

The Politics and Policies of Reproductive Agency

Mervi Patosalmi

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Abstract

This study examines the politics and policies of reproductive agency through a redescription of the following three Finnish policy documents dealing with the questions of the declining birth rate and population growth: the Government report on the future called 'Finland for people of all ages' (2004), Business and Policy Forum EVA report 'Condemned to Diminish?' (*Tuomitut vähenemään?*) (2003), and the Family Federation's 'Population Policy Program' (2004). The redescription is done with the help of the notion of reproductive agency, which draws on Drucilla Cornell's concepts of the imaginary domain and bodily integrity. The imaginary domain is the moral and psychic space people need in order to form their personality, which is created and recreated in constant identificatory processes. The aim of the processes is imaginary coherence and as the personality is embodied, forming one's imaginary coherence always includes attempts for bodily integrity. The formation of the embodied being also entails attempts to arrive at an understanding of one's procreative capacities.

In addition to Cornell, I draw on Judith Butler's thinking and comprehend gender performatively as doing, and in relation to that agency as part of the performative process of one's personality. Reiterability of the self facilitates the reconfiguring of one's embodied personality, but discourse, culture and society condition the reiterations. Reproductive agency is understood in this study as the possibilities to live differently the hegemonic forms of procreative life.

I deal with three redescriptive themes: the family, economics and gender. The family is a central element in policy documents concerning the raising of the birth rate in that it is considered the main location of reproduction. With regard to reproductive agency, the documents include problematic conceptions of the family. It is defined as a heterosexual, monogamous, conjugal relationship, which affects reproductive agency in that these notions do not allow for different modes of family life. The second prominent aspect, economics, features on two levels: the macroeconomic level of GDP, employment and competitiveness, and the level of family policies and concern about family finances. Macroeconomic-level argumentation is problematic in the context of reproductive agency because it implies that procreation is a duty of citizens, and thus has effects on values attached to reproductive potential. On the other hand, family policies may advance reproductive agency in supporting families financially. However, such policies also define how the family is understood, thereby affecting reproductive agency. The third theme, gender, intersects with many issues in the policy documents. All three texts consider the roles of men and women differently: women are primarily responsible for the family, and both men's and women's reproductive agency is affected in that the roles in the procreative process are predefined. EVA and the Family Federation see women as the main target of population policies, and consider it legitimate to try to change women's reproductive decisions.

Implicit in the notion of reproductive agency is the idea that it should be possible to overcome and live differently the sex difference, but the three documents do not open up opportunities for that. The notion of reproduc-

tive agency makes it also possible to question the legitimacy of population policies in general. It offers new perspectives on the vocabularies used in the three policy texts that are already in the political field, providing insights into the values and logics that support the concepts. Redescription through the notion of reproductive agency reveals how the texts do not fully respect people's freedom to decide about procreation.

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List of abbreviations

- EVA Wallenius, Timo (2003) *Tuomitut vähenemään? Suomalaiset ja lisääntymisen vaikea taito* [Condemned to Diminish? Finns and the difficult art of procreation]. Helsinki: Taloustieto Oy, EVA.
- FF Väestöliitto (2004a) *Väestöliiton väestöpoliittinen ohjelma* [The Population Policy Program of the Family Federation]. Helsinki: Väestöliitto. Available online at http://vaestoliitto-fi-bin.directo.fi/@Bin/de9704000e31ccf8eb58aa88cdee6489/1280125330/application/pdf/263803/vpohjelma_lopullinenpdf.pdf. Accessed on March, 17 2011.
- GOV Prime Minister's Office (2004) *Finland for people of all ages: Government report on the future: demographic trends, population policy, and preparation for changes in the age structure*. Helsinki: Prime Minister's Office: Publications 34/2004.
- GOV/FIN Valtioneuvosto (2004): *Hyvä yhteiskunta kaikenikäisille. Valtioneuvoston tulevaisuusselonteko väestökehityksestä, väestöpolitiikasta ja ikärakenteen muutokseen varautumisesta*. Valtioneuvoston kanslian julkaisusarja 27/2004. Helsinki: Valtioneuvoston kanslia.

1 Introduction

Väestön ikääntymiseksi kutsuttu ilmiö mainitaan kaikissa yhteyksissä yhdeksi suurimmista maamme tulevaisuuden haasteista. Väestöennusteiden mukaan Suomen väestö kääntyy vähitellen laskuun. Sitäkin tärkeämpää - ja selvästi varmempaa - on, että ikäryhmien suuruussuhteet muuttuvat tulevaisuudessa merkittävästi. Muutos on ollut käynnissä jo pitkään, mutta se tulee erityisen näkyväksi jo muutamien vuosien päästä suurten ikäluokkien saavuttaessa eläkeiän. Tilastokeskuksen väestöennusteen mukaan 65 vuotta täyttäneiden määrä kasvaa yli 600 000 hengellä vuoteen 2030 mennessä. Samalla lasten ja työikäisten määrä vähenee yhteensä noin 400 000 hengellä. Näin voimakas väestön ikärakenteen muutos vaikuttaa talouskehitykseen ja työllisyyteen. Sillä on mittavia julkistaloudellisia seurauksia, ja se muuttaa hyvinvointipolitiikan painopisteitä. (Eduskunta 2004)

[A phenomenon called the aging population is referred everywhere as a major future challenge facing our nation. According to demographic prognoses, the population of Finland will slowly start to decrease. Even more important – and clearly more certain – is that the ratio of age groups will change significantly. It has been changing for a long time, but it will become more visible already in a few years when the baby-boomers reach retirement age. According to the demographic prediction of Statistics Finland, the number of people reaching the age of 65 will increase by over 600,000 by 2030, whereas the number of children and people of working age will decrease by about 400,000 in total. Such a forceful change in the age structure will affect economic development and employment, have considerable effects on public finances, and it will change the focus of welfare policy.]

In 2004 the Finnish Government published a report on the demographic challenges facing the Finnish nation. The report was discussed in Parliament in November of the same year. The Finnish Prime Minister at the time, Matti Vanhanen, noted in his opening statement that the population question was one of the most serious challenges facing Finland (Eduskunta 2004). Although population growth, or the lack of it, had been the subject of political debate of varying intensity for decades, there was a revival of interest in demographic developments during the early years of the 21st century. Interest in demographics arose when Finland witnessed a sharp decline in population growth a hundred years ago prompting both discussion and policy measures. In the early 21st century, demographics is once again the subject of debate. In this study I concentrate at one specific point of the population-policy discourses, describing and redescribing three selected policy documents that contributed to the debate on the need for a Finnish population policy in the early years of the 21st century. I redescibe the documents from the perspective of reproductive agency, which is a concept I develop based on Drucilla Cornell's thinking.

The three documents concerned, which relate to the policy discussions in 2003-2004, are the Government report on preparing for demographic change, and two reports, one by the business-friendly think-tank Business and Policy Forum EVA and the other by The Family Federation, an NGO focusing on family issues. The purpose of my study is to shed light on the values and meanings that lie behind the concepts and vocabularies used in the documents, and by extension in the discussions in which the population and population policies are intertwined with issues such as family, economics and gender. For my study, the central theme of the policy documents is the idea that the Finnish birth rate needs to be raised. Although debates about the population and population policy deal with various issues, such as immigration and regional development, my study of the three policy texts concentrates on analyses and policy proposals regarding the birth rate, i.e. why it has been decreasing and what could and should be done about it. My interest is in the conditions that affect reproductive choices, and in the politics and policies that, directly or indirectly, target reproductive agency.

The scope of my study is limited to the three above-mentioned documents as this enables detailed analysis of the texts. I could have examined Finnish debates on population policy in general, or historical and current discursive constructions regarding population or demographic challenges, which would clarify the development of the discourses and the connections between the population-policy debate and other political issues. My focus is elsewhere, however. By concentrating on the three texts I am able to dig more deeply into the, often unannounced, principles and significations of the vocabularies that the texts use and include. The originators of the texts are operators who care about the development of the Finnish population, but they represent very different interests and have various perspectives on the population questions concerned. Consequently, the logics and values inherent in these documents are diverse. Thus I am able to provide different points of view about the discussion conducted in the documents on the need for a Finnish population policy.

The three documents differ not only in terms of the interests of the organisations publishing them, but also in the production processes. Nevertheless, all the texts are public documents that are at least partly directed at the general public, and were published at around the same time as part of a public debate. They were meant to contribute to a specific discussion at a specific time, and I consider them very much part of the same discussion. The three texts are similar in their effort to affect the Finnish population policy and to offer concrete proposals. It would be possible to conduct a historical examination of their position in Finnish population-policy discourses, but in addition to being a part of the on-going debate, they put forward separate arguments about population policies, and about the politics and policies related to the birth rate. The fact that they were meant as coherent policy proposals makes it possible to examine them as independent texts, set apart from other public discussions that were going on at the time of their publication.

In examining the texts, I adopt the concept of reproductive agency, which is used more generally, for example, in contexts concerning women's ability to decide or control their reproduction. I use the concept in a very specific sense, however, basing my interpretation of the notion on Drucilla Cornell's thinking. Cornell's notions of 'the imaginary domain' and 'bodily integrity' offer

me conceptual resources, on which I draw when formulating the tools for my analysis. Her conception of the personality or the self as processual and unfinished has led her to formulate a notion of the imaginary domain, which refers to a psychic and moral space in which people are able to sort through the different identifications comprising their personality. Cornell holds dear the idea of freedom to form one's personality. Freedom is always ideal, meaning that it cannot be achieved once and for all; it is always in the making and dependent on others, but still a value that should be respected. The personality is formed in identificatory processes that aim at a sense of coherence. The sense of the coherent self is embodied, and how people see themselves always includes a bodily aspect. Cornell calls the sense of embodied coherence bodily integrity, which is something that people aim for, even though they never achieve it. However, people need a sense of bodily integrity in order to be able to operate as embodied personalities. The notion of the embodied personality is the starting point for my notion of reproductive agency, which I then use as a tool in the analyses. I examine the complex conceptions connected to the notion of embodied personality more closely in the second chapter, in which I elucidate in detail the connections between the concepts of the imaginary domain, bodily integrity and freedom.

I have also been inspired in my study by the ideas of Judith Butler. Her conception of gender performativity, and connected to that how she understands materiality and the relationship between materiality, language and agency, are particularly relevant. I strongly believe that gender is performatively produced, in other words it is not prediscursive or presocial, but something that has to be produced and reproduced. As identity is iterative, it also enables reiterating differently and this, in turn, enables agency. The idea of agency as an element of a reiterative process means that because it is possible to repeat identity differently, change is possible. Changing things requires rethinking and reimagining, and I connect the imaginary domain to Butler's idea of performativity and agency as a place for thinking about personality or identity differently, and as such as an instrument for agency. I elaborate on this combining of Butler's and Cornell's thinking about agency, freedom and performativity in the second chapter.

According to both Butler and Cornell, the self is embodied, and one element of the performative process of the self is to give meanings and values to material features of the personality. Cornell's notion of bodily integrity is closely related to the imaginary domain as an aspect of the process of the personality. In this study, I consider reproduction to be an intimate part of how one conceives of bodily integrity. Sexuality, and deciding about procreation as an aspect of it, is essential in the formation of the self. Reproduction and the ability to decide about parenthood are fundamental in how one sees one's personality. Influenced by Cornell's and, to some extent, Butler's thinking, I thus formulate reproductive agency as the possibilities for different iterations connected to reproduction, creating opportunities to live procreation in various ways as defined by the person her- or himself.

The notion of reproductive agency provides me with an analytical tool in my study of the three selected documents. It would, of course, be possible to examine population-policy debates from other perspectives: 'reproductive rights' and concentration on 'bodily control', for example, have been applied in analyses of procreation. I have developed the concept of reproductive agency as my tool, because it facilitates thinking about politics and policies targeting procreation in ways that combine very personal decisions with the politics and policies that aim to affect notions and practices of procreation. Studying the documents from the perspective of reproductive agency is revealing in terms of the construction of the embodied personality. As a tool it facilitates examination of how the conditions for the process of personality formation are constituted in the three policy proposals. The proposals cannot, of course, be totalising in their effects, but they do reflect the conditions in which people live, and the values and meanings that are already out there. Thus the policy documents have a dual role: they reflect the existing discourse about procreation, and they affect the conditions in which people live, and that constitute the embodied subjectivity.

Understanding embodied subjectivity as open-ended avoids having to think about the body as something external that should or could be totally controlled. There can be no separation of the body and the mind, as they are always present as different aspects of an embodied being. When seen as a process of which embodiment is one aspect, the self always incorporates our imagin-

ings of bodily coherence. Inherent in this notion of bodily coherence as imaginary is the view that how one experiences and understands one's body is not unmediated: bodily experiences are created in an imaginary process aiming at integrity and affected by culture and society. In other words, there is no neutral, biological or pre-discursive body that is free of social and cultural influences. The idea that the body is produced and re-produced through imaginary processes draws attention to the fact that there is no one monolithic and unified experience of the body: people do not experience their bodies in the same way, and no individual experiences her body in the same way over time. People live and sense their embodied selves in diverse ways at different times and in different situations.

Experiences and notions of the bodily being are open to cultural and social influences, and the process of the embodied personality also has a public and a political aspect. I draw attention here to the relationship between the formation of the personality and the political sphere: how does the political create and recreate, enable and disable the free formation of the self? Current policies and politics, and those in the making, affect the imaginary processes through which personalities are formed. My notion of reproductive agency, which draws on Cornell and Butler, does not neglect the role of politics and policies in the process of creating and recreating the conditions, in which the personality is formed, nor does it take for granted any understanding of the body or the embodied being.

I use the notion of reproductive agency as a tool in my redescrptions of the selected policy texts. Redescription is often understood in the study of rhetoric as a form of conceptual change, which can give new meanings to concepts (see, e.g., Palonen 1999 and Skinner 1999). In this study it means describing the texts again through a specific conceptual lens, in this case the notion of reproductive agency, and thereby focusing attention on issues and aspects that relate to the formation of the procreative personality. In my reading of the texts I aim to find out how they take account of reproductive agency. The point is to analyse the extent to which different aspects of reproductive agency, such as being able to define your own values connected to the procreative process, are present, visible and taken into consideration in the texts.

Texts about population and reproductive issues often use concepts and vocabularies that are taken for granted, or that seem natural and unquestionable. The self-evident nature of the concepts and themes can be questioned through examination of the texts from a perspective that fosters new ways of looking at and reading them, and takes into account viewpoints that would not necessarily be visible otherwise. In addition to drawing attention to issues that would otherwise seem natural, redescription also facilitates the systematisation of the analysis process. The meanings and values of the concepts and the words used in the documents cannot be analysed in a mechanical manner, and re-describing the texts through the concept of reproductive agency directs the process in giving a specific viewpoint and conceptual framework. The use of the concept also means, of course, that attention is given to certain issues, whereas if another conceptual framework had been used, attention would have focused on other themes. Concepts and vocabularies are not taken for granted. As Kari Palonen notes, concepts supply strategic instruments for political action, and ‘shape the horizon of the political possibilities in the situation’: they may also be used as a means of rethinking the horizon of possible politics (Palonen 1999, 47). Redescription of the policy texts through the notion of reproductive agency shows that there is no right or core meaning in the concepts used in the documents, the concepts are contingent and amenable to change.

It is not my purpose in the redescriptions to give an overarching analysis of Finnish population-policy debates in recent decades, or even in the 21st century. Therefore, I do not analyse the visibility or importance of the policy documents in the Finnish political field in general, although it is clear that all three texts did receive at least some publicity at the time of their publication. It would also be possible to conduct a policy analysis of how the proposals emerged, how they have been implemented, and the consequences they have had. I concentrate on other issues, such as the conditions they impose on pro-creative personality processes. The selected policy documents make proposals, in other words the policies in question may not have been implemented, but this does not necessarily mean that they are meaningless. Their purpose was to influence Governmental policies and politics, and as such they say something about the values and goals of these specific operators with regard to Finnish so-

ciety. These values and goals are scrutinised in detail through redescription, which brings to light the unannounced logic, values and world-views that are embedded in the wording of the documents. The power and usefulness of redescription is that it gives distance from the obvious and established linguistic usage in the three documents, encouraging different modes of thought and alternative interpretations while not distracting attention from the texts themselves.

This work is constructed on the alternation of description and redescription. The descriptions adopt the language used in the documents. Chapter 3 comprises the first description, which gives an overall picture of the three policy documents. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 concentrate on description and redescription with regard to specific themes included in the texts. Each of these chapters begins with a description of a theme, followed by a redescription of the same issue. The description reveals how the particular theme is dealt with in the different texts, whereas the redescription does not necessarily focus on the same things, and teases out issues that reveal the lack of neutrality and innocence in the vocabularies and concepts used. All of the policy texts posit certain kinds of principles and world-views, which often seem somehow inevitable. Redescription makes it possible to envision new options, and thus casts doubt on the seeming naturalness of the linguistic and conceptual choices made in the texts. It does not take the language of the documents for granted, however: in my view the concepts are contingent, elements of texts that can be understood in different ways.

The three selected documents essentially deal with the politics and policies of reproduction, which has been and remains a hot feminist topic. Moreover, population policy is clearly connected to feminist interests. There are no easy answers to questions concerning reproductive politics and policies, which are issues on which people are forced to take a personal stand, and are also of political and social relevance. The question of reproduction touches upon some of the most basic concerns of women, and how it is dealt with reveals a great deal about how women's role in society and culture is understood. Application of the notion of reproductive agency to the selected policy documents makes it possible to analyse various aspects of the concepts and vocabularies used, and draws attention not just to women, but also to the politics of repro-

duction in relation to gender and the gendered roles that are assigned to people regardless of what they themselves think.

The structure of the dissertation

In addition to the introduction, the dissertation consists of five chapters and a conclusion. First, in Chapter 2, I formulate the notion of reproductive agency in line with Drucilla Cornell's thought and concepts. The first part of the chapter deals with Cornell's thought. I introduce her notion of the person, which lies behind the notions of the imaginary domain and bodily integrity I consider next. Inherent in the imaginary domain and bodily integrity is the psychoanalytically inspired understanding of the identification process and the imaginary aspects of the embodied self, as well as Cornell's conception of the personality as something processual and always in the making. In constructing the notion of reproductive agency I also lean on Judith Butler's thinking, giving a brief overview of her ideas on performativity, agency and the relationship between materiality, language and agency. Butler's thought complements Cornell's concepts. Her ideas about the relationship between materialisation and language, and how agency can be understood in the context of the imaginary domain and bodily integrity, are particularly relevant to my work. I conclude the first chapter by giving a formulation of reproductive agency that is the conceptual tool in the redescription.

The third chapter describes and contextualises the three selected policy documents. Although it is not the purpose of this study to give an extensive picture of Finnish population-policy discourses, it is still necessary to give some background information about the debates that preceded the policy documents under study. Chapter 3 gives general descriptions of the documents, whereas the following chapters concentrate only on certain aspects. The overview also gives some context to the later redescription. The three policy documents I describe and redescribe in this study are the Government report entitled 'Finland for people of all ages: Government report on the future: demographic trends, population policy, and preparation for changes in the age structure' (Prime Minister's Office 2004, from now on referred to as GOV), the Business and Policy Forum EVA's report entitled 'Condemned to Diminish? Finns and

the Difficult Art of Procreation' (*Tuomitut vähenemään? Suomalaiset ja lisääntymisen vaikea taito*) (Wallenius 2003, referred to as EVA), and the Family Federation's Population Policy Program (*Väestöpoliittinen ohjelma*) (Väestöliitto 2004a, referred to as FF).

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 cover the three specific themes addressed. The themes, which are the family, economics and gender, were selected following a careful reading of the policy documents during which they emerged as relevant and visible issues in general terms and from the perspective of reproductive agency. They are essential issues with regard to the birth rate, and why and how it could or should be affected. All three chapters covering these specific themes are constructed in the same way. First, I expand the notion of reproductive agency in order to strengthen the redescriptive tools I use. I then describe the policy documents concentrating on the theme of the chapter, and finally redescribe them through the notion of reproductive agency.

Chapter 4 concentrates on the family. Inherent in the concept of reproductive agency is the idea that no one but the person herself should be the source of values and meanings connected to the family. Such an understanding imposes demands on family-related public policies, which should be formulated in a way that does not presume or define only one way of understanding and living as a family. When reproduction is discussed in the documents, the family assumes importance in that it is considered the primary location of procreation. It is a central concept that, in many ways, structures the debates. The three documents deal with it in somewhat different ways, however: the GOV report puts forward the most impenetrable notion of the family as a single unit, whereas EVA and the FF deal with it in more diverse ways, noting that there are different kinds of families and also somewhat historicising the notion of the nuclear family. The redescription, however, reveals a mainly monogamous, heterosexual nuclear family with biological children, which excludes different kinds of family and kinship arrangements that do not comply with the notion that a child's parents are a heterosexual couple who have a sexual relationship with each other. The notions of the family in the three policy documents do not enhance reproductive agency in that the proposals show no intention to open up understandings of the family.

The fifth chapter concentrates on economic aspects of the population-policy discourse in the documents. With regard to reproductive agency, certain economic arrangements, such as social policies, are considered important as they define and construct the opportunities that give people the freedom to decide about their lives. The documents approach economics and the population question from two perspectives. The first is the macroeconomic notion that a nation needs economic growth, and for this to be possible the population has to grow continuously. Secondly, the texts depict families as financially pressed, and suggest that family policies should support them in their decisions to have children. The macroeconomic viewpoint is problematic in the context of reproductive agency in that it raises expectations that everyone should have children, and that it is a duty to procreate. Family policies, in contrast, are two-fold. On the one hand they could be seen in a positive light as enhancing reproductive agency in terms of helping families with children who are often under financial pressure. On the other hand, family policies also define certain limits for families and parenthood, and thereby affect reproductive agency.

I end Chapter 5 with a redescription of views that could be called a counter-discourse to the economics-based way of examining the population question. There are arguments suggesting that viewing procreation and having children as an economic decision is not a good approach. The discourse promotes the idea that children should be valued as such, and that the family as a unit is an important institution. Those who promote family values also defend more or less explicitly traditional gender roles and, for example, support the family model of one breadwinner. Through the lens of reproductive agency, the vocabulary of family values is problematic as it promotes a very limited view of how reproduction should be arranged. One is not given the freedom to decide about procreation if traditional, European family values, such as women's primary role in child-care, are promoted through family policies.

The sixth chapter deals with the theme of gender. My formulation of reproductive agency includes the idea that it should be possible to rethink gender, which is a crucial aspect of how people process and form their embodied personality in relation to procreation. The selected policy documents deal with gender in diverse ways: the GOV report aims at gender neutrality, whereas the

EVA and FF texts deal with it in a more explicit way. Despite its aim at gender neutrality, the GOV report cannot avoid gendered implications. In a way, aiming at neutrality could be read as trying to promote reproductive agency and the possibility to relive and rethink gendered duties connected to reproduction. The underlying structures go unquestioned, however, implying that procreative and child-care processes are limited to and by the current arrangements of sexual difference. The explicit approach to gendered problems related to reproduction reveals unequal structures, although EVA and the FF still cannot offer the freedom to rethink sexual difference. Overcoming binary structures related to procreation would demand more drastic measures than are proposed in the documents.

The Conclusion comprises a review of my findings and an evaluation of the different aspects of my study, including the conceptual framework of reproductive agency, the imaginary domain and bodily integrity. The purpose of the study is to offer a targeted redescription of the selected policy documents. Although the texts covered do not deal with all aspects of the Finnish debate on population policy, I am convinced that this type of study offers insights that are of relevance beyond the pages of these specific documents.

2 Formulating reproductive agency

2.1 Introduction

The tool for my redescriptions, the notion of reproductive agency, is to a large extent based on Drucilla Cornell's thinking, which combines different strands in the fields of philosophy, political science, legal studies and feminist theory, among others. Cornell has made theoretical contributions to critical and feminist theory, and has also written on practical political issues such as adoption¹, abortion², pornography³ and the war in Iraq, for example⁴.

Cornell's first book *Beyond Accommodation: Ethical Feminism, Deconstruction and the Law* (first published in 1991, new edition in 1999) deals with the notion of feminine and with Derrida's deconstructive reading of Lacan and its connections to feminism. The next one, *Transformations: Recollective Imagination and Sexual Difference* (published in 1993) continued on the theme of transformation with regard to sexual difference. As far as my work is concerned, her most influential books are *The Imaginary Domain: Abortion, Pornography and Sexual Harassment* (1995), *At the Heart of Freedom: Feminism, Sex and Equality* (1998) and *Just Cause: Freedom, Identity and Rights* (2000). Cornell introduced the concept of the imaginary domain in her 1995 book and developed it further in the next two. All three books include political analyses that lean on the concept of the imaginary domain. *The Imaginary Domain* and *At the Heart of Freedom* also deal with the notion of bodily integrity, which is an essential aspect of my work.

Cornell's first books show her interest in critical theory and critical legal studies, but she has also written on other issues. *Defending Ideals: War, Democracy and Political Struggles* (2004) deals with the importance of ideals and questions of war and nationalism. *Between Women and Generations: Legacies of Dignity* (2005), on the other hand, is autobiographical, although it also includes philosophical musings on dignity and witnessing. In recent years

¹ See, for example, chapter 4 in Cornell 1998.

² See, for example, chapter 2 in Cornell 1995.

³ See, for example, chapter 3 in Cornell 1995.

⁴ See chapter 1 in Cornell 2004.

she has returned to critical theory with her 2008 book *Moral Images of Freedom: A Future for Critical Theory* (Cornell 2008a) and her latest work, *Symbolic Forms for a New Humanity: Cultural and Racial Reconfigurations of Critical Theory* (co-authored with Kenneth Michael Panfilio) (Cornell & Panfilio 2010). She has also written about Clint Eastwood and American masculinity (Cornell 2009).

My reasons for engaging with Cornell are related specifically to her thinking on personality formation and her theorising on thinking beyond stable stereotypes of femininity and masculinity, women and men. I see this as a starting point for agency; it must be possible to re-think and re-imagine sexual difference, reproduction, and the roles of women and men in society. Cornell also challenges us to think about ideals and to push back the limits of what is understood to be possible. I find her concepts a stimulating starting point on which to build my thinking about bodily and reproductive themes in a way that would connect them to concrete political practices. In my view it is crucial to maintain the interconnectedness between political practice and theoretical and philosophical ideas in general, and it is an explicit purpose of my work: to show how theoretical ideas cannot be separated from political action and social reality, and to examine the ways in which theoretical premises play out in everyday life, be it on the political or the personal level. I focus on certain aspects of Cornell's thought, including the idea of the imaginary domain and, connected to that, her conception of bodily integrity. I do not discuss in any depth her engagement with Derrida, for example, nor do I analyse her Kantian and Rawlsian influences in detail. Her thinking draws on many different sources that often appear contradictory, and examining it in all of its intricacies would be another work in itself⁵.

The rest of this chapter comprises six sections. First I briefly outline how Cornell understands the notion of the person, and the next three sections describe the concepts of the imaginary domain and bodily integrity, and how they are useful in the construction of the redescriptive tool. Section six examines both Cornell's and Judith Butler's thought on agency, and in the final section I

⁵ For an examination of her work see, for example, Heberle & Pryor (2008).

formulate the notion of reproductive agency. Reproductive agency here refers to the possibilities to reconfigure the current situation with regard to reproductive options; reconfiguration refers to the possibilities to live the current hegemonic and often natural-seeming constellations of reproductive life differently. The formulation of reproductive agency relies a great deal on the principle that people themselves should be the source of the values and meanings they connect to their procreative lives, and outsiders such as the state or the legal system should not limit their options. The idea that people attach values and meanings to their lives relies on a specific notion concerning the personality, and I start my examination of Cornell's thought with her concept of the person.

2.2. The concept of the person

A useful starting point in the construction of the notion of reproductive agency is Drucilla Cornell's concept of the imaginary domain, which is strongly based on her concept of the person. The origin of the notion of the person is the Latin word *per-sonare*, which literally means sounding through⁶, thus a person is what shines through a mask, although usually it is the mask that is associated with the word 'persona'. Cornell is referring here to the kind of psychological thinking that equates the different personae an individual has with different roles that he or she assumes in different situations. However, she does not see the persona as a role or a mask that one puts on, rather the opposite: it is something that lies behind the role or the mask. Inherent in the notion of shining through is the assumption that a person is able to imagine herself as a whole, can pull herself together, so to speak. An important aspect of pulling oneself together is the fact that the wholeness is imagined: it is impossible to achieve true success in becoming whole, or, for that matter, in being able to conceptually separate the 'mask' from the 'self'. (Cornell 1995, 4-5)

⁶ Cornell assigns the etymology of the word persona (*per-sona*) to the idea of shining through in her book *The Imaginary Domain* (Cornell 1995, 4), but there seems to be a misreading since the word person is usually traced back to *per-sonare*, meaning sounding through, or the Etruscan word *phersu*, both of which refer to masks used by actors (see e.g., The Oxford English Dictionary 1989, 596, Barnhart 1988, 780)

The wholeness or coherence of a person is always becoming, meaning that personality is a process, something that is continual. This processual characteristic of the self does not imply a sense of disintegration, however - on the contrary, there is a sense of integration. A sense of coherence is not achieved because there is a stable, unified and unchanged core, but because the person imagines herself as unified and whole. The process is continuous and one can never fully succeed in it; one's personality is never complete. It could be said that the personality is a project⁷. In Cornell's words, one becomes a person, or to be more precise is becoming a person. Moreover, the continuous process of personality formation involves different personae, meaning that people always work through different identifications in the process of pulling themselves together and imagining themselves as entities (ibid.). Cornell writes:

A person is not something "there" on this understanding, but a possibility, an aspiration which, because it is that, can never be fulfilled once and for all. The person is, in other words, implicated in an endless process of working through personae. (ibid., 5)

Cornell insists that, because the formation of the personality is an on-going project, it should be legally protected. She sees freedom as a chance that is dependent on a preceding set of conditions that secure the individuation process. There should be protection, 'as a legal matter of equality, the equivalent bases for this chance to transform ourselves into the individuated beings we think of as persons' (ibid.). She lists the following three conditions she considers necessary for a minimum degree of individuation that will enable people to participate in public and social life as equal citizens:

1. bodily integrity
2. access to symbolic forms sufficient to achieve linguistic skill permitting the differentiation of oneself from others

⁷ It is possible to connect this idea about the projected character of the personality to Sartre's and Beauvoir's thinking: for more on these connections in Cornell's thought, see Bernstein 2008.

3. protection of the imaginary domain (ibid., 4).

My interest is in the first and third of these conditions. I will first consider the imaginary domain and then proceed to Cornell's ideas on bodily integrity.

2.3 The imaginary domain

Cornell introduced the concept of the imaginary domain in her book *The Imaginary Domain: Abortion, Pornography & Sexual Harassment* (1995), developing it further in her subsequent books *At the Heart of Freedom: Feminism, Sex and Equality* (1998) and *Just Cause: Freedom, Identity, and Rights* (2000) and addressing practical political issues such as family law and Spanish language rights. She also considers the theoretical and practical political significance of the concept in various articles, of which the most relevant in this context are 'Autonomy Re-Imagined' published in the *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture & Society* in 2003, and 'The Shadow of Heterosexuality' published in *Hypatia* in 2007.

