

## **Abstract**

# Exposing interpellation with dystopian fiction: a critical discourse analysis technique to disrupt hegemonic masculinity

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## **Abstract**

Dystopian fiction (DF) speculates on 'the hegemonic order and... resistance' (Baccolini & Moylan, 2003). Applying unconventional methods can enable researchers to look again from a new critical angle and challenge the primacy of mainstream qualitative gendered management research. DF provides a lens for critical discourse analysis/CDA enabling researchers in identifying ideological influences and proposing acts of resistance and change inspired by the genre.

## **Background**

This method expands on research promoting storytelling and fiction in managerial and organisational research (e.g. Rhodes & Brown, 2005). By positioning this method in an abstract space, we hope to generate creative solutions to enduring 'wrongs' (Fairclough, 2013).

## **Method**

Using illustrative examples with working parents, this CDA examines parental decision making at micro, meso and macro levels of discourse to demonstrate how DF can enhance CDA methods. This method aspires to the liminal spaces in between fiction and reality, towards a speculative pathway of resistance and change.

**Keywords:** Gender; Organisations; Hegemonic Masculinity; Critical Discourse Analysis; Working Parents; Social Justice

***Title - Exposing interpellation with dystopian fiction: A Critical Discourse Analysis technique to disrupt hegemonic masculinity***

**Introduction**

*predicting the future isn't really possible: There are too many variables and unforeseen possibilities. Let's say it's an antiprediction: If this future can be described in detail, maybe it won't happen. (Atwood, 2017)*

Our discourses -- what and how we 'talk' -- help construct our futures (Sambrook, 2000). Discourse analysis, a process which could be said to have developed from hermeneutics (knowledge interpretation) theorists such as Heidegger (2008/1927), emerged as a means to interpret the ways in which 'talk' shaped our interactions. While important for understanding social contexts, discourse analysis developed as a cross-disciplinary approach to humanities and social sciences, incorporating anthropology, sociology, linguistics, psychology and communication studies; it was not always centred on questioning the role of power in language and communication (Van Dijk, 2011). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) addresses that gap by exploring the power dimensions of the way language is applied and how ideology is produced and reproduced through language. This chapter extends our understanding of CDA by demonstrating how integrating dystopian fiction (DF) reveals new perspectives on subject interpellation (Althusser, 2014).

CDA also addresses a 'social wrong' through critical analysis of social events, practices, structures in discourse (Fairclough, 2013). In this chapter, we focus on the social 'wrong' of imbalanced gender discourses that typically benefit men in management contexts. We propose that the perceived ideal of 'hegemonic masculinity' (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985; Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), which promotes a 'superior' model of masculinity that protects men's interests in the workplace as the 'breadwinner', is a constraining factor for women's career prospects in management. We highlight this issue through the crucial career juncture of parental decision-making (especially concerning managerial support for caregiving). Through our CDA, we problematize this gendered discourse and promote DF as a unique inspiration for subversive (and constructive) responses in academic contexts.

This chapter provides an overview of CDA and then articulates a rationale and procedure for incorporating dystopian fiction as a mechanism to advance CDA. Understanding the linkages between CDA and dystopian fiction is particularly salient when viewed relative to the growth of ‘stories’ in organisational research in the last decade. As Beigi, Callahan, and Michaelson (2019) observed, women are finding their voice through and with storytelling and their voices often engage critical perspectives. Historically, the tenor and tone of storytelling has gendered implications (Harvey, 1989), with men and women telling different kinds of stories in different ways. Because gendered marginalisation features prominently in dystopian fiction, the genre can serve as a powerful lens to complement these stories. As a result, the link between dystopian fiction and CDA offers a nuanced tool for peeling back layers of gendered power discourse in organisations.

Using examples of an empirical study exploring parental experiences at work, the chapter demonstrates the use of dystopian fiction in conjunction with CDA through the application of fertility and hegemonic masculinity (HM) tropes derived from DF. We explain the methodological choices that enable a Dystopian-Fiction-inspired Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2013) as a means of appraising the lived experiences and expectations of parents with a critical lens. Using examples from the first author’s research, we briefly outline the methods for interviewing, which elicit stories of interviewee’s parental expectations and experiences. We use our adapted CDA to access hidden meaning behind the surface of parental experiences in the workplace, guided by DF tropes. We provide illustrative examples of coding and interpretations of interview transcripts from the first author’s study of a gendered phenomenon within an organization. This example of applying the method with data demonstrates the effect of this dystopian fiction-influenced CDA method. The examples were mindfully chosen to serve as an exemplar of the methodological process, but also because of their relevance for explicating the influence of HM as a barrier to women’s success in organisations.

## **Ethical considerations**

The method we present in this chapter is centred on the principle of social justice as an integral aim of CDA (Fairclough, 2013). By integrating DF with CDA we can further honour the respect, justice, and beneficence we owe to our participants (Glesne, 2016). The ethical considerations of this approach are largely consistent with other qualitative methods.

With CDA, there is no requirement for expressing a commitment to achieving social justice for participants directly as we seek their informed consent. It is, however, important to ensure the content of the study be clearly articulated to be respectful of the participants who are volunteering their time. In the example for this chapter, for instance, participants were accurately informed that the study was about their experiences as working parents; they were not, however, told of the intent to use DF to critically analyse their discourses. This is an important ethical distinction in the justification for using this method for a longer term social research agenda, rather than the unrealistic and impractical resolution of individual problems (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 113). Instead this method aims to reveal patterns of discourse that can generate a broader picture of a group of interconnected participants. Through this process, the layered analysis CDA method enables researchers to investigate deeper insights than the immediate meanings of participant's shared discourse and potentially reveals shared stories that can contribute to social justice agendas in organisations.

