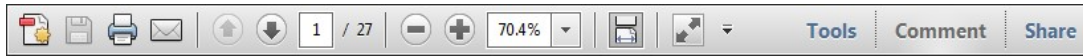
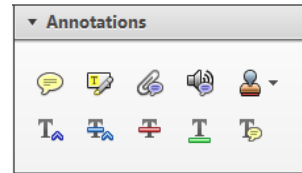


Once you have Acrobat Reader open on your computer, click on the [Comment](#) tab at the right of the toolbar:



This will open up a panel down the right side of the document. The majority of tools you will use for annotating your proof will be in the [Annotations](#) section, pictured opposite. We've picked out some of these tools below:



1. Replace (Ins) Tool – for replacing text.

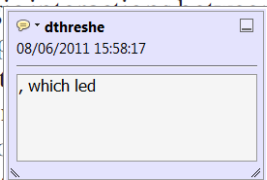


Strikes a line through text and opens up a text box where replacement text can be entered.

How to use it

- Highlight a word or sentence.
- Click on the [Replace \(Ins\)](#) icon in the Annotations section.
- Type the replacement text into the blue box that appears.

standard framework for the analysis of microeconomic behavior. Nevertheless, it also led to the development of a new paradigm of strategic behavior. The number of competitors in the industry is that the structure of the industry is a key component of the main components of the industry. At the microeconomic level, are exogenous variables important? (M henceforth) we open the 'black b



2. Strikethrough (Del) Tool – for deleting text.



Strikes a red line through text that is to be deleted.

How to use it

- Highlight a word or sentence.
- Click on the [Strikethrough \(Del\)](#) icon in the Annotations section.

there is no room for extra profits as mark-ups are zero and the number of firms (net) values are not determined by market structure. Blanchard ~~and Kiyotaki~~ (1987), perfect competition in general equilibrium. The structure of aggregate demand and supply in the classical framework assuming monopoly. An exogenous number of firms

3. Add note to text Tool – for highlighting a section to be changed to bold or italic.



Highlights text in yellow and opens up a text box where comments can be entered.

How to use it

- Highlight the relevant section of text.
- Click on the [Add note to text](#) icon in the Annotations section.
- Type instruction on what should be changed regarding the text into the yellow box that appears.

dynamic responses of mark-ups are consistent with the VAR evidence

sation of the industry. The number of competitors in the industry is a key component of the main components of the industry. At the microeconomic level, are exogenous variables important? (M henceforth) we open the 'black b



4. Add sticky note Tool – for making notes at specific points in the text.



Marks a point in the proof where a comment needs to be highlighted.

How to use it

- Click on the [Add sticky note](#) icon in the Annotations section.
- Click at the point in the proof where the comment should be inserted.
- Type the comment into the yellow box that appears.

and supply shocks. Most of the time, the number of firms in the industry is a key component of the main components of the industry. At the microeconomic level, are exogenous variables important? (M henceforth) we open the 'black b



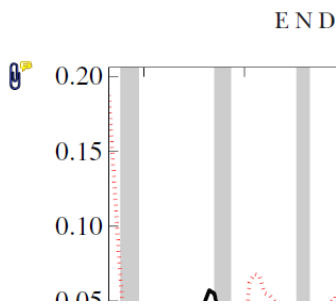
5. Attach File Tool – for inserting large amounts of text or replacement figures.



Inserts an icon linking to the attached file in the appropriate place in the text.

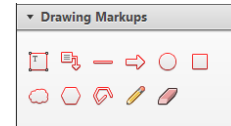
How to use it

- Click on the **Attach File** icon in the Annotations section.
- Click on the proof to where you'd like the attached file to be linked.
- Select the file to be attached from your computer or network.
- Select the colour and type of icon that will appear in the proof. Click OK.



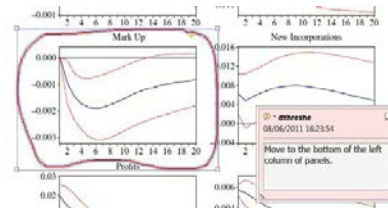
6. Drawing Markups Tools – for drawing shapes, lines and freeform annotations on proofs and commenting on these marks.

Allows shapes, lines and freeform annotations to be drawn on proofs and for comment to be made on these marks.



How to use it

- Click on one of the shapes in the Drawing Markups section.
- Click on the proof at the relevant point and draw the selected shape with the cursor.
- To add a comment to the drawn shape, move the cursor over the shape until an arrowhead appears.
- Double click on the shape and type any text in the red box that appears.



The silencing effects of the childhood innocence ideal: the perceptions and practices of fathers in educating their children about sexuality

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Abstract This study employed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to explore eight fathers' perceptions and practices in talking to their ten year old children about puberty, relationships and reproduction. The fathers participated in face to face interviews which were analysed idiographically initially, followed by analysis at the group level. Interpretations were then developed through critical application of a Foucauldian lens of governmentality and biopower. The results revealed a tension between the fathers' cognitions, accounts and behaviours. Their practices were largely characterised by silence yet they reported positive attitudes towards children's sexuality education and perceived themselves as equipped and willing to take on the role of sexuality educator. They also reported enjoying open relationships with their children. Interpretations centred on contradictions and conflict between the majority of the fathers' aspirations and the compelling nature of the childhood innocence discourse as a technology of governmentality. Whilst all of the fathers felt that it was in their children's interests to learn about sexuality, all but one adhered to hegemonic protective discourses and unquestioningly integrated their normalising effects into their fathering practices which, it is argued, may paradoxically render their children more vulnerable both now and in the future.