Cornell bases her theorising on the concept of the imaginary domain on Immanuel Kant and John Rawls⁸. I refer to these thinkers although I do not examine their work in more detail. Cornell defines the imaginary domain broadly as 'the moral and psychic place we all need in order to come to terms with who we are as sexuate beings and to have the chance to claim our own person as a sexuate being' (Cornell 2007, 230). This short definition requires further clarification on two points. Firstly, it makes no reference to Cornell's very strong emphasis on freedom in connection with the notion of the imaginary domain, and secondly, Cornell later expanded the concept to include other identifications in addition to those connected to a sexuate being. I begin my closer examination of the imaginary domain with the identification processes that are so crucial to the formation of the personality.

⁸ See Thurschwell 2008 for a detailed explanation of the points of convergence and departure between Cornell, Kant and Rawls. J.M Bernstein does not consider Cornell's Rawlsian and Kantian commitments deep, and sees them as more of a strategic ploy (Bernstein 2008, 83).

2.3.1 Identification processes

The open-ended approach to the personality implies a process that demands the continual working through of different personae: we work through different identifications as we attempt to cohere as a person, a self. Cornell writes:

Our basic identifications are fundamental aspects of our lives. We internalize these basic identifications initially as essential to ourselves, often even without recognizing, let alone rationally assessing, the fact that we do so. We cohere into a self only by making sense of these basic identifications, whether we consciously question them or not. (Cornell 2000, 137)

Our personality is formed in continuous identificatory processes. Some of the identifications are conscious and even rational, but most are unconscious and not something that people would rationally choose or evaluate. As Cornell notes, this process points us towards culture, and is strongly connected to our environment. Culture and society set the conditions that affect personality formation: people cannot 'just step out of their identifications', which have to be assumed and are not just given. (ibid., 131 & 135) The implication of assuming of identifications is that the formation of the personality is not totally dictated by culture. The individual has an active role in the process, although one cannot extricate oneself from culture or society.

In elaborating on the interaction between cultural and social conditions and the activity of a person, Cornell distinguishes between limits and parameters. Limits refer to cultural and social conditions that are inherited and which a person cannot simply decide to change. As an illustration of the difference between limits and parameters she mentions that the former would prevent her from gaining social acceptance just by identifying herself as a Latina⁹, no matter how much she wanted to do so. Parameters, in turn, refer to conditions that may change and thus facilitate new identifications. She continues with her example of identifying herself as a Latina: what if she married a Mexican,

⁹ Cornell notes that she is positioned as a white Anglo-American who is a US citizen. She adopted a child from Paraguay (see Cornell 2005, 98).

moved to Mexico, became a Mexican citizen, became fluent in Spanish and raised children as Mexicans? At that point, identifying herself as a Mexican would seem more feasible, even though some Mexicans would still consider her an Anglo (ibid., 140-141). This example shows how there are limits to the identification process in that people cannot just assume certain identifications and expect social and cultural acceptance or recognition, but this does not mean that identifications are locked and immune to change. People's parameters may change, and the changing enables the onset of different identificatory processes. Such processes include various aspects such as class, race, language, gender and nationality, and although sex and gender comprise one type of process, it is not the only one¹⁰. Given my engagement with questions of reproduction in this study, however, sex and gender as identificatory processes are of significance.

The psychoanalytical and, more specifically, the Lacanian background to Cornell's thinking about the identification process should also be mentioned. I will return to certain Lacanian strands in her thought later, but at this point I will refer to the imaginary nature of identity. The concept of the imaginary is one of the 'orders' of experience in Lacanian thought. It is characterised by the narcissistic relation with the image through which a sense of wholeness and unity is achieved (Frosh 2003, 107). Lacan rejects the notion of unified or authentic identity on the grounds that identity is always threatened by unconscious desires. It is based on an image of oneself that is reflected back from someone else. The specular image implies that although identity feels real to the person concerned, it is never actually owned: it is always unconsciously dependent on something or someone outside of oneself. (Minsky 1996, 141) As Rosalind Minsky notes: 'We are given a sense of identity, but we think we are given an authentic identity' (ibid., 145). Identity is first discovered during the mirror stage at around the age of six months when the baby first perceives itself as an entity, and finds in the specular image reflected back to it by its primary caretaker a coherent unity and bodily integrity, i.e. the sense of being centred in its own body (ibid., 144-145).

¹⁰ See Cornell 2000 for an examination of identifications not connected to gender.

Cornell's notion of the imaginary domain is connected to the forming of a sense of identity, or working through different identifications. People cannot discover who they are without these identifications, which colour the way in which they envision themselves but do not determine the reach of their imaginations (Cornell 2003, 144). Psychoanalysis teaches us that people can never fully know themselves, and that they rely on others to know their limits and creative powers. Thus, 'we need the imaginary domain so desperately precisely because our self-representations are always in flux as we engage with others and with our own unconscious stirrings, sexual and otherwise' (Cornell & Willis 2002, 88). The need for the imaginary domain is a logical conclusion given Cornell's notion of personality as something that we never fully know and that we are continually re-working and re-thinking.

In 1993 before the publication of *The Imaginary Domain* in 1995, and as a forerunner of the concept of the imaginary domain, Cornell wrote about recollective imagination. This notion is used in connection with legal interpretation and transformation, but she also refers to the construction of subjectivity and the possibility of agency (see Chapter 2 in Cornell 1993). She notes how 'the self is continuously "birthed" again through time and its encounters with others' (Cornell 1993, 41). The processual nature and other-dependence of the self is clearly present even at this stage. People create and recreate the self through an act of recollective imagination, which means that they interpret the past in a continuous process of pulling themselves together. It should be remembered here that the past is interpreted and imagined in the processing, as Cornell notes:

We cannot just reach back to the "actually was" as if there were a preinterpretive past that was "just there". We receive the past only through the process of critical interpretation. (ibid., 29)

One aspect of the imaginary domain is the continuous interpretation and reinterpretation of the past, which is then projected into the future.

Cornell is not the only theorist engaging with the notion of the imaginary. It is a category that has proliferated in social criticism and feminist

theory (Narach 2002, 65), and as Kathleen Lennon notes, there has been a shift from imagination to the imaginary (Lennon 2004, 107). One way of distinguishing between the two concepts is to understand imagination as a faculty that refers to creating inner and outer images, whereas the imaginary refers to concepts that have at least some form of connection to psychoanalytical ideas that recognise links between images and affects (ibid., 107 & 109). Kathleen Lennon notes:

For Lacan the act of identification is a manifestation of affect. It is an emotional act, not a cognitive judgement. It is joyful and jubilant and, at other times, aggressive and angry. These emotions are expressed by means of the child's relation to the image. Such moments of imaginary identifications persist throughout our lives as vehicles of affective phantasy. (ibid., 110)

Cornell clearly follows the psychoanalytical line of thought about the imaginary in connecting the notion of the imaginary closely to the emotional investments people make in their embodied selves. She notes that it is through the bodily ego that the body becomes meaningful as a self: people invest emotionally in their bodies, and these investments are inseparable from the sense of self (Cornell 1998, 35). The imaginary is an important concept in Cornell's theorising, and Lacanian influences are also significant. This is not her only source, however. She combines an emphasis on freedom with the Lacanian influences, which brings a unique twist to her thought.

2.3.2 The imaginary domain and freedom

Another important aspect of the imaginary domain is the concept of freedom, which connects Cornell to certain strands of liberal thinking¹¹. Cornell states that '[t]he freedom to create ourselves as sexed beings, as feeling and reasoning beings, lies at the heart of the ideal that is the imaginary domain' (Cornell 1998,

¹¹ Adam Thurschwell defines Cornell's thinking as 'radical feminist liberalism' (Thurschwell 2008).

ix). One of her sources is the Kantian idea of the equal worth of free persons, and she expresses the wish to 'defend the Kantian conception of our equal worth as free persons who possess a value-conferring capacity, partially setting our ends by reason' (Cornell 2000, 133). According to this understanding, as human beings, people are the source of values that they attach to their ends. Ends refer to objects of free choice and are set partially by reason¹². As human beings we make choices and attribute values to them, and it is the value-conferring capability as rational human beings that we recognise in each other (ibid., 132-133). Cornell writes: 'An individual respects the equal worth and dignity of all others because she shares in the humanity that makes them the source of value they give to their own ends' (ibid., 133).

Yet the concept of freedom is multifaceted, and Cornell subscribes to very specific views of it. Tuija Pulkkinen notes that in the tradition of German idealism the concept of 'freedom' is connected with the notion of an autonomous agent who reflectively governs itself (Pulkkinen 2000, 13). Cornell rejects the idea of the totally autonomous subject, but she does allude to the notion in the Kantian ideal that the individual person should be legally considered the responsible source of judgements and evaluations, although she does not claim that people can make evaluations and judgements freely and solely in accordance with moral law (Cornell 2000, 131). Given her lack of belief in the totally autonomous subject, Cornell's notion of freedom differs from the idea of freedom in most political thought. As Pulkkinen explains, freedom in the tradition of German idealism, which refers to the moral capacity of a rational creature, is a totally different concept from that of liberty in the liberal tradition, which refers to people's ability to act according to their will without obstruction (Pulkkinen 2000, 10-13). Cornell connects freedom to morality and people's capacity to make moral judgements, even though she does not agree with the Kantian ideal of the totally autonomous subject. Her idea of freedom is thus connected to German idealism as a version of the Kantian understanding. This makes Cornell's liberalism very specific.

¹² Cornell emphasises that ends are set *partially* by reason, as according to her reading of Kant an 'end' may also be an object of desire or inclination (Cornell 2000, 132).

The notion of the liberal abstract person, who seems to be non-gendered but is in fact male, has provoked criticism of Liberalism¹³ from different feminist perspectives (see, for example, Pateman 1988). According to Adam Thurschwell, Cornell avoids the dangers of abstraction:

Cornell can revert to these traditionally liberal motifs without falling back into the dangers of abstraction identified by feminists because protection of the imaginary domain guarantees that the person's sexual difference cannot be used as a marker of disempowering the person to equal respect. (Thurschwell 2008, 41)

When Thurschwell refers to liberal motifs he does not clearly distinguish between the different strands of liberalism, and I would argue that in Cornell's case it is meaningful to differentiate the libertarian vein from the Rawlsian one, which relies on Kantian thought. According to the libertarian version, autonomy is a negative freedom, the right to freedom from undue interference in making choices and the satisfaction of individual preferences, whereas Rawlsian liberalism understands autonomy as the capacity for rational self-legislation, which is the defining feature of people (Mackenzie & Stoljar 2000, 5). In drawing on Kantian and Rawlsian thinking, which she combines with her theorising about the imaginary domain, Cornell does not conceive of human beings as ahistorical, non-gendered individuals, although it is undeniable that she gives freedom priority in her thinking¹⁴. For her, freedom is connected to the protection of a person's internal self-conception, it allows respect for difference and is open to revision and reinterpretation (Thurschwell 2008, 40, 49).

¹³ Liberalism here refers to the liberal ontology of political theory positing that people are 'transcendentally singular individual agents' (Pulkkinen 2000, 2), which means that the individual is understood to be purified of any specificity, as non-gendered, non-aged and non-raced (ibid., 128). The individual has two basic characteristics: individual interest and the capacity to choose (ibid., 2).

¹⁴ The emphasis on freedom also implies, in a certain sense, the priority of freedom over equality. Cornell writes: 'I am not arguing that we should cease to address issues of gender discrimination as matters of social inequality. I *am* arguing that if we are not equivalently evaluated as free persons as an initial matter, we will be unable to *fairly* correct that definitional inequality; our life chances and prospect will be limited by the very definition of our inequality' (Cornell 1998, 20, emphasis in the original).

The respect for difference in Cornell's thought derives from her emphasis on the person as the source of her or his own values and life goals. Her emphasis on the freedom to choose one's own values and goals means that she avoids the feminist 'special treatment/equal treatment' problem. This means that when women are treated equally the same standards seemingly hold for men and women, when in fact the standards are disadvantageous to women. The alternative is to give women 'special benefits', which enables specified definitions or categorisations of what it means to be a woman. (Thurschwell 2008, 41) Cornell, however, emphasises the freedom to form one's own personality and define the meanings and values of one's own life. The imaginary domain is what makes the defining and processing possible, and against which for example laws should be evaluated. As Thurschwell puts it: does a statute respect people's fundamental freedom to define their own conceptions of themselves as physical, sexed beings? (ibid., 41) When the imaginary domain is used as a measure there are no unified standards with regard to gender (equal treatment), and no specified definitions of what it means to be a woman (special treatment): the measure is the respect for each person's imaginary domain.

In formulating the imaginary domain Cornell makes connections that are not self-evident, and combines two rather different forms of thinking – Lacanian ideas about the formation of the self and Kantian ideas about freedom. As she notes, the imaginary domain 'illuminates what freedom demands of creatures that inevitably are shaped by their own identifications' (Cornell 2000, 135). Because people are never complete in terms of their personality formation, they need space for sorting through different identifications. Moreover, they should be the only source of the values and meanings connected to the identifications and the sorting through, and thus should be free in terms of personality formation. The subject is understood as symbolically and socially constructed, and fragile freedom engages people in the practice of self-responsibility (ibid., 131). Such practice is significant from a feminist perspective and in terms of agency. Cornell understands 'freedom as a practice of assuming responsibility for our evaluations of our basic identifications as we make them our own in the course of experience' (ibid., 135). The fact that people make evaluations of their

basic identifications implies self-responsibility, but it also implies the right to the imaginary domain, which accords freedom to actually make the evaluations.

The idea of responsibility is essential to the idea of agency. As Paul Benson notes, feminists stress the need for women to take responsibility for their actions and feelings as a precondition for reclaiming and expanding personal and political agency (Benson 2000, 73). Taking responsibility and being responsible are connected to being worthy of a certain moral standing. When one is considered morally responsible, one is also considered worthy of a certain social standing, which gives eligibility for different kinds of moral exchange and participation in a community of moral dialogue (ibid., 79 & 83). The connection between responsibility and the ability to act as a full member of a community is also why Cornell considers it important to assign self-responsibility to people in their evaluations of their basic identifications. Being responsible means being considered a full member of a moral community. Then again, as Benson notes, a certain sense of self worth is necessary for a person to be fully responsible for his or her actions (ibid., 78). A sense of self worth is connected to the notion of the imaginary domain, which is needed for people to be able to freely form their personality. The right to the imaginary domain is one aspect of holding people responsible for the evaluation of their identifications in that it enables them to formulate and evaluate them. The responsibility is a sign that the person is a full member of a social and moral community.

Finally, it should be pointed out that Cornell formulates the imaginary domain and freedom as ideals (see, for example, Cornell 2000, 135-132) that cannot be fully achieved in our everyday political and social life. They are unreachable goals that nevertheless should guide feminist efforts. The point is that the imaginary domain and the free person are open notions in the sense that the freedom to decide about and process one's values and life choices should not be predefined. The imaginary domain is a normative ideal in the sense that that everyone is entitled to it, but it does not imply any substantive claims about how people should arrange and represent their lives or the imaginary domain. It is 'the place of prior equivalent evaluation that must be imagined no matter what historical and anthropological researchers tell us is "true" about women's nature' (Cornell 1998, 15), meaning that, regardless of the cul-

tural or social order in place, the imaginary domain should be recognised as an initial matter:

The moral demand lies at the heart of the hypothetical situation of the imagination, and it is out of this hypothetical situation that a fair proceduralist conception of justice can be developed. This demand for what ought to be does not, however, turn us directly to the real world for its justifications. (ibid., 15-16)

The imaginary domain and the freedom to define one's personality, values and meanings should come before any claims about justice. Of course, the freedom to imagine meanings in life is an imaginary rather than a realisable state. However, Cornell maintains that freedom in personality formation should be the ideal, a goal to be kept in mind when issues such as justice, social and cultural arrangements and politics are theorised and enacted in practice. Related to how it works in practice is her defence of the imaginary domain as a right, and the connections she makes with the state and the law.

2.3.3 The imaginary domain, law and the state

The connection of the imaginary domain to the state and law can be examined from different perspectives. One connection is through the idea of the discontinuity thesis. The discontinuity thesis is a term that Cornell borrows from Ronald Dworkin, and it relates Cornell's thinking about the role of the state in regard to representation of the imaginary domain. Cornell understands the discontinuity thesis as separating what the people consider good for themselves from what should be imposed by the state as the general good (Cornell 1998, 59). The general idea of the good life cannot be deduced from a person's ideas about what is good. With this notion, Cornell maintains that what the state or law does cannot be based on one form of arranging one's life. Cornell discusses the discontinuity thesis in connection with the right to self-representation of one's sexuate beings, she writes:

If the state were to favor only one form of representation of sexuate being, it would violate the basic mandate of a politically liberal society that all of us are to be given equal concern as persons. This equal concern follows from the equal intrinsic value of each one of us as a person. (ibid., 59)

Cornell refers to the sexuate being in the above quotation, but she has expanded the idea of the imaginary domain to include all sorts of identifications. For example, one might think that the state should not favour one form of self-representation of the national identity¹⁵. The relevant aspect to my study is representation of the sexuate being in that it is closely related to reproduction. In this regard, the discontinuity thesis also implies that the state should not prefer any one form of family arrangement, given the connections of representations of one's sexuate being to procreation and notions of the family.

Another element that illustrates the significance of the imaginary domain in relation to the state and the law is Cornell's defence of it as a right. As Adam Thurschwell notes, Cornell's conception of such a right is a natural extension of the liberal idea of freedom; according to Kant, people have the innate right to determine and act on their own ends on condition that this right is consistent with others' similar freedom (Thurschwell 2008, 39). Cornell's defence is significant, but what is even more relevant is the reasoning behind it. Her view of the imaginary domain as a right is connected to her vision of the role of the state and the legal system in the construction of the self. As she sees it, the subject is socially constituted and is thus deeply other-dependent, the other referring both to the social and the cultural, i.e. 'the Other', and to concrete other people. The unfinished nature of the personality and its constant state of becoming mean that there is a projection into the future based on the specular image provided by others. Combining the notion of the subject being constituted by the Other with the time frame of future anteriority, which refers to the self as constantly 'coming to be through the confirmation of the projection of what she

¹⁵ In my view, separating different identifications is somewhat artificial as they are intertwined and implicated in each other: for example, having a certain national self-representation includes certain self-representations of one's sexuate being.

has been given by others' (Cornell 1995, 41-42), facilitates conception of the legal system and the state as symbolic Others.

The legal system not only recognises persons, it also constitutes and confirms who is to be understood as a self. In this sense it is active in that it validates who is established as an entity and who is guaranteed the minimum conditions of individuation. If the legal system is understood as constitutive of the self, the imaginary domain can be defended as a right, but in a different way from the liberal tradition that defines freedom in negative terms. As Cornell notes, the formulation of law as a symbolic Other changes the perception of rights in terms of negative freedom, in other words avoids the negative connotation of freedom as freedom from state intervention (Cornell 2000, 42):

But, because the self depends upon the other for the achievement of individuation, if the state recognises and confirms whoever is recognised as a constituted person, then there can never be any simple negative freedom for persons (ibid.).

The fact that all people are constituted by the Other, which includes the state and the legal system, renders the question of negative freedom, i.e. freedom from state intervention, pointless. No matter what it does, the state is in one way or another involved in the formation of the self, and the more important question concerns how the state and the legal systems go about it.

Cornell's understanding of the law as a symbolic Other has political consequences. If the legal system is to be taken as one of the primary systems of cultural symbolisation, then neither the law nor legal rights should be dismissed, although the masculine, white, Western definition of rights must be challenged. Traditional justifications for rights are based on very particular and inaccurate conceptions of the subject and of the self, but recognising this does not mean that one should abandon the concept of rights. Feminists should emphasise the right to feminine imaginary that is not relativised to the context. In Cornell's view, there is a need for new imaginaries of what it is to be a woman and how women are symbolised in law, and in this the imaginary domain is in a crucial position. As a concept it emphasises women as the source of their own

imagining, and the right of everyone to self-representation. (Cornell 1995, 85-86) Indeed, women have been systematically denied their status as subjects of rights because of the gender hierarchy. Moreover, the projection of women as subjects of rights challenges the traditional discourse, but the new discourses that thereby re-articulate sexual difference and that expresses women as subjects of rights does not have to depend on universalist premises that dismiss gender, nationality and race, for example. Laws both limit and enhance who people can become in that they give content to humanity. However, the law should not attempt to articulate sexual difference, but should provide moral and psychic space through which people can come to terms with it or other identifications. (ibid., 83, 87-88) In other words, the law should secure the imaginary domain.

Cornell's notion of the state and the legal system as symbolic Others is highly relevant to my argumentation in this study. I interpret her references to the state also to mean different public policies that, through constituting the everyday environment in which people live, affect how people can and should behave and how they can imagine themselves. Policies, in turn, create an environment that enables and disables, encourages and discourages certain modes of being and the self, and therefore affect personality formation. As the state and its policies affect how people imagine themselves, politics and policies become important elements with regard to the imaginary domain. Nonetheless, Cornell does not see representation of the imaginary domain as an absolute right, and has formulated some limitations to how it can be represented.

2.3.4 Limitations on the representation of the imaginary domain

Cornell acknowledges two limitations on representations of the imaginary domain. The first is a straightforward ban on violence and the use of force against another person. The second is something she calls 'degradation prohibition' (Cornell 1998, 60), which she defines as follows: '[t]he degradation prohibition forbids the characterization of someone as unworthy because of how she has constituted herself from her basic identifications' (Cornell 2000, 150). The word

'degradation' here refers literally to grading down, seeing someone as unworthy or as a lesser form of being because of how she has formed her personality:

It should go without saying that hierarchical gradations of any of us as unworthy of personhood violates the postulation of each one of us as an equal person called for by a democratic and modern legal system. (Cornell 1995, 10)

Cornell is strongly against hierarchical evaluation and marking of some people as unworthy. As she notes, the recognition of equal intrinsic value demands the treatment of each person as an equal, and not just equal treatment, which is based on Ronald Dworkin's distinction. Treatment as an equal refers to a fundamental right to be treated with respect and concern equal to anyone else; equal treatment, in contrast, refers to the equal right to opportunity, resource or burden. (Cornell 1998, 59-60, 209n56) Equal treatment thus refers to the absence of obstruction, in other words the idea of negative freedom, whereas treatment as equal focuses on the way one acts towards other people, in other words whether they receive equal respect and concern. Equal respect or concern also refers to Cornell's formulation of the imaginary domain as a place for prior equivalent evaluation. Degradation prohibition thus also incorporates the idea of equal personhood before any social, cultural or political arrangements. The imaginary domain should be prioritised over any claims about justice or social arrangements.

Thus far I have discussed Cornell's idea of the imaginary domain as an important part of the formation of the personality: how it relates to the identification process, the role of freedom and the notion of rights, and the limitations in its representation. Cornell also sees the formation of the personality as embodied, meaning that there is always a bodily aspect in how people see themselves. She theorises this in terms of bodily integrity, which is another crucial aspect in my analysis of policy documents that target reproductive agency.

2.4 Bodily integrity

2.4.1 *The embodied self*

Cornell's ideas about the imaginary domain provide a productive starting point for my analyses and for the development of a redescriptive tool. In order to add further pertinence, I now turn to Cornell's thinking on bodily integrity, which relates to her ideas about the imaginary domain. The notion of bodily integrity is commonly used in the context of human rights codes, specifically with regard to issues such as freedom of movement, security of person and reproductive rights¹⁶. It is also an expression that is more generally applicable not only in political theory but also in feminist literature¹⁷. Drucilla Cornell formulates the concept in her own way, as described in detail below.

There is a close connection between Cornell's concepts of the imaginary domain and bodily integrity. There is always an embodied aspect in an individual's representation and image of his or her personality. The body is not separate from the personality, nor is it something that the self inhabits or owns: it is an inseparable part of how people imagine themselves as whole. This thinking is based on Jacques Lacan's ideas on the mirror stage in an infant's life, which he places between the ages of six and eighteen months. This is when the infant starts to recognise its mirror image and to display jubilation at the recognition. Lacan attributes the jubilation to the infant's first experience of perceiving itself as a whole. In reality it is still dependent and has only limited control of its body, so, it is, in fact experiencing a wholeness that it does not physically have. (Cornell 1995, 38-39, Cornell 1998, 34-35) As Cornell notes:

This perception of wholeness occurs when the infant is, in reality, in a state of complete helplessness. Thus the image functions both as a projection and an anticipation of what the infant might become but is not now. (Cornell 1995, 39)

¹⁶ See for example Council of Europe 1950, 1963 and United Nations 1948.

¹⁷ For an example of different ways to understand the concept of bodily integrity see Patosalmi 2009, in which I compare Martha Nussbaum's and Drucilla Cornell's notions of bodily integrity.

The disjuncture between image and reality implies that the mirroring refers to other things than an image in a concrete mirror, and is dependent on other people. The infant's primary caretakers and what they do function as a mirror. They mirror and treat the child as a coherent being when taking care of it, and the mirroring confirms the imagined coherence it experiences. The primary caretaker also represents a coherent self to the infant. According to Cornell:

The primary caretaker appears as whole to the baby, who invests in the primary caretaker because there she sees bodily coherence she can count on to meet her needs. By identifying with the primary caretaker's own projected wholeness, the child finds another means of achieving a sense of continuity for her own fragile bodily ego. (Cornell 1998, 35)

The primary caretaker thus has a dual role in confirming the infant's imagined wholeness by treating it as if it had bodily integrity on the one hand, and on the other hand being an object of identification for the baby by projecting wholeness. As Cornell remarks, it is only through the mirroring process that the infant acquires an identity (Cornell 1995, 39). The implication here is that there is no self or personality that is not dependent on other people. A person's subjectivity, the embodied self, is deeply other-dependent, and is formed in the interactions he or she has. Other-dependence does not indicate any sort of social determinism, however. Although the subjectivity is given from outside of the self, how the different identifications are worked through and sorted out is a process that is not totally determined, but is dependent on both the social world and the inner workings of the individual's personality.

There are two major aspects in the Lacanian understanding of the mirror stage worth closer examination: temporality and the imagined/imaginary quality of bodily integration. As Cornell observes, the stabilisation of the bodily ego must have a projected future. With regard to the developmental account of the mirror stage, the power for the infant is not the recognition of similarity in the mirror, but the anticipated motor unity associated with

bodily integration (ibid., 39-40). In more general terms, the future is crucial to the process of 'pulling oneself together', which is experienced as a sense of self-identity over time (Cornell 1998, 36). One aspect of the formation of the self is the ability to see oneself as a temporally continuous being, and this requires a projected future. Temporality and imaginary aspects are connected to the notion of bodily integrity, and therefore I turn to these next.

2.4.2 Temporal and imaginary aspects of bodily integrity

The temporal and the imaginary are significant aspects of bodily integrity and are thus relevant to my development of the notion of reproductive agency, especially regarding possibilities of transformation and embodied agency. Elisabeth Grosz's commentary on Cornell's work is a good starting point for a study of Cornell's conception of temporality with regard to bodily integrity. According to Grosz, Cornell goes beyond the more common parameters of feminist thought about the future and temporality (Grosz 2005, chapter 5):

Hers [Cornell's] is a politics that envisions the capacity for transformation inherent in any ordered system, the system itself being unable to contain its own becomings and thus open to potentially endless variations (Grosz 2005, 72).

The future is not just about the continuous process of becoming a personality, it also enables change: 'expanding and transforming the horizons available for their [women's] self-representations' (ibid., 73). Thus, imagining and reimagining oneself as an entity over time is one element in the theorising of transformative potential. Then again, some consider Cornell's open conception of the future too indeterminate. According to Lois McNay, for example, it is too abstract and does not provide a sufficiently detailed socio-historical understanding of change (McNay 2003, 145). She does not consider 'structural potentiality' sufficient for the feminist rethinking of social relations.

In my view, McNay's criticism is based on a rather restricted reading of Cornell's thinking. Cornell has written on many practical issues of impor-

tance for feminists, and also proposed a concrete re-reading of many theoretical accounts (see, e.g., Cornell 1998), thus abstractness does not seem a valid criticism. Moreover, it seems to me that a solid theoretical basis that does not exclude potential avenues of analysis or prescribe only one future path, and yet facilitates the re-thinking of practical political and social situations, is extremely valuable. The notion of an open-ended future is relevant to agency in that open-endedness allows the transformation of one's personal, political and social life.

Another significant aspect of the Lacanian inspired account of bodily integrity is the imagined and imaginary quality of the process of personality formation. Imagined quality refers to the idea that bodily integrity is not actual reality. As Cornell notes, the infant's body does not match the reflection of bodily integrity, and there is always a moment of fictionality that constructs the ego. Thus, imagined quality is not overcome as an adult: people do not conquer the mirror stage, but go through continuous processing in which the embodied personality is formed. Cornell combines the aspects of temporality, imagined quality of bodily integrity and other-dependence of the self; a future orientation is needed so that one can imagine oneself as integrated over time, and others should respect the process of imagining coherence (Cornell 1995, 40):

Our "bodies", then, are never really our own. The idea that we own our bodies is a fantasy that imagines as completed that which always remains in the future anterior. Therefore, to protect "ourselves" from threats to our bodily integrity we have to protect the future into which we project our unity and have our bodily integrity respected by others. (ibid.)

Cornell gives two meanings to the word 'imaginary' in her notion of the imaginary domain: it refers to a space that is not actual or tangible space¹⁸, and in a psychoanalytic sense it refers to identifications with primordial others (Cornell 2003, 144). It is clear that when Cornell writes about the space needed

¹⁸ The question of concrete space in the formation of the personality, as in Virginia Woolf's ideas on a 'room of one's own', has been an interest in feminist thinking and I think it is still a relevant feminist concern. Cornell does not discuss the need for a concrete space in the development of the personality, but I would not say that it is meaningless to her; it is just not examined here.

for personality formation, she does not mean concrete space, but rather refers to a psychic domain and identification processes. Such processes, again, are connected to Lacanian thinking, according to which the structure of the imaginary body-image is based on a number of principles: it is the product of the highly particular, indeed idiosyncratic meanings with which bodies have been endowed within the confines of the nuclear family, and the corporeal schema is also a consequence of the internalisation of the corporeal schema of others (Grosz 1990, 46). Cornell does not presuppose an individual without history or locality, and her specific psychoanalytic theorising on bodily integrity emphasises her understanding of personality as created in interaction with others as the person identifies with those who are a part of her or his life.