It is important, though, to also consider the justice due to the participants themselves as individuals. As they share potentially sensitive information and vulnerabilities, participants are due the respect of fair representation and a level of reciprocity for their time, effort, and willingness to openly share with researchers (Glesne, 2016). Further, in creating the characters from a DF lens, it is important to be thoughtful in considering the way we represent the voices of participants. We want to honour participants, not alienate them by creating caricatures instead of characters.

Because we draw on DF tropes and characters at the analysis and discussion phases, the principle of beneficence through privacy is enhanced. This approach facilitates greater masking of individual identity and aides the construction of shared macro discourses from participants. Thus, this DFCD method, though characterised by a potentially biased presupposition of social injustice, maintains the trust and confidentiality with individuals to 'do the right thing' towards a mutually beneficial, social justice goal for participants, in the case of our example for this chapter—working parents.

## **Critical Discourse Analysis & Interpellation**

Before outlining the combination of DF and CDA, it is important to first describe CDA as a relative of Discourse Analysis and briefly review its origins. Additionally, we will provide a brief overview of 'interpellation' to explain why we wish to expose it through our adapted CDA method. Firstly, Discourse Analysis has been theorised in relation to language use and

ideological influences related to state hegemonic power by philosophers such as Althusser (2014) & Foucault (1980), whose post-structuralist theories aimed at deconstructing normalised meanings of discourse. Discourse Analysis also finds its routes in linguistic scholarship including ‘sociosemiotic discourse’ (Halliday, 1978), which theorises language in relation to context-dependent usage and interpretation, and the symbolic of localised influences.

A founding discourse analysis theory book ‘Language and Control’ (Fowler, Hodge, Kress, & Trew, 1979), included a chapter which referenced language control techniques in Orwell’s *1984* (1949) such as ‘doublethink’ & ‘newspeak’ as means of manipulating mass conformity and constraining dissenting opinion through language. In this chapter, we view discourse as ideology-bound with socially constructed influences (such as hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy). These norms create a problematic inequity for those for whom the common language in their context cannot adequately represent their disadvantage, or actively acts to alienate them from a dominant group.

CDA is a process which, at its core, is concerned with the examination of dominant power abuses, injustices and ideological influence in society (Van Dijk, 1993) as seen through discourses (be they verbal, written or visual) and social relations (Fairclough, 2013). Specifically, CDA in social contexts provides a method for exposing and changing the inequity in social contexts through critical understanding of discourse (Van Dijk, 1993). CDA presupposes that dominant discourses constantly influence our language choices to reproduce the social inequalities of dominant social forces. These dominant discourses (such as patriarchal terms like ‘breadwinner’) can be identified more clearly in discourses such as populist political speeches, which draw on nationalistic rhetoric (such as the ‘Glorious British Empire’) to stir emotional attachment to ideas of patriotism, but simultaneously obfuscate historic abuses associated with nationalistic values such as colonial exploitation.

CDA is not limited to deconstructing the manipulative discourse markers of powerful political speeches. It can also be used to examine the everyday ‘naturalized’ discourses of a social group to identify the influences affecting their attitudes and behaviours. This is done by examining their discourse (language choices and their wider meanings in context) and what that can reveal of their conscious and unconscious thought processes. Often, CDA enables researchers to trace socially bound, cultural ideologies that run through discourses, a process comparable to the ideas of ‘interpellation’ (Althusser, 2014).

‘Interpellation’ (Althusser, 2014) can be loosely defined as the reproduction of ideology through the acceptance and legitimising discourse of the oppressed, dominated groups. When dominated groups, such as new working mothers, embrace normalised gendered power dynamics, their discourse can legitimise their own oppression by taking sole responsibility for childcare. An example includes referring to fathers ‘babysitting’ their own child, rather than simply ‘looking after’ them as an equal parent. Such symbols of ‘interpellation’ act to reinforce social inequity where women’s primary role is to look after children and men’s primary role is to earn larger wages for the family through prioritised career advancement. In this sense, the examination of interpellation in CDA is a process of identifying and exposing examples of subjects’ subconscious reproduction of their own subordination. We seek to highlight conformity to patriarchal ideology as an internal barrier to women’s success in organisations alongside men’s complicity (conscious or unconscious) to this barrier.

A CDA researcher is sympathetic to the plight of subordinated groups and aspires to change social inequities through their research findings and by raising collective awareness of such inequities in discourse. The lens of justice runs throughout the CDA process and motivates the researcher in their pursuit of meaningful change. This change-orientation is reflective of the subversive intent inherent in many characters inhabiting DF societies and marks one of the important tropes that characterises this method.

### **Why Dystopian fiction, and what does it bring to the table?**

Broadly recognisable and popular DF novels such as *1984* (Orwell, 1949) and *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Atwood, 1985) provide a commonly understood cultural reference to totalitarian, hyper-masculine and ideological societal rule. They also offer the prospect of gendered resistance from oppressed lead characters (Winston and Julia; Offred and Mayday), which can inspire subversive action in contemporary contexts. A common understanding of the subversive message encoded into DFs is one that speculates on future societies and ‘the hegemonic order and... resistance’ (Baccolini & Moylan, 2003) and describes societies favouring ‘a particular segment of society’ (Gordin, Tilley, & Prakash, 2010). A sense of injustice predicates most DFs and the reader is invited to imagine themselves in the position of the subversive protagonist resisting injustice. Such imaginative and liminal spaces allow the researcher to pursue new perspectives on persistent problems. When researching gender imbalance and injustice in organisational contexts, unconventional methods can enable

researchers to look again from a new critical angle and challenge the primacy of mainstream qualitative research by using a critical fiction genre (DF).

