

Daughters and their mothers: The reproduction of pronatalist discourses across generations

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Abstract

The expectation that all women will become mothers, and that they will mother in particular ways, has been a focus of feminist attention for many decades. What has been less considered is how pronatalist discourses are reproduced across generations within the same family. This article draws on interviews with five pairs of white middle class daughters currently planning to have children and their mothers living in South Australia, in order to examine the ways in which mother-daughter relationships are a key site for the reproduction of pronatalist discourses. Three recurring themes are examined: 1) expectations mothers have of their daughters to have children, 2) (grand)mothers as advice-givers, and 3) generational differences relating to paid work combined with the continued privileging of mothering. The article concludes with a discussion of the ways in which pronatalist discourses are mobilised in mother-daughter relationships, and how these position women in relation to motherhood.

Keywords

Mother, daughter, generation, pronatalism, parenting, mothering

Introduction

The expectation that all women will become mothers, and that they will mother in particular ways, has been a focus of feminist attention for many decades (for an overview see O'Reilly, 2007). Specifically, significant attention has been paid to critiquing cultural assumptions that link women and motherhood, and countering this by denaturalising ideas of motherhood as a biological imperative. These ideas were raised forty years ago in Adrienne Rich's ([1976] 1986) *Of Woman Born*, where she critiqued the ways in which the institution of motherhood is imposed on and thus limits women, as well as in Ann Oakley's seminal work examining the transition of women to motherhood (1979, 1980). Despite these critiques and those that have followed more recently (e.g. Goodwin & Huppertz, 2010; O'Reilly, 2004), motherhood continues to be culturally framed as significant, if not central, to being a woman.

One of the ways in which the injunction to motherhood is reproduced is through relationships between daughters and their mothers. As we document below, however, interest in such relationships has been more focused on generational change historically across the years, rather than specifically intergenerational influences with regard to reproduction. While more recently some feminist researchers have examined mothers and mothering across generations within the same family (e.g. Fox, Heffernan, & Nicolson, 2009; Thomson, Kehily, Hadfield, & Sharpe, 2011, discussed further below), and quantitative studies have found correlations between fertility patterns for mothers and daughters in the same family (e.g. Pouta, Järvelin, Hemminki, Sovio, & Hartikainen, 2005), further focus is needed to more fully understand the ways in which mothers impact upon their daughter's decisions and expectations in relation to motherhood.

As such, in this article we pay attention to the ways in which pronatalist discourses are mobilised in mother-daughter relationships. Doing so allows for consideration of how women are implicated in taking up, reproducing, and resisting such discourses. As Lupton and Barclay argue when elaborating a specifically Foucauldian account of the intersections of discourses and individual desires:

[t]he Foucauldian understanding of power relations is that central discourses invite and persuade individuals to conform to norms and expectations rather than directly coercing them, appealing to individuals' desires and wants at both the conscious and the unconscious levels (1997 11).

Thus we are interested in how pronatalist discourses are reproduced within mother-daughter relationships, including how these are taken up by both mothers and daughters. We argue that mother-daughter relationships are a key site for the reproduction of pronatalist discourses, yet also show how individual desires and 'choices' are shaped by wider cultural meanings.

In order to do this, in this article we explore the findings from our Australian interviews with five mother-daughter pairs to examine intergenerational practices which reproduce pronatalist discourses. We draw on two rounds of interviews with daughters derived from a longitudinal study with heterosexual couples who were intending to become parents in the near future, and separate interviews with their mothers. The article begins by situating the study by providing an overview of pronatalism and a review of current feminist research about generations and mothering, before documenting our study and turning to the analysis of our mother-daughter pairs.

Pronatalism

Pronatalism refers to the widespread promotion of reproduction, which is both cultural and institutional (Lovett, 2010). Through pronatalist discourses, parenthood is constructed as 'normal' and key to adulthood, and something that should be desired (Authors, in-press). One of the key ways in which pronatalist discourses are upheld is via the negative construction of the 'childless other' (Authors, in-press). This particularly occurs via the marginalisation of women who do not have children, who may be stigmatised, constructed as deficient, selfish, and immature, excluded socially, perceived as 'unfulfilled', and/or viewed as being 'career women' (e.g. Gillespie, 2000; Letherby, 2002; Meyers, 2001; Morell, 2000; Turnbull, Graham, & Taket, 2016). As such, while men too are impacted by pronatalist discourses, women are typically more significantly impacted given that women are expected to carry and birth children, as well as shape their lives around raising them. Importantly, pronatalist discourses are perpetuated in reworked forms over time, meaning that women continue to be positioned in relation to motherhood. As Gillespie argues:

despite significant social change, and despite women's gains in terms of fertility control and greater freedom, pronatalist cultural discourses and those that posit motherhood at the cornerstone of feminine identity persist, albeit in a manner recast and transformed. (2000 231)