A further significant aspect of the corporeal schema in Lacanian thinking is the affective aspect, which means that the body image is characterised by emotional investment (James 2002, 177-178; Lennon 2004, 109-110). This view is also evident in Cornell's formulation of bodily integrity, for example:

Through the bodily ego, the body becomes meaningful as our self, not only as a functional source of delights or a means to an end. Our investment in our bodies is in this sense inseparable from our most basic sense of self. (Cornell 1998, 35)

The emotional investment in the physical aspect of one's personality is also a significant feature in the inseparability of the body and the mind; people do not see their bodies from an objective or unemotional perspective. One more psychoanalytic aspect in the notion of the imaginary is its link to the moment of the mirror stage, which is characterised by unity and wholeness. Although there are contradictions between the specular image and the actual experience of the body, the specular image is characterised by unity. As Elisabeth Grosz writes:

The child's identifications with its specular image impels it nostalgically to seek out a past symbiotic completeness, even if such a state never existed and is retrospectively imposed on the pre-mirror

phase; and to seek an anticipatory or desired (ideal or future) identity in the coherence of the totalized specular image. (Grosz 1990, 39)

Cornell implies that it is impossible to go beyond the mirror stage, thus in this sense it is not a developmental stage but a process that continues throughout life (see Cornell 1995, 40). She refers to the process by which most adults pull themselves together as 'semiautomatic', but it can be disrupted by rape or other violent assault, for example, recovery from which usually demands more conscious imaginative processes (Cornell 1998, 36)¹⁹.

Cornell's reliance on psychoanalytic thought has also provoked criticism of her notion of the body, some of which is related to my development of the notion of reproductive agency. Vicki Kirby's critique (Kirby 1997, chapter 3) is interesting, although it is worth noting that her analysis was published in 1997 and relied on Cornell's earlier work, and therefore does not refer to *The Imaginary Domain*, which was published in 1995. According to Kirby, Cornell's work is ultimately based on the Cartesian distinction between the mind and the body in that language is made synonymous with the creative possibilities of the imagination and the scene of creation is identified as the mind (Kirby 1997, 92). As she notes, 'Cornell doesn't question the givenness of the ideal, the complexity of this particular identity, or the autogenesis of intelligibility that occurs in apparent isolation from the matter of the body' (ibid., 91). Elisabeth Grosz argued along the same lines more recently, noting that Cornell's work is still aligned with the oppositions between nature and culture, and the body and the psyche. Lacan is the psychoanalytic thinker of choice exactly because he distinguishes the biological from the symbolic. According to Grosz, Cornell relegates biology and matter 'to a never possible, ever receding background upon which "ordinary" writing takes place', devaluing it and transforming it from noun 'matter' to verb 'mattering', and thus desubstantialising it. (Grosz 2005, 77-78) In Grosz's view,

¹⁹ Bodily integrity can also be thought of as a matter of degree: one may experience less integrity in certain situations, although one does not lack it altogether (James 2002, 189).

if becoming, difference, and iteration are what make the self-identity of the subject and of culture impossible, so too, they immensely complicate and render self-identity problematic in the arena of nature, and materiality, as well. The biological, the natural, and the material remain active and crucial political ingredients precisely because they too, and not culture alone, are continually subjected to transformation, to becoming, to unfolding over time. (ibid., 78-79)

It is apparent from Kirby's and Grosz's criticism that Cornell's work can be read as Cartesian, or as not taking materiality into account. I believe that she aims to overcome the binary logic of the body and the mind, however. She clearly does not examine the role of materiality and biology, but rather concentrates on the inseparability of the physical body and the process of personality development. One of the differences between Grosz's and Kirby's viewpoint and Cornell's idea of the role of the material may lie in the active role that Grosz, and especially Kirby, assign to the material rather than whether the material is devalued. Kirby argues that nature is literate, an outsider that reads and writes (Kirby 1997, 127), although it is not clear to me what exactly this means.

I will return to the question of materialisation later, but at this point it is worth remembering that it is possible to conceive of the imaginary nature of bodily integrity as imagined fullness, or an attempt to achieve an unblemished identity. The concept of the imaginary domain could also be read as capturing some of the meanings referring to attempts at wholeness and a pure identity. As Cornell theorises how people imagine themselves as whole, the process could be understood as an attempt to attain the (imagined) unblemished identity of the moment of the mirror stage. The imaginary domain is characterised by other-dependence and attempts at wholeness. Other-dependence and aiming at coherence are also closely linked to bodily integrity, which is deeply dependent on others. It is often assumed that the physical body, understood as a separate material entity with certain natural-seeming characteristics, is unambiguously defined, but the imagined unity of the embodied self reminds

us of its formation in identificatory processes incorporating both material and intangible aspects that cannot be separated.

In my view it is important to understand that Cornell's aim in theorising bodily integrity through Lacanian thought is to overcome any dualist conception. She thinks of the self as embodied; it does not refer to a mind that inhabits a body. Cornell's theorising is intriguing not only in describing the self as embodied and processual, but also in that it includes some normative aspects while at the same time purporting to evade closure of thinking. The imaginary domain could be understood as a diagnostic tool with no specific normative plan with regard to the content of laws, for example. At the same time, it also includes some principles that are worthy of respect, and as far as Cornell is concerned it is a right that should be valued as fundamental.

In my view, bodily integrity is an aspect of embodied subjectivity. It is also a concept that encapsulates various meanings. In summing up the multiplicity of Cornell's ideas about bodily integrity I refer to Susan James who mentions various aspects of imaginary integrity: a person's body image can be characterised as integrated, as opposed to being imagined as a fragmented assemblage of parts; integrity refers to the quality of emotional investments in the body, positive investments creating a more integrated image; the concept of integrity also directs attention to the boundary around the body, although this is, at best, only relatively firm; finally bodily integrity incorporates a sense of sexual integrity, which James considers absolutely central in Cornell's thinking (James 2002, 188-189). As James' categorisation shows, Cornell's conception is open to various interpretations, and highlights several aspects of the embodied self. As such it is relevant to my aim of developing the concept of reproductive agency.

2.5 The imaginary domain as an evaluative tool

I am aware as I develop the notion of reproductive agency of some of the limitations in Cornell's thinking. The focus in this section is on selected areas of criticism that are relevant in the present context. I study questions related to the

notion of social imaginaries and Cornell's conception of freedom. Both of these issues are significant for the development of the notion of reproductive agency as a tool for evaluating politics and policies. I begin with the question of social imaginaries, which in Susan James' words means 'embedded narratives, pervasive images and potent symbols that run through our practices' (James 2002, 192). James draws on the work of Cornelius Castoriadis and Moira Gatens, who conceive of self-understanding as an understanding of the interrelations between the self and others. The term imaginary refers to the symbols, images and representations that make it possible to answer the questions, 'Who are we?' and 'Who am I?'. For Castoriadis and Gatens, the imaginary is primarily a social phenomenon as opposed to Lacan's psychic perspective of 'an individual capacity to achieve an integrated sense of oneself'. (ibid., 185, 183)

As Susan James notes, Cornell does not ignore the social imaginary, but she largely refrains from discussion, especially about the relationship between the individual imaginary domain and social imaginaries (ibid., 192). This question is closely connected to the perceived liberal value of freedom. According to both Linda Martín Alcoff and Susan James, Cornell chooses to emphasise the individual imaginary domain, and even a libertarian version of personality construction that exempts private life from public judgement (Alcoff 2004, 227; James 2002, 192-193). However, Alcoff acknowledges that, at the same time, Cornell debunks the public/private distinction (Alcoff 2004, 227), and assimilates the conceptions of positive and negative freedom in the protection of the imaginary domain.

In my view, Alcoff's and James' interpretations have some validity. Cornell emphasises an individual's freedom to interpret life as she chooses, to attach her own values and meanings to her experiences and identifications, and based on that to construct her personality. The role of social imaginaries in this is hazy. Further, she does not explain the logic of the representations and symbols included in practices that affect our individual imaginary domain. At the same time, she is clear about the other-dependence of the personality formation, which makes it apparent that she does not agree with the idea of the totally autonomous and pre-social subject. This disrupts the distinction between the public and the private. As Susan James writes:

Cornell thus incorporates the imaginary domain into a liberal framework and challenges liberal political philosophers to explain why it should not be protected, both by negative rights which prevent interference, and by positive rights to the conditions that make it possible for people to express their imaginary domain in their lifestyles (James 2002, 193).

Susan James interprets Cornell's notions of the imaginary domain as something that people express (*ibid.*). In my view this is somewhat misleading. I see the imaginary domain more as the setting of the identification processes, something that enables the formation of the imaginary wholeness of the personality rather than something that primarily seeks an expression. In other words, I do not think that Cornell refers to imagination in the sense of creativity, although freedom with regard to its expression could be considered essential for the process of personality formation. James's point that positive rights create the conditions for the imaginary domain (*ibid.*) is nevertheless relevant. Limitations on the imaginary domain and personality formation might include the economic and material conditions in which people live. Taking these conditions into the account facilitates the formulation of tools with which to evaluate policies. Conditions for the imaginary domain are examined more extensively in Chapter five.

With regard to the concept of freedom that is central to Cornell's thinking, I suggest that her incorporation of both negative and positive aspects into her idea of the imaginary domain is valid, but it does not get over the problems inherent in the right to an individual imaginary domain. Linda Martín Alcoff poses an interesting question:

I wonder what Cornell makes of the case of Brian Dalton, who was prosecuted for writing descriptions of the sexual torture of children for his own enjoyment. Aside from the question of whether Dalton should have been sentenced to prison, are we simply to counte-

nance his moral right to his own personality formation? (Alcoff 2004, 227)

This question is an interesting one: if no one is harmed, are people allowed absolute freedom in their expression of their imaginary domain? Freedom in this context could be considered in terms of what can be presented publicly or in a way that allows accidental access to any images or discourses²⁰. If, for example, nobody can accidentally come across violent, fictional stories, such stories do not interfere with other people's rights to their imaginary domain. Cornell uses the example of pornographic images as a case of material that could be zoned: it would be illegal to display pornographic images so that anyone could see them accidentally, thus sex shops would not display such images in their windows, although they could freely sell pornographic material to anyone going into the shop (Cornell 1995, 147-158). In terms of Alcoff's example, would it then be lawful for shops to sell fictional stories of children's sexual torture (i.e. no children are involved) to those who are interested in the subject, provided that nobody else could accidentally come across the material, and thus uphold their right to their imaginary domain?

Questions related to absolute freedom in the representation of the imaginary domain are also connected to the relationship between the individual imaginary domain, social imaginaries and the role of the state. Cornell does not analyse the question of social imaginaries, which is a deficiency in her theorising, but she does not overlook the role of other people in the construction of the self. As Susan James notes about Cornell's thought in relation to social imaginaries:

Although Cornell does not ignore the social imaginary – she acknowledges, for instance, that we are shaped by the world into which we are thrown and cannot be the original source of our own

²⁰ Cornell notes that there are images that devalue one's 'sex', which can challenge one's self-respect and present someone as unworthy of personhood. If one is forced to view these images, harm is created. (Cornell 1995, 147-148)

values – she refrains from much explicit discussion of its relation to the individual imaginary domain. (James 2002, 192)

The psychoanalytic narrative of the formation of the embodied personality, or ego, acknowledges that the personality is dependent on others. Cornell's extension in terms of understanding the state and the legal system as Others is significant in that it shows how these systems are meaningful for our subjectivity. In recognising the constitutive character of the state for the self, Cornell acknowledges the meaningfulness of what Susan James calls social imaginaries. Nevertheless, Cornell's focus is on the individual imaginary domain. Susan James argues that the significance of the imaginary domain in Cornell's theorising is not that it relies on symbols and images, but that it encompasses feelings and thoughts that are fundamental to a person's sense of self (ibid., 193):

These thoughts and feelings will be imaginary, sometimes in the everyday sense of knowingly representing what is not, sometimes in the more technical sense of unconsciously covering over fragmentation and lack. In either case, however, what qualifies them for entry into the imaginary domain is their subject matter. The question of how they arose and how they will be received (their relation to the social imaginary) thus becomes marginal to the project of specifying the character and content of the imaginary domain. (ibid.)

Cornell does not deny the meaning of social imaginaries. Symbols and images affect the formation of a person's self, but in Susan James' view, Cornell emphasises the imaginary domain as part of the project of personality formation, which directs attention to the individual, to the individual's right to an imaginary domain, to feelings and thoughts that are attached to socially mediated symbols and images.

An interesting twist to James' reading, however, lies in Cornell's evasion of normative political accounts while at the same time providing a tool with which to evaluate how the state protects the imaginary domain. Cornell evades normativity in insisting on freedom in terms of personality formation,

and protection from outside influence on one's identifications. At the same time, she also acknowledges the relevance of the conditions in which the personality is formed, making it possible to evaluate how social and political conditions enable the imaginary domain. Susan James argues that the implication in Cornell's thought is that the state cannot protect all kinds of representations of the sexuate being:

Hard choices have to be made, and the state will have to reach a view about where to exert itself, where to refrain from intervention and how to modify existing practices. These decisions need to be grounded, at least in part, on an examination of the social imaginary and its effects on subjectivity. If, as Cornell claims, any assessment by the state of the relative gravity of harms to the imaginary domain is a violation of the individual, it is difficult to see how the state can take on the obligations that amount to protecting the imaginary domain. (ibid., 192)

However, Cornell does not claim that all kinds of representations of the sexuate being must be protected by the state. In her evaluation of state action and policies her guiding principle is her very specific understanding of freedom and the freedom to create one's personality. State actions should therefore be evaluated against this principle: does a specific policy enhance or impede the formation of the personality, bearing in mind the degradation prohibition of the imaginary domain? Cornell's thought has its problems, but it does facilitate the evaluation of public policies and laws. This is a solid starting point in my construction of the notion of reproductive agency as an evaluative tool. Next, given my intention to evaluate how the environment for agency in procreative matters is enabled and disabled in the three policy documents under study, I consider Cornell's conceptions of agency.

2.6 Agency in Cornell's and Butler's thought

2.6.1 Cornell on agency

Drucilla Cornell does not explicitly give a great deal of attention to the concept of agency. She does use it in her essay 'Pragmatism, Recollective Imagination, and Transformative Legal Interpretations' (Cornell 1993, chapter 2), linking transformation, the construction of the self and agency, and outlining some of the themes she elaborates in her later work in connection with the imaginary domain. She remarks that there is no self-enclosed subject in that the self cannot cut herself off from the Other, and also notes that 'I' repeats itself through iterability. (Cornell 1993, 41) She did not introduce the notion of the imaginary domain until 1995 in her book *The Imaginary Domain*, but the above-mentioned article incorporates the idea of constantly becoming subjectivity, which is connected to agency. She writes:

What we think of as agency is precisely the engagement of the self with its own iterability, which is never just given but always confirmed or disconfirmed in the process of signing for oneself. It is the very process that allows us to underwrite a statement such as "I am Drucilla Cornell" again and again over time. (ibid.)

Signing for one's personality is linked to recollective imagination, which refers to acts through which the past assumes its meaning. The past does not have one true meaning, but it is created via recollective imagination, through which we interpret it and create meanings for it. Cornell continues:

Agency is this specific sense of possibility for an "I" that is both defined and recreated through recollective imagination. The recollection of oneself is always an act which imagines through the remembrance of its own claims of selfhood what can never be fully recollected, but only forever reimagined and re-told. The iterability of language allows us to regenerate ourselves through the continuing process of redefinition. (ibid., 42)

Cornell connects agency with the iterability of language and of the self, and the possibility is included in the continual processual nature of the self. Given that the self is not a set and unchanged entity, it is possible to change it through redefinition. There is also a close connection between the idea of agency and the concept of the imaginary domain. Although Cornell dismisses the totally autonomous subject as an impossibility, her contention that people should be the source of ideas about their own personality gives space for agency in that people have the opportunity to re-think and re-work their ideas about themselves and how they present themselves to the world. Cornell writes in relation to the imaginary domain: 'By demanding an imaginary domain, we are insisting that we will not be confined in our life's opportunities because of the imposition of physical, cultural and legal definitions of ourselves as unworthy of personhood' (Cornell 1995: 232). She refers to a politically free person as 'individuated enough to represent herself as the source of evaluation of her life plans to make her claim upon society without appealing to her social position or her duties to society' (Cornell 1998: 21).

A significant aspect of reproductive agency is the embodied being, which is connected to the question of materiality. At this point I will expand my examination by bringing in Judith Butler's views on gender performativity, and especially her thought on the relationship between materiality and language. Although Butler's thought conflicts with Cornell's thinking in certain aspects, her ideas complement Cornell's view of the imaginary domain in taking into account the process of materialisation. Butler also sheds light on some of the problems related to Cornell's views on the relationship between social imaginaries and the individual imaginary domain. As Gill Jagger notes, Butler's notion of performativity and her Foucauldian reading of the psyche as a product of social regulation avoid the tendency to privilege the psyche over the social (Jagger 2008, 100). She thus offers complementary viewpoints to my reading of Cornell.

2.6.2 Butler, performativity and the relationship between materiality, language and agency

It is worth re-stating Judith Butler's idea that gender is performatively produced, i.e. produced by doing:

In this sense, gender is always doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed. ... There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results. (Butler 1999: 33)

The doing is done with or for other, although the other may be imaginary; 'the terms that make up one's own gender are, from the start, outside oneself, beyond oneself in a sociality that has no single author' (Butler 2004, 1). The subject, 'I' is constituted by norms, but at the same time one also tries to maintain a critical and transformative relations to norms (ibid., 3). As Gill Jagger points out, according to Butler, social power and regulation are in operation in the formation of the psyche, but the subjection also allows for the possibility of resistance (Jagger 2008, 90). Butler's intention in bringing up the constituted nature of the subject is not to deny its existence, but to interrogate its construction as pre-given or foundational (Butler 1995, 42).

Related to the question of subjectivity is the question of bodies and materiality. Butler notes that her intention is not to presume materiality or to negate it, but to problematise the question. Language is not opposed to materiality, but neither can materiality be summarily collapsed into an identity with language. Language both is and refers to that which is material, and what is material never fully escapes from the process by which it is signified. (Butler 1993, 30, 68) In saying that language both is and refers to materiality, Butler is recalling the materiality of the sign, but she is also suggesting that language is not all there is. Language refers to materiality, which means that materiality is neither just a set of signifiers nor just an effect of language. Nevertheless, she does think

that materiality is bound up with signification from the start, and it is difficult to think through the inseparable intertwining of language and materiality:

To posit by way of language a materiality outside of language is still to posit that materiality, and the materiality so posited will retain that positing as its constitutive condition. (ibid., 30)

In her discourse on materiality²¹, Butler is also talking about bodies:

The body posited as prior to the sign, is always *posited* or *signified* as *prior*. This signification produces as an *effect* of its own procedure the very body that it nevertheless and simultaneously claims to discover as that which *precedes* its own action. If the body signified as prior to signification is an effect of signification, then the mimetic or representational status of language, which claims that sign follows bodies as their necessary mirror, is not mimetic at all. On the contrary, it is productive, constitutive, one might even argue *performative*, inasmuch as this signifying act delimits and contours the body that it then claims to find prior to any and all significations. (ibid., 30, emphasis in the original)

Butler does not deny its existence, but she does claim that we do not have access to materiality, including the body, outside of language. With regard to the body, I read this to mean that the materiality of our bodies is not self-evident or 'natural' in the sense that how we understand our bodies could be

²¹ Karen Barad finds limitations in Butler's theorisation about the relationship of matter, discourse and materialisation. Barad is in agreement with Butler to a great extent, but thinks that she does not go far enough in that she ultimately retains the idea of matter as a passive product of discursive practices rather than understanding it as an active agent. In addition, Butler's account of materialisation concerns the construction of human bodies, whereas Barad's posthumanist understanding, which she calls 'agential realism', aims to move beyond the anthropocentric view. As Barad sees it, 'matter is substance in its intra-active becoming – not a thing but doing, a congealing of agency'. She maintains that matter refers to ongoing materialisation, and she is not only referring to human bodies, but to all kinds of bodies. (Barad 2007, 151-152) Barad is a theoretical physicist. She bases her account of agential realism – with a rich theoretical elaboration I cannot examine more closely here – on Niels Bohr's philosophy-physics, which combines in interesting ways both philosophy and physics.

simply or straightforwardly said to derive from their material nature. The materiality of personality, the embodied being and how we understand the body, its contours and characteristics is a process of materialisation. Butler's views on materialisation should be separated from the idea of cultural inscription, however. According to Karen Barad, Butler does not refer to the surface of the body, but rather discusses the process of materialisation that produces our understanding of matter, its boundaries, fixity and surface (Barad 2007, 63-64). Materialisation is not just a question of culture affecting – inscribing – how people look on the outside or the surface of their bodies. Inherent in the term inscribing is the notion that underneath cultural inscriptions is a natural or biological body that is not dependent on culture. However, our cultural understandings about biology and nature are also dependent on language, not in the sense that language creates them or that the material is only language, but in the sense that we cannot access materiality without language.

Butler's conceptions of gender performativity and the constituted nature of the subject lead to a specific kind of understanding of agency. As she notes, one is tempted to think that one needs to assume the subject in advance so as to safeguard its agency, but she maintains that its constituted character is actually a precondition for agency. She writes: 'For what is it that enables a purposive and significant reconfiguration of cultural and political relations, if not a relation that can be turned against itself, reworked and resisted?' (Butler 1995, 46) The performativity, the iterability in the subject formation enables agency; cultural and political relations can change, be reconfigured exactly because they can be repeated differently. Butler also emphasises the fact that agency is a political prerogative (*ibid.*, 46-47), and cannot be thought of as a self-evident capacity that the subject holds. As Tuija Pulkkinen notes, the agent is constructed within a continuous, never completed process and as an effect of certain powers operating in a specific context (Pulkkinen 2000, 189). Butler considers it important to question the conditions in which agency is possible, and not to take it for granted:

We need instead to ask, what possibilities of mobilization are produced on the basis of existing configurations of discourse and

power? Where are the possibilities of reworking that very matrix of power by which we are constituted, of reconstituting the legacy of that constitution, and of working against each other those processes of regulation that can destabilize existing power regimes? (Butler 1995, 47)

Butler's way of thinking about agency also bypasses the determinism-voluntarism dichotomy. The focus of performativity is not on the question of choosing your identity or being determined by the environment, but on the powers conditioning the construction of the self (Pulkkinen 2000, 172). As Moya Lloyd notes, Butler sees agency

as an effect of the operations of power/discourse and thus as phenomenon that cannot be separated from contexts. This necessarily means that politics, as she understands it, is also related to context. This is why her politics is immanent politics of subversion. (Lloyd 2007, 76)

Contextuality of agency and politics are also questions that I keep in mind in my redescriptions of the three selected policy documents. With regard to reproductive agency, there is no subject that is expected to 'own' or to have agency as a distinct thing, and the idea is rather that agency and its possibilities and limits are produced in discourses that also affect personality formation. Still, people are not understood to be powerless or without agency, which is a shifting possibility tied to location and history. As Butler notes, the subject is produced time and again, and the subject is the permanent possibility of certain resignifying processes, which get distracted and stalled, but which also may be reworked (Butler 1995, 47).

Before moving on to the notion of reproductive agency I will consider some interpretations of Butler's thinking about agency and, in order to sharpen my focus, examine how she and Cornell converge and how they differ in this respect. I do not intend to rehash in detail the claims that Butler does away with the subject, or that the subject becomes just an effect of the discourse (see

e.g., Benhabib 1995, Dow Magnus 2006, 83-86). I prefer, instead, to examine aspects that highlight the similarities and differences in Butler and Cornell and thereby elaborate the concept of agency.

As Moya Lloyd notes, Judith Butler's ideas about agency have been interpreted as both supporting a voluntaristic understanding and denying agency altogether through the inclusion of determinism, according to which the subject is the product of discourse and has no potential for autonomous action (Lloyd 2007, 49). Emphasising the process of iterability or, for example, understanding gender as performance (as opposed to performative) allows interpretation of Butler's views as voluntaristic, and of gender as something that one is freely able to iterate or perform differently. There are different degrees of voluntarism, but someone who reads Butler as having an active notion of agency is Elena Loizidou (Loizidou 2007). She notes:

Her [Butler's] interventions introduced a refreshing perspective in feminist thought. Women were not any more to be viewed as passive, repressed by power and waiting for the regime of power to alter, recognise and 'represent' them in order to be able to transform their conditions of livability. But as subjects embedded in power, or to be more precise, as subjects being formed by power and language, it meant that women could resist the conditions of their formation. Her outlook presents us with an un-static and active relation to our lives (and its constitutive forms: power and language). (Loizidou 2007, 4)

Loizidou also notes that Butler's treatment of ethics, law, and politics is related to the question: 'How can we have more livable and viable lives?' (ibid., 6) She reads Butler in a way that allows active agency, and enables people evaluating and attempting to direct their lives to be more livable, to change discourses and constituent powers.

Conversely, Butler's views of subjection and the inseparability of the self and the discourses could be read as a deterministic account of the subject. One of the most well known interpretations of Butler as denying the possibility

of agency is Seyla Behabib's, who by concentrating on the role of the language in Butler's account interprets her thinking on gender performativity as something that ultimately denies agency, noting that no speech-act theory of gender performativity can provide an account of gender formation that would sufficiently explain the capacity for agency (Behabib 1995, 110). Behabib continues:

The theory of performativity, even if Butler would like to distinguish gender-constitution from identity-constitution, still presupposes a remarkably deterministic view of individuation and socialization processes which falls short of the currently available social-scientific reflections on the subject. The viability of some form of human agency, however, is crucial to make empirical sense of processes of psycho-sexual development and maturation. (ibid.)

It is not my intention to go into all the argumentation about different readings of how agency could be interpreted in Butler, but as these conflicting interpretations show, her work is multifaceted with regard to the question of agency. According to Moya Lloyd, Butler develops 'a non-voluntarist account of agency' (Lloyd 2007, 49). Butler's thought on gender performativity and iterability implies the possibility of change, but because one is not able to control social aspects of language, it is not possible to direct the transformations in a voluntaristic way. At one point in her theorisation of non-voluntarist agency Butler addresses problems of resistance related to Foucauldian and Lacanian versions of subject formation (Jagger 2008, 89-90, Disch 1999, 552-553). The problem with theorisation about productive power is that the subject is not able to resist the effects of power, and disciplinary power works unilaterally on the subject. Psychoanalytic theory, in turn, concentrates on the psychic and fails to theorise on political resistance. (Disch 1999, 553-554) Thus Butler aims to theorise agency in a way that would overcome the dichotomy of determinism and voluntarism related to Foucauldian and Lacanian theory. One consequence of this aim is some indeterminacy in thinking, and this is one of the criticisms levelled at both Cornell and Butler.

I have already mentioned Lois McNay's criticism of indeterminacy in Cornell's thought. She makes the same claim of 'structural indeterminacy' with regard to Judith Butler. In Butler's case, however, it refers to her

account of the performative construction of identity [that] lacks an anticipatory or hermeneutic dimension that can explain the active dimensions of subject formation and how the inculcation of norms is always partially transcended in the process of the living through of those norms. (McNay 2003, 143)

According to McNay, agency for Butler is more a quality of structures than of subjects (*ibid.*), whereas Cornell's problems with indeterminacy are connected to her understanding of temporality and the future. Moreover, Cornell's notion of the future anterior – a future based on a past that cannot be fully recollected and that creates a future not fully determined by the actualised past – 'remains an abstract possibility that does not lend itself to a thoroughgoing socio-historical understanding of change' (*ibid.*, 145). McNay continues:

In Cornell, the category of indeterminacy stands in for an analysis of the ways in which power relations shape and deform the experience of hope. Thus, Cornell disregards the difficult question of how such an abstractly formulated feminist ethics relates to the realities of women's oppression, expressed as thwarted expectations and diminished hopes. (*ibid.*)

McNay's criticism of both Butler and Cornell is that their theories are too abstract to be helpful in analyses of historical situations, and especially of power relations.

McNay's reading of Butler relies on the idea that her account of change and agency is based only on linguistic and symbolic practices, but as discussed above, the self in Butler's thought is embodied and thus material. Moreover, McNay does not agree that, for Butler, identity is doing. Understanding identity as doing has analytical potential in terms of how identity is done and in

what kind of conditions, but it also shows that McNay's reading of Butler's account is beside the point. According to McNay, Butler's thinking implies that agency is a quality of structures rather than subjects, but as Karen Barad notes, Butler rejects the binary of agency/structure altogether (Barad 2007, 62). In line with Foucault's thinking about 'the historical conditions that call forth certain kinds of subjectivity' (ibid.), Butler's idea of performativity implies that identity is not a singular act by an autonomous subject, but a doing 'in which subjects are called into social being from diffuse social quarters' (Butler 1997, 160).

With regard to Cornell, I argued earlier that she pays little attention to social imaginaries, and is more interested in the individual imaginary domain. This does not mean that she is not inclined to examine changes in historical situations, and in certain respects on the question of agency she comes close to Butler's views on reiterability and change. Cornell acknowledges that the self is socially constituted and other-dependent. She also sees the personality as a process, something that has to be done again and again, and this also includes possibilities for transformation. Nevertheless, despite her agreement with Butler on many points, her strong commitment to the ideals of equal value and everyone's freedom to form their personalities is also a point of departure with regard to their views on agency. Although there are some elements in Butler's thought that engage with the notion of freedom, she does not focus on questions such as what freedom means or freedom as the purpose of political theory (Lloyd 2007, 133). Cornell, however, considers the notion of freedom important: predefined values and meanings of life should not be imposed on people, who should have the freedom to work out these things for themselves. It is important to remember that this freedom is ideal. I read Cornell's emphasis on freedom to mean that people should be treated as if they were free, although this can never be realised. With regard to agency this means that acting as if one were free may or may not effect changes, but at least it makes change possible when people reiterate differently.

I argue that Cornell does not claim that one is able to fully determine the direction of change, or foresee the effects of one's actions, and in this regard she and Butler are in agreement. However, Cornell concentrates on an individual's potential for personality formation, although as will become clear in

this study, this has political and social connections and significance. Butler, on the other hand, focuses on the constitution of identity and the workings of power. As Gill Jagger notes:

Agency, then, becomes a matter of reworking injurious interpellations, of unsettling passionate attachments to subjection. Its roots are not to be found in the structure of the subject and autonomous actions, which this view of power exposes as an illusion (...), but in the workings of power in the simultaneous productions of subjects and subjection. They are to be found in the combined operations of social power and psychic regulation and in the possibility of resistance and resignification. (Jagger 2008, 104)

In this regard I focus on other aspects of Cornell's thinking. She concentrates on an individual's potential for personal change, but as I have pointed out, her theorising also offers interesting insights into the formation of the personality and its connections with its social and political environment. I do not wish to exacerbate the differences between Cornell and Butler because there are also points of convergence, but in the context of this study, the most significant difference is that Cornell considers agency more of an individual activity, related to the imaginary domain and the formation of the personality, whereas for Butler it is attached to the discursive context and the operation of subjection and power. Cornell is also strongly committed to the ideal of equal value and indeterminacy is an important element in thinking in terms of not claiming to know in advance what is good for people and allowing them to find out for themselves. It is also worth noting that indeterminacy is an element in the ideal. According to Cornell, we should aim for freedom and the imaginary domain, even though their meanings change over time and they cannot be defined once and for all.