Keywords: parenting/parents, sexual health, Foucault

Introduction

Throughout the last decade, a growing body of literature has suggested that parent-adolescent communication about sexuality can be a protective determinant of sexual risk-taking behaviour during adolescence (Campero *et al.* 2011, Huebner & Howell 2003, Lehr *et al.* 2000, Miller *et al.* 2001, Nagamatsu *et al.* 2008, Ogle *et al.* 2008, Somers & Paulson 2000, Widman *et al.* 2006, 2016). However, whilst there is a burgeoning literature concerning the challenges that parents encounter in undertaking this role, there is a paucity of research which specifically examines parents' experiences of sexuality communication with their pre-adolescent children. The few studies that exist suggest that parents struggle in fulfilling this aspect of parenting (Ballard and Gross 2009, Davies and Robinson 2010, Frankham 2006, Geasler *et al.* 1995,

	
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1 Stone *et al.* 2013, 2015a, 2015b) but there has been little analysis of why parents report such
2 challenges.

3 Sexual thinking is very much present in the worlds of young children who continually
4 observe aspects of sexuality in their daily lives and seek to understand and integrate their per-
5 ceptions into their personal schema (Best 1983, Renold 2005, 2013). Goldman and Goldman
6 (1982) identified that if explanations are not available to children they will invent theories for
7 themselves in order to make sense of their sexual world. Children not only seek sexual knowl-
8 edge but they strive to understand it and make sense of it. However, children's efforts are fre-
9 quently thwarted by taboos enforced by sometimes evasive, repressive or even coercive
10 behaviours by adults.

11 2 The study, from which this article has been developed (*Anon 2015), sought to add to the
12 current limited body of knowledge about parent-child sexuality communication. However,
13 rather than focusing on 'parents', a more nuanced approach was taken which focused specifi-
14 cally on fathers since their experiences are largely over-looked in the literature and there is a
15 consensus that further work in this field is required (DiIorio *et al.* 2003, Walsh *et al.* 1999,
16 Widman *et al.* 2016, Wilson *et al.* 2010, Wilson and Koo 2010, Wyckoff *et al.* 2008). The
17 research question that guided this study was, therefore: 'What are the perceptions and practices
18 of fathers in educating their children about physical maturation, reproduction and relation-
19 ships?'

20 The aims were:

- 21 1. To develop a critical understanding of the practices of fathers in engaging in sexuality com-
22 munication with their children.
- 23 2. To surface the perceptions of fathers concerning their role in engaging in sexuality educa-
24 tion with their children.
- 25 3. To reveal fathers' attitudes towards children's sexuality education.

26 27 28 **Methodology**

29 This study employed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) which was developed
30 and refined by Smith *et al.* (Smith 1996, 2004, Smith and Eatough 2016, Smith *et al.* 2009).
31 Philosophically IPA is informed by phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. IPA is also
32 influenced by symbolic interactionism with its concern for how meanings are constructed by
33 individuals within both their social and their personal world. IPA has a dual aim of providing
34 an in-depth exploration of people's lived experiences as well as an examination of how people
35 make sense of these experiences (Smith *et al.* 2009). It also facilitates a focus on social cogni-
36 tion in that it is concerned 'with unravelling the relationship between what people think (cog-
37 nition), say (account) and do (behaviour)' (Smith and Eatough 2012: 442) which was of
38 particular value to this study since it was concerned with both the perceptions and practices of
39 fathers.
40
41

42 43 **Theoretical Framework**

44 The theoretical framework for this study was Foucault's concepts of governmentality and bio-
45 power. Conceptually, governmentality originates from the work of Foucault (1979). It refers to
46 the 'subtle, comprehensive management of life drawing both from a top-down exercise of
47 power over conduct ... with a subjectivity constituted in a sense of personal responsibility,
48
49

rights, freedoms and dependencies' (Fox 1993: 32–3). Governmentality is characterised by pervasive surveillance and disciplining of the individual and the population 'in relation to a whole series of power networks that invest in the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology and so forth' (Foucault 1978: 122). Foucault (1978: 140) argues that governmentality's continuous surveillance and corrective mechanisms make bodies transparent and render them open to manipulation, thus fostering the emergence of 'biopower'. Biopower refers to the 'technologies of power that address the management of, and control over, the life of the population' (Nadesan 2008: 2). It is concerned with maximising the functionality of individuals, families, the economy and the state and promoting social discipline (Beck 1992). For Foucault, biopower was the dominant system of social control in modern Europe throughout the 20th century since it constructs truth discourses concerning 'normal' sexuality and it also produces authorities who exert power in speaking about them, thus enabling subjugation (Rabinow and Rose 2006). Unlike previous regimes which exerted power over life, biopower brings 'life and its mechanism into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life' (Foucault 1978: 143).

Methods

Recruitment of participants was via advertisements placed at a university, sports clubs, community groups and social networking sites. A total of eight fathers volunteered and they were all recruited to the study. The sample was homogenous, a quality which is advocated for IPA studies (Smith *et al.* 2009). All of the fathers had children who were aged ten and in year five of the English school system and they lived with their children and their children's mothers full-time. They were all white, heterosexual and similar in age (forty-two to forty-six years) and were professionals, educated to Masters level or equivalent.