Importantly, reproductivity is valued for particular groups of people. Specifically with regard to the gendered nature of the injunction to reproduce, in Australia, for example, professional middle class women are often depicted as responsible for low national fertility rates (Dever, 2005), and there is a perception that infertility is a result of middle class women's investment in their careers (Duvnjak, 2013). This privileging of middle class women's reproductivity is

further evidenced by financial incentives to encourage particular women to have children, such as an Australian federal government initiative which benefited high income earners more than low income earners (Dever, 2005). The pronatalist push in countries such as Australia relates to an ageing demographic, but also highlights the focus on reproducing the *white* population in the face of increasing immigration (Dever, 2005). As King argues, ‘nationalist (implicitly conceptualized as ethnonationalist) discourse tends to define women as the biological reproducers of the national community, and racial/ethnic minorities as “outsiders”’ (2002 371). In addition, the privileging of certain mothers over others can be seen in the negative discursive framing of ‘teenage pregnancy’ (e.g. Macleod, 2001) and ‘welfare mothers’ (e.g. McCormack, 2004). Therefore, the injunction to have children is commonly placed on white, middle class women. This background to the pronatalist political climate in Australia and more broadly provides a context for which the mother-daughter relationships in our study occur.

Generational studies of mothers and motherhood

There are two key ways in which generations of mothers and motherhood have been examined in existing qualitative research. First, research has focused on historical shifts in mothering practices, and has found that there are differences between generations due to historical contexts (e.g. Bulbeck, 1997). Second, attention has been paid to generational narratives of mothering experiences, and has found that generations within the same family impact upon one another, in particular noting that mothers influence their daughters’ conceptualisations of, and choices in relation to, motherhood (e.g. Fox, et al., 2009; Thomson, et al., 2011; Zhu, 2010). We outline these two key bodies of work briefly below, highlighting that a focus on mother-daughter relationships in terms of the reproduction of pronatalist discourses has yet to be fully explored.

As with feminist writing in many areas, attention to motherhood often focuses on historical changes across generations in different time periods. In other words, comparisons between women now as compared to in the past have received much of the attention. For example, in Australia Bulbeck (1997) provides a historical comparison of women including access to and use of contraceptive methods, marriage, and work. She divides her participants born between the mid 1910s and early 1970s into three generations, arguing that the older two generations expected domestic work to be the central goal of their lives, in contrast to the youngest generation whose lives were shaped by expectations about education and careers, as well as the availability of contraceptives. More recently, Everingham, Stevenson, and Warner-Smith (2007) critique the idea of a progress narrative in their research with three different age cohorts of women (aged 26-31, 53-58, and 65-70 in 2004). They suggest that for the youngest generation, women are constructed as both mothers and workers which, in an era of 'choice' and consumerism, does not mean increased equity. Davis's (2016) study in the UK with women who became mothers between the late 1960s to 1980s shows how 'intergenerational transmission' from mothers to daughters in terms of attitudes towards motherhood occurs both consciously and unconsciously, and continues to have an impact despite parenting in different time periods.

Despite the above summarised recognition of intergenerational continuity and change, narratives of mothering experiences across generations within the same family (i.e. daughters, mothers, and sometimes grandmothers) are rare. An exception to this relative lack of attention to specific mothers and daughters is the 'Making Modern Mothers' study (e.g. Thomson, 2008; Thomson, et al., 2011) in the UK, which included intergenerational case studies of twelve women and their mothers (and sometimes grandmothers). The study found

that mothers and daughters discussed presumed shared experiences of pregnancy and labour (even when they were not biologically related), making claims to similar bodily experiences; the act of giving birth brought generations together; and daughters became more interested in their mothers' experiences as they prepared for motherhood. Thomson and colleagues also discuss the impact of generational change, including in terms of the material culture of mothering (with a shift towards consumerism), the increase in domestic appliances cutting down domestic labour time, pregnancy becoming public and celebrated rather than private, and the increased involvement of fathers.