2.7 Reproductive agency

In this chapter so far I have developed the groundwork for exploring the notion of reproductive agency. My understanding of the concept is very specific, drawing on Drucilla Cornell's concepts of the imaginary domain and bodily integrity. The term 'reproductive agency' has also been used in a more general sense in contexts in which women's reproductive decisions are discussed. Therefore, before outlining my own interpretation, I will make some more general observations.

The notion of reproductive agency is often used in discussions about women's rights and their ability to decide about procreation, whether and when to have children. It is thus linked to the history of fertility control among women, and the process of gaining the rights and having the option to decide and control their reproductive capacities. The history of fertility control is complex, and although the turning point is often dated to the time when women were seen to achieve control of their bodies with the invention of oral contraceptives, and to the advent of legalised abortion in the 1960s and 1970s, the history of attempted influence on overall levels of national fertility is a long one. As Angus McLaren notes, the regulation of reproduction is not a straightforward story of development from subjection to freedom, and cultural, social, economic, medical and other aspects intertwine in how fertility has been viewed through the ages (McLaren 1990, 1-11). Regulation has public and private aspects, and operates on different levels. Attempts to influence the birth rate involve not only public policies and politics, but also very intimate and personal individual decisions. As fertility becomes a social issue, such decisions concerning reproduction become a matter for public concern.

Fertility has always been subject to control in one form or another. The mode of control has varied: sometimes the aim is to increase, and at other times to curb population growth. The 19th century witnessed a significant change in population development as birth rates dropped significantly at the same time as death rates decreased. It is significant that this drop in birth rates happened before the advent of effective contraceptive measures. (ibid.) The development of the modern contraceptive is often considered decisive in population development, although the control of reproduction is not only about the

effective prevention of pregnancy. Women's reproductive agency is usually understood in historical studies simply as their ability to control their reproduction. As I see it, however, it is not limited to the control of reproductive capacities, but more comprehensively covers procreation as a part of personality formation.

Although it is not the purpose of this study to chart how women's reproductive agency has been understood or constructed historically, I do deal with issues that are connected to historical debates on reproductive agency and fertility control, and address questions of how procreation is understood politically and socially. It is a widely held view that women's reproductive agency has increased with the invention of modern contraceptives and reproductive technologies. This is understandable, and in many ways reflects what has happened. However, at the same time medical and cultural pressures related to procreation have also strengthened, and the increase in reproductive freedom is not as clear as it may seem at the first sight. McLaren mentions as an example that over 20 per cent of white women in the US were childless at the age of forty in the 1920s, but by the 1980s the figure was down to 10 per cent (*ibid.*, 260-261). He continues:

It may be no longer be expected that a woman will have large number of children, but an enormous amount of normative pressure is exerted by governments, churches and the popular culture on women to 'fulfil' themselves by having at least one child. (*ibid.*, 261)

My study examines some of these normative pressures that are exerted on women by politics and policies that aim to affect reproductive decisions. My viewpoint on reproductive agency is limited to the decisions concerning whether to have children or not, but such decisions connect the political and individual level; people's personal choices are considered to be of political concern. The decision to procreate, of course, has different aspects, and is influenced by matters to do with care, the family, motherhood, fatherhood and custody arrangements. I address various questions related to such decisions, but the specific focal point of my examination is the connection between personal decisions and

political concerns. The decision to reproduce is a central area in population-policy thinking, and on the individual level it is at the heart of the personality-formation process. Whether or not to have children is also a marker that divides women, and has been used as a way to degrade some groups. It is therefore not merely a question of the political significance of women reproducing, but also concerns the refusal to procreate. My aim is thus to offer tools that facilitate examination of the whole variety of reproductive decisions and the connections to politics and policies that target reproductive agency.

My formulation of reproductive agency is based on the idea of the imaginary domain. As Cornell puts it, the imaginary domain is needed for the individual to freely form her personality, to constantly think through who she is and who she wants to become, and thus to become a full member of the moral community and act as a responsible citizen. Personality is embodied, and bodily integrity is an aspect of the imaginary unity of the self. The personality is formed performatively in identificatory processes. Performativity means that there is no absolute difference between the self and the discourses, practices and norms that produce and condition one's being. The notion that the self cannot be totally separated from discourses and practices also enables agency, in that it is possible to reiterate discourses and norms differently and thus propel transformations.

Agency implies the possibility to repeat or reiterate identities differently and thus also to produce changes in the conditions that construct one's subjectivity, even though the effects of the reiterative process cannot be known beforehand. Although it is possible to focus on Butler's emphasis on workings of power and subjection, her relevance to this study lies in her notion of gender performativity. The conception of gender as doing, as something that needs to be reiterated and repeated, is a basic premise for my notion of agency. The idea of the unfinished nature of personality is also significant for me in Cornell's thought. Her account of the imaginary domain and bodily integrity is read as an account of how she sees the construction of subjectivity and what she considers essential in it. The imaginary domain is considered a place in which to rethink identity, a space for the creation and recreation of the self and the norms that condition us all. A significant aspect of this is its connection with politics, the

law and other social arrangements. The relevance of the imaginary domain to my redescriptive work is in how it can be employed as a diagnostic tool in studying political and social arrangements and policies. It is possible to question whether a certain policy enhances or inhibits the free formation of the personality, and whether the imaginary domain needed for this process is secured.

How, then, do I formulate the concept of reproductive agency? In my view it incorporates the idea that it should be possible to re-configure and live differently the hegemonic forms of reproduction. Procreation is an important part of being an embodied human being. Although medical science has progressed so far as to blur reproductive roles with regard to biological parenthood, the connection between women and pregnancy is still very tight. Women have traditionally suffered because of the assumption of their role in the reproductive process as the primary carer. I examine reproduction from a perspective that questions the traditional settings of procreation in terms of parenthood, sex and gender. I would like to reiterate Cornell's words, which still describe the situation in Finland in many cases: women's reproductive capacity is frequently seen as the real difference that explains or justifies women's inequality in employment, for example (Cornell 1998, 66). She writes: 'That a pregnant woman is a *person* remains an incongruous if not a preposterous idea in the public imagination: how can anyone claim pregnant women to be the same as men when they are so obviously different?' (ibid.) Her point is that pregnancy does not and cannot take away a woman's standing as a person. She continues:

[T]he demand is that our reproductive capacity not be allowed to deny our claim to be a person. Although pregnant, we, like men and women who are not pregnant, remain the only legitimate moral source of our life's direction. (ibid., 67)

Cornell's point is that the potential to become pregnant does not take away a person's right to the imaginary domain, or the right to define life goals and values, including the meanings and values connected to procreation and parenthood. Then again, motherhood is not something that should define being a woman. One should be able to decide about reproduction, including re-

fusing to procreate, without the decision being valued as a bad choice. Cornell uses the term 'degrade', meaning downgrading someone because of how she has chosen to live her life (ibid., 60). If one is free to decide about procreation one should not be degraded because of one's choice to procreate or not to procreate, or because of how one has decided to arrange parenthood. Parenthood and procreation are just some areas in which people should be the source of their own life goals, values and meanings. Reproductive decisions fundamentally affect how people understand and process their selves, and politics and policies that target or aim to influence reproductive agency in one way or another are very relevant to freedom.

Cornell understands the concept of the imaginary domain as largely connected to individual personality formation, but it should also be borne in mind how, together with the notion of reproductive agency, it is also connected to politics and change. When there are opportunities to live differently, to reiterate the discourses that define femininity and masculinity and how to 'do your gender', there are also opportunities for change. Performativity enables change. I redescribe political discussions, and my redescrptions not only offer a clearer picture of the current situation, but also open our minds to different kinds of views, possibilities for living differently. The concept of reproductive agency, drawing from the notion of the imaginary domain, emphasises freedom from oppression with regard to reproduction, thereby creating conditions that enable people to decide as freely as possible about procreation. Such freedom is naturally an ideal. One can never be free in the liberal sense of the word, and is always influenced by the existing society and culture. The ideal of reproductive agency, in the form of being able to re-configure and live differently the hegemonic modes of reproduction and the family, can, however, be used as a tool with which to evaluate policy proposals.

Given that I have developed my notion of reproductive agency in the context of Drucilla Cornell's thinking, I reiterate her view that there should be no state-imposed sexual choices or reinforcement of a rigid gender identity. States should not, for example, force women to play the role of primary carer in families (Cornell 1998, xi). Cornell describes her own approach as two-fold:

[F]irst, we must demand inclusion in the moral community of persons as a matter of right and demand that, as persons, we be given equal and maximum liberty to determine our sexual lives, including what meaning to give to our reproductive capacity; second, as recognized persons we must demand a scope of rights, resources, and capabilities consistent with our treatment as equals. (ibid., 67)

Cornell's basic principle involves securing the right not only to the imaginary domain, and the freedom to determine one's life and its goals and values, but also to the necessary resources and capabilities. Thus the imaginary domain and reproductive agency offer a perspective on concrete policies – which are part of the symbolic, cultural and political environment in which people live – in terms of evaluating how well they comply with this demand. I therefore assess the concrete policies or policy proposals against the ideal of reproductive agency.

3 The policy documents described

3.1 Introduction

The aim in this chapter is to introduce and contextualise the three population-policy documents I redescribe later on. I introduce the documents in their entirety here, and focus on specific themes in later chapters. The selected documents deal with the declining birth rate and the need for a Finnish population policy for the 21st century. Of course, reproductive agency in itself is not an explicit aim or subject of discussion and policy in the documents, but the texts are examples of proposed politics and policies that target people's reproductive behaviour and decisions. The proposals therefore include and elaborate on notions of reproduction and reproductive agency.

I should point out that this study is not a policy analysis of Finnish population policies. It is not my aim to examine the kind of policies adopted in Finland, how they have developed, how they are implemented or what their effects are. I rather see population policies as a subject or theme of political discourse. My intention is to reveal and to analyse through redescription the frequently implicit values and meanings that are advocated through and reflected in the policy proposals.

It is also worth noting that reproductive agency is understood here as something that the discourses, as one element, construct; it is not something that one has or does not have. As a notion it is rather used as a tool for examining the possibilities and potential inherent in the documents for more or less freedom in the process of procreative personality development. The discourses analysed in this study are just one element in the process through which people decide about their reproduction. They do not force people to act in a particular way, but they do contribute to the environment in which personality formation takes place. Conversely, the policy documents were not produced in isolation, but were influenced by existing views about reproductive agency.

My redescription focuses on three texts from three different sources that present clear policy proposals to counteract the problem of the declining birth rate. The texts are: 1) the Governmental report on the population problem

called 'Finland for people of all ages: Government report on the future: demographic trends, population policy, and preparation for changes in the age structure' (GOV); 2) the Population Policy Program of the Family Federation (FF); and 3) the report on the population question contracted by the Business and Policy Forum EVA and written by Tapio Wallenius, entitled *Tuomitut vähenemään: Suomalaiset ja lisääntymisen vaikea taito* (in English 'Condemned to diminish: Finns and the difficult art of procreation'; EVA). The texts represent three very different kinds of interests and agendas, and I introduce them in more detail later in this chapter. I do not examine the production processes, although I provide background information about the organisations that published the documents and discuss briefly why they were written. The texts are similar in the sense that they are all in the public domain and are ostensibly aimed, at least partly, at the general public and people interested in population issues. EVA and FF could also be seen as lobbying material aimed at the Government and Parliament. In this sense they differ from the Governmental document, which is an expression of goals or aims that the coalition Government were able to agree on.

Although the analysis of general population-policy discourse is not the main aim in this dissertation, it is worth recalling the notion of the materiality of discourses. In this case it means that the discussion on the need for a Finnish population policy has concrete and material consequences, which are not, however, total or deterministic. The discourses, and even the proposals that are not implemented in the eventual policies, iterate and re-iterate and thus produce conditions and the environment for ways of living, and simultaneously reflect existing views. Thus the documents have a double role: they affect the circumstances in which people form their personality, and they reflect the circumstances in which they were created. They create elements of and possibilities for living, and also contribute to the creation of the imaginary domain. They may express some deeply held values and views of Finnish society that affect the imaginary domain and its formation, or they may introduce new perspectives that either enhance or impede free personality formation. My intention here is to examine how the three policy texts enhance or restrict the potential for reproductive agency, and to identify the potential inherent in them, but I do not

go into how this is realised in people's lives. The three documents deal with various issues from immigration to regional politics and the reform of the pension system, and I have no intention of tackling them all. For my purposes, the relevant questions in the documents are: 'Why are Finns not having more children?' and 'What can be done about it?'

I use the language that is used in the documents in the following general descriptions of the selected policy documents, which means that at this point there is no questioning or analysing of how the texts express issues related to reproductive agency. Although my purpose is to shed light on how texts that seem politically neutral can put forward strong viewpoints on gender and procreation I save this for later, and merely summarise the documents here. First, however, I will briefly contextualise the Finnish debate on the population and the birth rate.

3.2 Background

3.2.1 On the history of Finnish population policies

Finland gained its independence as a nation state in 1917, but the debate about the specifically Finnish population was already underway in the 19th century. The population was on the increase throughout the century, but when the birth rate dropped dramatically in around 1910 the issue became a topic of public discussion. Although there was some newspaper coverage of the population problem in the 1920s (Lindgren 1976, 18), public concern and more extensive discussion did not surface until the early 1930s (Pitkänen 1988, 63-63). The Winter War in 1939-1940 acted as an additional impetus provoking debate on population policy, and the slow growth of the population was considered a problem that should be addressed on the policy level (Simonen 1991, 50). The late 1930s and 1940s witnessed the emergence of new and renewed family, maternity and child policies, which also included pronatalistic aims. With the baby boom that followed the Second World War the birth rate jumped, and worries about the declining birth rate subsided, although the national population remained an interest in some quarters of society. One institution that retained an interest in

the population question was the Family Federation²², which was established in 1941, and one of the reasons for its foundation was the worry about the declining birth rate (Väestöliitto 2010a).

Interest in population issues revived in the late 1960s and the 1970s. The Finnish birth rate was very low in the early 1970s and this, combined with active immigration to Sweden, caused concern in the Family Federation and among others interested in demography. (Strömmer 1991, 46-37) Jouko Hulkko, who was the executive manager of the Family Federation at the time, wrote in 1973 that Finland did not have population policies aimed at balanced development and renewal, and demanded a social policy that would take into account the population policy (Hulkko 1973, 125-126). Of more relevance is the fact that the 1970s was the decade when a pronatalistic population policy transformed into a family policy that no longer included strong elements aimed at raising the birth rate. The new family policies were more clearly part of the development of the welfare state, which aimed at universal services and equality. (Nätkin 2002, 181) Leena Suominen's study of the family-policy proposals in the Finnish parliament from 1934 to 1973 mostly confirms this view. Family policies in the 1930s and 1940s in particular were more strongly connected to the population policy – such as raising the birth rate – than the policies introduced in the 1970s. A further significant stated motive, according to Suominen's study, was social in terms of equalising the differences in standards of living. (Suominen 1976) It is notable that the global question of overpopulation, which re-emerged and was strongly debated in the 1970s, was also discussed in Finland, but the overpopulation problem was not connected to questions related to the Finnish population (see e.g., Strömmer 1991, 47-48).

Population issues lost some of their urgency in Finland in the 1980s. Family policies were developed further, including the introduction of parental and paternity leave, alongside the existing maternity leave. The argumentation for these policies was not usually based on the population issue,

²² In Finnish, the Family Federation is called Väestöliitto, which means The Population Federation. The Federation, however, uses in its English material (see for example Väestöliitto 2009) the name Family Federation, which I also adopt. The Federation had a semi-public role in the formation and implementation of Finnish family and population policies until the 1970s, and has always had close contacts with the Government and the state.

however. As an example of the lack of attention to the population perspective, the Ministry for Health and Social Affairs drew up a long-term plan in 1982 in which the stated aim of the family policy was to improve the situation of children and families. There would be beneficial effects in other areas such as population, economics and labour, but population growth was not the focus. (Hulkko 1985, 30) The Family Federation nonetheless continuously maintained its interest in population issues, and published policy programmes and research on related matters. For example, its Population Policy Programme published in 1987 stated that it was possible to change the direction of population development as long as there was a policy programme and enough money to implement it (Ollila 1994, 88). The best option would be to raise the birth rate to the replacement level, and to improve the circumstances for having children (ibid., 89).

There were some discussions on issues related to the population in the 1980s and 1990s, although not in the Governmental sphere. For example, there were worries about labour shortages during the period of strong economic growth in the 1980s, but these worries subsided during the 1990s with the onset of the economic depression and the very high unemployment rates (Valkonen 2006, 5). The term 'population policy' was re-introduced into Governmental discourse in 2004 in connection with the publication of the Government report on the future (GOV). Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen noted in his opening speech during the parliamentary discussion on the report that Finland had not had a population policy for a long time (Eduskunta 2004). The Family Federation also published its Population Policy Programme (FF) in 2004, and the Finnish Business and Policy Forum EVA had published its report on the population a year earlier in 2003 (EVA). Matti Vanhanen also attracted public attention in 2003 when he demanded an active population policy in a newspaper column and in a radio interview (see e.g., Vanhanen 2003).

3.2.2 The debate on the declining birth rate and the need for a population policy in the 21st century

The starting point of the 21st-century interest in population matters pre-dates Vanhanen's statement in 2003. Two years previously, in 2001, Parliament had

discussed a consultation paper drawn up by the Committee for the Future²³ (*tulevaisuusvaliokunta* in Finnish) suggesting that the Finnish Government should provide Parliament with a review of demographic questions. The majority of parliamentarians taking part in the discussion agreed that the review was needed. As the leading Finnish newspaper Helsingin Sanomat²⁴ reported, 'Parliament acknowledges the low birth rate' (Helsingin Sanomat 2001a). In connection with this news story the paper also published a feature of the '3+ Team', a group of people advocating family policies, especially for families with three or more children. The article is entitled 'Motoring and housing costs dampen the desire to have children' (Helsingin Sanomat 2001b), and reflects the concern about the low birth rate. The decision to provide Parliament with a review of the population question led to the publication of the GOV report in 2004.

The discussion on the low birth rate in 2002 was sporadic, with some debate on the reasons for it and the late age of having children in connection with the publication of the Government report on child policy (see e.g., Helsingin Sanomat 2002). The discussion became livelier in 2003 when Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen stated in a radio interview that Finland should introduce a population policy. One of the most frequently quoted statements in the interview was, '*Emme voi vain ukkontua ja akkaantua täällä*', which loosely translated means, 'We [Finns] can't turn into granddads and grannies just like that' (Helsingin Sanomat 2003). Shortly afterwards Vanhanen re-iterated the need for an active population policy in a newspaper column, writing that such a policy should examine in depth the reasons for the low numbers of children. He also hinted that he would be proposing that this would be one of the main themes in the forthcoming Governmental report on the future. (Vanhanen 2003)

The Prime Minister's demands for a population policy were not the only public statements in 2003 dealing with population issues and the declining birth rate. The first of the three policy documents I examine was published in 2003. EVA, the Finnish Business and Policy Forum, published its population

²³ The Committee for the Future is a Parliamentary committee concentrating on issues related to the future that could affect Finland in the long term.

²⁴ Helsingin Sanomat is by far the largest newspaper in Finland, and its influence on the Finnish media is significant.

report in early September, making a point of emphasising values and attitudes rather than financial incentives (EVA). The Family Federation published its Population Policy Programme, the second of my policy documents, in June 2004. I examine this document in detail later, but Helsingin Sanomat reported its main message as being that Finns should have more children. In addition to addressing the usual questions to do with increasing the numbers of children, lowering the age of first births and the aging population, the newspaper also emphasised the need to increase the numbers of immigrants in order to ease the population problem. (Helsingin Sanomat 2004a, Helsingin Sanomat 2004b)

The year 2004 also saw the publication of the third of my policy documents, the Governmental report on the future, which was published in November. Before its publication and the subsequent parliamentary discussion about it, Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen had paved the way by speaking and writing about population policy (e.g., Vanhanen 2004a, 2004b). When 'Finland for people of all ages' was published and was discussed in Parliament, Helsingin Sanomat pointed out that Matti Vanhanen was once again demanding a population policy (Helsingin Sanomat 2004c). One editorial noted that the report was cautious in its social-policy proposals, but that it did bring up questions about immigration and the situation of young women in the current job market (Helsingin Sanomat 2004d).

The documents I redescribe were published in the years 2003-2004. There has been some publicity and media coverage regarding the falling birth rate since then. For example, in 2005 Helsingin Sanomat published an article about young people's willingness to have children in which a doctor working at the student health-care services suggested that young women dealing with conflicting expectations related to studying and their own biology were vulnerable to depression, and she urged students to have children earlier (Helsingin Sanomat 2005). Just a few weeks previously there had been a column devoted to the birth rate, and a discussion in the Letters-to-the-Editor section. The population and the birth rate also recurred as themes in a series of articles published in Helsingin Sanomat in January 2007 under the general headline 'Childless Finland?' Examples of the articles include, 'A lack of money destroys dreams of a third child' (Helsingin Sanomat 2007a) and 'Researchers

demand that mothers should work, as well' (Helsingin Sanomat 2007b). As these examples show, the birth rate and population policy was regularly under public discussion in the first decade of the 21st century in Finland, especially following the Prime Minister's remarks in 2003.

In the following sections of this chapter I examine more closely the three reports that I picked out from the discussion described above. Although these three policy documents are not meant to be representative of the entire discussion, in my view they cover relevant aspects of the Finnish population-policy discourse of the 21st century. Having been produced by three organisations with different interests and points of view, they provide various takes on the issues to be redescribed from the perspective of reproductive agency, and as such are also indicative of the more general issues covered in the discourse. I examine the reports in their order of publication: the EVA Business and Policy Forum report published in 2003, The Population Policy Programme of the Family Federation published in June 2004, and the Government report on the future published in November 2004.

3.3 Policy document 1: Condemned to Diminish? – Finns and the Difficult Art of Procreation (EVA)

'Condemned to Diminish? – Finns and the Difficult Art of Procreation' (in Finnish "*Tuomitut vähenemään? – Suomalaiset ja lisääntymisen vaikea taito*") was commissioned by the Business and Policy Forum EVA. EVA is an acronym for the Finnish name *Elinkeinoelämän valtuuskunta*, which loosely translated means Committee for Business Life. EVA describes itself on its website as 'a policy and pro-market think-tank financed by the Finnish business community' and as 'a discussion forum and networking arena for decision makers both in business and society'. It publishes reports and policy proposals, among other things (EVA 2008). It is thus clearly an organisation that promotes business interests and favours market-based solutions. Its report on the population ques-

tion, which was commissioned to Tapio Wallenius²⁵, was published in 2003. Pentti Vartia, the managing director of EVA at the time, notes in the introduction that the decreasing birth rate in Finland is a worrying phenomenon for the business world for many reasons (EVA, 3). Commissioned by a business-friendly think-tank, the report examines the issues of demographics and population policies specifically in terms of how they affect business life. There is no detailed explanation of how it was produced, although the influence of the 3+ group, which promotes policies for families with more than three children, is acknowledged (ibid., 4)

The report is divided into three chapters, entitled 'Finns represent a shrinking and aging nation', 'Why don't Finns have children?' and 'What can be done to raise the birth rate?' The first chapter focuses on demographic developments in Finland, restating the frequently heard arguments about the aging population and the ratio of working-age people to pensioners. In terms of prognoses, it is noted that predictions are very vague, and that researchers can only refer to probabilities in the various scenarios of population development they describe. Current prognoses are not necessarily any more accurate than earlier predictions (ibid., 9-11).

The first chapter also covers the question of immigration and longevity in the light of the low birth rate, and notes that this cannot be considered a solution to the problem. It is acknowledged that Finland needs qualified people who adapt quickly to Finnish society and working life, but in practice first-generation immigrants cannot be expected to do that. It is also acknowledged that even though people are living longer, no major changes are expected in the death rate²⁶, and the important question regarding the size of the population is the birth rate²⁷. (ibid., 9-13) The last section of the first chapter gives a brief historical account of developments in Finnish fertility and the birth rate. The fertility rate dropped from nearly five children at the beginning of the 20th century to a low of 1.6 in the 1970s, rising slightly to 1.8 over the last three decades. Even

²⁵ Tapio Wallenius worked in the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs specialising in environmental policy, and as a consultant for various Finnish and international clients (Finnfund 2010).

²⁶ The death rate refers to the number of deaths in relation to the size of the population. Mortality was a significant factor in the demographic transition in Europe, which started around the 1870s. (Teitelbaum & Winter 1985, 5-17)

²⁷ The birth rate refers to the number of births in relation to the size of the population.

though this is not exceptionally low by international standards, it is clearly below the replacement level²⁸ of 2.1. Recent decades have also witnessed changes in the family structure in that there are more single parents and co-habiting couples, and more and more women are not having children at all. (ibid., 13-15)

The focus in the second chapter of the report is on why Finnish people do not have more children. It gives five different explanations: 'Support from society is inadequate', 'Women concentrate on work and a career', 'Working life does not leave time for children', 'Prolonged studies delay starting a family' and 'Unbearable uncertainty prevails in the world of fixed-term contracts'. The first section concerns the Finnish national policy on families. Support for families was reduced during the 1990s, and differences in family income widened. The improvement in the economic situation early in the 21st century renewed interest in increasing benefits for families. It was noted in the Government family policy document, for example, that family benefits had deteriorated in comparison with other social benefits, and that there should be concrete actions to redress the balance. The report refers to Government promises to improve benefits such as paid maternity and paternity leaves. (ibid., 17-20)

The section dealing with how women's education and participation in working life affect their having children also considers the changes in women's lives that facilitate control over the number of children, such as effective contraception. In Finland women have been active in working life, yet the birth rate has remained at a relatively high level compared to many other countries. One reason for this seems to be the day-care arrangements, which allow women to engage in full-time work. It is also noted that gender equality does not extend to all areas of life, however, in that although women do work full time, they still do the majority of the housework. There is a brief reference to the role of fathers and the fact that far from all men exercise their legal right to paternity and parental leave. (ibid., 20-22)

²⁸ Replacement-level fertility refers to the level of fertility in a generation of women that is 'exactly sufficient to replace itself with a new generation of women equal in size, taking account of the mortality expected under prevailing mortality conditions. ... In low-mortality societies [such as Finland], replacement fertility requires approximately 2.1 children per woman'. (Teitelbaum & Winter 1985, 6)

There is also reference to how working life restricts the numbers of children women have. Specifically, the demands of current job markets seem to be in conflict with raising children; it is difficult to combine family and work interests, jobs are insecure and fixed-term, and the general economic situation and unemployment worry people. It is also suggested that people may seek reasons other than their own choice for not having children, and working life may constitute such a reason. (ibid., 23) The prolonged studying time at university is specific to Finland. Consequently, when students graduate they are usually considerably older than their counterparts in many other countries, and given that people often prefer to graduate and have a stable job before starting a family, having children is postponed. (ibid., 24)

There are various reasons for long study times. Student organisations blame the quality of teaching (ibid.). Financing one's studies is also often considered to have an effect. Higher-education institutions do not charge Finnish students tuition fees, and there is a public support system entitling students to study grants and housing benefits. The EVA report refers to demands that the grant system should allow full-time studying (Finnish students often have paid employment at the same time as they are studying), and there is also support for entirely loan-based financing, which is assumed to offer a higher incentive to graduate (ibid., 24). The final section of the second chapter is also related to working life. It brings up the problem of short-term fixed contracts for young women, which create many kinds of uncertainties and is also thought to affect having children. A lack of stability at the beginning of working life, which is also usually the time to start a family, fosters economic insecurity. A history of short-term and irregular work also affects the benefits, including the amount of maternity benefit. (ibid., 26-27)

Following its analysis of the background factors affecting the birth rate in Finland, the final chapter of the EVA report focuses on finding ways to improve the situation. Analysis of the relationship between the birth rate and Government benefits and policies, income and other economic factors gives no simple or straightforward explanation. Devising measures that would affect the birth rate is thus not a simple task, and is further complicated by the splintering

of the target group: families, women and fathers²⁹ change and become more heterogeneous. Family differentiation is one factor that makes it more difficult to formulate effective family policies. Women seem to form two distinct groups: those who have children and those who are active participants in the work force. The first three sub-sections in the final chapter are entitled, 'The target group splinters', 'Current family policies are not a solution to the problem of the birth rate' and 'Values are behind everything', and the fourth is a conclusion. (ibid., 28-31)

The report clearly states that EVA does not consider the current family policies an effective solution to the problem of the birth rate. It further questions how, if the mechanisms through which family policies operate are not known, it is possible to effectively direct the policies. More than anything, it seems that values have the strongest influence: current Finnish values do not support having children or consider children valuable in themselves. Parental goals play a crucial role in decisions related to starting a family and facing the related risks: the more having children is considered in terms of economic security and readiness, the greater is the uncertainty experienced by prospective parents. The report concludes that there are various explanations for the low birth rate, but in the end, individuals' life-style decisions affect the decision to have children and the state cannot be responsible for changing an individual citizen's values. The report ends with a brief section advising business organisations and trade unions of their responsibilities in helping to raise the Finnish birth rate. (ibid., 28-38)

3.4 Policy document 2: The Population Policy Programme of the Family Federation of Finland (FF)

The Family Federation, which is called *Väestöliitto* (the Population Federation) in Finnish, is a non-governmental organisation that was established in 1941 because of worries about the low birth rate and the poor conditions in which fami-

²⁹ The report uses the words 'women and fathers', not 'women and men' or 'mothers and fathers'.

lies with children were living. Initially it had close connections to the Government, and until the 1970s held a semi-official position with regard to family and population policies in Finland. It had a central role in the formation of policies related to contraception and abortion counselling, and sterilisation until 1972, for example, when all these functions transferred to public clinics under the new health-care law. (Auvinen 1991, 234)

The Family Federation comprises its member organisations, of which there are currently 32, including family, youth and student bodies, medical associations and trade unions (Väestöliitto 2010c). The main sources of income in 2009 were RAY³⁰ with 45 per cent, earnings from the Federation's own operations³¹ (29%), and the state (13%) (Väestöliitto 2010b, 36). The Family Federation 'takes the initiative to reform legislation, carries out social and medical research, and gives counselling on family affairs, family planning, hereditary diseases, and infertility'; it also 'publishes material on human relationships and sexual health, and offers consultative aid and education to professionals in the respective fields'. With regard to family, housing and population policy, it 'takes the initiative to reform legislation and gives statements on family matters and population trends'. Its stated aim is to ensure that Finnish decision makers take into account the ageing population and the perspective of families with children, and its mission is 'to produce and disseminate information about the significance of the population's size and structure'. (Väestöliitto 2004b, 2-3) The Family Federation has a clear task to promote the growth of the Finnish population and the conditions of Finnish families.

The Family Federation's Population Policy Programme is more extensive than the report commissioned by EVA, and it also includes clear policy proposals. The Federation started to publish its programmes in 1975 and the immediate predecessor of the one under investigation appeared in 1998. A special group at the Family Federation is responsible for producing the programmes. The Federation also set up a working group on population policy in

³⁰ RAY, in Finnish *Raha-automaattiyhdistys* (Finland's Slot Machine Association), raises funds through gaming operations to support Finnish health and welfare organisations. It has the exclusive right in Finland to operate slot machines and casino table games, and to run a casino (RAY 2010).