Data collection was via individual face-to-face interviews which lasted between 30 and 72 minutes. All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and data analysis was carried out as per Smith *et al.*'s (2009) guidelines. Thus, analysis was an iterative and inductive process with each interview analysed separately initially. Each transcript was analysed line by line and initial descriptive notes were made, followed by observations of the language used and semantic content and finally, conceptual comments were recorded which, in due course, became themes. The process was cyclical in that emerging themes were tested against earlier data and themes were, on occasion, changed to become subordinate or superordinate.

The School of Healthcare Sciences Research Ethics Committee at Cardiff University granted approval for this study. The study adhered to the approved proposal throughout. Informed consent was obtained from all participants both in relation to their participation in the study and subsequent publication of findings. All quotations in the ensuing discussions have been anonymised in order to safeguard the confidentiality of participants and pseudonyms have been used throughout for the fathers, their children and their partners.

Results

The following section reports on the study's findings pertaining to 'Childhood Innocence' at the idiographic level, followed by a cross-group analysis.

1 *Michael*

2 Michael felt that he had a close relationship with his son and he was confident that his son
3 could talk with him openly:

4
5 Henry and I have got a good relationship. We talk, you know umm we're open with each
6 other ...

7
8 Michael described feeling equipped to teach his son about puberty, relationships and reproduc-
9 tion and he felt that it was a parental responsibility to do so, however, he had not engaged in
10 such discussions with Henry:

11
12 On the sexual side I probably haven't actually approached it in a, as a are you ready for a
13 talk yet? I don't, I don't think I've said if you ever want to talk.

14
15 Michael appeared to perceive Henry as younger than he was chronologically and did not
16 acknowledge that his son was growing up and approaching a period of physical and emotional
17 change:

18 Interviewer: How about say puberty? At around this age, some boys start to change don't
19 they?

20 Michael: Umm.

21 Interviewer: They might grow body hair, have wet dreams and so on? Have you talked
22 about those kinds of changes?

23 Michael: No I haven't no.

24 Interviewer: Has it occurred to you?

25 Michael: No it probably hasn't. I don't think he is close to that stage ...

26 Interviewer: When do you think children are ready to know about puberty, relationships
27 and reproduction?

28 Michael: I don't think Henry is yet ... he hasn't shown any interest [in girls] yet.

29
30 This last response suggested that whilst the interviewer, was talking about three areas of learn-
31 ing, Michael had aggregated these three aspects to one, interpreting the conversation as being
32 concerned only with (hetero)sexual relationships. The dialogue suggested that since such con-
33 versations would focus on sex they would be irrelevant to a ten year old:

34
35 He's not ready ... there's no need yet.

36
37 Thus, a silence characterised Michael's treatment of sexuality which he attributed to his son's
38 lack of readiness for these types of discussions.

39
40 *Nigel*

41 Nigel felt strongly that educating children about puberty, relationships and reproduction was
42 'the parents' responsibility' and 'you shouldn't shirk it'. He reflected on his own parents' lack
43 of communication with him about intimate issues and he wanted to be better than them in this
44 regard. He described feeling knowledgeable and confident in undertaking this role and said
45 that he had an 'open and honest' relationship with his children yet he had not discussed any
46 aspect of puberty, sex or relationships with his son Tom, who was ten. Nigel appeared to not
47 see his son as he really was chronologically and developmentally; his overall perception of his
48 son was that he was innocent and, therefore, asexual:

1 He really doesn't need to know yet. It's not relevant to him. Perhaps when he's going to
2 secondary school but not now, he's more into playing than all that stuff.

3
4
5 *Angus*

6 Angus spoke passionately about how knowledge can protect children from emotional and
7 physical harm:

8
9 Knowledge protects them. They need to be aware of everything that is going on for them.
10 As individuals, they need to be aware of what is going on with their bodies, so they aren't
11 worried about it and they need to be aware of relationships and that there are all sorts of
12 people in this world, some of them are good, some of them will try and help you and some
13 will do the opposite and that's how life is.

14
15 In articulating this belief, Angus's language was fluent and confident and his line of argument
16 was clear. His assertions were underpinned by a belief that children required support and pro-
17 tection, however, in using 'they' it appeared that Angus was talking about children in general
18 as opposed to his own. Angus stated that it was a parental responsibility to teach children
19 about sexuality and described feeling equipped to fulfil this role, yet his lived experience of
20 discussing sexuality with his own children appeared to be very limited. As the conversation
21 moved from the general to the personal lived experience the change in the linguistic character-
22 istics of his speech were striking. When asked about his daughter's knowledge of periods and
23 other aspects of puberty and her awareness of how babies are made, Angus responded:

24 Angus: I don't know, it's weird to think about as I've never thought about it.

25 Interviewer: Do you plan to check that out?

26 Angus: I am not sure I do, I don't know ... I'm not sure that she is ready yet, she
27 still likes her dolls and stuff like that.

28
29 Thus a tension emerged between Angus's beliefs and his behaviours in the home in that he
30 believed that knowledge can be protective for children but he felt that sexuality-related com-
31 munication was superfluous to his daughter's needs at this time.

32
33 *James*

34 James voiced his concern about threats to childhood innocence:

35
36 ... Rich, he's ten so a bit early, but he's showing an interest in girls now and I don't
37 think he's equipped to deal with that ... I am terrified that his innocence is going to be
38 taken away.