The 'My mother, myself' project in the UK also examined generational experiences of pregnancy and motherhood, including some interviews with mothers and daughters with children (Fox, et al., 2009; Heffernan, Nicolson, & Fox, 2011; Nicolson, 2010; Nicolson, Fox, & Heffernan, 2010). This research found key differences between generations, particularly relating to surveillance and policing of pregnant bodies (in relation to the rise in media attention to pregnant bodies and the glorification and visibility of pregnant celebrities), along with the increased medicalisation of having children. Perhaps because of this information overload and increased scrutiny, Heffernan et al. found that the mothers from the older generation had more confidence in their own 'embodied instinct' in terms of what to do during pregnancy than did the younger generation (2011 327, 330). Similarly, Zhu's (2010) research in China focusing on ten mother-daughter pairs found that mothers from the older generation relied on their own knowledge and experiences which differed from their daughters' generation. The older generation were sceptical of the new 'scientific' knowledge, just as the younger generation dismissed the advice given to them by their mothers because it was not based on such knowledge (Zhu, 2010 410).

This existing literature around intergenerational studies of motherhood and the largely separate literature on pronatalist discourses are both useful in exploring how the injunction to reproduce is placed on women, and specifically on white, middle class, heterosexual women. Drawing on our Australian study, we bring these two areas together to examine the ways in which pronatalist discourses were mobilised by a sample of white middle-class mothers and their daughters.

Methods

The Project

This article draws on an ongoing broader qualitative longitudinal study examining the experiences of ten heterosexual couples who were intending to become parents in the near future. The study is focused on desires to have children, decision-making and expectations related to planning for a first child, and subsequent experiences during pregnancy and after the child is born. The study involves (or will involve) interviews with members of the couples separately at four stages: 1.) when couples are planning a pregnancy via reproductive heterosexual (i.e. without the assistance of reproductive technologies), 2.) when the couple is six months pregnant, 3.) six months after the birth of the child, and 4.) 18 months after the birth of the child. More details about the broader sample and study are available in our other publications (Authors 2016a, in-press). The study also involves an intergenerational comparison of parenting, where interviews were undertaken with 10 parents (six mothers and four fathers) of our participants. Participants were given the opportunity to invite their parents to take part in an interview. Ethics approval was granted by the authors' university [details removed for blind review].

This article focuses specifically on the five mother-daughter pairs who participated in the study in order to examine how pronatalist discourses are drawn on by mothers and daughters, and the relationship between them. We focus on women in order to pay closer attention to the ways in which mothers impact on their daughters' desires for and expectations around motherhood. We are particularly interested in mothers and daughters considering that the mobilisation of pronatalist discourses in these relationships means that on the one hand daughters will be privileged (in line with the 'women equals mothering' discourse and avoiding the marginalised 'childless woman' discourse), yet on the other hand primary responsibility for raising children in heterosexual couples is still largely placed on women.

Participants

We deliberately draw on a sample of mothers and daughters who have socially privileged subjectivities (white, middle-class, heterosexual) in order to demonstrate that while these women gain considerable privilege through their social positioning, they are nonetheless still subject to the demands of pronatalism.

The analysis presented below includes data from the first two rounds of daughter interviews with Amanda, Dani, Alex, and Rachel (who were all six months pregnant during the second interview) and from the first interview with Nicola who was still planning for her first child at the time of writing. The interview data from these daughters are paired with the interview data of their mothers. All mothers and daughters conceived their child(ren) via reproductive heterosex in the context of a heterosexual relationship. Daughters generally had higher educational qualifications than their mothers. All five daughters had at least a bachelor university degree, whereas only one of the mothers (Mary) was university-educated. We

provide a brief summary of each mother-daughter pair in order to provide a context for the analysis.

Amanda was 36 at the time of her first interview, and was engaged to be married. She became pregnant just prior to marrying her partner. Amanda's mother Gwen gave birth to the first of her four children in the mid 1970s when she was 24. Amanda was her third child. Gwen was still married to the father of her children and was the only mother to already have grandchildren. At the time of her interview, Gwen was 64 and Amanda's baby was approximately 3 months old.