Using fiction and storytelling in organisational research is not a new method. Rhodes and Brown (2005a) reviewed a growing body of research adopting fiction in organisational contexts up to 2005. A related paper (Rhodes and Brown, 2005b) promoted the validity of fiction in organisational research across three aspects: ‘fictionality’ in research writing in general terms, the appropriateness of fiction as empirical material, and fiction genres as legitimate modes of writing research (p. 469). In this chapter, we address the first and second points, while alluding to the valence of point three with fiction as a legitimate mode of writing through the subversive message this method aims to produce.

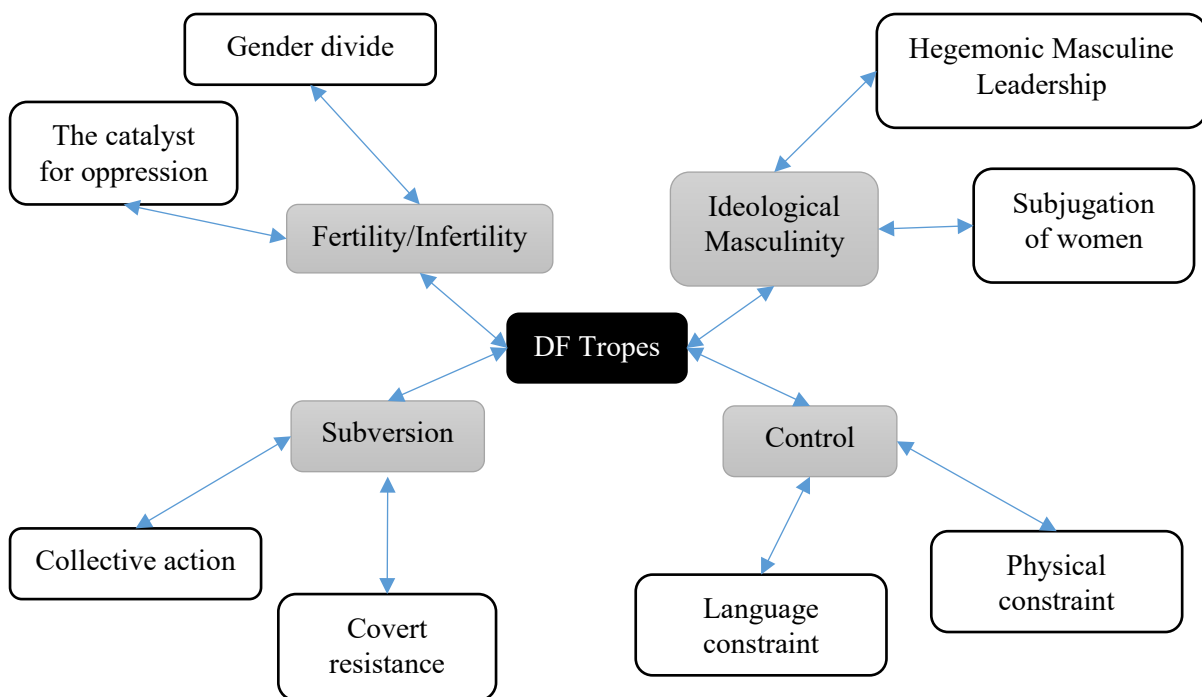
There are some prominent examples of organisational researchers using fiction and specific genres as empirical or allegorical sources, and inspiration for resistance (Griffin, Harding, & Learmonth, 2017; Rhodes, 2001a, 2015; Rhodes & Brown, 2005b). Czarniawska-Joerges and De Monthoux (1994) raised the subversive potential of fiction by attributing ‘rebel’ status to the voice of the novelist who can legitimately ‘oppose the organisation and its power’(p. 10). Czarniawska (1999) cited the abductive reasoning of detective fiction character ‘Sherlock Holmes’ to illustrate the ‘problem solving’ intent of organisations. In this example, detective fiction provides a means of revealing the hidden narratives of organisational reality. Czarniawska also cites postmodern detective fiction’s treatment of reality as provocation for further critical thought, stating that ‘behind a fiction there is always another fiction’ (p. 29). This is an important point and we use this lens to highlight how DF can assist CDA in organisational, and gender and management research to reveal aspects of fiction in our reality where dominant patriarchal ideology influences, or is revealed, through our actions and discourses.

Indeed, recent analyses of storytelling in organisations suggest that critical perspectives are taking a more prominent space against dominant ideologies. Beigi, Callahan, and Michaelson (2019) revealed the emergence of women’s critical voices as authors in organisational storytelling research. They propose this occurred in the aftermath of the Rhodes and Brown (2005a) paper, which forms the inciting incident in the organisational research narrative as a critical space and method for organisational research. Beigi, Callahan and Michaelson’s identification of this critical space inhabited by women writers supports the use of DF in

gender and management research; it is a genre whose unique message can further enhance critical approaches to storytelling in organisational research.

## Tropes of Dystopian Fiction

To integrate DF with CDA, we draw on Gatto’s (2019) identification of a range of tropes, associated with contemporary and canonical DFs, as a means of opening up the critical space. We present some of these tropes below as an outline of the connectedness of dystopian fiction to critical organisational research, which aims to address the contemporary ‘wrongs’ (Fairclough, 2013) in organisational reality.