39
40 However, a conflict between James' perception of childhood as a time of innocence and the
41 realities of his son Rich's life emerged from the transcript: 'he's gone out with about ten girls
42 and that doesn't actually mean going out with them but sitting in the bike shed kissing which
43 is very sweet'. James was describing sexualised behaviour yet he described it as 'very sweet'
44 which portrayed it as innocent as opposed to tainted or worldly. Although James described
45 himself as having 'enough knowledge' he was not proactive in discussing sexuality related
46 issues with his son. Instead he relied upon Rich to ask questions which did not happen. Whilst
47 he felt that it was a parental responsibility to teach children about sexuality and he believed
48 that knowledge can be protective, he was not proactive in fulfilling his aspirations to be open

1 and supportive of Rich in this regard which resulted in a complete void with regards to this
2 aspect of James' communication with his son.

3
4 *Steve*

5 Steve was explicit in relation to discussing the tension between his perception of his daughter,
6 Lydia, as innocent yet, simultaneously, physically developing:

7
8 You can see Lydia growing up now, but she – in her outlook and the way she wants to be
9 – she is completely a little girl, drinking her milk out of a baby's cup and playing little
10 girls' games ... So the thought of talking about growing up, sexual relationships and
11 reproduction I just can't see how we will do it ...

12
13 Despite observing that Lydia had already commenced puberty, 'physically she's starting to
14 grow up' Steve still saw her as a little girl; thus there was a conflict between Lydia as she
15 really was and his perceptions of her. He saw Lydia as 'other' but she was on the cusp of
16 changing to become the 'same' in the form of an emerging adult yet Steve appeared to be
17 silenced by his perceptions of Lydia as young and innocent.

18
19 *Colin*

20 Colin's experience of parent-child sexuality education had an exclusively biological focus:

21 Colin: Jake asked me a question and we covered it all in fifteen to twenty minutes.

22 Interviewer: When you say 'covered it all', what did you cover?

23 Colin: Sexual, erm we did a little, yes we did. Obviously not in graphic detail but
24 how the sperm gets in and penetrates the egg and we did do menstruation as
25 we are an open family. He's asked questions like what's that on the toilet, it's
26 a bit of blood and I have said 'it happens to mum sometimes'.

27
28 Colin asserted that 'it's the parents' responsibility' to impart sexuality education. He painted a
29 picture of openness, for example: 'we are an open family' and 'I don't think you should make
30 it a taboo'. However, a second reading revealed a tension between 'openness' and 'control'.
31 Whilst Colin felt that he had been open and responsive he had actually addressed very little.
32 Although Colin described his son as 'a bright spark', the limitations to discussions imposed by
33 Colin appeared to link to his perceptions of age appropriateness and how much he felt Jake
34 needed to know:

35 Colin: If he asks a question, I tell him the truth but I suppose you're economical
36 with it ...

37 Interviewer: When you've talked about sex have you talked about the relationship side of
38 things?

39 Colin: No I don't think that's appropriate for his age, and I could gauge from his
40 reaction he would not cope, he would be pulling a face and saying 'Oh no'!

41
42 Thus Colin appeared to apply a framework of varying shades of openness to his parenting in
43 this regard which appeared to be underpinned by notions of age appropriateness and childhood
44 innocence.

45
46 *Neil*

47 Protective discourses characterised much of Neil's dialogue. He drew upon both his personal
48 and professional experiences and his personal values to create a world view which privileged
49 perceptions of risk and the need to protect children, for example:

1 We talk about how some adults can't be trusted and stranger mentality where you think 'I
2 don't know this person, I am not going to go off with them'. It's that naivety and gullibility
3 you've got to touch on without removing their innocence and childhood.
4

5 Risks included normalising messages regarding promiscuity on the television and predators
6 that his children may come in to contact with, either through the internet or through their day
7 to day lives. These risks caused Neil significant anxiety as illustrated by his use of language,
8 for example he used the terms 'it's just horrific' and 'it does worry me' several times and he
9 described employing protective behaviours such as discouraging his daughter from joining
10 community groups and restricting his children's internet usage.

11 Neil described feeling equipped for the role of sexuality educator and his behaviours were
12 consistent with his aspirations to be open with his children. For example, he described some
13 of the more 'factual' discussions that he had had with his son, Tony, when he was age ten:

14
15 I said that every twenty eight daysish a girl loses the lining of the womb and it leaks out
16 through her vagina so they need tampons and panty liners to stop it being embarrassing,
17 smelly or staining clothes.
18

19 We talked about blokes first of all and sex. It was sort of talking slang terms for penis, vagina
20 and sex. We talked about erections, hard-ons.