Dani was 36 at the time of the first interview and was engaged to be married. Like Amanda she became pregnant just prior to marrying her partner. Dani's mother Barbara had given birth to her Dani in the late 1970s when she was 25. Dani was the eldest of three children born to Barbara and her husband. Barbara was interviewed when she was 62 and Dani's baby was 9 weeks old.

Rachel was 29 at the time of the first interview and had been married for approximately 3 years. Susan, Rachel's mother, was 20 when she had her first child in the early 1980s and was the mother of five children, all with her ex-husband. Rachel was the second eldest child. Susan was currently remarried. At the time of the interview, Susan was 54 and Rachel was just over 6 months pregnant.

Alex was 33 at the time of the first interview and had been married for a few months. Alex was the only child of Betty and her husband. Betty was 40 when she had Alex in the early 1980s, a much longed for child after suffering two miscarriages. Betty and her husband were

still married when we interviewed her. Betty was 74 at the time of the interview and Alex was approximately 7 months pregnant.

Nicola was aged 26 at the time of her (first) interview and had been married for less than a year. She was the only daughter not to have conceived yet, postponing trying for a baby until finances allowed her and her husband to buy a house. Mary was 28 when she had Nicola in the late 1980s and she had another child a few years later. Mary was still married to Nicola's father at the time of the interview. Mary was interviewed when she was 56, just over a year after Nicola's interview.

Interviews

Daughters were recruited during February-May 2015 as part of the larger longitudinal study by advertising in local media and community newspapers, and on Facebook, Twitter, and internet forums that focus on parenting. Mothers were recruited via their daughters in early 2016. All participants signed consent forms after being provided with an information letter detailing the research, and were interviewed by the first author. All interviews were audio-recorded, with the average length of recordings being approximately 60 minutes. Recordings were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription service and participants were allocated pseudonyms by the authors following transcription.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face with the daughters who were planning to have a child, apart from one participant who lived in a regional area and participated via Skype and telephone. During the first interview, questions focused on what it would mean to have a child, reasons for wanting a child, and others' expectations for them to have children. All first interviews were conducted in 2015. The second interview focused on

the process of finding out about the pregnancy, the experience of pregnancy, preparation to become a parent, medical appointments, and plans for the birth and for post-birth. Second interviews were conducted in 2015 and 2016.

Four mothers participated in semi-structured interviews face-to-face, via Skype, or via telephone. An additional mother participated via written response in discussion with her daughter. Interview questions focused on the mothers' views on their daughter having a child, the role they will play in their grandchild's life, and their own experiences as a parent. Questions were modified slightly depending on whether the participant's daughter was planning to become pregnant, was pregnant, or had already given birth (see participant details above). Interviews with mothers were conducted in 2016.

As others have noted, memory, or at least how people remember their experiences and feelings, is likely to impact on interviews about past events (e.g. Fox, et al., 2009; Thomson, et al., 2011). The context of the mothers being interviewed was very different than for the daughters who were currently planning for a child and experiencing pregnancy. The mothers of our participants had their first child between the mid 1970s and late 1980s, meaning a significant amount of time had passed since. While this likely impacted on the ways in which experiences were recalled in hindsight, as might be expected it was evident that having a first child was a significant event in the participants' lives and therefore feelings and experiences often appeared to be recalled with clarity.

Analytic Approach

A thematic analysis was undertaken focusing on influences between generations with specific attention to the gendered and classed nature of pronatalist discourses. As outlined above, we

examine how pronatalist discourses were mobilised by mothers and daughters, and how the women are implicated in taking up, reproducing, and resisting such discourses. Data was thematically analysed drawing on the process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006): 1) becoming familiar with the data, 2) generating codes, 3) identifying themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) refining specifics of the themes, and 6) selecting extracts that best illustrate the themes identified. Interview transcripts from the mothers and the daughters were read by the first author for discussion of generations (i.e. mentions of daughters, mothers, grandmothers). These extracts were then read repeatedly by the first author to ascertain key themes relating to the ways in which pronatalist discourses were reproduced by mothers and daughters. These themes were then confirmed by the second author. In the analysis, we also consider the impact of broader discourses, including normative assumptions surrounding motherhood, showing how these were taken up by participants.

Three key themes relating to the intergenerationality of pronatalist discourses in terms of mothers and daughters were identified: expectations mothers have of their daughters to have children, (grand)mothers as advice-givers, and generational differences relating to becoming a mother in different time periods, which centred on paid employment, alongside a continued privileging of mothering. These themes are explored below using illustrative extracts from the interviews.