³¹ The Family Federation provides childcare and fertility services, for example, and has clinics advising on sexual health.

2003, which includes experts from various fields and organisations concerned with demographics, statistics, immigration and economics, among other things. Consequently, there are several experts on hand when the programmes are compiled.

The current Population Policy Programme, published in 2004, has seven main chapters. The aim, which is to produce concrete choices for population policy, is stated in the introductory chapter, and it takes both a long-term (to the year 2040) and a short-term (to the year 2015) view. It is noteworthy that it voices awareness of criticism of the notion of population policies, and attempts to dispel any doubts about its intentions in stating that although there are negative connotations, it is possible to have a dispassionate discussion about the different factors affecting the population, such as the birth rate, ageing and migration (FF, 7-8). The second chapter discusses different definitions of population policy, and generally narrows it down to matters concerning the birth rate and migration in the context of public policies. (ibid., 9)

The third chapter tracks the demographic changes in Finland in 2000-2040. The first section deals with growth. The Finnish population has increased slowly, and according to the latest data will continue to grow until the 2020s, starting to decrease from 2024 onwards. It is probable that the birth rate will remain stable in the near future, whereas migration may fluctuate rather strongly. (ibid., 11) The second section concerns the age structure, and reiterates the frequently heard notion of an ageing population: by 2020, 23 per cent of Finnish people will be over 65 (ibid., 12). The third section is devoted to the birth rate and family creation. Finland has a relatively high birth rate compared with many other European countries, although people are delaying starting a family for longer and longer, even if it is in their minds to do so. Section four is about immigration. Finland has low numbers of immigrants, and the net migration level is one of the lowest in the European Union. The fifth section traces the regional or geographic developments in population trends: the major regional differences and uneven development may cause problems to accumulate in certain areas (ibid., 13-17).

Section six is the most extensive in the third chapter, and it comprises several sub-sections. The overall theme is the development of the Finnish

population in 2000-2040, based on alternative calculations. It describes three different fertility scenarios - lower fertility, heightened fertility and replacement-level fertility – and two scenarios related to migration: negative net migration (i.e. more people moving out of Finland than moving in) and positive net migration. These basic alternative scenarios are then considered from three developmental perspectives: population size, changes in the work force and trends in the age structure. The predicted size of the Finnish population in 2040 varies between 4.2 and 6.2 million depending on the scenario. Regardless of the scenario however, the size of the work force will diminish and the aging-population trend will continue: the predicted proportion of people over the age of 65 in 2040 varies between 32 and 24 per cent. (ibid., 17-23)

Chapter four lists the population-policy goals of the Family Federation, which are based on the scenario of balanced development, meaning that the current population of 5.2 million will be maintained until 2040. With regard to the birth rate, the fertility goal is 1.9 children against the current 1.7, the aim being to lower the age at which women have their first child from 28 to 26, and more fertility and adoption services are suggested. As far as immigration is concerned, the goal is positive net migration, about 7,000 people annually. (ibid., 24-25)

The fifth chapter, entitled 'Means of implementing the population policy' comprises the bulk of the programme, and analyses reasons for the low birth rate, the means of raising it and the issue of immigration. The low birth rate has been attributed to European values and changes in the economy and working life, for example. The most fundamental change has been the transition from a collective, family-centred and duty-based society to a society that emphasises individual rights, which has also had an effect on women's rights. The question of what influences the birth rate is rather complex, however (ibid., 26-29). The Family Federation does maintain that without an active population policy the Finnish birth rate will start to decrease after 2020.

The first measures advocated to raise the birth rate are to bring about changes in values and attitudes. It seems that people in general have child-friendly attitudes and value children, but these values are not reflected in the political decision-making. The Family Federation emphasises the need to

take more account of people's feelings in this regard. (ibid., 29-31) Secondly, measures should be taken to help childless people to have children. This also relates to changing values, and includes offering fertility and other medical services, making international adoptions easier, and improving wellbeing in relationships. (ibid., 32-33) The third set of measures relate to timing, and include lowering the average age of bearing children by two years, making it easier for women to have children while they are studying, improving housing policies and raising the minimum maternity benefit (ibid., 33-34). Fourthly and finally, there should be measures supporting families with many children in order to increase the proportion of families with more than three children. Such measures include lowering the cost of day care, helping mothers to return to working life after a long period at home, and raising benefits for those taking care of children at home. (ibid., 35-36)

The Family Federation assigns a key role to immigration in population policy. According to the report, Finnish population growth will be based entirely on immigration by 2015 (ibid., 36). Managed immigration should focus mainly on labour migration, the aim being to achieve the same levels of employment among immigrants and natives (ibid., 38-39). The numbers of Finns emigrating is low at the moment, but the aim still should be to improve the conditions of those on short-term fixed contracts, because the improvement constitutes a disincentive in terms of moving abroad (ibid., 39). Finland has been lacking a proper immigration policy, and active measures are needed. There has been no systematic integration policy for immigrants either, and there should be more resources and open-minded programmes. (ibid., 38-42)

The sixth chapter of the Population Policy Program describes demographic scenarios until the year 2040. Scenario A is 'aging Finnish Finland', with no active population policy and a fertility level of 1.5. The population would number 4-4.5 million, and a third would be over the age of 65. Most people would be concentrated in large urban areas. (ibid., 43-44) Scenario B is Finland with balanced population development and an active population policy. The fertility rate will rise to 1.9-2 and about a quarter of people will be aged over 65. There will be an increase in the numbers of immigrants, from the current 110,000 to between 300,000 and 400,000. (ibid., 46-47)

The seventh and final chapter of the report summarises the programme and the proposed actions. There has been a change in the discussion related to population policy since the publication of the previous programme in 1998. It is now clearly recognised that the baby-boom generations born after the Second World War are becoming pensioners and there will be a shortage of labour, and that family questions have become a matter of political rhetoric. In conclusion, it is suggested that there are measures that can be taken to combat the decline in population levels provided that there is the will to do so. (ibid., 50)

3.5 Policy document 3: Finland for people of all ages: Government report on the future: demographic trends, population policy, and preparation for changes in the age structure (GOV)

Each Government issues a report on the future, in which it examines an issue it considers important for Finland from a broad perspective and in the longer term than just one parliamentary season. Matti Vanhanen's first Government decided to concentrate on demographic issues in its 2004 report, which was published in both Finnish and English. I have taken the English version as my main source in this work. I also peruse the Finnish version in my redescription of the text, and if needed note relevant questions related to the translation. The English version includes English summaries of the supplementary expert reports³² and the abstracts of commissioned papers related to the preparing of the report, which were written in Finnish but are not examined in this study. Both the expert reports and a series of seminars with experts from various fields contributed to the preparatory work.

The GOV report comprises 13 chapters in total. The first chapter gives the background: preparation for demographic change is of great relevance for the future of Finland, and the purpose of the report is to give a comprehen-

³² The expert reports are called: 'Changes in the population age structure and preparing for them', 'Regional demographic trends and policy reform needs', 'Influencing demographic trends – should the birth rate and immigration be increased', 'Economic growth and public finances in the context of an aging population' and 'Aging as a resource'. (GOV)

sive and target-based evaluation of the situation. (GOV, 9-10) The second chapter, entitled 'Preparing for demographic trends is a key issue for the future', continues on the same theme. It is noted that Europe is the only continent in which the population is declining, and according to Statistics Finland, the Finnish public statistical authority, Finland's aging population will start edging downwards in numbers before 2030. (ibid., 11-12) The report also sets out some necessary policy premises and values, including inter-generational solidarity and avoiding narrowing the range of choices for future generations. (ibid., 13-14)

The theme in the third chapter is common to all of the selected population reports: demographic trends. The GOV report first considers global trends. Population growth has been relatively constant in Finland, and the country has had one of the highest birth rates in Europe, although it is still below the replacement level. (ibid., 14-16) Culturally Finland is a homogenous country, although immigration has increased since 1990. Changes in the age structure have been mainly attributable to mortality and birth trends. (ibid., 17-18) It is impossible to forecast population trends accurately given that projections are based on actual outcomes, and the choice of assumption affects the results. However, it can be said that the number of people of working age in Finland is declining quickly, and this causes a higher level of old-age dependency. Moreover, demographic trends vary regionally: growth is slow in the major cities, areas close to the major cities are experiencing the fastest growth, and rural regions are experiencing depopulation. (ibid., 19-24)

The fourth chapter focuses on the consequences of the demographic trends, first listing the challenges and opportunities and then examining them more closely. In particular, the fact that the workforce will be smaller and older will require adaptation. Lower levels of unemployment are predicted, but there will still be structural imbalances in labour supply and demand. The predicted changes in working life and social activities will require investment in occupational well-being, and a less dynamic but more experienced workforce. (ibid., 26-28) The third age, in other words the new, long phase of life between working age and old age, is bringing new challenges, not the least of which is the weaker potential for economic growth due to the ageing and shrinking population. Connected to this is the strain on public finances on account of the dimin-

ishing tax base and rising pension costs, although there are potential savings in the education sector, for example. According to the baseline scenario, public finances will fall into deficit between 2020 and 2030, which will require higher levels of employment and productivity. (ibid., 28-32) Furthermore, despite the creation of new jobs, the viability of many regions may be in jeopardy. In conclusion, it is suggested that the greatest challenge will lie in securing and financing services due to the growing numbers of older people. (ibid., 32-34)

The fifth chapter, entitled 'Government conclusions on development', presents the Government's policy proposals. The first section describes the policies that are already in place, many of which take account of the ageing population, and the second section analyses the current provisions in terms of adequacy. It is acknowledged that there has been Governmental action, but it has concentrated on cost estimations, and preparatory measures that vary by sector and are short-term. There is not enough emphasis on the opportunities arising from the change in the age structure, although it is admitted that the projections are uncertain. (ibid., 35-38) As stated in the third section, 'preparations for the change in the age structure must be coordinated, broad-based, and sustainable in the long-term' (ibid., 38). There is a need for a population policy that addresses the demographic development, and there should be open discussion about influencing demographic trends. There should also be investments in health and functional ability. Particular attention should be paid to children and young people given that investing in them is an investment in the future. Another focus area is labour productivity and increasing employment levels, and the need to reform social-security provisions and their financing. Furthermore, it is crucial to maintain balanced regional development and services. Finally, elderly people should be seen as a resource, and ageing as an asset. There has not been enough emphasis on the positive aspects of the demographic developments, such as the opportunity to reform the public sector and shift priorities, and the qualitative consequences of having a more active, healthy and skilled body of elderly people who constitute a human resource. (ibid., 38-44)

The sixth chapter calls for policy measures. It is necessary to increase immigration levels in order to secure a balanced population structure and a sufficiently high birth rate. Increasing the population is not the primary objec-

tive – it is more a question of the age structure – but if the policy is implemented it will also have that effect. (ibid., 45) The first step is to create favourable conditions for having more children. Measures promoting a higher birth rate might include lowering the age at which women have children, reducing the amount of atypical employment (short-term, fixed contracts), encouraging the reconciliation of work and family life, alleviating housing and subsistence difficulties for families with children, and ensuring reproductive health. In addition, the Government proposes increasing the levels of work-related immigration and making it easier for foreign students who study in Finland to enter the Finnish labour market after graduation. (ibid., 46-50)

The focus in the seventh chapter is on promoting health and functional ability. Given the increase in life expectancy, measures should be taken to enable people of all ages to lead a happy and fulfilling life, specifically with regard to the maintenance of health and functional capabilities. The state should be prepared for an increased need for services for the elderly living at home, for example, and for preventive services. (ibid., 51-54) The eighth chapter concentrates on care for children and the young. Recommended measures include monitoring income development in families with children, preventing poverty and social exclusion, and promoting health and cognitive development. It is also important to guarantee education, training or traineeship for young people, and to maintain a regional balance of education opportunities. (ibid., 55-56)

Chapter nine considers ways of strengthening the potential for economic growth, which is seen as one of the greatest challenges arising from demographic change. The first section concerns unemployment and ways of reducing it, especially in terms of structure. The Government is also committed to increasing professional and regional mobility, and to shortening study times. (ibid., 57-59) The focus in the second section is on the goal of reinforcing genuine competitiveness and productivity. There is a particular need to increase productivity in the service sector, and one way is to strengthen know-how. There is also a need to support research and development and innovation, and to promote good management practices. (ibid., 60-61)

Chapter ten, entitled 'Reform of benefit schemes', offers suggestions in terms of re-thinking the different social-security arrangements in Finland.

One of the starting points is the need to promote employment in all age groups, referring to work opportunities for older people, and also to accelerating studies and easing entry into working life among the young. As stated in the first section, 'benefit schemes must be assessed from the point of view of labour input and increased flexibility' (ibid., 63). Finland has shorter working-life expectancy but a higher number of annual working hours per employed person than the other Nordic countries: employed people work relatively hard and full-time. There is a need to make employment models more flexible so that that people will find it easier to combine family life, studying and training with employment. Reforms should cover the benefit system, taxation and services. (ibid., 62-64) The focus in the second section is on early-retirement schemes. Older people should be encouraged to stay in employment, and this requires improvements in occupational wellbeing and working conditions. Section three refers to the need to assess the effects of the reform in the pension system, and to ensure the financial sustainability and fairness of the earnings-related pension scheme. Other social-security reforms are considered in the final section of the chapter. Action should be taken to prevent unemployment from becoming long-term, and to find new ways of funding unemployment benefits. There is also a need for the reform of services for the elderly. (ibid., 64-67)

Chapter eleven discusses regional development and the need to safeguard basic public services. The developmental aim is to create a multi-centred regional structure based on a competitive metropolitan area and a network of regional centres. This will ensure regional competitiveness and the balanced development of the infrastructure. (ibid., 68-70) In terms of the availability of services, the municipalities face many challenges. For example, change in the population structure increases spending and the need for staff to supply the services. The aim of the reform in municipal financing and transfers from central to local government is to ensure the accessibility of statutory services. Attention should be paid to older people's ability to utilise information and communications technologies. Moreover, there will have to be new forms of cooperation on the inter-municipal and sub-regional levels. (ibid. 70-74)

Chapter twelve considers ways of supporting older people and utilising the resources they represent. One policy would be to encourage the elderly

to participate actively in various areas of society, and to make it easier for them. This would mean, for example, giving active people of retirement age more opportunities to continue in productive or working life if they so wish. More active participation means that demands for personal health and recreational services are likely to increase. The report reiterates that older people are an important resource for the whole of society. (ibid., 75-77) The final chapter follows up the preparations for the demographic change. Given that changes are difficult to foresee, preparations must be regularly reassessed. Inter-sectoral cooperation would facilitate more systematic follow-up. (ibid., 78-79)

As the above descriptions of the three selected policy documents show, there are several common themes. There are also differences in how the texts deal with the population question and the need for population policies, however. I concentrate on three specific themes in the following descriptions and redescrptions of the documents, the family, economics and gender. The redescription is done from the perspective of reproductive agency developed in the first chapter. Descriptions of the documents using the concepts used in the texts do not necessarily reveal the values and logics that support the concepts and the vocabularies, making the policy proposals and their principles seem natural and without options. The following redescrptions illuminate the constructions of the policy proposals and deconstruct their naturalness and obviousness.

4 Thematic description and redescription I: the family

4.1 Introduction

The first theme I describe and redescribe is one of the focal subjects in the population policy documents: the concept of the family, which is very prominent in the discussion on reproduction and the birth rate. The family could be seen as one of the organising principles, a kind of social imaginary that structures the discourses on population policies and fertility in the documents. It features particularly strongly in the parts of the texts in which measures aimed at affecting the birth rate are directly discussed, and when concrete policy proposals are made. As one of the formative concepts in the debate, it offers a perspective that gives the different policy proposals their intelligibility, presupposing the automatic self-evident nature of the family. It is assumed that everyone knows what is meant by it, and that the meanings connected to it are widely shared. It is also used in a way that unquestionably makes it the primary unit in matters to do with having children. It could be referred to as a self-evident theme in the policy documents in that they deal with demographic problems, but one should not assume that there is a 'natural' connection between the family, and demographics and the population debate. The way the concept of the family is used reveals something about the rationale behind the policy proposals.

The three selected policy documents primarily portray the family as a heterosexual couple with children, and the proposals are largely based on this idea. The heterosexual, monogamous family is the unit through which the politics and policies of increasing the birth rate are articulated. This is, however, a very limited conception, which is evident if it is considered from the perspective of reproductive agency and the imaginary domain. If the idea of the imaginary domain is to be taken seriously, the notions of the family in the documents affect freedom in terms of reproductive agency.

By way of introduction to the thematic description and redescription in this chapter, I take a closer look at Drucilla Cornell's re-thinking of fam-

ily law and the ways in which it connects to my notion of reproductive agency. I base my examination on a close scrutiny of Cornell's theorising, which provides a framework for my redescription. I also briefly discuss the application of her thinking to the Finnish legal system, and how some of her concepts can be seen in the Finnish context. I then move on to describing the notion of the family in the documents. All the texts use the word 'family' (*perhe* in Finnish). There are many commonalities in the usage, such as children making the family, heterosexuality, an emphasis on the couple relationship, and the central place of the family in the discussion on population growth. There are also differences in conception, however. The GOV report refers to the family as a single, opaque unit and does not dissect it in detail, whereas the EVA report and the FF Population Policy Programme consider it in more varied ways, and as multifaceted.

After the description I redescribe the documents through the notion of reproductive agency and examine the themes that emerge from my re-reading. I discuss the opaqueness of the concept of the family, which is problematic from the perspective of reproductive agency in terms of the failure to acknowledge personal imaginaries. I also analyse the definitions of the family in the texts and the way they are ruptured in some of them. The definitions are significant in the context of reproductive agency in that they provide substance for thinking and re-thinking conceptions of the family. Finally in the chapter I consider notions of kinship in the texts, and their relationship with the concept of reproductive agency. In conclusion, I synthesise the redescrptions and consider the difficulties in re-thinking the family institution. The redescrptions show that none of the texts create productive discourses and an environment for reproductive agency with regard to the family in a way that is consistent with notion of the imaginary domain.

4.2 Expansion of the redescriptive tool: the family and the imaginary domain

Drucilla Cornell's thought exemplifies how the family can be rethought based on the notion of the imaginary domain, and offers new insights into the concept of

reproductive agency. The following quotation restates some basic premises of the imaginary domain:

The imaginary domain gives to women, as well as to men, the chance to become a person, to interiorize and cohere the identifications that make us who we are into a self. (Cornell 1998, 100)

Respect for the imaginary domain and for people's ability to cohere into a self is thus a goal towards which societies should strive, although Cornell is aware that the goals can never be achieved. With regard to women's position in society, despite the positive changes in status regarding the family and its relationship with the state, women are still differently positioned compared to men. Cornell bases her thinking on women and the family partly on Hegel. Joan B. Landes has also written about Hegel and his conception of the family, and this sheds light on Cornell's interpretation. In Landes' view, Hegel considers the modern family to be an ethical root of the state as within it individuals first learn to orient their activities toward the whole. A family member is simultaneously a member of civil society and the state, so a full individual is a family member, a member of civil society and a citizen at the same time. An individual's consciousness of himself as a moral agent is a product of social experiences, which happen both inside and outside the family, and the family provides a material and ethical base for individuality. (Landes 1982, 125-136)

Women and men are differently positioned, and their roles with regard to the state and civil society are different. According to Cornell, Hegel sees the woman as bound by her duties in the family. Her obligation is to serve man's needs. The family is a natural organisation and women can participate in the ethical life of society – which includes family life and organisations of civil society such as corporations, unions and other associations – because of their central role in the family. Men, in contrast, exercise their subjectivity both as citizens and as members of civil society because their 'natural' side is taken care of in the family. A woman's true nature is to be duty bound to the family, and this obligation also means that the state owes allegiance to women only in their role of wife and mother. (Cornell 1998, 100-101)

As Joan B. Landes writes:

Only woman is singularly destined to experience the passive stance in love, to both lose and achieve her individuality in and through another person, the man; while he, according to his separate nature, is allowed to transcend mere loving in order to participate in the "substantive life in the state, in learning ... and in labour". ... In Hegel's view, man and woman belong to separate spheres. This is the result of their different natures. Woman is destined to be a mother and a wife. Her sexuality is appropriated by the male in marriage. (Landes 1982, 138)

Cornell notes that she, as a feminist, obviously disagrees with Hegel's contention and continues:

But his description of how a woman's legal identity is intertwined with her duties to the family, and not in her entitlement as a person, remains a powerful explanation, in spite of his own intent to justify it, of why it has been so difficult to adequately challenge family law. (Cornell 1998, 101)

Although things have changed since Hegel's time, Cornell does not believe that as far as women are concerned the changes adequately challenge what she calls patriarchy. She has her own definition of patriarchy, which she says 'indicates the manner in which a woman's legal identity remains bound up with her duties to the state as wife and mother within the traditional heterosexual family' (ibid., 101-102). In her view, the legal system does not consider women to be fully persons, and in many cases a woman's legal status is understood through her role as a mother and a wife. This connection has historically made women dependent on men in various ways from employment to sexuality, and conceiving of women as mothers and wives connects them to men in a subordinate way. Cornell's argumentation is that from the perspective of the law

and the state, a woman's standing in the public sphere is based only on her role in the family, hence her right to freely form her own personality is not acknowledged in that she is assigned the role of a mother and a wife. Complementarily, men are assigned the specific role of head of the household and a participant in public life. Thus, although men are freer than women in many respects, their imaginary domains are also restricted through being forced into certain roles.

Assigning gendered duties in relation to the state presupposes a specific family model, that of heterosexual, monogamous marriage. Rethinking women's position with regard to the state and state-imposed duties requires rethinking the family. Cornell notes that women 'cannot demand release from a legal identity that defines and limits what it means to be a woman through state-imposed duties without challenging the legal institution of the monogamous heterosexual family' (ibid., 102). The feminist demand for women to be able to form their personality freely also means that the heterosexual family that is enforced through law must be questioned. Feminist rethinking of the family gives more freedom also to men in forming their personality and re-thinking the meanings and representations of fatherhood.

The question of legal personhood and of differences between persons has been less prominent in the Finnish legal system than in common-law countries due to the strong ideology of equality and cultural homogeneity. The issue of legal identity has recently assumed more significance, however, on account of the increasingly international legal environment and the weakening of the welfare state, for example. When Finland's modern legal system was created in the 19th century, the legal person was primarily a Lutheran male land-owning farmer or a member of the gentry who operated in the public domain. As elsewhere, the family was a domain in which neither equality nor freedom of contract was applied. (Pykkänen 2007, 150-152)

The removal of most of the formal legal gender inequalities from the Finnish law in the first part of the 20th century, in laws on suffrage, marriage and qualification for public office for example, simultaneously strengthened the position of the middle-class nuclear family. Women as independent legal subjects were given rights, but at the same time the division between the public and the private was reinforced. Many of the factors related to the idea of the nuclear

family started to change in the 1960s, and the building of the welfare state led to reforms in social rights and social citizenship in particular. Working life and economics became the basis of legal personhood. In recent decades Finland's membership of the European Union has strengthened individual rights and the liberal understanding of personhood, in other words individual freedom and autonomy have become more dominant. Nevertheless, a certain emphasis on the welfare state is built into the Finnish legal system. According to Anu Pykkänen, as a result of this strengthening of the liberal framework, and the dismantling of the welfare state that has been happening in the early 21st Century, legal personhood is becoming more deeply gendered. (ibid., 150-157, 159)

Cornell's observation that women's legal status has been understood through the family and the role of the mother is also relevant in the Finnish context. As Anu Pykkänen notes, women's legal personhood has been largely constructed in a way that emphasises social utility and community: the regulation of and discussion about the family, sexuality and reproduction in particular reflect how corporality and sexuality enter the legal sphere (ibid., 159). The regulation of the family and reproduction, be it through the legal or political system, or social policy, is not free from gendered constructions in Finland, meaning that women's and men's positions in the family are perceived as different. In this respect, Cornell's point about the gendered nature of women's legal position is relevant in the Finnish context. Demands related to the imaginary domain and the freedom to form one's personality are related to the gendered constructions of the Finnish legal, social and political personhood.

Cornell draws on the ideal of the imaginary domain in formulating a concrete programme for the reform of family law, which I examine briefly below. The proposals, which should not be viewed as fixed propositions, offer some ideas for bringing about a change in thinking with regard to an apparently natural institution such as the family. They are also directly connected to state regulation, in other words they are not meant to reflect general ideas about the family as a social institution, or to examine how the care of children is arranged in practice or how the division of labour is worked out. The idea is to suggest reforms of concrete laws that regulate family life.

Cornell starts her discussion from the premise that family regulation should protect all lovers who choose to enter into a civil marriage³³ or some other form of domestic partnership, which means that the privilege of heterosexual relationships should be removed. Her point is that the state should not define what is considered the good family. She recognises that children need a stable, lasting relationship, but sees no reason to prioritise heterosexual, monogamous marriage: all lovers should be able to contract a civil marriage if they so choose. Moreover, the government should have no legitimate interest in monogamy. (Cornell 1998, 123-125) People should be as free as possible to arrange their intimate relationships. In privileging the marriage of a man and a woman who have a sexual relationship the state is defining what a proper family should be like.

Cornell's second point is that the government should provide a structure for custodial responsibility for children, which should not be linked to the sexual relationship.

To achieve the needed stability for children, the assumption of custodial responsibility would carry with it all that it does now – financial support, limits on movement, and so forth. Parents would be legally established at the same time they assumed custodial responsibility; each child would have a legally recognized family. ... Custodial responsibility would remain for life; legal responsibility to custodial children would continue regardless of the sexual lives of the members of the custodial partnership or team. (ibid., 125)

Every child would have a legally recognised family, which would not necessarily coincide with the traditional Western or Anglo-American notion; it would be

³³ In her talk about marriage in connection with the regulation of the family, Cornell is following the American understanding of the family in terms of marriage. As Martha Albertson Fineman notes in her writing on the current American family and the political rhetoric about social policy: 'Marriage is considered central to the concept of the family, and the family is perceived of as the foundation of society' (Fineman 2004, xvii). I am grateful to Jaana Vuori for pointing out the difference between the American view of the family as marriage and the Finnish or Nordic idea that the children constitute the family. It should be noted, however, that race and ethnicity play a role here, and for example African-American notions about the connections between marriage, family and kinship are different (see e.g. Butler 2004, 103).

possible to create a team of carers, for example. Under Cornell's proposition that the custodial relationship would remain for life, it could be terminated only in exceptional circumstances (in the case of sexual or physical abuse, for instance). (ibid., 125-127)

Thirdly, Cornell refers to the 'equitable distribution of the burdens of reproduction and the equal protection of the health of young children', meaning the provision of healthcare for children and income maintenance for families in the form of publicly funded childcare as a parental entitlement (ibid., 128). The demand for publicly funded services is based on the idea that material conditions have significant effects on the ability to develop as a person. Without services such as childcare, people may be forced to make choices they would not make if their material conditions were different. Publicly funded childcare is an example of a material condition that facilitates the combination of motherhood and working outside the home at all income levels, giving women choices in their lives and in constructing their personalities.

Cornell's propositions should be viewed as ideals, or as she notes they 'stretch our imaginations' (ibid., 127). However, stretching the imagination is often necessary for reforms to take place, and I will therefore keep her ideas in mind when I begin my redescription of the policy documents. Cornell's proposal for the reform of family law is a good reminder about the need to denaturalise the construction of the nuclear family. Her suggestion can be read as a normative attempt to reform the family, but it can also be understood as a proposition about rethinking the regulation of family relations. As such it reminds us that the family is not a natural or unchanged entity, but a historically changing arrangement. The rethinking of the relationship between the state and the family is also an example of taking reproductive agency seriously. Disconnecting the family from the heterosexual monogamous relationship increases the options in terms of deciding about reproduction through the family. There are many different kinds of custodial relationships and parental arrangements, including those that are not dependent on sexual orientation or a sexual relationship.

Cornell's thinking on family reforms also has its limitations. In writing about provisions for families in the form of income maintenance or public childcare services she clearly locates herself in the United States. Many of these

provisions are already in place in Finland, which has extensive family policies. It is worth remembering that family policies are not neutral, however; they define who is entitled to what kinds of services and for what price. The relevance of Cornell's ideas on supporting families through public policies lies in the recognition that freedom is not always advanced through aiming at minimum state interference. The conditions in which people form their personalities affect the process. The question of conditions in the context of the imaginary domain and reproductive agency is examined more thoroughly in the next chapter.

Related to the development of reproductive agency as a concept, there are elements in Cornell's thinking suggesting that people should be the source of their own values with regard to procreation arrangements. In practice this means that the state should have no legitimate interest in how people form families. On the other hand, reproductive agency is heavily dependent on how various social policies are arranged in that it is very much socially and politically constructed. How people see their procreative options is affected by the ways in which public policies are arranged, but public policies also allow freedom in creating conditions in which people are able to engage in personality formation in a way that would not necessarily be possible without public provisions. The above examination of the connections between the imaginary domain, reproductive agency and the family gives insights into my redescription of the selected policy documents. First, however, I will describe how the family is understood using the language of the documents themselves.

4.3 Thematic description I

Discussion about the low birth rate and population issues almost inevitably incorporates the concept of the family, at least to some extent. This section concerns how the concept is used in the three selected policy documents. I focus specifically on the word 'family' (*perhe* in Finnish), examining in which contexts and for what purposes it is used, and what presuppositions are connected to it (i.e. what the family is understood to be or how it is defined). I begin my analysis with what I call an opaque concept of the family as encountered in the GOV

report. Opaqueness here refers to the presentation of the family as a single unit with internal workings, relationships and power structures that are not publicly visible; it is treated as if it were one operator with one will and one mind. I then move on to the more open and multifaceted views of the family that are to be found in the EVA and FF reports. There are also commonalities and unifying aspects in how the family is understood in the three texts, which I consider at the end of this section.

4.3.1 The opaque family

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, the GOV report represents the opaque understanding of the family, in other words the text treats the family as a single unit. There is no reference to what happens inside it, such as who the members are and what roles they play. Both the EVA report and the FF Population Policy Programme take a somewhat more analytical approach in that they also consider women's role in the family and working life in relation to reproduction (see e.g., EVA, 31-32 and FF, 30-31).

The first time the concept of the family comes up in the GOV report is in connection with the birth rate. It is noted that 'the birth rate is high in countries where family-oriented social policies and measures reconciling working and family life have been used to enable the combination of both' (GOV, 16). It is acknowledged in the same paragraph that family structures in Finland have changed rapidly (*ibid.*), but there is no further explication. This section of the report skims over the idea of the family rather quickly, although it mentions the significant notion of historical changes in family structures.