21 We've talked about masturbating.

22 The linguistic qualities of Neil's transcript suggested that he was comfortable and confident
23 in discussing these issues with his son. Metaphor and euphemism were not a feature of his
24 dialogue; his language was factual and unembarrassed. Although Neil was concerned about
25 preserving his children's childhood innocence he felt that possession of factual information
26 could be protective, thus enabling them to safeguard their sexual innocence.
27

28 *Andy*

29 Andy had given his role in talking about sexuality with his daughter, Charlotte, very little
30 thought prior to the interview. When asked whether he had any opinions regarding the age that
31 children should learn about sex and relationships he responded:
32

33
34 The thinking is that girls mature quicker than boys do. I reckon if Charlotte knows more
35 about sex earlier it's a good thing as she will be more street wise. But that's if you think
36 she can cope with it. It depends on the child, if you think they are fairly immature then you
37 don't want to be telling them too much at that time. It's making sure you give them enough
38 information that they can cope with at that time and give them bits to go away with and
39 come back at a later point to go through further. I think if she's confident to ask questions
40 or won't get too upset then I think ten, eleven, and twelve, after that it's a bit late.
41

42 This extract suggests that age appropriateness and levels of maturity were important to Andy
43 in relation to determining when sexuality should be discussed with children. The age range
44 that he mentioned, age ten to twelve, included Charlotte's age, however, he did not appear to
45 connect this statement to Charlotte's needs. Similarly, he did not seem to link his statement
46 about the potentially protective role of knowledge to Charlotte at this stage in her life, instead
47 his focus appeared to be on a notional future. Furthermore, although earlier in the interview
48 Andy had asserted that 'parents have a responsibility' and he indicated that he felt that he
49 would be capable of undertaking the role of sexuality educator if he had to, 'I'd probably go

1 on the internet. The resources are there ... I can muddle through, I'm sure', his practices as
 2 a sexuality educator were characterised by an absence of meaningful dialogue.

3 Thus, although Andy felt that girls need to know about sexuality related issues at an early
 4 age because they 'mature quicker than boys' and he felt that it was advantageous for them to
 5 learn about relationships and sex, he was completely unaware of Charlotte's level of under-
 6 standing. Whilst he reported feeling equipped to undertake this role and considered it a paren-
 7 tal responsibility there was significant dissonance between these assertions and his behaviours
 8 which appeared to relate to constructions of his daughter as being developmentally less mature
 9 than she was in reality.

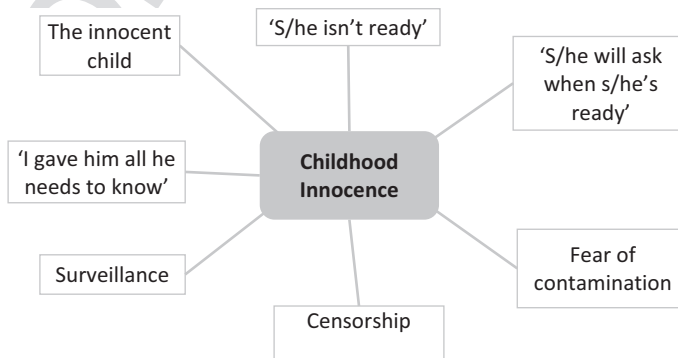
11 *Analysis at the group level*

12 All of the fathers agreed that discussing sex, relationships and puberty with their children was
 13 a parental responsibility and the majority felt that knowledge about these issues would protect
 14 their children emotionally and physically. All but one of the fathers described themselves as
 15 equipped for the role, yet only one, Neil, had addressed sexuality comprehensively with his
 16 children. The children that were discussed in these interviews were aged ten and were, there-
 17 fore, likely to be peri-pubertal or pubertal. However, all of the fathers apart from Neil consid-
 18 ered their children to be too young to require information about puberty, relationships and
 19 reproduction. The fathers shared a perception of their children as innocent and/or 'not ready'
 20 which appeared to give rise to an over-arching silence regarding father-child sexuality, regard-
 21 less of whether the child was male or female. The subordinate themes that emerged from the
 22 fathers' data are presented in Figure 1 which demonstrates the relationship between the subor-
 23 dinate themes and the emergence of the superordinate theme 'childhood innocence'.

26 **Discussion**

28 *Innocence*

29 Whilst the fathers' lived experiences of fatherhood and masculinities were central to interpret-
 30 ing the findings of this study (*Anon 2015) their practices were contingent on wider issues
 31 concerning regimes of truth regarding the condition and status of childhood. Jackson and Scott
 32 (2010: 101, 103) describe sexuality as being seen by many as 'inimical to childhood itself'
 33 and 'antithetical to the well-being of children' since it is widely regarded as a threat to the
 34 childhood innocence ideal. The findings of this study were in keeping with those of Egan



49 **Figure 1** *Development of the superordinate theme 'Childhood Innocence'*

1 (2013), Goldman and Goldman (1982) and Robinson (2013) in that the fathers perceived their
 2 children as asexual in their thoughts and behaviours and they were viewed as innocent and
 3 unaffected by sex. These perceptions were in keeping with notions of the Romantic child
 4 which dates back to the late eighteenth century. Children were portrayed as asexual, pure and
 5 innocent and thus, the innocent child ideal emerged which led to the normalisation of practices
 6 that aimed to shield children from an awareness of sex and sexuality. Childhood, therefore,
 7 became a site of public and private surveillance and childhood sexuality became the object of
 8 intense scrutiny which was pivotal in deploying a shift in disciplinary apparatus, most notably
 9 through the family, which foregrounded the project of normalisation and surveillance in the
 10 late nineteenth century (Foucault 1978). This project strengthened further in the first two dec-
 11 ades of the twentieth century with the emergence of psychoanalysis and sexology which iden-
 12 tified the potential for children to be sexual.