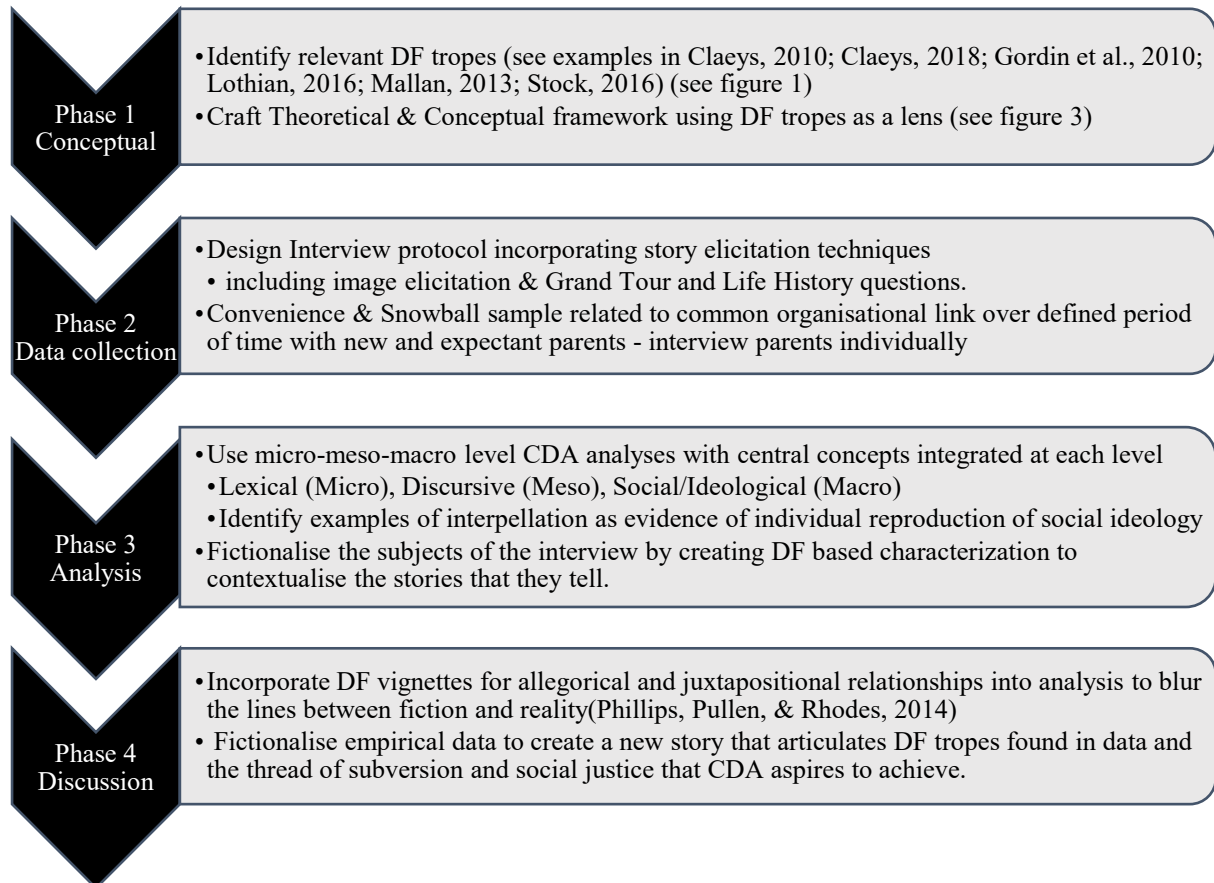
**Figure 1 – Dystopian Fiction tropes relevant to gender and management research.**

In this radial diagram, all tropes are interconnected and flow to and from each other to illustrate the relatedness of each trope. These tropes conceptualise an insight into some of the landscapes of dystopian fiction relevant to this method and the use of CDA to research gender in management contexts. We used these DF tropes as starting point concepts analogous to social phenomena in our contemporary organisational realities; some have direct crossover (masculinity), while others (fertility) required translation (parenthood) to clarify our focus on the ‘motherhood penalty’ and ‘patriarchal dividend’. We position parenthood, especially new parenthood, as a vital gender management issue because it is a crucial time when workers experience a gender imbalance which disproportionately damages women career progression, creating a leaky pipeline of female managers.



The next section provides an overview of the steps of this method (summarised in figure 2) to establish the broader context to the research, including formulating guiding concepts and theories from DF tropes, which inform the data collection and analysis phases. We then present an exemplar of the theoretical and conceptual basis for this method, particularly pertaining to gender.

## Method outline



*Figure 2 – Dystopian Fiction inspired Critical Discourse Analysis Method Outline*

## An Exemplar

To demonstrate how this approach can be applied as an analytical method, we provide exemplar cases selected from emerging data in Gatto’s PhD in progress (2018-2021). We also draw on Gatto’s theoretical framework to highlight the integral role of relevant theory in formative stages of the CDA method. Gatto’s research seeks to identify the influence of masculinities and hegemonic masculinity as a symbolic ideology of patriarchy on the decision making of expectant and new working parents. The aim of the research is to influence and inform improvements in management policy concerning parental rights. A

further aim is to contribute to greater equity in wider cultural discourse surrounding constructions of gender roles and parenting. Drawing on dystopian fiction characterisation, the research develops concepts building on theories of masculinity and offers a useful exemplar for this chapter to examine the intrinsic role that dystopian fiction plays in directing the research at all stages -- conceptual, theoretical and methodological.