Expectations mothers have of their daughters to have children

Pronatalist discourses were most explicitly apparent in terms of expectations mothers had for their daughters to have children. Amongst our participants this occurred both in the form of pressure (e.g., ‘when are you going to have a baby?’), and in more subtle ways, such as by relaying positive depictions of motherhood. Importantly, expectations were also impacted on

by normative ideas about having children at a particular age and within heterosexual marriage, showing how these expectations strongly orient to a 'heteronormative life course' discourse. In addition, in several cases expectations to have children related to the desire of mothers to become grandmothers, itself an example of the broad reach of pronatalist discourses and the ways in which grandparenthood is also part of a 'heteronormative life course' discourse.

Mothers such as Gwen spoke about positive images of motherhood, both as she relayed to her daughter, but also as were relayed to her by her own mother:

I've always said to my girls, particularly, motherhood's the best thing that ever happened to me, and I think that's why they've all wanted to have children, because I painted it as a positive thing.

my mum adored babies so that gave me the image of motherhood I suppose, and that was a pleasant experience, even though I said we weren't going to do it but once we were doing it, I realised that my mother's influence was strong.

It is particularly interesting to note that Gwen suggested that she previously did not think she would get married and have children, and that it was only on reflection that she realised the influence her own mother had on her in terms of having children. While Gwen's daughter Amanda did not specifically mention her mother giving her a positive message of motherhood, she viewed her desire to have a large number of children as stemming from being part of a family of four children, and her parents encouraging her and her sisters to get

married so they could have grandchildren, albeit initially in a joking way, since she was a teenager.

Clearly, one way in which expectations were directly placed upon daughters often related to the desire of mothers to be a grandmother or grandparent. For some women, the expectation to have children was relayed as a joke:

Mary: [My husband's] mother in particular would always hint that, 'When are you going to have a baby?' But he didn't listen to that. That didn't come into it.

Interviewer: What about your parents?

Mary: Mum would joke, yeah, but I knew that she was dying to be a grandmother.

(Mary, Mother)

Others experienced expectations more strongly, and notably this again related to the desire for parents to become grandparents. Dani spoke about this in relation to both of her parents, and the pressures placed on her, as well as her siblings, to have children:

[my parents] did say something that seemed like they failed as parents too, because you know I'm 36, my brother, he is 34, and my sister is 31 - no, 32 she turned, sorry. And yeah, neither of us have any kids. My parents are 'What have we done wrong?' So, yeah, I think it's because all their friends are already grandparents.

(Dani, Daughter First Interview)

It was clear in the interview with Dani's mother Barbara that she was relishing being a grandmother and, when asked how she felt when she heard that her daughter and her partner had decided to have a baby, she stated 'I was expecting it, sooner or later'.

In terms of normative expectations relating to age, participants recalled that their young age when planning to have or having children meant they were *not* supported by their mothers, and that there was a perception that they were too young to have children:

My mum freaked out the first time I told her, that was funny, I guess because she thought I was young. It sort of came up just after we had gotten engaged and we were sort of talking and like yeah, we will probably get married and then start thinking about having children and she kind of froze and went 'I'm too young to be a grandma'. But now I think she's come to terms with it

(Nicola, Daughter First Interview)

Interviewer: Who influenced your decisions about having children and how you parented?

Susan: Not my mother (laughs). My mother was horrified that I had children so young, and that I had so many.

(Susan, Mother)

Thus, while mothers have expectations that their daughters will have children, there are particular ages at which this is deemed appropriate. According to Nicola, her mother Mary thought she was too young to have children shortly after she became engaged at age 25, despite the fact Mary was only three years older than this when she had Nicola. In this case,

age appears to be an issue for Mary because she sees Nicola as her child rather than an adult. For Susan, who had given birth to her first child at the start of her 20s, she related the lack of support from her mother to her mother's own relationship to motherhood, with Susan going on to describe her as 'a very career minded, not sentimental, not touchy feely, not emotive woman'.