13 Several studies have identified that parents' concerns to protect their children's innocence
 14 can present a barrier to parent-child sexuality communication (Dyson and Smith 2012; Stone
 15 *et al.* 2015a, 2015b, 2013, Walsh *et al.* 1999). McGinn (2013) found that although there is
 16 some ambiguity on the part of parents in defining childhood innocence, definitions generally
 17 centre on two key areas: the non-sexuality of children and their lack of sexual knowledge.
 18 These definitions applied to the present study with the fathers assuming that their children
 19 lacked knowledge about sexuality, coitus and their own bodies and they were, therefore, inno-
 20 cent. However, the fathers' assumptions were based on their lack of dialogue with their chil-
 21 dren about sexuality and appeared to overlook spatiality, in that they underestimated the
 22 learning that their children were likely to have acquired through their exterior worlds such as
 23 school friends, friends' families and observing people's bodies and relationship behaviours in
 24 public spaces. Whilst some reference was made to playground learning by Michael and James,
 25 and Andy made reference to Charlotte having support through the extended family and friends,
 26 the fathers largely appeared to overlook the impact of the children's inner worlds on their
 27 learning, for example their interactions with books, television, films, art and social media all
 28 of which portray different aspects of sexuality.

29 Relationality or the 'otherness of the other' is at the heart of social constructions of child-
 30 hood. This was evident in the fathers' transcripts with the children being described as too
 31 young to cope with learning about sexuality by all of the fathers apart from Neil. Developmen-
 32 tal perspectives were clearly evident in the fathers' perceptions of childhood. Stone *et al.*
 33 (2015a, 2015b) identified that this was a concern amongst the 110 parents that participated in
 34 their research and Nguyen and Rosengran (2004) also identified that this was the case in their
 35 study, with parents believing that issues of a sexual nature should be discussed later than other
 36 biological concepts.

37 Thus, boundaries and barriers were applied by the fathers which privileged the 'knowledge-
 38 able' adult over the 'naïve' or 'ignorant' child. However, with no clear demarcation between
 39 what constitutes adulthood and, therefore, childhood, definitions of age or stage appropriateness
 40 are problematic. The notion of a threshold between child and adulthood was hinted at by
 41 the fathers and appeared to include several reference points: the development of competence,
 42 the loss of innocence and physiological sexual development. Alanen and Mayall (2001)
 43 emphasise the social construction of age, time and temporality of childhood and Lee (2002)
 44 furthers the debate by challenging notions of competency, emphasising that competency is
 45 context dependent in that adults and children can be simultaneously competent and incompete-
 46 nt depending upon what is being demanded of the individual. However, Robinson (2008)
 47 and Jackson and Scott (2010) argue that the defining boundary between adulthood and child-
 48 hood is childhood innocence and hegemonic discourses of sexuality suggest that physiological
 49 sexual maturity is a signifier of adulthood (Robinson 2008). As Foucault (1978) notes, in

1 modernity, the child's sexuality was conceptualised as physiologically present, but experienced
 2 as subjectively and phenomenologically absent until puberty. Thus the fathers' discourses were
 3 congruent with the dominant discourse that children are, therefore, non-sexual. By perceiving
 4 their children as innocent, childhood could be prolonged by the fathers and time was temporar-
 5 ily suspended in that roles were unchallenged and remained unchanged.

6 In relation to temporality all of the fathers, apart from Neil, appeared to experience a tension
 7 between objective time, that is their children's chronological age and stage of development,
 8 and their subjective, lived time whereby the children appeared to be perceived by their fathers
 9 as being much younger physically and less knowledgeable than they were in reality. For exam-
 10 ple, the girls that were referred to by their fathers were either peri-pubertal or pubertal and
 11 Nigel's son, Jo, had already learnt about reproduction before his father broached the issue with
 12 him, yet the fathers continued to perceive the children as 'not yet ready' to talk about sexual-
 13 ity. Temporality discourses surrounding 'being' and 'becoming' (James 1998) were, therefore,
 14 also of relevance to interpreting the findings of this study. The 'being' child is regarded as
 15 exercising agency in constructing their personal childhood whereas the 'becoming' child is
 16 perceived as an 'adult in the making' and lacks the essential skills and competencies of the
 17 adult that they will become (James and James 2004). Neil's discussions focused on preparing
 18 his children to become the competent, confident adults that he hoped they would be, whereas
 19 the other fathers appeared unable to think beyond their perceptions of the present. James and
 20 Prout (1997) assert that the dominant framework in contemporary Western European society is
 21 the 'becoming' child, however, the findings of this study question this position.

22 A further finding of this study relating to both constructions of childhood and temporality,
 23 concerned the age of the children that were the focus of the interviews. Many of the findings
 24 of the current study resonate with Davies and Robinson's (2010), Stone *et al.*'s (2015a,
 25 2015b, 2013) and Walsh *et al.*'s (1999) in that many of the parents who participated in these
 26 studies felt that discussing bodies, relationships and reproduction with young children was
 27 unnecessary and may pose a threat to childhood innocence. However, an important difference
 28 between these studies and the current study concerned the age of the children under discus-
 29 sion; the children in the studies cited were aged three to six years, whereas the parents in the
 30 current study were reflecting on the needs of their ten year olds. Thus it appeared that the
 31 image of the sexually innocent child extended well beyond the early years for the fathers in
 32 this study. With the exception of Neil, the fathers' lived experiences were embedded in a pro-
 33 tracted sense of time in relation to their biographies as fathers of young children and the dura-
 34 tion of early childhood.