## **Developing the Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

To demonstrate the use of this method, we first describe the development of the theoretical and conceptual framework supporting the methodological exemplar we provide. As Figure 1 shows, we begin with a DF informed ‘conceptual map’ of tropes from DF stories that are relevant to our gender topic. We translate these DF tropes into a meaningful conceptual framework applicable to gender critical research into parenting in organisations. Figure 3 shows the three central concepts (parenthood, masculinities and subversion), translated from the original DF tropes, that guide this analytical method. We chose these concepts due to their common intersections between prominent dystopian fiction novels and gendered experiences in organisations. The parenthood concept (translated from the fertility trope) is integral to this conceptual framework as it represents the site of inequity between men and women in career progress and management experiences, namely the gender pay gap and promotion success rate. Importantly parenthood qua ‘fertility’ exists as an important trope in many DFs (see *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Atwood, 1985) and this relationship between DF and organisational phenomena is pivotal to this disruptive and transdisciplinary approach. Parenthood represents our central lens through which we problematize gender and management.

The other concepts of masculinities and subversion are also interrelated with the DF tropes in Figure 1 (‘hegemonic masculine leadership’ and ‘subversion’). We translate HM leadership into ‘Masculinities’ to highlight the important contemporary distinction between patriarchal models of an idealised fantasy of HM and the accepted reality of multiple masculinities that characterise men as workers, fathers and friends. HM is semiotic of totalitarian, ideological male leadership, or patriarchy, within DFs (see 1984 (Orwell, 1949)), whereas ‘masculinities’ problematize a unitary model of masculinity and open up broader discourses of gender roles, attitudes and behaviour, especially pertinent to parenting.

Examining wider discourses is very important when we consider our third trope and concept, ‘subversion’. Subversion, as a DF trope, describes acts of rebellion and the desire to

overthrow the existing societal order typified by authoritarian control, it is a term evocative of resistant acts and covert action to overthrow of an existing system (see *The Children of Men* (James, 1992)). As a concept, ‘subversion’ provides a guiding social justice instruction for our method and takes inspiration from DF inspired approaches to achieving change through collective action and creative solutions. We align this approach to disruptive and covert acts in academic writing (Gatto, 2020) and management consciousness to highlight inadequate patriarchal parental policies, cultures and management structures that currently reward adherence to HM ideals.

Our conceptual Framework is underpinned by two critical theories concerning gender and ideology that problematize hegemony. Firstly, Connell’s Masculinities theory incorporates the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985; Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) and the subversive potential of ‘re-embodied masculinities’ (Connell, 2005). Secondly, Althusser’s (2014) theorising of ideology serves as a means of explaining the process of reproduced power and influence in society, in this context, the power of patriarchal social structures in management. Patriarchy, when framed by ideology theory, is a socially constructed order, which influences individual and collective decisions in favour of those who benefit most (men). HM, as the embodiment of patriarchy, can be viewed as a dominant, ideological influence on organisational norms, especially parental decision making. This is especially pertinent as fathers disproportionately benefit from their gender role as ‘breadwinner’ through a career ‘boost’ associated with this role. Fairclough (2013) neatly summarises the ideological power relationship in some organisations:

*‘institutions construct their ideological and discoursal subjects; they construct them in the sense that they impose ideological and discoursal constraints upon them as a condition for qualifying them to act as subjects.’ (p. 43)*

Most organisational subjects, regardless of the discipline, can be described as constrained by the HM order. This is exemplified clearly in the context of *organisational* experiences of *parenthood*, especially in professions where men dominate leadership roles, such as higher education institutions<sup>1</sup>. Parental decisions in these organisations are predominantly characterised by incidents of controlling behaviour as a majority of women are coerced into secondary roles as primary caregiver, often at the expense of their career progression, while

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/18-01-2018/sfr248-higher-education-staff-statistics>

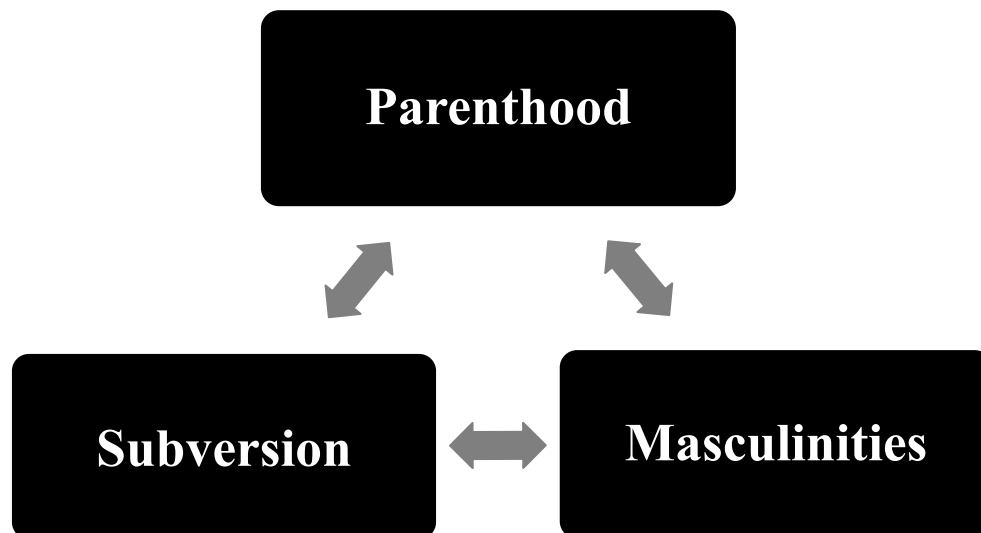
their partners (predominantly men) are constrained into the role of provider. Additionally, women in these organisations may also still feel the controlling pressure to plan or curtail their parental leave to align with the organisation's priorities (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Acker & Dillabough, 2007).