It would also appear from our interviews that the strength of traditional ideas about being married before having children continues to shape expectations around parenthood, even though an increasing number of children are born outside of heterosexual marriages (Authors 2016b). In our study this expectation was evident in relation to the two daughters who were engaged to be married when they conceived. These two daughters came from families with strong Christian beliefs, showing the continuation of previous ideas that women should become pregnant in marriage only. Thus, while happy for her daughter, Gwen said she did not know they were 'physically planning' to have children before they were married and that she had 'mixed feelings' about finding out her daughter was pregnant:

Well I had mixed feelings of course. For me, it's better to do it the other way around, you get married and then you have kids. But, no, I was delighted actually.

While Gwen's daughter Amanda identified as Christian, she was more pragmatic about having children, largely due to her concerns about not being able to become pregnant because of her age. She spoke of her long term desire to have several children, and thus started to try to become pregnant with her partner while they were engaged. In this way, while Amanda still had a child, she resisted her mother's expectations that she would get married prior to becoming pregnant.

While there were age and marital status based caveats to expectations mothers had of their daughters to have children, daughters were still expected to have children at some stage in their lives. As such, whilst there were exceptions to the 'rules' (e.g., Amanda resisting her mother's expectation of marriage before children, and Mary thinking that Nicola was too young to have children despite being married), these rules were nonetheless constitutive of our participants' views on womanhood and reproduction.

(Grand)mothers as advice-givers

The mothers in our study often framed themselves as advice-givers, claiming maternal 'knowing' that they could use to help their daughters as they became mothers. This is another way in which pronatalist discourses work between generations, specifically with regard to the normative expectation that women have children. It also demonstrates how the 'heteronormative life course' discourse renders becoming a grandmother as a normative, expected life event. The position of mothers as advice-givers relates specifically to the imparting of gendered knowledge about parenting, and relates to the continuation of mothering their daughters by teaching them how to be mothers. What was notable in our interviews was that mothers were much more likely to talk about being sources of advice for their daughters, whereas their daughters relied more on contemporary sources for their information.

Giving advice was viewed by some of the mothers in the study as a key role of being a grandmother:

Interviewer: So what role do you think you'll play when your grandchild is born?

Susan: I think I'll be the advice person. I think I'll be the supportive advice person. 'Mum. This is what's happened, what should I do? How should I handle this?' Maybe I actually think probably right from the start, breastfeeding that's what I did with all of them and they were hoping to breastfeed. I know things are really different now, so I'm going to have to educate myself as they go along too because I think there are so many different viewpoints on parenting now, but I think on the whole they will discuss with me

As Susan's comments suggest, what is seen as valuable knowledge is her knowledge of mothering. Likely Susan, as is true of all people, would have many forms of knowledge that she could impart. So, for example, her response to the role that she might play could have involved teaching her grandchild how to paint, or helping them learn to ride a bicycle. Given the gendered nature of parenting, however, these types of roles appear largely precluded during our interviews, instead limiting women's knowledge to knowledge of mothering (in this case breastfeeding). This seems to suggest an ongoing mothering role which is effectively centred on care for daughters rather than the grandchildren directly.

The significance of the role of (grand)mothers as advice-givers can mean that other people's opinions are viewed as a threat. For example, while Mary, like several of the mothers, stressed she did not want to 'impose' her beliefs about parenting on her daughter, she was concerned that her son-in-law may start to have stronger opinions than he had previously expressed, thus potentially limiting the scope for her own advice-giving:

I would hope I would be able to say to Nicola, ‘I hope you didn’t mind me saying that and if you do, you need to tell me and that this is your child and you bring up your child the way you want to.’ I think it would be really hard if [son-in-law] all of a sudden became very single minded about certain things. It hasn’t happened as yet but you don’t know.

In this extract Mary shifts from stating that she would not be over-bearing in her advice giving, to expressing concern that there was a possibility that parenthood may change her son-in-law, and thus preclude her from advice giving. We suggest this shift highlights the importance Mary places on passing on her mothering knowledge to her daughter and, thus supports pronatalist discourses where mothers reproduce their own mothering by giving advice to their daughters.