The word 'family' is used most frequently in the section dealing with favourable conditions for having children. The focus is on actions that the Government could take to encourage families to have more children. In this context, family policies are seen to have a significant effect on the birth rate, and are understood widely as including different kinds of monetary benefits, services and efforts to reconcile work and family life. The Government's aims are summarised as follows:

Higher birth rates can be promoted most effectively by supporting fall in the child-bearing age, seeking to reduce atypical employment, encouraging the reconciliation of work and family life, and alleviating housing and subsistence difficulties for families with children. Ensuring reproductive health is also important. (ibid., 46)

The word 'family' is frequently, although not exclusively, used as a qualifier (family policy, family life, family allowance, family welfare) in the section on favourable conditions for having children. There is no further explication; in other words, the concept of the family is used often, but in a way that makes the notion impenetrable.

The above-mentioned opaqueness is evident in the way the GOV report treats the family as the primary unit in terms of having children. This view is present in the other texts as well, but the GOV report has a specific approach that emphasises the unitary nature of the family: it is the family as a unit that has children, not individual women. A good example of this unitary thinking is the second paragraph in Chapter 6.1 (Favourable conditions for having children), which starts: 'The Government has taken steps to improve the position of families and their ability to have children and ensure their welfare by raising the family allowance and improving the parental allowance, child home care allowance, and children's afternoon activities.' (ibid.) The implication is that it is the family that has the ability to have children, and in order to raise the birth rate the life of families needs to be supported and improved. The aim to improve the position of families is seen as an instrument for raising the birth rate. As the report notes: 'The Government will continue to exercise a comprehensive family policy that encourages higher birth rates' (ibid.).

Thus, the ability to have children is clearly a family matter; as the report notes, '[t]he Government has taken steps to improve the position of families and their ability to have children' (ibid.). The idea that children are had by families is even stronger in the Finnish version of the report, which states, for example, that a higher child-bearing age and longer study times lower the number of children a family has (GOV/FIN, 35). Thus, even child-bearing age is assumed to be a characteristic of the family, although it is the woman whose age is

relevant in terms of the link between age and increasing the number of births. The GOV discussion about favourable conditions for having children is so tightly defined through the notion of the family that 'mothers' and 'fathers' are both mentioned only once in this context: mothers in relation to compensation for parental leave to the employer (GOV, 46), and fathers in connection with family leave the proposal to encourage fathers to use their rights in this respect (ibid., 47). Other than these two exceptions, it is the united unit of the family that is considered the focal point of the policies.

I find 'opaque' a good term to describe the way the concept of the family is used in the GOV text. It is frequently used in the singular or as a qualifier of different policy elements: it is a single entity that possesses the capacity to have children. The singular nature is taken even further in the Finnish version, in which even the age of having children is portrayed as a family characteristic.

4.3.2 A cautious dissection of the concept of the family

Both the EVA report and the FF Programme use the concept of the family in a somewhat different way from the GOV report. Although the notion of family policies is prominent in the EVA and FF texts, the family is not as strongly singular and opaque as it is in the GOV report. The EVA report acknowledges in the introduction that the family is not a single entity in its statement that Finnish men's attitudes toward the family and childcare need improvement (EVA, 4). Reference to men's attitudes imply that women and men may have different positions with regard to the family, and what family members do may conflict with what is considered good for the entire unit. The members may have different attitudes towards the family, and their roles vary.

Both the GOV and the EVA reports often use the word 'family' in connection with the birth rate. According to the EVA report, Finnish families have 1.8 children on average. The change in family structure is acknowledged, and although this is not an issue that is given much attention, it is noted that more and more families are co-habiting (i.e. couples are not getting married) and the number of single-parent families is growing (ibid., 14). The concept of

the family is considered from a broader perspective than in the GOV report, and it is made clear that it is open to change, and that marriage, for example, is no longer a prerequisite.

This broadening of the perspective is visible in Chapter two of the EVA report, which deals with the question of why Finnish people do not have more children, and discusses family policies and economic incentives for having children. In terms of opening up the concept, the report analyses the distribution of housework between men and women, acknowledging that it is women who give birth. It seems that when children are born into the family women contribute more than men in terms of caring for the child and doing other things related to starting a family (ibid., 22). Reference to children being born into the family is a good example of the seemingly self-evident connection between having children and having a family, but it does show some awareness of the different and differently placed parties that the family is thought to consist of. Another example in the same context is in the next paragraph, which uses the Finnish term *perheenisä*, the father of the family or pater familias (ibid.). This also acknowledges the different parties that form the family: it is not singular in that it includes fathers (and complementarily mothers). Reference to fathers may seem self-evident, but it acknowledges one position in the family that is assigned to an individual and thus identifies this individual from the communal unit.

Another section in which the EVA report takes a different stance on the concept of the family than the GOV report is in Chapter three under the subheading 'The target group splinters'. It states, 'families, women and fathers change and become more individual'³⁴ (ibid., 31). Later it gives some statistics: 37 per cent of families with children do not comprise the traditional married couple with children; 13 per cent comprise co-habiting couples with children; 20 per cent consist of a mother and children, and two per cent of a father and children. Moreover, a considerable proportion of the married couples with children are reconstituted families in one form or another, and there are some same-sex

³⁴ The text uses the terms family, women and fathers as opposed to women and men, or mothers and fathers, for example. The usage of the differently gendered terms is discussed in Chapter five of this work.

couples with children. (ibid., 32) This listing of different kinds of family formations shows some historical awareness, although this is not apparent to the same extent in all parts of the report. Nevertheless, it acknowledges the prevalence of divorce and some variety in sexuality. It is not assumed that all families are alike, which one could say is a minimum level of thinking from new perspectives.

Individualism is considered an important value in the EVA report, and is emphasised in several places. Chapter three, for example, mentions the increasing individualisation of the family structure, referring in particular to single-parent and same-sex families, and the difficulty in finding the right policies (ibid.). One might assume that this acknowledgement of individualism would make the report more likely to embrace new family forms and broaden the perspective, but it still does not consider how things could be arranged differently or what free choice with regard to the family and procreative life might mean.

The FF, as the name implies, attaches importance to the notion of the family. Although the Finnish name does not contain the word 'family'³⁵, one of the basic principles of the Federation is to improve the situation of families (FF, 7), and its programme concentrates on family policies. As in the other two texts described here, the situation of families with children is a central theme and family policies are one of the focal points. Moreover, the family is mentioned in connection with the low birth rate, although the FF analyses the birth rate mostly from the perspective of women, emphasising in particular the age at which women have children (ibid., 13-14); unlike the GOV report, the text does refer to the age of women (not families) who have children.

The FF also refers to individualisation, but from a somewhat different perspective than the EVA report. In the latter it is a question of families, and members of families, becoming individual in the sense of being different and having different interests, whereas the FF mentions the transformation from a collective, kin- and family-based society to an individualistic society that emphasises individual rights (ibid., 26). Here the historicity is recognised in that it

³⁵ The Finnish name *Väestöliitto* means the Population Federation.

is acknowledged that the family as a social institution is amenable to change. It is glossed over to some degree, however, because different constructional elements that would make changes in the institution more concrete are not discussed. For example, there is no mention of the short history of the bourgeois nuclear family or of the practical consequences of the more collective family model.

The FF Program, like the EVA report, includes some analysis that separates women and men, and thus, unlike the GOV report, constructs a family unit comprising individual persons of different genders (see e.g., *ibid.*, 31). The FF ends up analysing questions related to the different members of the family in a way that emphasises harmoniousness, however. It is understood that there are different family members, but neither conflicts inside the family nor the conflicting interests of the members are acknowledged. An example of the harmonious family is one in which women's and men's motives for having children are compatible. On the question of motives, the report states that women justify having their first child on the experience of motherhood, the continuation of life and giving a meaning to life. The first two of these are also mentioned with regard to men, for whom the joy in following the child's growth and development is the third motivating factor. (*ibid.*, 31) The FF Program does not examine situations in which couples have differing life goals or motivations with regard to family life.

In addition to the harmoniousness, the FF text also considers the family a central entity in people's lives. It refers to value surveys suggesting that the family is one of the most important things in life, and that Finnish people value the family institution (*ibid.*). It is suggested that conflicts are more between the family and other sections of society than inside the family. As the report notes, working life is one element that creates pressure on family life: 'The current atmosphere of hurry, uncertainty and work pressure does not favour starting a family or staying together as a family' (*ibid.*). Although the FF does not see the family as a singular operator, it does imply that its members live in harmony, and that pressures come from outside the family unit. EVA, on the other hand, acknowledges that different family members may operate in conflicting ways, and this way differs from the other two texts under scrutiny.

4.3.3 Commonalities in the concept of the family

As the above sections show, the concept of the family is different in the three policy documents, although there are also unifying aspects. The first commonality is the self-evident connection with population policies, which goes in several directions. Population policies deal with growth in the birth rate and reproduction, which is connected to the family as the site of reproduction. The value of the family as the primary location of reproduction is not problematised or discussed in any of the texts. Inherent in such an understanding is a connection with biological reproduction. The FF does mention adoptive families, but otherwise biology is a fundamental assumption. The role of biological reproduction is evident in the centrality of the question of the birth rate. The GOV report has a section entitled 'Favourable conditions for having children' (GOV, 46), the EVA report has a chapter entitled 'How could we raise the birth rate?' (EVA, 28), and the FF Program has a section entitled 'Means of increasing the birth rate' (FF, 29). All these texts deal with how Finnish families could have more biological children.

Another theme that is common to all three texts is the basic premise of the family as heterosexual, a major aspect of which is the at least seemingly monogamous sexual relationship, which is reflected in the constitution of the family as one man and one woman. The EVA report does acknowledge that there are same-sex families (EVA, 32), but does not examine the issue any further and does not reflect it in other parts of the report. Polyamorous relationships are not discussed in any of the texts. Heteronormativity is not explicitly stated either, but it is easy to infer when the text at one point refers to families and parents, and then starts to use gendered concepts such as father and mother with reference to parents. The following example of this usage is from the EVA report in the chapter on why Finnish people do not have more children. One subsection, 'Women concentrate on work and a career' (EVA, 20-22), deals with issues related to women's paid employment, including day-care arrangements. The complementary partners for women and mothers in the discussion about women's position in the labour market and the home are men and fathers.

When women's domestic work is discussed, the contrast lies in the fact that women carry a heavier burden than men with regard to childcare, and that many fathers do not take advantage of the paternity and parental leave to which they are entitled by law (ibid., 22). A similar example of heterosexual complementarity in the FF text is the statement that encouraging men to take part in the domestic work may help women to cope (FF, 35). These are just some examples of the assumption of heterosexual, monogamous sexual relationship that is prevalent in all of the documents.

As the above analysis shows, the three texts have several things in common: they take the family as the starting point with regard to increasing the birth rate, and they assume a heterosexual and, in principle, monogamous family based mainly on biological reproduction. They also differ, most notably in their perceptions of the family unit. The GOV text is the most opaque, and does not consider the historicity of the family or the different perspectives of the various members. The EVA report and the FF text do not portray the family so strongly as a single unit, although the FF text does not acknowledge that men and women may have conflicting interests concerning reproduction and family life. Having described the use of the concept of the family in the three texts, I will now redescribe the texts from the perspective of reproductive agency. The focal point in this redescription is still the notion of the family.

4.4 Thematic redescription I

My first redescription covers five topics: the family as a single opaque unit, the meaning of family values, definitions of the family, the differences of the concept of the family in the three texts, and the notions of kinship included in the policy documents. All of these topics arose from my reading of the documents from the perspective of reproductive agency, although the connections are different. The first sub-section concerns the question of treating the family as if it were a single unit or operator. The concept of the imaginary domain emphasises everyone's right to form their personality and to give values and meanings to their identifications. The emphasis is on individual choice, and I discuss ques-

tions of individuality in the context of the family understood as a single opaque unit. Connected to the questions of individuality and reproductive agency are the public/private distinction, the politics and policing of the family, and the connection with reproductive agency. The question of family values is related to the freedom of giving meanings and values to one's own life, and is thus highly relevant to reproductive agency. The three texts differ to some extent in how they perceive the notion of the family, and from the perspective of reproductive agency these differences provide a basis for rethinking of the notion of the family. Finally in this first thematic redescription, I examine the notions of kinship in the three texts, and how they influence the concept of the family. Such notions are usually implicit, but they nevertheless structure how the family is understood.

4.4.1 The family as a single, opaque unit

The first group of issues emerging in the redescription is related to the notion of the family as a single unit. Reference to the family making reproductive decisions hides the many kinds of power structures that operate within it. These power structures have long been of interest to feminists, who have considered them from various perspectives. The ideology that glorifies the family as a domestic haven but at the same time denies men's dominance and women's subordination, the privatised family that cuts women and children off from outside contact and support, and the power structures related to the traditional setting of the male breadwinner and the female homemaker are just some of the issues that feminists have addressed (Thorne 1982, 2). In this sub-section I examine two issues that are connected to the idea of the family as a single, opaque unit: individuality and individualisation, and the public/private distinction.

The family as a single unit is problematic from the perspective of reproductive agency in that decisions about procreation are not only joint decisions within the unit or couple but are also always deeply personal and individual. At this point it is worth recalling Cornell's idea of bodily integrity: people should have the right to project their bodily coherence as freely as possible. Indeed, it is difficult to think of any aspect of bodily integrity that affects more a

woman's ability to project herself as a whole over time than determining whether to have a baby or not (Cornell 1995, 35); in other words, reproduction is fundamental to a woman's experience of bodily integrity. The idea of the family as a single unit deciding about reproductive issues clearly acknowledges neither women's nor men's reproductive agency in that it fails to recognise their individual viewpoints and imaginings in deciding about procreation. A policy according to which it is 'the family' that has children overlooks the idea of reproductive agency.

One thing that tends to be neglected in discourse referring to the family as the unit having children is that it is a woman who gestates and gives birth. How the decision to reproduce is made is glossed over when the assumption is that it is the communal unit of the family that has children. Having a child requires input from a woman's and a man's body, and individual men and women imagine their personality, and reproduction as a part of that, in their own way. Even though a (heterosexual) couple discusses the decision to have children, both parties have to make individual decisions about procreation and the embodied personality, although the woman as the one carrying the child and giving birth is in a different position from the man. If reproductive agency is to be taken seriously, everyone should have the right to decide about parenthood in a way that maintains respect for their imaginary domain, and allows them to develop a coherent personality. Becoming a mother is physically more demanding for the woman in that it is her body that carries the child for nine months and gives birth, but it should also be remembered that parenthood may be a profound experience in other ways, and thus a central part of men's personhood as well.

An issue related to individuality is the individualisation of different family members. Individualisation here refers to the sociological notion concerning the process by which the family is conceived of socially and culturally in smaller units than heretofore: the nuclear family and the couple relationship are seen as separate from the larger family or kin, the man as separate from the family, the woman as separate from the husband, and so on. The process of individualisation with regard to the family is, of course, multifaceted and non-linear. It has been widely studied in sociology, also from a feminist perspective,

and it is acknowledged that women's position in the family has changed. However, Ritva Nätkin notes that the individualisation of women and children in our society is an illusion to some extent because in many cases it is with reference to the Western traditional nuclear family, although one could say that many of the problems related to the bourgeois model of the nuclear family have become more visible and many processes are shown not to be natural or unchanging. (Nätkin 2003, 20-21)

Referring to the family as a closed, single unit is an example of how the process of individualisation in this regard is still not self-evident. The GOV text avoids recognising the individual members of the family. A good example of this blindness is the way it deals with the rise in the age of child bearing and studying:

The average child-bearing age has risen continuously, causing childlessness and health risks and reducing the eventual number of children. Longer study times have not only postponed entry into working life but also having children. The possibility to combine studying and family life must therefore be improved. Student families with children are supported through general family policy. (GOV, 46)

The text does not recognise that it is women's age that is important, or that both studying and giving birth are personal decisions and individual activities. This consideration of reproduction through the impenetrable idea of the family shows how the naturalness of the family remains unquestioned, and there is the blindness to its internal workings and structures. The different members are not understood as separate individuals, or then their role is defined through the family.

As Ritva Nätkin notes, family structures are becoming visible and their naturalness is being dismantled in sociological research (Nätkin 2003, 21-22). I contend that it is also important to show how the concept of the family is used in politics. As is evident in my redescription, the selected policy proposals do not necessarily recognise the individualisation process that considers men

and women full persons with reproductive agency. Treating the family as a single unit disguises the fact that reproductive agency is necessary in individual personality formation, and that decisions about reproduction also concern individual coherence and life plans.

The GOV report ignores reproductive agency in its consideration of the family as a single unit. However, individual agency may be ignored even if different family members are recognised. The FF text covers men's and women's motivation for having children, but does not admit to any conflict between them; the reasons are connected to having a 'better life', and children are seen to bring spouses closer to each other (FF, 31). This implies harmony and a lack of conflict in the family, but could also indicate limitations in the range of choices among those who form the family unit, and the denial of contradictory views. Expecting family members to make similar choices is comparable to understanding the family as a single unit: reproductive agency is dependent on other people in that the spouses' choices are linked. This reading of reproductive agency focuses on the level of individuals, but the notions of the family also have significance on the political level.

Conception of the family as a single unit has implications in terms of the distinction between the public and the private sphere; decisions about reproduction are confined to the 'black box' of the family, to the private sphere that is outside of politics. This is a somewhat conflicting position. The GOV document focuses on increasing procreation in Finland through public policies that aim to influence what happens in families, while at the same time taking the family as a singular concept that pushes its internal workings to the private sphere, which is not considered a matter of politics or public policies. According to the GOV text, the unit for procreation is the family and policies are understood through the family. The welfare state aims to police or direct families as a unit, and to affect how the unit operates as a site of reproduction. It has been claimed that the welfare state has caused the decline of the family. For example, in a classic sociological work Christopher Lasch writes negatively about state intervention and suggests that the modern welfare state has largely replaced the family as a key agent of social reproduction (Zaretsky 1982, 188-192). As the

GOV text shows, however, the Finnish welfare state at least sees the family as a central institution in biological reproduction.

Theoretical discussion on the family tends to portray it as a private institution that is beyond public control, and in feminist theory it has even been described in terms of imprisonment for women who are subjected to violence and isolation out of sight (see e.g., Barret & McIntosh 1982, 56-59). The GOV document does not see the family as purely private, however. The text includes an interesting mix of what is understood as public and private, and what is seen as a target of politics and policies. Families are an object of policies and are therefore a subject of political discussion, and it is entirely legitimate to have policies that regulate family life. At the same time, the text treats the family as a single unit and maintains the privacy of what actually happens inside the institution, how reproductive agency is actually lived and enacted in individual people's lives. Children are an example of what are considered legitimate policy objects. The GOV report has an entire chapter entitled 'Taking care of children and the young', in which it states: 'Developments in the income of families with children must be monitored', and notes that although parents are responsible for the growth and development of their children, '[i]t is the duty of society to support parents in their educational efforts' (GOV, 55). The unit is the family, but children's welfare is a legitimate reason for public intervention. There are two albeit connected approaches to how public the family is: policing it as a unit is self-evidently legitimate, but consideration of its members as individuals is avoided.

The question of drawing the line between the public and the private with regard to the family is widely studied in sociology and anthropology, and is addressed in political theory. There are sociological studies aimed at penetrating the family, its private organisation, relationships and structures (for Finnish studies see e.g., Forsberg & Nätkin 2003). There is also acknowledgement that the private and public aspects are in many ways parallel in that the family can be understood as part of the social and political system and an object of public intervention, and at the same time it is a private haven and a refuge (Turnaturi 1987). According to Katja Yesilova, who conducted a sociological study of the meaning of the family in Finnish society, the nuclear family assumed political

and social relevance during the 20th century. On the most evident level of this process the family has become a focus of public worry. Its wellbeing and problems are discussed in the media, in political statements, reports and seminars, for example. At the same time, there is the assumption of the natural, biological family, a basic unit of society that is non-political and has its own logic. Hence there is the paradox of what Yesilova calls the politicised non-political family. (Yesilova 2009, 30-31)

My redescription also reveals the paradoxical attitude towards family life in the GOV text: policies aimed at helping families in everyday life are considered extremely important politically and with regard to increasing the birth rate, but the family is also seen as something that is natural, and its structure and basic values are not to be questioned. Both of these attitudes are problematic in terms of reproductive agency. Family policies define, regulate and reflect how the family is understood and thus affect the environment in which people live and, by extension, their abilities to define their own family formations, whereas treating the family as a private unit makes recognition of individual reproductive agency more difficult. Although the formation of the personality is socially, culturally and politically dependent, the formation of the embodied personality is an individual process and is beyond the authority of a family unit.

4.4.2 Individual family values

Whereas the GOV report ignores individual reproductive agency in its treatment of the family as a unit, the EVA text relies on a different logic. It considers family policies suspicious, but still retains a strong notion of how the family should be understood, thus proposing discourses that affect the imaginary domain and reproductive agency in a specific way. Support for public family policies is strong and often unquestioned in Finland, but there are some holes in this thinking. The EVA report is an example, criticising the fact that current family policies are not specifically constructed to increase fertility (EVA, 33), and implying that decisions about having children are ultimately based on individuals' life goals (ibid., 37). In other words, the report conveys a sceptical attitude to-

wards family policies, and suggests that individuals should be taken into account in discussions about fertility and the birth rate. Questioning the policies does not mean abandoning the concept of the family, however, and in certain respects the report reflects traditional conservative thinking. As Michèle Barret and Mary McIntosh wrote in 1982:

Conservative thought is often said to focus on the idea of individualism: self-help, self-support, self-sufficiency, self-respect. It rejects dependence, 'scrounging', collectivism, the belief that 'the world owes you a living'. Yet in practice the unit of self-support is not the individual but the family. (Barret & McIntosh 1982, 47)

There are similarities in the logic of the EVA report: the individual is emphasised, but the family retains an important role as a social institution. The report makes no outright demand to dismantle the welfare state, even though it does consider family policies ineffective in terms of increasing the birth rate. It does demand changes in personal values, however, which begin with individuals and should be geared towards the family. Taken to its conclusion, this logic reveals a rather conservative line of thinking: the state and public policies are ineffective in terms of population control; individuals are responsible for their own values; a single life is considered hedonistic and individuals are encouraged to take responsibility for and value the family. If there are public policies, they should promote family values and children. People nowadays expect the state to take responsibility for the birth rate:

Individuals then leave the responsibility for having children and for the renewal of the population to society. At the same time they³⁶ demand the time and the right to be single, to study, to be career-building producers who concentrate only on themselves. (EVA, 37)

³⁶ The Finnish text uses the word 'hän', which is the third-person singular pronoun and gender neutral (there are no gendered pronouns in Finnish). I have chosen to use the plural here in order to avoid any gendered connotations.

The message in the EVA report is rather contradictory: individuals should not expect the state to help them in everything, and should be responsible for their own values, but these values should be family-oriented rather than individualistic. To be too involved in your career or to have 'a single lifestyle' is not good for the Finnish birth rate, and individuals should feel their responsibility and value the family more. As the report concludes: 'Ultimately, the responsibility for restoring the appreciation for children belongs to individuals' (ibid., 38). The state has a limited ability to affect the birth rate, and people should value family life and children. The family is thus a central element when it comes to population growth.

The GOV policy proposals ignore reproductive agency in treating the family as a communal subject, and although the EVA report recognises individuality, it does not respect reproductive agency either. Individuality in this case does not mean that people should have total freedom in deciding about their life choices and values, it means the freedom to have family-friendly attitudes and to appreciate children. Reproductive agency based on the idea of bodily integrity and the imaginary domain implies the freedom to decide on and formulate one's own life choices, which should not be pre-defined by an outside authority. Cornell notes:

The imaginary domain allows us to separate what is of value in the doctrine of privacy from its illegitimate promotion of the heterosexual nuclear family as the good family, and does so without reducing the value of privacy to the right to be left alone. Simply demanding that the state leave us alone inadequately protects what is at stake in the right to self-represent one's sexual being. (Cornell 1998, 40)

The EVA report is an example of the contradictory nature of the concept of the family in the politics and policies targeting reproductive agency. The contradictions are different in the different texts, but they also have some things in common. The GOV text considers the family a target of policies, but it is also private because the way the concept is used renders the notion opaque and does not consider what goes on inside the family. As far as EVA is con-

cerned, individuals rather than the state should decide about their own values, but these values should be family-oriented. The FF Program recognises that the family comprises different members, but these members cannot have conflicting interests. All three documents consider the family an important element in policies aimed at increasing the birth rate, but none of them take reproductive agency and the imaginary domain seriously. Either they aim to influence how people think about the family or they refuse to acknowledge full personhood for the men and women who form it. Social norms and public policies affect definitions of how the family should be understood. The chances of giving value and meaning to one's procreative life similarly decrease when the decision about reproduction is removed from the individual to the communal unit of the family. When policies and politics aim to influence people's attitudes with regard to the family, what is it that is being promoted? How is the family understood, and what is a family in these discourses?

4.4.3 Defining the family

Taking the family as a self-evident starting point for reproduction begs the questions of what a family is and what kind of a unit forms it. If the imaginary domain is to be taken seriously, the state should not define one model of the good family; predefinition as a monogamous heterosexual couple with children is limiting. The GOV and the EVA reports do not include any explicit definitions of the family and that can allow different kinds of formations, but this could also imply that the concept is so self-evident that there is no need to discuss what it means. This is not to say that there is no inherent understanding of what the family is in the texts. The FF Program is the only one of the three that explicitly addresses the question, although no definition is included in the main body of the report.

The FF text gives a definition in the glossary, adding that it varies somewhat depending on the statistical principles and the usage. According to Statistics Finland (the Finnish statistical agency), a family consists of a married or co-habiting couple and their unmarried children living with them, or one parent and his or her unmarried children living in the household. According to

this definition, a family includes at most two consecutive generations. It is noted, however, that it does not take into account all forms of co-habiting that may be counted as family life. (FF, 69) The definition is a formal one, but it is worth considering it more closely because it states some of the basic premises.

The definition gives certain basic limits, but it does leave some questions open. Three things are worth noting. Firstly, it is common in Finland to have children out of wedlock, hence the inclusion of unmarried couples with children; being married is not an important consideration in this context. This is not universally self-evident, however: in the US, for example, the meaning of marriage plays a bigger role in how the family is understood (see e.g., Fineman 2004). Secondly, the sex of the people forming the couple is not mentioned. In Finland, single women and lesbian couples are eligible for fertility treatment, thus according to this definition the family could be a lesbian couple with their own biological children. It is more rare, although not totally out of the question, for the definition to apply to homosexual men³⁷. Thirdly, even this vague definition excludes all other parenting and living arrangements except those based on a (at least formally) monogamous, conjugal relationship. Single parents are included, but not arrangements that involve more than two people taking care of the children. The model of the family is limited to a sexual relationship and kinship. Even if the FF definition is not the strictest – in other words it does not totally exclude unmarried or same-sex couples - the emphasis is on heterosexuality. There is no reference to the procreative process. Two generations are mentioned, which without explicit discussion about procreation incorporates the notion of biological reproduction and the presupposition of heterosexuality and kinship relations. The starting point is a couple, and the only exception mentioned is the single parent. Moreover, according to the definition, without a child or children there is no family.

A similar understanding of the family primarily as a heterosexual couple with children is implicit in the other two texts being redescribed here. The GOV report is very consistent in referring to the family as an opaque unit,

³⁷ This is because of the Finnish restrictions on same-sex couples' adoption and surrogate motherhood.

but the heterosexual presupposition is visible in some places, as in the following excerpt:

In workplaces, taking statutory family leave should be encouraged by providing adequate and permanent replacement arrangements. Fathers must also be encouraged to use their right to family leave and to take part in everyday activities at home. (GOV, 47)

The text refers to families as a unit, but at one point to 'fathers ... also'. The structure clearly implies that it is a mother and a father that form the unit.³⁸ The basic assumption in the EVA report is also that the family is a heterosexual couple comprising a mother and a father, as is clear in the section dealing with the weekly working hours of mothers and fathers, for example. The text describes the uneven development of equality between men and women in terms of domestic work, and how men are seen as 'assistant mothers' (EVA, 22). In its complementary use of words such as 'mother', 'father', 'men' and 'women' it implies unquestioned heterosexuality. The complementary use is seamless in that no explicit explanations are needed. An example of this is the analysis of how working life and having children are combined:

Parents of small children would seem to be in disadvantageous positions on the job market in that the costs of childcare are targeted indirectly at their employers. As long as mothers are the prime users of parental leave, their position is, of course, even more difficult than men's. (ibid., 23)

Assigning reproduction to heterosexual families is creating an environment that is potentially limiting from the perspective of reproductive agency. The imaginary domain is not respected if the family, by default, is understood to be heterosexual. The freedom to develop one's personal coherence, and reproduction as one element of that, implies the freedom to think about procreation

³⁸ The excerpt is interesting from a gender perspective, but I return to gender questions in Chapter six.

in non-heterosexual terms. There is also violation of the imaginary domain in the assumption that the focal relationship in the family is sexual in nature. It is quite possible for the family as a community or unit to be based on intimate relationships other than conjugal or sexual coupledness.

Although the notion of the heterosexual family is present in all three documents, the GOV report is more restrictive than the other two in that it does not discuss the family in any other way than as a biological unit. It refers to parents in the context of increasing the birth rate, the rate of births referring to biological children, and thus connects biology and family without taking into account the various family formations that exist today. Significantly, and related to the emphasis on biological connections and heterosexuality, in the GOV report in particular the family is understood as the nuclear family, which is a rather recent construction in historical terms. The concept was introduced as an ideal and as common practice during the late 19th century, but its position was firmly established in Finland in the 1920s and 1930s as a bourgeois family ideal in the name of national unity, at the same time as the public and private spheres started to separate³⁹ (Nätkin 2003, 18; Häggman 1994). Katja Yesilova recently studied nuclear-family 'ontology' in Finnish social policy. According to her, the nuclear family functions as a condition for normalcy, having the prerequisites for the normal development of children. It is the nuclear family that creates the natural conditions for a child's development, and is considered the basis of and a precondition for societal development. (Yesilova 2009, 159, 205-207)

Although the GOV policy document does not go into great detail, the idea of the nuclear family looms in the background and thus also implies preferences about how the family should be understood and its relations arranged. With regard to reproductive agency, the notion of the nuclear family is even more problematic than the idea of the heterosexual couple in that it may include presuppositions – such as marriage or assumptions about women's and men's roles – that bring further constraints and thus create specific environmental elements for reiteration and different forms of family life.

³⁹ For more about the ideal of family life connected to the construction of the Finnish nation state, see Häggman 1994.

4.4.4 Eroding the concept of the family

Although the family is largely understood in the three policy documents as a heterosexual, nuclear unit, there are some exceptions. In terms of reproductive agency, expanding the notion facilitates reconsideration of the procreative process. The EVA report acknowledges that there are different kinds of families, although it does not promote extensive rethinking. It notes that families are taking different forms, and that 37 per cent of them comprise other than traditional married couples with children. Furthermore, quite a large proportion of those consisting of a married couple and children are so-called reconstituted or blended families that include children from previous relationships. It is also mentioned that a small minority of families comprise same-sex couples with children. (EVA, 23)

It was acknowledged in the parliamentary debate⁴⁰ on the Government's report on the future that families come in various forms. Reconstituted families are mentioned, as is adoption as a reminder that not all child-parent connections are biological (see e.g., Eduskunta 2004, Taiveaho, Satu, Eduskunta 2004, Karttunen, Marjukka (vastauspuheenvuoro [response statement])). Remarks were made to the effect that single parenthood, divorce and new forms of families created by remarriage are common, and should not be forgotten. The GOV report does not properly take such changes into consideration and the Parliamentary debate reflected this deficiency in failing to acknowledge the transformation in family structures. Despite the recognition in the discussion that families come in various forms, and that there are gaps in the political understanding, the traditional model was also defended, as it is in parts of the three policy texts. Chapter 5, which concentrates on the economic perspective, examines the explicit defence of family values. This somewhat contradicts the economic argumentation about family policies and the role of financial circumstances in terms of having children.