Gendered parental roles directly influence the career pathways of men and women after childbirth as men benefit from the 'patriarchal dividend' (Connell, 2005; Hodges & Budig, 2010), which rewards fathers with increased pay and promotions in congruence with their 'breadwinner' role while new mothers experience the 'motherhood penalty' (Budig & England, 2001) which widens their pay-gap and inhibits their career progress (Cahusac & Kanji, 2014; Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007).

DF can contribute to the growing body of research disrupting our hegemonic social science methodologies to discover something new and subvert the gender norms of organisational reality, especially concerning experiences of *fertility* (as a DF proxy for Parenthood) based mistreatment as exemplified in prime examples like *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood, 1985) & *The Children of Men* (James, 1992), and more recent offerings like *The Book of the Unnamed Midwife* (Elison, 2016) & *Red Clocks* (Zumas, 2018). All these novels identify the essential physical barrier of fertility in women's experiences. This *fertility/parenthood* barrier to managerial and organisational equity, alongside *masculinities* and *subversion*, form the three conceptual frames of the method we discuss in this chapter.

## **Dystopian Fiction-influenced CDA Framework**

The dystopian-fiction-inspired CDA framework (see figure 3) establishes a direct interaction between parenthood, masculinities, and subversion to resist and navigate hegemonic experiences. This conceptual framework is the guiding lens for our method, which started with the identification of DF tropes (see Figure 1). Referring back to figure one, the trope we have not discussed yet is 'control'. 'Control' is especially relevant to CDA as it symbolises the influence of ideological language discourses relevant to gendered management experiences which contribute to constraining patriarchal attitudes to new parents in organisational contexts. Patriarchal, parental 'control', inclusive of incidences of 'interpellation', is therefore the gender management problem we wish to uncover and subvert through our CDA method.



*Figure 3 – Dystopian Fiction-Inspired CDA Framework*



This conceptual framework provides the lens through which we encode micro linguistic analysis, meso whole conversation themes and macro cultural level CDA. This lens helps identify language use and constraint evidence of ideological, HM influences on parental decision making and the role, relationship and perceptions of organisational policies and processes. Althusser’s theory of ideology (Althusser, 2014) is a guiding basis for this approach. His concept of the ‘Ideological State Apparatus’ places the family, education and culture at the heart of ideological ‘interpellation’. Interpellation describes an inculcation process of influence and internalisation. Citizens are influenced by powerful forces such as the state and big business whilst internalising ideological principles. In this process of internalisation, they become complicit with power wielders and active reproducers of the rules of HM. In this respect, patriarchal ideology is the dystopian fiction ‘wrong’ (Fairclough, 2013) that we seek to identify and expose. We do so through disruptive and shocking comparisons between organisational reality and speculative, ‘counterfactual imaginings’ (Stock, 2017) of dystopian fiction societies.

### **Dystopian-Fiction-Inspired Critical Discourse Analysis (DFCDA)**

In this section, we first review one DF example (case 1) and then one couple (case 2a&b) taken from a series of interview transcripts (Gatto 2019) to illustrate the process of DFCDA and its unique utility in critical subversive gender and management research. We include a DF example (taken from the novel *The Handmaid’s Tale*) for two important reasons: firstly it integrates a fiction-based example of the DFCDA method into this chapter which intentionally blurs the lines between fictional and ‘real’ discourse. Secondly, we use this

example as a starting point for the examples of DFCDA to pay tribute to our DF roots before we present our empirical case examples of DFCDA (a new parent couple). The couple we analyse as our empirical examples (case 2a&b) were recent new parents; the mother was on new parent leave from an external, private organisation at which she was employed and the father was working full-time in a Higher Education organisation. Their responses were based on reflections of their expectations and their actual experiences as working parents.

For all our examples we follow a systematic process of analysis which incorporates our three concepts (Parenthood, Masculinities and Subversion). We then show three layers of analysis for the focus transcript (see Table 1). This demonstrates the process of analysis from linguistic to socio-cultural concerning ideological influence from micro to macro level of analysis.

			
<b>Phase one – CDA level of Analysis</b>	<b>Phase two – apply DF conceptual lens to identify CDA level of analysis to each concept.</b>		<b>Phase three – relate examples to DF trope of language control to identify potential interpellation</b>
Micro – Lexical text level	Masculinity	Parenthood	Subversion
Meso – Discursive Practice & Form	Masculinity	Parenthood	Subversion
Macro – Social Practice & Ideology	Masculinity	Parenthood	Subversion
			
<b>Phase 4 – Social Justice Action</b> Examples taken from subversion analysis used to inform a change-oriented analysis of discourse towards narratives to support social justice.			

**Table 1 – DFCDA analysis and discussion phases**

All participants consented to their responses being used in the research project and their names and contributions have been anonymised. Names of dystopian fiction characters serve as pseudonyms for the participants.