In contrast, the daughters we interviewed were less likely to view their mothers as important advice-givers. This has the potential to cause issues between mothers and daughters as daughters are able, and expected, to find information from contemporary sources as well as share care work with their partners (at least to some degree). While daughters sometimes commented on asking or intending to ask their mothers for advice to a certain extent, other sources such as the internet, medical professionals and ante-natal classes, and books were relied upon more and in the first instance, similar to generational differences found in other studies (e.g. Thomson, et al., 2011; Zhu, 2010). For example, the use of new technology as a key (although not only) source of knowledge was evident when daughters were asked in the second interview where they sought information about pregnancy, childbirth, and caring for their newborn baby from:

I've Googled things, I've Googled morning sickness, I've Googled all kinds of things, changes to your body, things to expect and so on (Alex)

The internet, for better or worse (Amanda)

I do have a phone app that I sort of read every now and again when it's stuff that I don't know and that [husband] reads about sort of the growth and what to think about and prepare for (Rachel)

What this difference in relation to advice-giving means in terms of mother-daughter relationships is something we explore further in the discussion.

Becoming a mother in different time periods

The clearest generational difference the mothers and daughters in our study discussed related to paid work expectations alongside mothering. In this theme, pronatalist discourses were modified to accommodate the changing expectations around middle class women's involvement in the paid workforce, while continuing to place the responsibility for raising children on mothers and positioning motherhood as central to women's identities. This reflects the stronger current expectations for middle class women to engage in both paid work and mothering, even if there is also a view that the two are in conflict (see also Thomson, et al., 2011). This point about a paid work/motherhood conflict was particularly evident in our interviews, where many of the intending mothers spoke about returning to paid work at some point after the birth of a child (due to financial necessity and/or out of an enjoyment of work), but this was paired with a romanticised image of full time motherhood, often similar to their own mothers.

The ways in which different time periods impacted on expectations and practicalities about working and mothering was particularly highlighted by the mother-daughter pair of Gwen and Amanda. Amanda had similar desires as her mother to stay home to raise her children, to 'just be a wife in almost like the traditional sense, have time to kind of raise children'. However, she did not view this as financially feasible, and was planning to return to the workforce part-time 'when I feel ready or if finances become too difficult'. Amanda noted differences with her mother's experiences, particularly in terms of paid work:

I talk to my Mum a bit even though things are fairly different for me now than they were for her. [...] She didn't work when she was pregnant I don't think with any of us, so she did a lot of housework still, she didn't stop because she's pretty hardworking but she doesn't necessarily relate to my feeling of working full time at the same time as being pregnant.

In the interview with Gwen, she noted differences in social expectations about paid work and mothering in different time periods, yet still strongly believed that mothers should not be in the paid workforce:

Interviewer: What you do think it will be like for Amanda parenting in a different time period to you?

Gwen: Well, her situation's completely different I suppose. She's older, the time is different, yes, people do different things. There's more acceptance of childcare and mothers working and that sort of thing, but luckily she's got a brother who's got five kids and she's had a lot to do

with them. She's got a sister who's got four and is a devoted mother, you know. She works as well, sadly.

Gwen also gave a strong critique of childcare and women's commitment to motherhood:

I guess it also depends on how much you are committed to motherhood. If you're a career woman and you suddenly have children, it's quite a shock I think, it can be, because you've always thought of yourself as being independent and able to bring in the money and suddenly you've got this dependent child, and I guess it's not surprising that women put their children in childcare to kind of get rid of them. Even though they want them they still want to be separate from them. But Amanda's committed to being a mother I think and, no, she's going to be great.

Mothering in different time periods could thus bring potential challenges and conflict between mothers and daughters. While Amanda was similar to her mother Gwen in that she said she would prefer to stay home to look after her baby, she knew that realistically she would return to the paid workforce. Thus, pronatalist discourses continue in the face of changing societies where, while the context in which women mother changes, the imperative to have children, and for women to be largely responsible for them, continues.

The current practice of many women returning to the paid workforce at some stage after having children meant that a significant amount of thinking and planning was required. In the second interview when she was six months pregnant, Alex discussed in detail her complex work plans that would allow her to spend some time at home with her baby and some time in paid work, while also noting how difficult it was to make plans in advance:

[After the birth] I'm taking four months off and then I'm going to go back one day a week [...]. And then [when the baby is 6 months old] I'll probably go back full time and by full time I mean three days a week. So I don't want to be a full time working mum by any means. So yeah it'll be either two or three days a week. [...] So that's my plan.

Alex had devoted a significant amount of time to building her career and business. However, while she said her husband was 'quite happy to be a stay at home dad', Alex did not want to return to full-time work, which later in the interview she connected to her own experience of being mothered:

I was lucky enough to have a mum that was home until I was 10. I would love to be able to spend, like stay at home with my baby like for 12 months, 18 months, two years but it's not going to happen.