35 *Protective discourses*

36 Discourses are historically and culturally developed practices through which knowledge, power
 37 and subjectivity can be understood (Foucault 1972). A protective discourse characterised much
 38 of the fathers' collective narrative with the assertion that knowledge about sex and relation-
 39 ships could protect their children from predators. The children were perceived as emotionally
 40 and cognitively immature by their fathers and, therefore, vulnerable. Such concerns are repre-
 41 sentative of the wider literature such as Stone *et al.*'s (2015a, 2015b, 2013) and Dyson and
 42 Smith's (2012). In addition, they reflected the prevailing media discourse in the UK at the time
 43 of data collection concerning ongoing revelations about the perpetration of sexual abuse by
 44 several high profile media personalities which had exacerbated public anxiety about 'the paed-
 45ophile' as a threat to children's safety.

46 Jackson and Scott (2010) suggest that such anxieties are associated with changes in the
 47 social world which is becoming less stable and predictable. Thus, protective discourses have
 48 endured and grown with risk anxieties superimposed on to a normalised set of risk
 49

1 assumptions about childhood and sexuality. Consequently, a preoccupation with prevention
 2 against any potential threats to the wellbeing of children with regards to sexual knowledge has
 3 emerged both within the private domain of parenting and health promotion discourses (Jackson
 4 and Scott 2010). Harden (1998) posits that such discourses present contemporary examples of
 5 biopower with prescriptions for the protection of children's welfare linking private acts to the
 6 'public good'. A cultural perception of the childhood innocence ideal coupled with the concept
 7 of risk are argued to act together to galvanise parents to pursue the safeguarding of their chil-
 8 dren's wellbeing as a goal, although keeping children in ignorance does not necessarily protect
 9 them effectively and may, paradoxically increase their vulnerability (Jackson and Scott 2015,
 10 Robinson 2013). As Foucault (1978) asserts, the repressive discourses of the Victorian era sur-
 11 rounding sexuality intensified the focus on the sexual and by 'insisting so loudly on the inno-
 12 cence, purity and asexuality of the child, we have created a subversive echo: experience,
 13 corruption, eroticism' (Kincaid 1992: 4). Chenier (2012) argues that the social construction of
 14 the sexual predator serves to support the ideological function of the white, middle-class, gen-
 15 dered, hierarchical, heterosexual family and, thus, 'stranger-danger' discourses maintain the
 16 'natural order of disorder' (Foucault 1978: 44). As Foucault (1978: 44) asserts aberrant sexual-
 17 ities are not suppressed, they are, instead, subject to analytical scrutiny and 'made into a prin-
 18 ciple of classification and intelligibility' in order to maintain societal order. By externalising
 19 threats to childhood innocence through the predator discourse, which directs the gaze to the
 20 stranger and distracts from the family, the fictional ideal of the family as safe and nurturing is
 21 maintained (Chenier 2012). Thus, the sexual deviant is both an effect of and a strategy of
 22 power in that the paedophile has been seen by many as defining sexual innocence (Chenier
 23 2012).

24 For the fathers in the current study, the reluctance to discuss sexuality related issues with
 25 their children appeared, in part, to relate to an anxiety regarding premature sexualisation of
 26 their children. All of the fathers expressed concern that their children were being exposed to
 27 too much sexualised imagery and this could be harmful to them emotionally. Martin and Tor-
 28 res (2014) propose that such concerns reflect the traditional assumption that children are pas-
 29 sive in their sexual socialisation. However, childhood sociologists such as James and Prout
 30 (1997) and Corsaro (1992) and the developmental theorist Vygotsky (1978) argue that children
 31 are far from passive in that they interpret, engage and interact with the world around them to
 32 evaluate and make sense of their sexual socialisation. Indeed, Buckingham and Bragg's (2004)
 33 analysis of interview and diary data of 120 nine to 17 year olds demonstrated that children
 34 and young people assert agency in interpreting and assimilating sexual messages that they are
 35 exposed to through adult and youth media. Rysst (2010) and Pilcher (2010) have also demon-
 36 strated how adult interpretations of girls' fashion are frequently at odds with adult interpreta-
 37 tions in that adults assume that girls want to look 'sexy' and provocative whereas the girls
 38 talk about wishing to look 'grown up' and 'cool'. Thus, children appear to assert agency and
 39 interpret 'adult' materials in more complex and nuanced ways than adults frequently assume
 40 (Renold 2013; Wyness 2015). Thus, Foucault's (1978) assertion that sexuality must be under-
 41 stood through the politics of talk and that sexuality is organised spatially and materially is of
 42 relevance here in that these studies demonstrate that children themselves question the politics
 43 that sustain the dichotomy between child and adult sexuality.

44 The fathers all described engaging in types of surveillance in relation to their children's
 45 internet and television usage, with music videos and social media featuring as particular
 46 sources of concern. They felt that exposure to such material and conversations were inappro-
 47 priate for children and posed a threat to their innocence. Normalising judgements, coupled
 48 with the panoptic gaze are central to the apparatus of social control which is characteristic of
 49 biopower. Jackson and Scott (2010) posit that the surveillance of children's sexual lives has

1 historically been underpinned by an additional motivation to prolong childhood. Sexualisation
2 and predator discourses offer another contemporary example of biopower. They have led to
3 heightened surveillance of children because of their perceived vulnerability to sexual danger
4 resulting in control since, according to Foucault (1977), control is internalised and exercised
5 through universal surveillance rather than force.