## Case 1 – Offred – (Infertility victim) – See *The Handmaid’s Tale*

This DF case asks the reader to reflect on the representative ‘truth’ we bestow on the empirical stories we find, which may be just as fictional as this example; here we further ‘blur the lines’. This case serves as an introduction to the DFCDA method prior to empirical examples and offers an explicit introduction into the impact of parenthood on social norms. Offred’s account recalls her time as a Handmaid in a patriarchal family in a strictly Christian fundamentalist society (Gilead). Here, she recounts the moment when she sees a pregnant woman amongst other women who are potentially infertile. Her response is indicative of the pivotal role ‘fertility’ and parenthood can play in changing societal attitudes to gender roles.

### Offred:

One of them is vastly pregnant [...]

There is a shifting in the room, a murmur, an escape of breath; despite ourselves we turn our heads, blatantly, to see better; our fingers itch to touch her. She's a magic presence to us, an object of envy and desire, we covet her.

She's a flag on a hilltop, showing us what can still be done: we too can be saved.

### Micro Level – lexical

**Masculinity** – The conditional clause ‘despite ourselves’ illustrates the degree of control and constraint applied to the ‘we’ as the female handmaid collective.

**Parenting** – hyperbolic ‘vastly pregnant’ emphasises the unusual presence of a pregnant woman against an infertility context.

**Subversion** – ‘we too can be saved’ highlights the sole route to freedom via pregnancy – a highly restrictive context that justifies subversion.

### Meso Level – Discursive

**Masculinity** – The military metaphor, ‘A flag on the hilltop’ evokes HM constructs of conquest and domination in describing the pregnant woman.

**Parenting** – ‘envy and desire’ represents shared discourses in the society from women towards pregnancy.

**Subversion** – Offred’s recording is an illegal act in Gilead. Her act subverts the Gilead gender control regime.

### Macro Level – Social

**Masculinity** – Offred’s recording creates a counter-narrative to the patriarchal norms of the Gilead society where women are silenced.

**Parenting** – Offred evokes the ‘magic’ of pregnancy as an almost biblical event, which links to the ideological dogma Gilead apply to reproduction rituals.

**Subversion** – Her internal monologue describes essentialised women in servitude to Gilead societal norms; while recording it for a future audience to resist that servitude.

## **Case 2a – Winston (The oppressed critic – see 1984)**

This is the first empirical example and concerns Winston's reactions to becoming a father and his emotion management that both contrasts and mirrors that of Offred's. Winston was a recent father with Julia of baby 'Alex' (gender neutral pseudonym). In this case he refers to an image metaphor of blind monks examining an elephant (an image elicitation interview technique). Winston's response is evocative of parenthood as a proxy for a large, 'unwieldy' animal, something difficult to control. He also describes a sense of the unknown, 'daunting' parental landscape for a new father as his experiences highlight the absence of support offered to new fathers in the workplaces. In an illustration of 'interpellation', Winston describes 'muddling along' in acceptance of his 'daunting' circumstances, which alludes to the normalised hegemonic organisational culture, systems, policies and structures with limited scope for accommodating individual vulnerability.



**Winston:** This was a, a, a good, er, picture to describe my expectations of my role, as a, a, working parent, because both, I, I..., I only started at [HE] less than a year ago, so in August of last year, and we had Alex in October.

Erm, so, there's sort of a dual perspective there, of, erm, engaging in two, two very new things that were quite daunting. Daunting, erm, I, I yeah, daunting experiences, erm, so... I kind of felt like, you know, kind of grappling in the dark with a very large kind of unwieldy thing that I er wasn't quite sure how to deal with...

...Erm, again for both the job and in terms of having a, having a child. Erm, just muddling along and trying to just trying to, erm... just yeah, just just, get by... In in in areas that, er, were very new and were, you know, quite scary and quite, you know, were quite daunting

### **Micro Level – lexical**

**Masculinity** – repetition of ‘daunting’ displays a willingness to share emotional vulnerability akin to ‘caring masculinity’

**Parenting** – noun choice ‘working parent’ indicates willingness to identify as a ‘parent’ not a father.

**Subversion** – Semantic field of vulnerability (muddling, scary & grappling) suggest a parent willing to be open and honest about their emotions and subvert HM expectations of assertive masculinity.

### **Meso Level – Discursive**

**Masculinity** – The interview confessional form taps into discourses of incompetent dads and super mums in western portrayals of gendered parenting. ‘Dual perspective’ also evokes ‘separate spheres’.

**Parenting** - The idiomatic phrase ‘grappling in the dark...’ discursively references the elephant image sympathising with the compromised blind monks. This description is reminiscent of Josef K in ‘the trial’ (Kafka, 1925) who also grapples with obscurity when confronted with his new reality.

**Subversion** – In the context of prevailing breadwinner attitudes and policies toward working parents, this expression of openness challenges the expected role congruity of a working father.

### **Macro Level – Social**

**Masculinity** - Winston describes navigating ‘hidden rules’ (von Alemann, Beaufays, & Oechsle, 2017) of the masculine social order, which creates an obscure context for new fathers.

**Parenting** - Winston’s circumstances are doubly challenging as a new employee too and he draws on this shared understanding of daunting social practices to emphasize the acute nature of his experience. His willingness to share this vulnerability demonstrates personal reflexivity and the social acceptability of parental vulnerability for fathers.

**Subversion** – This counter-narrative to HM ideology raises awareness of masculine vulnerability which can open up further subversive parental discourses.

### **Case 2b – Julia (The subversive antagonist – See 1984)**

Our third case is Winston's partner, Julia, a recent mother on parental leave, who discusses her experiences of policies and processes for working parents. Julia's response highlights negative aspects of policy uniformity, which could be interpreted as a negative ideological force applied to individual circumstances through ideological HM.