One way of broadening the concept of the family is to advocate adoption and to support adoptive families. The FF, for example, proposes that

⁴⁰ I do not redescribe the parliamentary discussion in this study, but I make some observations as it is clearly connected to the GOV report and offers additional perspectives on the discussion about the family.

international adoption be made easier (FF, 33). Articulations on adoption expand the concept of the family to some degree, and disconnect it from biology. Children are still at the centre, but there are attempts to include non-biological children. Fertility treatment is discussed, and the need for more financial support for fertility services is highlighted (see e.g., *ibid.*). From the perspective of reproductive agency, promoting adoption and fertility services extends reproductive potential to some extent, but inherent in both is strong definition in terms of what constitutes a family and who counts as a parent. For example, adoption services define who is eligible to adopt. Eligible parents are further inspected, thus creating a definition of 'good parents'. Similarly, sexuality is a factor that affects the availability of fertility services: Finland provides services for lesbians but limits the use of surrogate mothers, thereby limiting gay men's parenthood. The definitions, which may be legal or created in the practices, then affect reproductive agency.

As the EVA report shows, there are minor shifts in thinking regarding families comprising same-sex couples, but on the whole this is not discussed in the three policy documents. Inherent in the notion of reproductive agency is the idea that it should be possible to rethink the concept of the family, but it should be borne in mind that talk about extending it to include same-sex couples is still talk about a family based on a sexual relationship. If the imaginary domain is to be taken seriously, it should be possible to imagine and form families based on relationships that are not sexual. Breaking the connection between the concept of the family and the central idea of a sexual relationship between its adult members entails, for example, thinking about teams of guardians that are affiliated with each other through friendship or a biological connection other than being a parent. Extending the notion of the family to include reconstituted families, adoptive parents and same-sex partners expands the possibilities for reproductive agency, but still retains the idea of a couple as the basis. The notion of the conjugal couple also characterises the understanding of kinship in the three policy documents.

4.4.5 Kinship and family

Defining the family is not only a matter of who belongs to the unit and who does not, but also involves issues of kinship and biology. Nowadays when divorces are common and reproductive technologies complicate the notion of biological reproduction, the question of what makes a family is not just theoretical, but people have to negotiate their understanding in their everyday lives. Issues such as parenthood, motherhood and fatherhood, are not self-evident and are constantly under negotiation. The negotiations are being increasingly subjected to analysis in studies focusing on new family forms, such as situations after a divorce (see e.g., Kuronen 2003 or Robinson, Nelson & Nelson 1997) or how children understand their family unit (Ritala-Koskinen 2003). It is curious that the three policy texts do not, for the most part, acknowledge that families are no longer self-evident and unchanging units.

Kinship is a background factor in the three policy documents, but it is not dealt with directly. How kinship is understood is one thing that structures how the family is comprehended, and consequently also the kind of policy proposals that are considered feasible. Conceptions of kinship also influence how reproductive agency is constructed in the texts in that it is connected to the procreative process through the centrality of the notion of the family. The idea of kinship that is present is what Marilyn Strathern calls Euro-American kinship⁴¹ (Strathern 1995), which is based on a biogenetic relationship. This may seem to be a self-evident or natural fact in the Euro-American cultural sphere, but the idea of 'blood ties' as the basis of kinship is not universally tied to the idea of someone being one's 'own flesh and blood'. (Strathern 1995, 348-349) As Strathern notes:

And while "flesh and blood" might be a symbol, it is a symbol for what Euro-Americans take to be literally true: that those joined by substance are kin, and it is the act of procreation that accomplishes the joining (ibid., 349).

⁴¹ See also David M. Schneider's classic study on American kinship (Schneider 1980/1968), as a form of Euro-American kinship.

The notion that those whose substance is joined in a child are kin is also the dominant base line in the texts under examination; they take it for granted that biological procreation is the basis of the family. As FF notes, for example, one of the motivations for having children is related to the continuation of life (FF, 31) and this as a reason for having children is presented as a fact that needs no explanation.

Strathern considers the concept of 'a natural fact' as foundational in how Euro-Americans see the primordial basis of human relations (Strathern 1995, 349). Such conceptions also effectively describe the starting point of the documents examined here. As the GOV text notes:

Regarding the birth rate, the objective will be to maintain the current level and encourage a rise in the number of births, by helping to create an environment in which more families can have their desired number of children. (GOV, 45)

A family created through biological reproduction is the basic model that needs no explanation, whereas other kinds of family forms are mentioned separately. For example, adoptive parents are considered an exception that are mentioned as being outside the norm but should not be dismissed when families are discussed.

The closeness of kin relations is also symbolised by the closeness of biogenetic identity. The procreative act of a conjugal pair constitutes the core of the family, and the child's genetic closeness to its parents endorses the nurturing closeness of the conjugal couple. Strathern notes:

Though parents were not born kin to each other, the child was born kin to both of them. The child they produced created a closeness, defined in the way familial and kinship relations overlapped. (Strathern 1995, 351)

It is the child that makes the family according to all of the three policy documents. A section in the FF Program, for example, analyses the reasons why men

and women as couples have children, noting that a network of relatives and generations is created through children (FF, 31). It is the child who creates the kin relationship between parents, who are not kin to each other to start with. When the child is born both parents join a network of relations of which they would not otherwise be a part. The child is in a central position in the process that forms the family. There cannot be a family without a child, and in accordance with the logic of Euro-American kinship, the child is a biological production of the conjugal couple.

All these conceptions of the family that circulate in the policy texts examined here are also present in the political sphere in Finland in general. On the legal level there have been attempts since the 1960s to separate the notion of the family from moral, religious and social conceptions. Of course, family law is not value-neutral, and is influenced by various social forces, but the legal family is currently not an institution, it is rather a relationship created by individuals with individual rights. (Pylkkänen 2008, 71-72) Although issues such as sexuality restrict the substantive notion of the legal family, throughout the 20th century the direction was away from substantive formulations in the law. Current law is less and less prescriptive in terms of how people should conduct their family lives, but this is not necessarily reflected in the political sphere. As evidenced in the redescrptions here, there have been attempts to define what the family should mean to people, and how people should live their family lives.

It is clear that the potential for reproductive agency is limited by the ways in which the notion of the family is understood in the three texts. The limitation is on many levels: conceptualising the family as heterosexual or monogamous, or based on a sexual relationship, or advocating individualism that is founded on the only life choice of procreation in the traditional family. The writers of the documents may not have meant to limit the choices in proposing how people think about their reproductive possibilities, but when having children is strictly attached to the family and the family is defined within the constraints of the Euro-American kinship system, it cannot have any other effect. Just as expectations of biological reproduction affect the space for imagining things differently, laws and regulations about procreation affect the space for reiterating and living one's life differently. As Judith Butler notes, when the state holds the

monopoly to grant the legal recognition of kinship relations, its refusal to grant recognition to certain kinds of intimate relationships – in the contexts of the three policy documents one could mention adoption for same-sex couples – signifies a sense derealisation and delegitimation of those relationships (Butler 2004, 112-118). This limited understanding of the family implies a two-fold effect on reproductive agency: on what can be imagined as possible and on the possibility in practice to reiterate or live differently the hegemonic understanding.

4.5 Conclusion

In conclusion of my description and redescription of the concept of the family in the three policy documents, I will summarise the various positions and understandings. First, however, I will offer a very different viewpoint on the question of families, children and reproduction as political issues than the notions inspired by Cornell. In so doing I wish to bring a totally new perspective to thinking about reproductive issues.

Lee Edelman's polemical book *No Future*, which was published in 2004, deals with reproductive futurism and the figure of the Child as a political tool. Elaborating on Lacanian theory, Edelman, a Queer theorist, argues that the figure of the Child is something that is impossible to deny in politics, and that it shapes the logic within which the political is forced to be thought. This logic compels the framing of political debate in terms of reproductive futurism. The Child is the perpetual horizon of all political intervention and promotes reproductive futurism, which privileges heteronormative procreation. Edelman's answer to reproductive futurism is queer, which he connects with the Lacanian concept of the death drive and which embodies future-negation, narcissism and resistance to meaning. (Edelman 2004, 1-31) He notes that assuming the queer position might make it possible to 'undertake the impossible project of imagining an oppositional political stance exempt from the imperative to reproduce the politics of signification (the politics aimed at closing the gap opened up by the signifier itself), which can only return us, by way of the Child, to the politics of

reproduction' (ibid., 27). In criticising the fetishization of the figure of the Child he is proposing a different kind of political logic based on something other than reproductive futurism.

My purpose here is not to examine Edelman's argumentation more closely⁴², but to offer a glimpse into a kind of logic aimed at disrupting the conventional way of thinking about politics as something that is closely connected to the idea of the future and future generations. Edelman's notions of reproductive futurism and the figure of the Child are also relevant to my work. It is clear from my description and redescription that children and the future are unquestioned values in the three documents on the need for a population policy, and are not challenged from any viewpoint.

The family, which requires children, is one of the elements that structures understandings of reproduction and population policies. The Euro-American understanding of kinship specifies the family in an unquestioned way in the sense that its position in the thinking about population policies is not examined in the discourses I study. The family is primarily understood as a heterosexual and at least a formally monogamous relationship, which has its basis in the sexual relationship between the adults. The child is the connecting element that makes the man and the woman kin to each other and thus creates the family unit with kinship ties and networks of relatives. There are some signs of relaxation of the concept, but often in terms of exceptions to the norm and not something that should be given the same weight and valuation as the traditional family.

In formulating the notion of reproductive agency I draw on the work of Drucilla Cornell, who offers a different approach to the question of heteronormative privilege than Edelman. She does not attempt to deny the future, but rather sees it as a necessary concept in terms of personality formation. This does not imply that she wishes to reinforce the heteronormative and patriarchal structure of the family, however. On the contrary, she offers theorisation that aims to disrupt the traditional understanding. She notes that living out the sexuate being is a fundamental aspect of one's personality, and this includes for

⁴² For criticism of Edelman's thought see e.g., the Introduction and Chapter 5 in Muñoz 2009.

example the question of whether or not to marry (Cornell 1998, 41). Furthermore, '[w]hether and how one represents oneself as a mother is clearly a personality-defining decision' (ibid., 42); thus everyone should have the right to imagine their reproductive lives as freely as possible, the right to reproductive agency.

According to Cornell, 'the promotion of the integrity of heterosexual monogamous marriage in a politically liberal society is illegitimate because it violates the sanctuary of personality, the imaginary domain' (ibid., 39). The question is how the idea of the imaginary domain with its refusal to give substance or content to our imaginations can be successful in re-thinking and re-living the family. Cornell notes that imagined settings need to be translated into real space – she uses housing laws as an example – so that intimate relationships may be actualised and represented (ibid., 43), and she offers broad guidelines on how family law could be reformed. However, it may be difficult to broaden the idea of the family in everyday politics, where change is always piecemeal and based on existing systems.

It is clear that the construction of family policies that are at the core of Finnish population policy has taken decades, during which time conceptions of the family have changed. The changes are built upon the old structures and are thus rather piecemeal. Some of the policies and policy proposals are formulated so as to enable different kinds of family arrangements, such as the provisions for paternity and family leave that allow the roles of men and women to be arranged differently to some degree, but they are not necessarily used. There have also been attempts to bring equality measures into family policies, such as the redistribution of the economic and employment-related burden of having children, and the division of family leave between the parents, but if people's attitudes and imaginaries remain in the mode of the traditional family, it is difficult to see how these policies will actually bring about change. Cornell calls for a deeper change, which requires giving women full recognition as persons and subjects of rights (see e.g. Cornell 1995, 83-91), and that involves more than just tinkering with individual policies. Change is, however, more difficult. Moreover, policies defining how family lives should be conducted, even if designed with

equality in mind, could be deemed unwanted from the perspective of reproductive agency because they imply there is only one way of looking at the issue.

A basic question concerning the notion and institution of the family, and its historicising and expansion, is whether it is possible to have population policies without such a concept. As has become clear, family policies are at the core of the discussion on population policies in the documents. In the current climate such policies refer to a wide range of public activities ranging from housing support to maternity leave, and are focused on the family. It thus seems difficult to think in terms of population policies and measures aimed at affecting the birth rate without the concept of the family. Despite the problems thus involved in creating wide-ranging policy proposals, I believe that population policies and family policies in general are one area of politics in which understandings of the family could be more flexible and open. Fundamental redefinition requires more than just policy change or governmental action, however. It seems from the above discussion, as well as from Cornell's attempt to formulate a reform of family law rather than to get rid of the entire concept of the family, that the family is still an important site of intimate relations. My conception of reproductive agency offers perspectives in terms of re-iterating, or living differently, the hegemonic understanding. We also need everyday contestations of restrictive representations of how the family should be acted out and lived.

5 Thematic description and redescription II: Economics

5.1 Introduction

The second major theme in the three policy documents concerns the economic aspects of the population question. Demographic development is generally considered one of the elements in national economic development, and Finland is no exception: demographics is strongly related to the future, continuity of the nation and its economic success. Chapter nine in the GOV report, entitled 'Strengthening the potential for economic growth' (GOV, 57), is a good example of the focus on economic success. My description and redescription in this chapter, therefore, concentrates on the economic perspective of the population-policy discourse in the three documents, with specific reference to how various conditions either enhance or prevent reproductive agency. First I recap Drucilla Cornell's ideas about the prerequisites for the imaginary domain in order to shed light on the connection with reproductive agency; what is needed to facilitate the process of personality development. I also examine the connection between the imaginary domain and matters of public policy. I then show how the economic perspective is present in the three policy documents. All the documents include economic considerations: the GOV report concentrates most heavily on macroeconomic questions such as employment and competitiveness, whereas EVA and FF focus more on the financial situation of families and on family policies.

I redescrbe the documents in the third section of the chapter. In terms of economics, one of the main areas concerns family policies, which are seen as an essential tool in increasing the birth rate. The documents also consider macroeconomic problems connected to demographics such as employment, GDP growth and competitiveness. Although I do consider the macroeconomic perspective, my redescription emphasises family policies, which are more significant in the light of the aim to influence the conditions of reproductive agency more directly. I also examine a counter-discourse to economics talk, the focus being on family values and the counter-approach to the view that having

children is primarily a financial decision. The gender aspect of the family-values discourse is analysed in the next chapter, but it warrants attention here, too, because it is presented as a counter-argument to the economic viewpoint.

5.2 Expansion of the redescriptive tool: conditions for the imaginary domain

Earlier I examined Drucilla Cornell's views on the imaginary domain in terms of the formation of the self, and explained my use of the concept in developing the notion of reproductive agency. I now turn my attention to the conditions in which personality formation, and thus also reproductive agency, is enacted. Cornell writes a great deal about the need for the imaginary domain and its role in personality formation, but for her it is not given. The conditions in which the personality forms are not irrelevant, and the formation of the imaginary domain is dependent on the existing society and culture. The existing society, furthermore, is linked to different kinds of social arrangements, and to economic and policy issues. The connection between the imaginary domain – and reproductive agency – and a state's economic and social arrangements is not self-evident, and might at first seem tenuous, but it is apparent that the kinds of economic and social policies that are in place and how they are realised affect the process of personality formation and reproductive agency. An important element in personality formation is freedom, which I formulate here in line with Drucilla Cornell's thinking.

As noted in the second chapter, Cornell sees freedom as an essential element in the formation of the personality, and as closely connected to the notion of the imaginary domain. I will now introduce a new, related aspect. Cornell writes that the freedom to struggle to become a person, to try to cohere as a self, is a chance or an opportunity, and this chance is dependent on a prior set of conditions that are needed for individuation (Cornell 1995, 5). The prior set of conditions refers to the very basic conditions that are necessary, but not suffi-

cient for the formation of individuality⁴³ (ibid., 4, 240n2). I elaborate on her thinking and consider these conditions from a broader perspective that takes into account not just the minimum requirements, but also what might constitute a sufficient set of conditions for the open-ended process of personality formation.

Implicit in the idea that the freedom to become a person is a chance is the presence of certain societal elements that make freedom, or to be more precise the ideal of freedom, possible. One element in the quest to form one's personality freely is the question of justice, and the ways in which equality and privacy are understood. As I see it, the notions of substantive equality, or societal and economic arrangements, are relevant here. Cornell is not proposing that equal protection of the imaginary domain requires control over all aspects of life in the name of substantive equality (Cornell 1998, 26). In general, she uses the notion of the imaginary domain in a way that does not make substantive claims about its content. Nevertheless, this does not mean that there are no repercussions as to how societal or economic arrangements are considered.

Cornell writes:

The problem with most theories of justice, from a feminist perspective, is that they have not adequately addressed conditions of inclusion because they have failed to address the relationship between the ideal of the free person and the project all human beings have of orienting themselves as to their sexuate being. An equivalent law of persons would clearly demand that the scope of distributive justice be sufficient to ensure the right to the self-representation of each person's sexuate being. (ibid.)

Distributive justice is thus connected to self-representation. Cornell's notion of distributive justice refers here to the kind of material conditions

⁴³ These are bodily integrity, the protection of the imaginary domain, and access to sufficient symbolic forms and linguistic skills that enable a person to differentiate themselves from others (Cornell 1995, 4).

and economic resources that are necessary for and influence the formation of a coherent personality. Certain societal conditions must be present if people are to be free in terms of personality formation, and these conditions can be evaluated against the ideal of the imaginary domain. Although Cornell does not make any substantive proposals, her ideal of freedom may be used to evaluate policies and could affect how one thinks about society's economic arrangements. In addition, because Cornell considers freedom and the imaginary domain ideal, i.e. they can never be fully realised, societal arrangements assume importance in any attempt to realise the ideals

What does evaluating policies mean in practice? By way of an example I will briefly consider Cornell's views on abortion and related policies. Cornell supports free abortion⁴⁴, but being able to choose abortion, which is the form or the logic of current US legalisation, does not comply sufficiently with her notion of the imaginary domain. As she notes, '[s]ince abortion does involve the need for access to some kind of medical facility, the state may not prevent women from being able to live out their own self-images by making it either well-nigh impossible or unsafe for them to actually have abortion' (Cornell 1995, 67). She thus insists that the state should offer publicly funded free abortion, which enables all women to live out their self-images. This example of abortion policies illustrates how the economic conditions in which a woman lives can be used as justification for certain policy arrangements, not because the woman is entitled to benefits *per se*, but because these benefits are essential in the formation of the personhood to which everyone should be entitled.

When one views the need for state involvement in people's lives from the perspective of the imaginary domain, the question that arises is whether a social policy or public arrangement, or a law enhances or inhibits one's ability to cohere and imagine oneself as a whole. It is possible to evaluate whether a certain policy strengthens ability to have the imaginary domain. Policies should not be structured in a way that defines content of the imaginary domain; in other words, there should not be predefined notions about how people construct their identities. Continuing with the example of abortion policies, it

⁴⁴ For more about Cornell's views on abortion rights see e.g., Cornell 1995, Chapter 2.

could be said that publicly funded free abortions enable women to have an abortion when they judge it to be the best for them, but they do not force anyone to have an abortion. Those whose sense of coherence requires them to have an abortion are able to have one, but those whose imaginary selves do not accept abortion or for whom it is not consistent with their identifications are not forced into it. Cornell's thought, even though it emphasises freedom, does not automatically view public policies negatively. They have an essential role in the continuing formation of the personality, and may guarantee, at least to some extent, that people are able to cohere into a self and to secure their imaginary domains. In other words, public policies can promote freedom, as Cornell understands it.

Public policies are connected to economics. The perspective on economics in this study is twofold. Firstly, it is possible to examine the conditions guaranteeing that a person can retain a sense of imaginary coherence, or at least recognise the ideal as something to be aimed at. These conditions are connected to various policy arrangements, which in turn are connected to state and public financing. This first perspective concerns specific policies and discourses about policies, and the way they affect the imaginary domain and people's ability to imagine themselves as a whole. Secondly, emanating from the notion of specific policies is the more macro-level perspective covering the financing of state and public policies and the general logic behind macroeconomics.

Policies as conditions enabling the imaginary domain, and thus also reproductive agency, are not addressed directly in the debates described and redescribed in this study, but policies aimed at influencing the birth rate create conditions for reproductive agency through proposing economic and political solutions. I will focus briefly on the macroeconomic perspective because it is so salient in some of the selected policy documents. In terms of reproductive agency, formulations of policy arrangements that affect the economic conditions for the process of self-development are more significant in this context.

5.3 Thematic description II

In this section I describe the economic discussion in the three selected documents in relation to the questions of demography and the birth rate. The connection between economics and demographics is two-fold. First, on the macro-economic level, there is concern about Government finances in a situation in which demographic development is not balanced, and the older age groups are becoming larger in relation to the younger, productive groups. This concerns public or Governmental finances, and the more comprehensive question of national economic development. Secondly, in connection with finding solutions to these demographic challenges, there are micro-level questions to do with family policies, the balance between work life and family life, and the financial circumstances of individuals and families in general in relation to their willingness to have (more) children. This perspective is related to social policy and is more directly connected to the financial conditions of the imaginary domain and reproductive agency. I start my description on the macroeconomic level.

5.3.1 Demographics and economic development

The connection between demographic and economic development is stressed in the three selected policy documents, all of which take for granted the link between population and economic growth. There are differences in emphasis and approach, however. The GOV report focuses in particular on economic growth, public finances and competitiveness, and a growing population is considered vital for the future of the Finnish welfare state and the general wellbeing of the nation. There are several chapters dedicated to economic issues: Chapter 9 is entitled 'Strengthening the potential for economic growth', Chapter 10 'Reform of benefit schemes', and Chapter 11 'Safeguarding regional development and basic public services', and all questions are related in one way or another to the economic perspective. There are also sections in many of the other chapters that touch on themes related to finance.

Questions concerning macro-level economic development are not as prominent in the other two policy documents. They are mentioned, but the main focus is on the connection between the economic situation of families and

the willingness to have children. Both concentrate more on family policies, although FF clearly refers to their effectiveness in a more positive light, whereas EVA views them and their effects on the birth rate with suspicion. I return to the question of family policies in the next section.

All these economic questions, meaning the different policies on the practical level and macroeconomic questions such as national competitiveness and concern about the gross domestic product, are related. The logic of the different aspects can be described as circular. The starting point is the idea of economic growth, which – especially in the GOV report – is considered essential for the maintenance of the welfare state. The welfare state then creates family policies aimed at affecting the birth rate in a positive way. When people have more children it guarantees a productive work force and a body of consumers, which also means that economic growth is secured. Although the macroeconomic perspective and concerns about family policies are intertwined, for analytical reasons I will separate them as this facilitates a more detailed redescription.

The macroeconomic aspects of population growth are dealt with in the three documents within distinct themes. One of the most visible is the notion of the aging population, which is considered the main demographic trend affecting Finnish society and economics. This issue incorporates different strands that are obviously related to differing degrees. These strands represent major economic themes, such as employment and competitiveness, but since they are addressed in terms of the demographic challenge, i.e. the aging population, the perspective is restricted. Accordingly, although the GOV report examines many economic themes, the problem of the aging population is usually there in one form or another. It is considered one of main challenges facing the Finnish government in the near future. Not only will there be more elderly people, the balance between the older and the younger, productive generations will change. The report notes:

Aging implies a change in the relative size of different age groups. Ageing is a phenomenon affecting the whole society, and due to its effects the number of children and working-age people will decrease while the proportion of old people will grow. (GOV, 12)

Thus the ageing process will influence economic development and employment, and will have a considerable impact on public finances and the financing of the welfare system (ibid.). It will affect how people spend their time, it will entail change in the need for different services, and it will create new consumer demand (ibid., 26-28).

Chapter 1 of the EVA report, entitled 'Finns are a decreasing and ageing nation' (EVA, 7), also deals with the aging population and the consequent demographic challenges. It draws attention to the ratio between productive and non-productive members of society, the so-called dependency ratio, and to the challenges that the rising number of dependent citizens will bring (ibid., 7-9). The report also includes a brief analysis of the demographic prognoses and factors affecting the size of the population, such as the birth rate, the death rate and immigration (ibid., 9-16). The Family Federation's Population Policy Program covers population change in Chapter 3.1 ('Population Development') and 3.2 ('Age Structure') (FF, 11). It takes a more demographic perspective, however, focusing more on the population structure and development and less on analysing the financial ramifications.

The discourses on the ageing population include many concepts and issues that come up in all the documents, such as the dependency ratio, the financing of pensions, competitiveness and employment rates. All these are issues that are affected as the age structure of the Finnish nation changes and the population becomes older, and the proportion of the productive population (i.e. people of working age) relative to the dependent population, pensioners in particular, declines. The problem of the aging population is not just a question of financing pensions, however. Other challenges include the changing structure of the workforce, which affects availability and regional and professional mobility; the increasing need for services, which also creates regional differences and thus affects the provision and financing of basic public services; and the slower economic growth in general due to the smaller and older workforce, the slowing down of productivity growth, and the changing structure of domestic demand favouring the service sector in which productivity is lower (GOV, 26-34).

Although ageing is considered a problem, there are also attempts to see the positive sides. The Government report notes that older people have experience and wisdom, and that the new generations of retirees are wealthier and have more purchasing power (*ibid.*, 28, 43-44), and thus constitute a consumer group with purchasing potential. The FF report remarks that aging is not a disability, and that an ageing society does not mean a society that is getting worse (FF, 7). Despite these positive aspects, however, it is clear that aging is seen mainly as a challenge that will create problems for Finnish society. The main demographic challenge is considered a legitimate worry for the Finnish Government. Through this the documents go on to analyse all sorts of economic problems that will arise as the proportions of pensioners and older people increase. The GOV report in particular analyses the effects from many perspectives ranging from regional development to the reforming of the benefit and social-security systems. All these questions are addressed in terms of demographics. An example of this is the focus on the availability of welfare services: as there will be fewer people there may not be enough employees in the sector, meaning an erosion in public funding and a growing need at the same time (GOV, 33).

Another issue that is brought up in connection with the question of the diminishing population is immigration. I do not examine this question more closely here, but it is noteworthy that the EVA report is the most negative, stating that immigration is not the solution to the demographic challenges that Finland faces (EVA, 11-12). The GOV report and the FF Program take a somewhat more positive attitude, but they also see immigration as a limited solution, and emphasise that it should be work-based and controlled (GOV, 48-50, FF, 36-39). None of the three documents see it as a solution to the problem of population growth. It is more important to raise the birth rate among Finnish people through the introduction of different kinds of family-policy measures.

5.3.2 Family policies and the economic conditions for having children

Concern about the economic development of the Finnish nation is strongly present in the GOV report, and is also visible in the EVA report. Both documents consider economic growth vital for Finland, and population growth as an important factor in it. Population growth may be stimulated by different kinds of policy measures that could be called family policies, and this is the second focus of the financial preoccupations I distinguish in these documents. Family policies are also at the heart of the FF interest and thus constitute a theme that is present in all three documents, although the perspectives vary. There are differing viewpoints on the basic question of effectiveness, for example. The FF report notes that the universal welfare-state model and a certain level of social security seem to be a precondition for keeping the birth rate near the renewal level (FF, 28), and the GOV report also considers family policies essential in raising the Finnish birth rate. The EVA report takes a more critical stance, emphasising individual responsibility. The question of whether family policies have an effect on the birth rate, and if so to what extent, is not relevant to my study. Whether they are effective or not, they are a central element in the debate on population issues and the need to raise the birth rate.

Defining what policies count as family policies is tricky in that many public activities clearly affect the lives of families. An exact definition is not necessary for my purposes, and I do not give one here - nor do the documents I examine. There are some distinctions, however. For example, it is possible to separate policies dealing with direct cash benefits such as child benefit (*lapsilisä*), services such as childcare, and other support systems such as maternity and family leave. Different types of policies have different operational logics, and there are also differences inside the groupings in how and by what logic they function. Benefits may be means-tested or universal, fees may be flat rate or based on income, and actions in addition to the application may or may not be required. For example, Finnish child benefit (*lapsilisä*) is paid for children under the age of 17, it is not dependent on income and needs only an application. Maternity benefit (*äitiysavustus*) can be included in the same group of di-

rect cash benefits: it can be taken as a lump sum of 140 euros or as a maternity pack containing everyday things needed for early childcare. It requires medical examination of the expectant mother, however. In income-based policies parents' incomes affect the fees; an example of this is the public provision of childcare. Knowing the exact content of the policies is not relevant to my analyses, but it is good to be aware of the different ways in which families are supported.

My examination of the themes in the discourses related to family policies in the documents clearly revealed that one of the main issues concerns the combining of work and family life. It is a multi-faceted question, but the basic assumption is that securing a high level of employment and participation in the work force are essential for the economic survival of the nation and for the survival of the welfare state. The Finnish welfare system was built on the assumption that women are full-time participants in the work force (see e.g., Julkunen 1994), and this question is often considered in more detail in the documents. Women's working is not always seen as merely positive, however, or as something that should be encouraged. I examine the gendered viewpoint in Chapter 5.

The GOV report takes it as self-evident that both parents work: it is families that have children and thus it is family life and work life that have to be combined. The work perspective is the most prominent theme in the section of the report dealing with favourable conditions for having children. The combining of work with having a family is dealt with on rather a general level, although family leave and the problem of fixed-term work contracts are mentioned on a more specific level (GOV, 46-47). Of the texts examined here, the GOV report takes the broadest approach to the question of employment and the labour market, which is logical given its focus on preparing for the changes in the age structure. It includes a section on reducing unemployment and increasing the labour supply (*ibid.*, 57-59), which are important questions from the perspective of economic growth on the national level.

The question of family policies is not as strongly concentrated on the combination of work life and parenthood in the FF document. Although it mentions the need for a more child-friendly work culture, one that would make it easier to combine the demands of family and work life (FF, 32), it pays the

least attention to policy proposals connected to the labour-market side of the work life - family life balance. It traces the development of the labour force (ibid., 21-22), but with regard to policy proposals it does not recommend specific actions. The focus is more on policies that would enable parents to stay at home than on changes in the labour market itself. Examples of policies it promotes include raising the maternity allowance and home-care subsidy (ibid., 34-35). The focus is more on the need for parents to spend time with and care for their children than on the structures and practices of working life.