Here, having a mother home full time makes Alex 'lucky', which implies that those who do not have their mother home full time (and indeed those mothers who are not home full time) are not lucky. Alex's mother Betty spoke of her regret at having to return to paid work outside the home for financial reasons when Alex was a child, despite her strong belief that mothers should stay at home with their children:

I'd always, I grew up in a family where mum was at home and I honestly like to this day I believe that the role of a mother is in the home with child. But I know things are different and I accept that times have changed and each generation is going to do

things differently but for myself I really wanted to remain at home because I thought that parenting was – there's no more greater responsibility than that.

For Alex and Betty, it would appear, and similar to the other women in this theme, while work may be variously accommodated due to financial reasons and/or possibly due to enjoyment of paid work, motherhood is seen as a superordinate category and source of enjoyment and duty. Indeed, despite generational changes, it was still difficult for the participants to think beyond the idea that being a mother meant being the primary carer of one's child.

Discussion

The findings presented in this article support previous research about heterosexual middle class couples and parenthood, in suggesting that while some things change (e.g., women's engagement in paid work), much stays the same across generations (e.g., the expectation that women should be mothers, and that motherhood should be a central identity privileged over, for example, paid work). By including interviews with daughters and their mothers, we have considered the ways in which pronatalist discourses are intergenerationally reproduced in Australia. Our specific focus on a sample of white, middle-class, heterosexual women allows for consideration of how the injunction to reproductivity is squarely placed upon this group because of their privileged status, and the gendered implications this has. Research certainly suggests that the same valuing of mothering and the privileging of motherhood is often not placed upon other groups of women (e.g. Dever, 2005; Macleod, 2001; Tyler, 2008).

While we have focused on mother-daughter relationships this, of course, is not to ignore the significance of institutional norms and discourses of motherhood as they circulate in the

cultural sphere and in government directives, and which thus impact upon women. Mothers and daughters are both tied up in these broader discourses, which impact on their relationships with one another. It is through the relationships between mothers and daughters, we have suggested, that pronatalist discourses are particularly influential, even though such discourses are typically not named as such (e.g., such as in the positive depictions of motherhood as a meaning making enterprise outlined in the first theme).

Our findings also support previous research with regard to intergenerational differences, specifically with regard to whether mothers are seen as sources of advice. While we did not specifically find that the daughters disregarded their mothers as potential advice-givers, other outlets for information appeared more salient. Others have also highlighted this shift in which daughters are positioned more broadly as needing to rely on contemporary sources ('expert knowledge'), rather than the knowledge of their mothers ('lay knowledge'):

[t]raditionally, the older generation of women in kinship relations have had more power than the younger ones. However, at present, a rupture appears to exist in this power hierarchy. Modern mothers rely on expert knowledge rather than the lay knowledge of the previous generations (Notko & Sevón, 2006, 142)

We feel it important to note that some of the mothers were very focused on sharing their knowledge with their daughters, and that being stymied in this has the potential to place strain upon mother-daughter relationships, particularly if mothers' experiences are framed as being outdated and no longer relevant. How the daughters negotiate this after they become mothers is something to which we will pay close attention as we conduct further interviews with the daughters.

It is important to note that the mothers in our study became mothers across a range of time periods, during which expectations of women and the availability of access to (and expectations surrounding) the paid workforce likely shifted to a certain degree. Nonetheless, it is salient to us that many of the same concerns were raised across the interviews, thus emphasising our point above that while much has changed, perhaps even more stays the same with regard to normative expectations about mothering and motherhood. We also note the potential limitations of the small sample size, which we have drawn on to illustrate and explore themes.

While we have been critical in this article of the ways in which pronatalist discourses place pressure on women, our point has not been to discount the joys that mothering may bring, nor are we suggesting that women who take up the injunction to motherhood or who share with others their joys in mothering are dupes of pronatalist discourses. Obviously given our sample (i.e., of intending parents and their own parents), it is unsurprising that parenthood would be depicted as desirable. Nonetheless, our point in this article has been to consider how motherhood is framed in a very specific way by mothers to their daughters. We suggest this serves to shape the expectations that daughters have around motherhood which can potentially impact on the decisions that daughters make, both with regard to whether or not to have children at all, and then what kind of mother they will be.

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