Importantly, we noted that Julia's responses are indicative of 'interpellation' and language control through her choice of juxtaposing descriptions of the policy as simultaneously fair, while also demonstrably not working well for her individual circumstances. Here, she demonstrates a willingness to defend a policy for which she has experienced detrimental effects. Such dichotomies of cognitive dissonance are evocative of the doublethink concept famously coined by Orwell in 1984.

'Doublethink' cognitive dissonance is seemingly a common process for two of the cases we present in this chapter. Offred and Julia demonstrate interpellation with their willingness to reproduce and support the 'norms' of their experiences, while simultaneously producing subversive discourse. Both challenge the 'norms' of their experiences through their discourse; Offred through her illegal recording of her experiences, Julia by questioning the fairness of the policies she experienced.

**Julia:** Well, the reason I've picked this one really is that... in terms of the policies and practices they've... erm of Winston's, Winston's job and my own you're not counted as an individual in any way. It is kind of policy for the masses.

...

**Interviewer:** So, it's uniformity?

**Julia:** Yeah. That you, in terms of policy, you're not an individual and it seems in general, and particularly big companies that your policy doesn't consider you as an individual, it has to consider everybody... all as equals. And, in some ways that's a good thing and in others that not such a good thing.

**Interviewer:** Would you mind describing where it's a good thing and where it's not a good thing?

**Julia:** Yeah, I suppose in terms of erm, it being a good thing it, it keeps everything bla... very black and white, and you know exactly where you're at.

**Interviewer:** Mmm, mmm

**LL:** That, there's no feeling of anything being unfair, that you are all treated just the same. Erm.. but in terms of it being a bad thing I think that particularly when it comes to bringing children into the world, it's such a very very individual thing and rigid policies don't necessarily erm... [MG Comment: *pause as being careful with her words here*] sort of... the fact that they don't have any flexibility doesn't always work in terms of individual circumstances.

### Micro Level – lexical

**Masculinity** – ‘all as equals’, & ‘black & white’ evoke a semantic field of rigidity and HM workplace norms.

**Parenting** - juxtaposition between collective ‘masses’ as the intended audience of policies, versus the ‘individual circumstances’, for which she suggests such policy ‘doesn’t always work’.

**Subversion** - the abstract pronoun ‘they’ creates a sense of anonymity to the ‘organisation’ as mysterious & dystopian controlling force.

### Meso Level – Discursive

**Masculinity** – ‘you’re not counted as an individual’ draws on discursive homogenised policies applied with a patriarchal lens.

**Parenting** – ‘policy for the masses’, a borrowed idiom from ‘religion is the opiate of the masses’, which denigrates the individual agency of people as malleable to social influence.

**Subversion** - Julia’s supportive description of the policies is similar to Offred’s public conformity to Gilead rules, while harbouring subversive ideas in private. Language control

### Macro Level – social

**Masculinity** – Julia’s description of ‘fairness’ is juxtaposed to her descriptions of the rigid policy for the masses. This highlights her interpellation into ideological patriarchy & structural inequity.

**Parenting** – The overarching impression Julia creates is one of ‘rigid policies’, which draws on neo-liberal ideological policies surrounding governance in the age of austerity. Such policies place the burden of responsibility on the individual parents, against social justice.

**Subversion** - Julia clearly indicates this form of ‘policy for the masses’ as incompatible with actual individual experiences of parenthood. Julia also states ‘the fact that they don’t have any flexibility’ after a lengthy pause. These statements justify subversive action.

## Discussion & Conclusion

An important distinction of DFCDA is the integration of dystopian fiction tropes, characters and plots into the analysis. All three of these examples do this to emphasise the value of DF as a source of empirical data (Rhodes & Brown, 2005b). We chose these examples due to their relevance to the theoretical influence of HM (*a fantasy ideal of masculinity*) on working or expectant parents as a barrier to women's success in organisations. By highlighting issues such as 'daunting' fatherhood, and 'rigid' policies versus 'individual' experiences, these DFCDAs generate a collective, disruptive argument for more 'individual', compassionate and humanistic approaches to organisational attitudes to parenthood.

This method intentionally 'blurs the lines' (Phillips & Knowles, 2012) between what is real and what is fiction to disrupt perceived and rhetorical reality in organisations. It does so by highlighting the comparable nature of empirical data from transcripts and empirical data from novels. This method also aspires to disruptive, *subversive*, change oriented outputs akin to Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2013), by addressing a social 'wrong' of workplace parenthood inequity in an unconventional, and even starkly shocking, way which challenges the reader to re-evaluate their own perceptions of reality.

The illustrative examples for this DFCDA are intended as an overview of the method, which is intentionally critical. It alludes to comparable DF examples to emphasise the similarity between real life and fictional societies, where women are subjugated based on their fertility status. The value of this in raising collective consciousness of the existing problem and our 'interpellation' (Althusser, 2014) as coerced reproducers of our own ideological reality. Once we raise awareness, the next step is to further subvert.

To take the DFCDA further, researchers can further fictionalise the data to create a more compelling fact/fiction blur. In doing so, it is vitally important to take responsibility for the truth of what is being written (Rhodes & Brown, 2005b). Examples of such work include 'ethnographic fiction science' (Watson, 2000) and 're-presentation' of organisations (Rhodes, 2001b) which reimagine organisational evidence in fictional form. Such approaches can further disrupt and subvert the gendered organisational space and promote new awareness of our dystopian fiction/reality towards a new narrative of subversive resistance.

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