Instead, women who choose or who are forced to become single parents are positioned as contributing to the perpetuation of the low socio-economic classes, and the supposed negative social conditions that go along with this status.

Finally, the "broken" family, which is implicated in contributing to teenage pregnancy in the literature, serves as the defining limit of the intact, well-functioning family. It is the pathologised presence, made possible by a static view of familial relations that sees any deviation from the fixed nuclear (or, with a push, extended) family frame as a break or rupture. The broken family is portrayed as being created either through the wilful actions of individuals (e.g. through divorce), or through circumstances (e.g. widowhood or migrant labour). Either way, it is implicated in the creation of personal and social disruption.

*Extract 15*

Another underlying theme among some of the subjects ... is a fear of exposure, hurt and rejection. This fear is prominent with Adele, Delia and Elaine, and may be related to childhood experiences of rejection. Both Adele and Delia come from divorced homes and King (1970) has noted that parental discord may result in a fear of rejection in the children (Pond, 1987:159).

*Extract 16*

The basic marriage link may be absent and, even when present, does not provide lifelong security due to such factors as inadequate or even non-existent financial support from males, divorce, widowhood, and premarital pregnancy (Preston-Whyte & Louw, 1986:382).

*Extract 17*

The phenomenon of growing numbers of street children and unwanted and abandoned babies in developing countries is well documented. This problem has its roots not only in poverty, but also in the "disorganization in the family" as a result of migrant labour systems, rapid population growth, civil war, violence and increasing urbanization and Westernization (Boult & Cunningham, 1992b:304).

The broken family is associated with personal problems such as feelings of hurt and rejection (Extract 15) insecurity, and lack of financial resources (Extract 16), as well as social problems such as street children, unwanted and abandoned babies, civil war, population growth, urbanisation (Extract 17). The normalised absent trace here, the “intact” family (which maintain the husband-wife and parents-children axes of alliance) is implicitly associated with stability, financial security, adequate child-care, and reasonableness.

## **CONCLUSION.**

The shift from “unwed mother” and “illegitimate child” to “teenage pregnancy” achieves, as with other scientifically neutralised terms, the apparent wresting of “judgments [of human difference] from a sphere of values, prejudice, or rule of thumb to the sphere of human truths, equality of standards, cogently justifiable choices, and objective criteria of efficacy” (Rose, 1992:359). However, an analysis of the teenage pregnancy literature in South Africa indicates that, while the problem is posed in “scientific” terms, it is the rupture of the conjugalisation of reproduction that is of issue. The dominant signification of “teenage pregnancy” serves to disguise the judgement of “scientific” language concerning the marital status of the adolescent. Instead, early (implicitly “unwed”) reproduction is cast as psychologically and socially damaging. Early reproduction in the context of marriage, on the other hand, is relegated to the unproblematic, as marriage decides the undecidable pregnant adolescent.

The conjugalisation of reproduction privileges the nuclear family formation, which takes on the aspect of the normalised absence. In contrast, the single-parent and the broken family are foregrounded as socially deviant. The single-parent family fractures the conjugalised deployment of sexuality and subverts the assumption of male headship in the family. The single mother is portrayed perpetuating poor parental practices and as coming from a lower socio-economic background, which is associated in the literature with “unfavourable” social conditions (this, in turn, relies on the privileging of middle-class social conditions as favourable). The “broken” family defines the limits of the intact, well-functioning family. It allows for the fixing of the idealised nuclear family formation as the site for psychologised security and normal familial relations and childhood development. It becomes the repository for social problems such as unwanted babies and teenage pregnancy.

Finally, the question may be asked concerning what terminology, other than “teenage pregnancy”, should be adopted in the attempts to research or explore this issue. Deconstructive writers have grappled with this type of issue, coming to two conclusions (Hall, 1994). Firstly, while a concept may be deconstructed, it may be necessary to continue to use it, as there may be nothing with which to replace it. However, the usage is in a de-totalised, deconstructed form; the concept can no longer operate within the paradigm in which it was originally formed. An example of this would be the term “mothering”, which feminists have deconstructed to expose the gendered taken-for-granted assumptions or absent traces that inhabit the standard use of the term. However, many feminists continue to use the term to describe the parenting activities of women. Importantly, though, the term is infused with different (feminist) understandings in this deployment. I have my reservations about “teenage pregnancy” falling into this first category as it is saturated with a variety of fall-aways (including the nature of adolescence / adulthood / childhood, adolescent / adult / child sexuality (see Macleod, in press), mothering (see Macleod, 2001), and family formation and function). I would argue that it should belong in the second category where the term is sabotaged by the deployment of a new term. For “teenage pregnancy” we could

utilize the term “early reproduction”; however, this also threatens to allow an early / usual / late distinction to be made. Perhaps the solution is to research “reproduction”, with particular attention to the local specificities within which it takes place. For example, if we are to believe Ncayiyana and Ter Haar<sup>1</sup> (1989), reproductive women from particular socio-economic positions may have more in common in terms of obstetric outcomes than young reproductive women across classes and other social location indices. Thus, understanding reproduction within, say, a context of rural-based poverty (with its consistencies and divergences) may be more useful than studying “pregnant teenagers”.

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<sup>1</sup> Ncayiyana and Ter Haar do argue, however, that age *per se* does not confer increased obstetric risk, and that studies in which increased risk is found have used inappropriate control groups (Ncayiyana and Ter Haar, 1989). These researchers argue that socio-economic status is a far greater indicator of risk, no matter the age of the woman.

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