6 A conspicuous absence in the fathers' discussions and in the literature relates to the child's
7 right to learn about sexuality. Power, according to Foucault (1982) is an action that requires
8 two consenting parties and a possibility of choice. In the current discourses children are disem-
9 powered because they have no choice and the normative framework is to refuse children such
10 information. Not only does this mean that they are rendered more vulnerable, they are also
11 unlikely to be prepared for the onset of puberty given the earlier physical maturation of boys
12 and girls (Goldman 2008).

13 It could also be argued that the fathers who participated in this study were disempowered
14 because they were seemingly unaware of how their practices were influenced by the subtle
15 coercions of governmentality. Warnings regarding the perils of childhood sexualisation implic-
16 itly advise that the good family will discourage sexuality-orientated discussions with their chil-
17 dren; thus expert discourses rendered the fathers as self-policing subjects. Their lack of
18 resistance led to the production of a 'docile body' (Foucault 1977: 136) that may be subjected,
19 used, transformed and improved. With the exception of Neil, the fathers chose to align their
20 practices with 'expert' recommendations. Rather than challenging the centrality of expertise
21 and, indeed, the legitimacy of such experts, they endorsed disciplinary technologies. As seen
22 in this study, such technologies employ powerful discourses that shape regimes of truth and
23 incorporate 'normalising judgement(s)' (Foucault 1977: 177) which qualify or disqualify indi-
24 viduals as 'fit and proper members of the social order' (Danaher *et al.* 2000: 61). Individual
25 behaviour is, therefore, constrained through 'a set of standards and values associated with nor-
26 mality which are set into play by a network of ostensibly beneficent . . . forms of knowledge'
27 (McNay 1994: 94). Thus, the childhood sexualisation discourse reinforces the notion that
28 childhood sexuality is an expert realm in which only experts can legitimately advise on how
29 the subject should be tackled.

32 **Limitations**

34 The interpretations presented in this study were those of the research team and they were,
35 inevitably, shaped by the researchers' values and choice of theoretical lens; subjectivity is,
36 therefore, an inevitable feature of this study. In addition, the role of language can be problem-
37 atic in IPA studies in that language can construct rather than describe reality, and there is,
38 therefore, a risk that the interview transcripts in this study told more about the way in which
39 the fathers talked about their experiences than the experience itself. As Willig (2001) points
40 out, individuals may struggle to use language in a way that accurately conveys the subtleties
41 and nuances of their experience and, as with all studies of this nature, there is a risk that the
42 fathers' dialogues reflected what they perceived to be the 'right' thing to say rather than their
43 authentic accounts. The small sample size and homogenous nature of the sample that is
44 required of IPA studies are further limitations to the generalisations that can be drawn from
45 this study. This study provides an insight into a population that is not representative of all
46 fathers since the sample was exclusively white, mature, educated, professional, heterosexual
47 and the fathers lived with their children and the mothers of their children full-time. It, there-
48 fore, does not provide an insight in to the perceptions and practices of groups such as young
49 fathers, fathers of different cultures, fathers who are socio-economically disadvantaged and

1 those who do not identify themselves as heterosexual. In addition, the socio-economic status
 2 of the fathers may have given particular prominence to issues such as the ‘stranger-danger’
 3 discourse which is frequently suggested to be of greatest concern to white ‘middle class’ par-
 4 ents (Pain 2006). Furthermore, due to the self-selected nature of the fathers who participated
 5 in the study, the findings and interpretations need to be placed in context since the sample
 6 may over represent fathers who are more favourable towards discussing sexuality with their
 7 children than other fathers. Further research that selects from different groups and draws compar-
 8 isons across groups is, therefore, required.

11 Conclusion

13 A significant barrier to father-child sexuality communication appears to relate to the childhood
 14 innocence ideal. Notions around childhood and sexual innocence are held to be of such signifi-
 15 cance to social relations and systems of regulation that political institutions, the media, reli-
 16 gious authorities and others use the sexualisation agenda as a quiet coercion (Foucault 1977)
 17 in order to produce and reproduce social and political norms that suppress open dialogue. Such
 18 conversations are, therefore, difficult and subjugated and normative behaviours have been
 19 established that question the need for children to learn about sexuality. Thus the panoptic gaze
 20 is broadened not only to include surveillance of our children’s learning about sexuality but to
 21 extend to fathers’ concerns regarding how they will be judged by others if their children
 22 ‘know too much’ about their bodies, relationships and reproduction (Stone 2015). As Foucault
 23 argues, the most powerful effect of the panoptic gaze is the attitude of self-policing that it
 24 engenders in its subjects; ‘he becomes the principle of his own subjection’ (Foucault 1977:
 25 209). Thus biopower operates through these technologies of normalisation and the panoptic
 26 gaze, through a ‘subtle, calculated technology of subjection’ (Foucault 1977: 227), to produce
 27 self-regulating subjects which conform to societal norms to keep children in ignorance regard-
 28 ing sexuality. However, children are potentially rendered more vulnerable if they are kept in
 29 ignorance; thus normalising assumptions regarding the childhood innocence ideal need to be
 30 challenged and fathers need to be encouraged to align their practices with their perceptions
 31 that knowledge can play a protective role for children.

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