The EVA report analyses the Finnish labour market from several perspectives: the sub-headings in the chapter 'Why do Finns not have children?' include 'Women concentrate on work and a career', 'Working life does not leave room for children' and 'Unbearable uncertainty prevails in the world of fixed-term contracts' (EVA). As the sub-headings suggest, these sections analyse women's position on the labour market, family policies directed at combining work and family life, and the pressures in the current work environment. The take on family policies is more sceptical than in the other two documents, but EVA also acknowledges that when people feel more pressure at work it affects their attitudes and plans regarding the family (EVA, 23).

One of the major issues in the discussion on the combination of work and family life is childcare, and all the texts deal with this question to some extent. Even the EVA report, which questions the effectiveness of family policies, admits that successful childcare arrangements have mitigated the effects of women's participation in the work force on the birth rate (ibid., 22). Other examples of childcare-related issues include the FF demand to lower the costs of day care (FF, 35) and the GOV stress on the importance of maintaining various day-care options (GOV, 46). Although publicly funded childcare is seen as an important part of the Finnish welfare system, and is referred to in these texts, it is dealt with here in a surprisingly cursory manner. The discourse on the importance of combining working and having children or a family does not discuss childcare arrangements in a very detailed manner, the FF gives it the most detailed attention.

Studying is an issue related to the larger question of combining work and family life. All the documents consider it important to improve the

position of students who have children. Studying times are long in Finland, and people graduate at an older age than in many other European countries. All the texts consider it vital to provide services that would facilitate having children while studying. EVA pays the least attention to students in terms of the policy proposals directed at them, but its report does analyse the possible causal connection between the long studying times and the low birth rate. It offers possible solutions including raising the birth rate among students, but notes that attempts to shorten studying times may result in students having even fewer children than they do now (EVA, 24-26). The FF makes more detailed propositions to make it easier for students to have children, such as reinstating the child increment of the study grant and making study loans flexible enough to take into account the family situation (FF, 34). The GOV report takes a much more general approach, but notes that increasing financial assistance will promote a faster studying pace, and that it should be possible to combine childcare and studying (GOV, 46-47).

All the above-mentioned policy sectors and proposals clearly concern family policies. The difficulty in defining what counts as family policy or a policy that has effects on the birth rate is exemplified in the housing policies that also feature in the documents. The EVA report does not pay attention to it, although it mentions housing policies as one of the areas included in a wide understanding of what family policies are (EVA, 18). The GOV and FF reports, however, see housing as one of the areas to be taken into account when policies aimed at influencing the birth rate are drawn up. As the GOV report notes, '[t]he housing expenses of families with children often swallow up a large part of their income and, for many families, increasing the burden of such expenses is not possible'. There is a clear need for affordable, high-quality housing, which should be pursued by means of a land-use policy, especially in major cities (GOV, 47). The FF also places importance on housing policies, noting how they can significantly affect young families and their decision to have children or not (FF, 34).

The questions of economic growth, financial support for families and economic conditions feature strongly when population policy is discussed in the three documents. Not all of them deal with all economic aspects, although

there are overlapping themes. The GOV report takes the broadest perspective given its assumed responsibility for the economic growth of Finland. The EVA report, which shows scepticism towards family policies in general, takes a different approach. It analyses different economic aspects, but concludes that it is impossible to tell whether or not family policies are effective, and that it is more important to concentrate on the values that people hold (EVA, 32-36). In questioning the relevance of monetary considerations in general when people make decisions about having children the EVA report differs from the two other policy documents, both of which take it as axiomatic that the family economic situation is an important factor.

EVA expresses doubts as to whether low incomes and inadequate benefits really explain the falling birth rate, given that decades ago when benefits were smaller, working weeks were longer and studying was financed by the family rather than study grants, the birth rate was still higher than now (*ibid.*, 35-36). The report draws attention to the values that people hold, and at the same time questions the reasonableness of public expenditure on family policies. The FF and GOV reports, in contrast, claim that financial support for families is necessary in terms of increasing the birth rate and, consequently, maintaining population growth. The FF report states clearly that it is a task of society to maintain conditions that support the decision to have children (FF, 8), and although it attaches importance to the values people hold (*ibid.*, 31-32), it also deals extensively with the financial aspects and notes, for example, that economic uncertainty is one of the main reasons why people under 30 do not have children (*ibid.* 33-34). The GOV report stresses the positive connection between the birth rate and family policy, referring to the fact that countries with advanced family policies and measures that allow the combining of family and work life also have the highest birth rates (GOV, 46).

As this description shows, demographics and economics are closely connected in the three documents. Inherent in the two different levels of argumentation, the macroeconomic connection between population growth and economic success, and family policies as means to affect population growth, are certain notions of how economics and finances affect decisions related to repro-

duction. I now turn to redescription in order to explore some of these values and notions.

5.4 Thematic redescription II

My focus in this redescription is on family policies. I consider the macroeconomic perspective only briefly, as the notion of reproductive agency is more directly connected to the family policies and to the conditions the policies create for the formation of the procreative personality. The redescription covers four perspectives. First I look briefly at the macroeconomic discourse of understanding people as power, and then move on to the policy-oriented views of reproduction normativity and procreation as a rational decision. Finally I examine the counter-discourse to the economic viewpoint, which reveals that the seemingly unanimously positive attitude to family policies is not the only opinion in Finland.

5.4.1 Macroeconomics: people as power

The idea of connecting the population and the evaluation of (economic) development arose relatively recently. Although the numbers and quality of inhabitants have long been a major element in governance of a land, the population became a specific object of governance only in the 17th century (Koivusalo 1994, 53). There was a significant conceptual advance in the 19th century with the development of statistics and its introduction into everyday language (Duden 1992, 147-148), which facilitated the observation of people in quantitative terms. According to Barbara Duden:

These new concepts made it possible to uncover general truths about mass phenomena even though the cause of each particular action was unknown and remained inaccessible. Populations were attributed forms of 'behaviour', explained now by 'probability'. Statistics became the new 'Latin' of all modern sciences and the term 'population' lost its tie to actual people. (ibid., 148)

The population was already the subject of research and policies in many countries in the 19th and early 20th centuries (see e.g., Lento 1948). It also assumed importance in debates about development in the 1950s, and became a very significant variable in the development calculus and the politics and policies regarding developing nations. (Duden 1992, 150-152) According to Duden, '[b]y the late '70s population appears in policy statements as a variable in the algorithm to which the whole immensely complicated development process had been reduced' (ibid., 154). On the political level the population has become a multifaceted problem in the 21st century, and examined from the European perspective there are at least two discourses that are characterised in many ways by hypocrisy and disconnection. First there is the drop in European birth rates, which happened in the early twentieth century, and the policies and debates around that theme (see e.g., Lento 1948, 190; Ritamies 2006, 19), and secondly there is the discussion on overpopulation in the developing world that started in the 1950s. The global debate on development and population issues differs in perspective from the debate on the European level. The Finnish documents examined clearly diverge from the global view in which overpopulation is often considered a problem. The three policy texts are in line with the Euro-centred perspective, according to which the decline in the population is strictly a domestic matter.

Macroeconomic considerations and the role of the population are prominent in the GOV report, which focuses on the general economic development of Finland. The continuing economic growth is connected to the population question in that population growth, and implicitly women's role in the process as the ones giving birth, is vital for the survival of the nation. Nira Yuval-Davis calls this kind of talk 'people as power discourse'. She writes:

In this discourse [of people as power], the future of 'the nation' is seen to depend on its continuous growth. Sometimes this growth can be based also on immigration. At other times, it depends almost exclusively in the reproductive powers of women who are called upon to have more children. The need for people – often primarily

for men – can be for a variety of nationalistic purposes, civil and military. They can be needed as workers, as settlers, as soldiers. (Yuval-Davis 1997, 29)

Although the policy texts do not promote strong pronatalist ideas, they still suggest that the future of the nation is dependent on continuous economic growth, and that economic growth requires at least a replacement-level birth rate. Furthermore, women's role in matters to do with the birth rate is indisputably different from that of men. The gender perspective is analysed in the next chapter, but even at this point it can be said that, given the current cultural, social and political arrangements, the effects of policies that target procreation are stronger on women's reproductive agency and imaginary domain. One factor in this relates to the current cultural and social values attached to motherhood and women's role as mothers.

The idea of people as power discourse is especially noticeable in the GOV text: people are considered essential for national economic development, i.e. as workers and consumers. The need for continual economic growth features very strongly. An entire chapter is dedicated to the consolidation of growth through reducing unemployment and increasing the labour supply, and the chapter on regional development also concentrates on economics (GOV, chapters 9 and 11). The consumer perspective is present, for instance, in the way pensioners are perceived as consumers who will create a demand for leisure products, travel and culture (GOV, 76). In general, the concern with national economics reflects the growing importance of economic issues in current politics. As Anu Kantola points out, the management of public finances and economic questions have assumed major significance in Finnish political governance, especially since the Second World War (Kantola 2002, 292-293). The discussion often focuses on budgetary measures and public funding needs rather than value preferences or ideologies. Politicians approach issues from the perspective of economics, and public funding and policies, and not in terms of whether particular values are important. As one parliamentarian noted when the GOV report was discussed: 'Money reveals the true values of society, everything else is just talk [*hymistelyä*]' (Eduskunta 2004, Kasvi, Jyrki, (ryhmäpu-

heenvuoro [group statement])). The centrality of economics in Governmental policy is reflected in the GOV text, which refers to people as workers who contribute to economic growth with their labour input, and as consumers who enhance economic growth with their purchasing power.

Economic growth requires people, and in that way population growth is economically important. The logic is that it is acceptable to try to influence people's procreative behaviour in the name of a greater good, in other words economic growth. The basic premise is that the right measures will affect population development, i.e. if the policies are right, people will have more children. This is not consistent with the ideas of the imaginary domain and reproductive agency, however, which demand that people have the freedom to decide about procreation. Taking reproductive agency seriously means giving people the opportunity not only to reproduce, but also to refuse to reproduce. Everybody should be allowed to imagine their coherence as they wish, and imaginary coherence may mean not having children. Drucilla Cornell notes that women's reproductive capacities continue to be used to override their own choices about whether to become or remain pregnant in the name of the greater good of future life (Cornell 1998, 66), and that overriding women's own decisions violates their imaginary domains. Pushing for policies that promote one view of procreation in the name of national economic development is creating an environment that is not conducive to reproductive agency.

Although the connection between economic growth and the success of the nation, and by implication the wellbeing of its citizens, is taken for granted, there are views that cast doubt on the idea that the continuous pursuit of more wealth guarantees wellbeing. As Richard Easterlin notes, the connection between declining population growth and declining economic growth is far from clear, and that between economic growth and wellbeing is not straightforward: in other words, faster economic growth does not necessarily enhance the wellbeing of a nation (Easterlin 1996, 113-127, 131-144). Although the selected policy texts acknowledge that population growth in absolute numbers is not the answer to all problems, and that the age structure matters, they still usually end up emphasising growth. For example, the FF notes that the current focus is on the population structure more than its size (FF, 10), but still the policy targets

concentrate on growth (see e.g., FF 50-51). The GOV report also focuses strongly on the aging population and how it affects Finland, and yet advocates population policies aimed at increasing the number of Finnish people (see e.g., GOV, chapter 6.1). Despite the brief references to other things besides population growth in absolute numbers, in the final analysis the reports deal with how to increase the birth rate, which they connect with economic growth with a view to influencing people's reproductive decisions.

5.4.2 Having children as a financial decision: normativity of reproduction and rational calculations

I begin my examination of specific policies aimed at affecting the birth rate from the basic principle that everybody would have children if their (economic) circumstances were just right. Economic problems are assumed to prevent families from having children at all, or to limit the number of children they have. The three policy texts differ somewhat in how they deal with family policies and with the connection between procreative decisions and financial considerations. The GOV report and the FF text in particular concentrate on the connection between family finances and the birth rate. The section of the GOV report focusing on the favourable conditions for having children deals only with the economic side, referring to different elements of family policies, measures that support the combining of studying or working with having children, and other aspects of the job market (GOV, 46-47), but ignoring other issues covered in the FF and EVA texts such as people's values. The concentration on economic issues was also evident in the Parliamentary discussion on the report; the underlying assumption was that everyone wants children, and that economic circumstances prevent families from having any (or more) (see Eduskunta 2004).

Although the FF report takes a much broader view than the GOV text on the question of why people do not have more children, it mentions economic reasons as well. The lowering of the birth rate is also connected to so-called 'quality' issues: parents want to guarantee their offspring a better social and economic position, and have fewer children in order to be able to invest more in each one (FF, 27). Another example of FF linking procreation with eco-

economic circumstances is the notion that a certain level of social security is a prerequisite for keeping the birth rate even close to the replacement level, and its proposed measures concentrate on giving financial support to families (ibid., 28, 33-36). It is very clear, therefore, that economic considerations are seen as central when decisions about having children are made.

The logic in the texts with regard to the financial aspects of procreation is that people would have children if the economic conditions were favourable. Families clearly make calculations regarding whether or not they can afford to have children, and they should be supported by public funds in making these decisions. The idea of procreation as an economic decision is an interesting reversal of the logic that prevails in discussions about the population problems in the developing world. It is often stated, for example, that poor families in the developing world consider children to be an asset (see e.g., Säävälä 1994, 161), and thus have (too) many. The logic is the opposite in the three selected texts: children are seen as a financial burden for families and this limits their willingness to have them at all, or makes them limit the number to two at the most.

The three documents promote the view that children are non-productive members of the household in a society that has gone through the so-called second demographic transition⁴⁵ (see Ritamies 2006, 22-23), and because they are a financial burden, the decision of whether or not to have them is of major significance to the economic situation of the family. The decision of an individual family not to have children, or not to have 'enough', is considered detrimental on the level of the state. The focus is on the significance of children for the future and for the economic survival of the Finnish nation. There is thus a double structure: having children is a financial burden for the individual family but an economic necessity for society. Analysing the decision to have children as a financial calculation from the perspective of reproductive agency highlights two issues. First, there is the hidden normativity that everyone wants to have

⁴⁵ Demographic transition theory concerns the development of human fertility and mortality. In its first stage a society is characterised by the equilibrium of high mortality and high fertility over the long term. Mortality declines in the second stage, while fertility remains at a high socially sanctioned level. The equilibrium of slow or no growth is established in the third stage: both fertility and mortality are at low level. (Teitelbaum & Winter 1985, 14-15) A society that has gone through two demographic transitions is at stage three.

children, and secondly there is the idea that having children is a rational decision based on financial considerations. I will examine the normativity issue first.

In the documents I examine, having children is regarded as natural and as something that all families would do if the economic conditions were right. One effect of this thinking is to present the normative structure of 'having a family' as concern for people and their financial situations. Having children is considered natural, and because the documents present this as something that everyone essentially wants, it is important and even natural for politicians to be concerned about the economic situation of people with children. Family-friendly policies do not need to be argued for explicitly, nor is there any need to defend them. For example, the GOV report clearly states that people would have children if the conditions were right. Long periods of studying, financial insecurity in the form of fixed-term work contracts, and difficulties in combining work and family life lead to the postponement of having children (GOV, 46-47), but essentially people want to have them.

Talk about the ideal number of children that Finnish people would have, which is higher than the number they end up with, is one way of strengthening the norm of having children. All three documents imply that Finns do not have as many children as they would like (GOV, 45-47; FF, 30; EVA, 17). The EVA report, for example, poses the question: 'Why are more Finnish families giving up on the family size they consider ideal?' It goes on to mention that the ideal average number of children in Finnish families is 2.4 (EVA, 17). Reference to averages hides the fact that there are people who do not want to have children at all. The FF text also covers this group, suggesting that advocating child-friendly attitudes and the combination of work and family life can influence self-imposed childlessness (FF, 32). FF is explicitly stating that its aim is to change the attitudes of people who do not want to have children (see *ibid.*). The conception that self-imposed childlessness is somehow unacceptable is one of the clearest examples of the norm that does not take reproductive agency into account. Reproductive agency is ignored through denial of the notion that having a full-range of options with regard to procreation means that refusing to procreate is also a legitimate choice.

From the perspective of reproductive agency, the logic that having children is primarily an economic decision, and the normativity connected to it, clearly places constrictions on the imaginary domain. Policies advocating that everyone should have children imply how people should think about and imagine their reproductive capacities, and there seems to be only one option: everyone wants to procreate. As value propositions the policy proposals do not respect the freedom to imagine one's reproductive future. In addition, the documents affect the space for performing hegemonic norms differently as they have effects on the choices that people see possible in their reproductive behaviour. The norms in the texts create the limits of bodily integrity, and of imaginary coherence, acting as 'politically invested and investing performative' (Butler 1993, 72).

Family policies can also be interpreted as enhancing reproductive agency among those who freely decide to procreate. Given the financial hardship associated with having children, family policies enable people to live out the life they have chosen for themselves. With regard to the formation of the imaginary domain and thus also the possibility to exercise reproductive agency, some policies are needed so that people are not forced into a course of action they would not choose in freer circumstances. It is a question of how the policies are formulated as they also place limits on how parenthood and procreation are understood, for example. The documents examined here consider economic incentives essential in population policies. This links to the second issue I wish to discuss: rational, economic calculations with regard to procreation.

The FF and GOV reports consider having children, at least to some degree, an economic decision. What this means in terms of population policy is that families with children should be financially supported. According to this line of economic thinking, citizens are economically rational people who calculate the costs of having children and then make reasoned decisions about whether or not to do so. From a common-sense perspective this does not seem very plausible, even if people (as they do) were to bring some degree of rationality to their reproductive decisions.

There are theoretical approaches covering the analysis of economic conditions with regard to family-related decisions, including Marxism and its

combination with feminism. The family has been analysed as a site of production and reproduction, for example, meaning a site of domestic labour, of reproduction of the labour force, and as the basic economic unit of society (Humphries 1982, see e.g., Brown 1982). Moreover, feminist scholars have studied issues such as the differences between men and women with regard to family financial resources (see e.g., Repo 2003) and the financial aspects of marriage and divorce (see e.g., Prager 1982). Reproduction as an important factor in general economics has also been investigated (Robertson 1991). However, there is a lack of research on financial considerations as a specific element in reproductive decisions. Conversely, the economic articulations of the family in the FF Program and the GOV report (and in the Parliamentary discussion about the Government report on the future) portray people as rational beings who base their decisions about having a family, in other words having children, primarily on economic considerations. As the GOV report notes, insecurities lead to the postponement of having children (GOV, 47), and here insecurities refer to economic issues. The FF report gives another example of the role of financial calculation in reproductive decisions with regard to women: it claims that many women would be ready to have more children if there was more support for childcare at home (FF, 30-31), meaning that women calculate the economic consequences of having children.

From the perspective of reproductive agency and the imaginary domain, the association of procreation with financial calculation is somewhat peculiar. How people construct their personalities, what kind of identifications they assume and how these identifications and reproductive decisions are processed and re-processed as part of the personality are not primarily economic considerations. People are not transparent to themselves when they project imaginary selves. The idea that people make fully rational, informed choices about reproduction is not plausible. Even if the decisions are not entirely rational, however, it does not mean that financial conditions do not matter or that they, or other rational considerations, are not involved; it is just that they are more complex and include unconscious aspects that are difficult to evaluate politically.

The idea that people make rational, economics-based choices about procreation is not a straightforward issue when viewed through the lens of reproductive agency. Financial support for families can be seen as enhancing reproductive agency in that people who want to have children have more options. It is easier for them to make the decision to have children when they know that there is some kind of economic safety net. Family policies as such do not force or require people to procreate, although they help those who do decide to do so. One interpretation of this is that family policies do not push certain values, and the contributions of public support systems have progressive elements in terms of offering assistance and safety nets without expecting everyone to have children. Elements of this thinking are to be found in Drucilla Cornell's writing on the need for publicly funded childcare, for example (see Cornell 1998, 128).

However, it must be remembered that even seemingly value-free welfare-state systems include certain value choices when policies are implemented, and they do define how family and parenthood are understood. The family is defined in many ways, for instance by the rules of different kinds of maternity and paternity benefits, child benefits and leave systems. In addition, the above-mentioned general assumption that all people want to have children pervades the policy proposals and the political process. The three documents do not question the general idea that everyone should have children, or admit that refusing to have children is a legitimate choice and not something that needs to be changed. If the imaginary domain is to be taken seriously and reproductive agency is to be respected, the state should not promote one specific view of procreation. Even though the economic approach may seem value-free⁴⁶, the proposals contain value choices. Not only do they promote a child-friendly attitude, they also advocate for those with children and not some other group of people as the preferred option in terms of how the limited public funds should be used. In addition, the policies are constructed in a way that defines and shows what a family is, and therefore affect people's reproductive choices, especially when reproduction is expected to take place in the family. Social policies require people to fulfil certain criteria in order for them to qualify for benefits, and this de-

⁴⁶ See Isola 2008 for an analysis, which is based partly on the same texts as my study, and which considers the value-laden language in the texts invisible.

finances and reflects how families and the reproductive environment are understood.

When the family is defined in terms of economics it is often also treated as a single unit. This is problematic from a feminist perspective because, as Susan Okin notes, men and women tend not to have equal power in families (Okin 1989, 146, 159). This unequal distribution of power is connected to the fact that women who work earn less, on average, than their male partners, thus: '[a] cycle of power relations and decisions pervades both family and workplace, and the inequalities of each reinforce those that already exist in the other' (Okin 1989, 147). The combination of economic argumentation with the opaque notion of the family disguises the effect on women's reproductive agency of the unequal distribution of financial resources.

The notion that the decision to have children is based on economic considerations has attracted little research interest at least in feminist circles, but it is a logic that is strongly present in the policy documents examined here. From the perspective of reproductive agency this reliance on economic arguments seems odd. Using the economic arguments to promote growth in the birth rate might help to explain why it is such a difficult political problem. Addressing such a multi-faceted issue only in terms of economics is not likely to be very effective given various non-financial elements related to the construction of the personality. The seemingly self-evident character of family policies also hides the fact that it is a political preference to support families with children rather than some other groups of people. Such a choice, when made, strengthens the reproductive agency of those who want to have children, and at the same time defines how parenthood is understood. On the other hand it creates an environment in which the reproductive agency of those who choose not to have children is not similarly recognised.

I think this two-sided problem also indicates a possible weakness in Cornell's theoretical thinking with regard to reproductive agency. The freedom to understand reproductive agency differently, in terms of choosing to have children or not to have children, limits its helpfulness as a guide in making specific political decisions or deciding about political preferences. It is not my purpose in this study to present substantive policy proposals, however. I therefore

turn in the next section to the alternative perspective and analyse the discourse on family values in the policy proposals.

5.4.3 A counter-discourse to economics: a return to family values

Although the connection between having children and the economic conditions in which people live is a strong one, there are some disruptive elements in the debate. In this section I briefly chart the line of discourse I refer to as family values. It is a discourse that contests the emphasis on financial matters, and includes the defence of values that are considered more important than economic factors when it comes to reproduction. Given that it is women who give birth, this line of thinking includes interesting gender aspects, to which I revert in the next chapter. The argumentation stressing family values is present in the EVA report and in the Parliamentary discussion on the GOV report on the future, and there are some traces of it in the FF report. Although I have not discussed the Parliamentary debate in detail in this study, I decided to include some elements from it as a reaction to the GOV report, which is studied in detail.

The EVA report clearly states in one of its subheadings, 'Values are behind everything' (EVA, 33). It disputes the view that family policies are constructed in order to increase the birth rate, and also questions their effectiveness for this purpose. However, its views on what Finnish people think about children and procreation are somewhat contradictory. It states on the one hand that children are no longer valued for themselves, and have come to reflect adults' own life goals and situations, but on the other hand that value surveys indicate that Finnish people still appreciate the family and children. (ibid., 33-36) It acknowledges these contradictory standpoints: 'The contradiction between the responses [to the surveys about values] and the culture of disregarding children that gathered strength in the 1990s is evident' (ibid., 36), so what people think seems to be different from the prevailing culture⁴⁷.

The Parliamentary debate on the GOV report reflected similar lines of thinking. Some of the parliamentarians explicitly emphasised the value of

⁴⁷ The idea that culture and what people think are two separate things is in itself a rather complex and problematic way of looking at the issue, but cannot be analysed here.

children and large families, and attacked the current notion that both parents should be active participants in working life. The statements were not specific to certain political parties, although there were party differences in the intensity and frequency of these articulations. The discourse on family values creates an opposition between large and small families, arguing that families with more than the number of children acknowledged as the norm (i.e. two) suffer in that 'our family policy is designed to force people who choose to add to this two-child norm into poverty' (Eduskunta 2004, Särkiniemi, Seppo (vastauspuheenvuoro [response statement])). The implication is that current family policies are designed for families with at most two children and two working parents. Some of the statements in this vein also refer to the old agrarian society when there were more children (Eduskunta 2004, Lahtela, Seppo), and there is some criticism of the current competitive society that prioritises business interests at the expense of families and children (Eduskunta 2004, Soini, Timo). As in the EVA report (see e.g., 33-36), there is a contrast between the profit-driven market economy and the family, which by implication is based on other kinds of values.

Some family-value statements create an economic opposition between those with children and those without. There are claims that public funds should act as an income transfer from the latter to the former (see e.g., Eduskunta 2004, Karttunen, Marjukka (ryhmäpuheenvuoro [group statement])). Usually these arguments just state that child benefit (*lapsilisä*) is some compensation for the expense of having children and thus should not be tied to income⁴⁸ (see e.g., *ibid.*), but it is also explicitly stated that family policies should be financed by those who 'choose not to have a family', i.e. who choose not to have children (see e.g., Eduskunta 2004, Vistbacka, Raimo (ryhmäpuheenvuoro [group statement])). This line of thinking is somewhat similar in logic to the debate about the need for family policies in that they both consider having children from an economic perspective; the monetary situation affects decisions to reproduce. The family-value articulations explicitly state that families with children should be prioritised just because they have children.

⁴⁸ At times there have been demands for child benefit to be based on income. Currently all families with children receive the same amounts irrespective of parental income.

This harking back to the traditional or nuclear family is dubious from a feminist perspective and in terms of reproductive agency⁴⁹. One might even question whether such a nuclear family ever existed. In any case, with regard to reproductive agency one can justifiably criticise patriarchal family forms that define women's lives solely through the family and motherhood. Even though Finland is relatively progressive in terms of the situation of women, some very gender-specific attitudes still prevail when it comes to reproduction. For example, the discourse on family values in the Finnish Parliament implies in some articulations that it should be possible to survive on one person's wage (e.g., Eduskunta 2004, Särkiniemi, Seppo). It is also noteworthy that in 2005, for example, men used less than 6 per cent of the total number of days of parental leave taken (Kela 2006, 45). In practice, therefore, efforts to make it easier for the family to live on one person's wage are supporting situations in which it is the mother who stays at home with the children, thereby making women dependent on the breadwinner, i.e. the husband, economically and in other ways. Preference for policies that support families with children and adversely affect the economic situation of people with none⁵⁰ is problematic in terms of reproductive agency because those who choose not to procreate are punished. Although one should not forget the positive effects of family policies with regard to reproductive agency, they may create an environment that does not fully respect the reproductive agency of those who choose childlessness.

It is obvious that strong value propositions are included in the discourse on family values. Such values promote the heterosexual, nuclear family in which the women's role is primarily that of mother and wife, and clearly create effects for the imaginary domain and reproductive agency. They advocate one way of organising one's reproductive life and limit people's imagining about their lives. In addition, they aim to strengthen traditional views of women as mothers and homemakers above all else.

⁴⁹ See Young 1999 for an argumentation against the view that the nuclear family is the best possible family form.

⁵⁰ Even without income transfers from the childless to those with children, it is more expensive to live in a single household.

5.5 Conclusion

Is the historical record consistent with the view that declining population growth and growing dependency have retarded long-term economic growth? To what extent, if at all, are projected demographic changes – rates of population growth, dependency ratios, aging of the labor force, labor force education – out of line with historical experience? (Easterlin 1996, 125)

Richard Easterlin, an economic historian and demographer, asks these questions in his book examining problems of economics and population growth from a historical perspective. He concludes that historical experience raises doubts about 'the new secular stagnation thesis' (ibid.), meaning that the connection between economic growth and population growth is not straightforwardly positive. He also questions the connection between the welfare of people and economic growth (see e.g., ibid. Chapter 10). Nevertheless, the debate on population policy conducted in the three policy documents I examine presupposes a positive connection between economic and population growth, and even between the welfare of people and economic success. Macroeconomic factors such as the GDP and the dependency ratio, and microeconomic concern for the financial situation of individual families are among the most prominent elements in the discussion on the need to raise the birth rate in Finland.

The connection between the demographic challenge, i.e. the aging population, and the (economic) success of Finland as a nation is unquestioned, and it is the basic starting point of much of the debate about population policy in the documents. Economic growth is considered essential for the survival of the Finnish nation, and because growth is assumed to be dependent on a growing population, population policies are of major significance with regard to economic success. Population growth is then boosted by family policies, which is the other economic viewpoint in the debates about population policy in the three policy texts.

The importance assigned to the population in economic development incorporates the macroeconomic idea of 'people as power', meaning that

people, especially those of working age, are needed not only as workers, but also as consumers in order to secure continuous economic growth. This logic pushes politics in a direction focused on boosting the birth rate. In terms of reproductive agency, it is an attempt to influence people's reproductive decisions. It is difficult in liberal democracies to directly affect reproductive behaviour as enforced or coercive measures are out the question. Nevertheless, family policies can be seen as an attempt to set procreative decisions on a certain course.

Family policies and their promotion presuppose normative assumptions about reproductive decisions: everyone is assumed to be interested in having children as long as the (economic) conditions are right. This automatically makes such policies and the transfer of income to families with children desirable political goals. From the perspective of reproductive agency, however, a rather different picture emerges. Even though the policies can be interpreted to enhance reproductive agency for some people, they can also be seen restrictive in terms of how one is expected think about procreation. It is taken as self-evident in the three policy proposals that everyone wants children. Family policies are therefore important for politicians, who can promote them without specific justification. The policies do not, of course, force anyone to act in a specific way, but they do reflect and create the culture and social conditions in which procreative decisions are made.

The problem with using the notion of the imaginary domain in reading the policy documents is that it is not specific enough with regard to how family policies should be conducted as many of the policies could also be seen to strengthen reproductive agency. Cornell has written in defence of publicly funded day care, for example (see Cornell 1998, 128). As a general policy it enhances reproductive agency, but in terms of the specifics of its organisation, there may be aspects that limit agency in reproductive matters. One option is to return to Cornell's emphasis on ideals. If reproductive agency is thought of as an ideal that includes the notions of procreative freedom, it is something to be strived for, even though it is never actually achievable. Accordingly, economic conditions and policy arrangements are in that case considered work in progress aimed at coming closer to the ideal of freedom

6 Thematic description and redescription III: Gender

6.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises the third description and redescription of the selected population-policy documents, the theme of which is gender. As mentioned in previous chapters, gender as an issue is present in many places in the three texts, and in one way or another intersects with all of the larger themes examined in this study. My aim is to give a coherent view of how gender appears in the documents, and through redescription to identify viewpoints that are specific to its coverage in the documents.

First I turn to Drucilla Cornell and her thinking about gender, and the ways in which her views connect to reproductive agency. Her ideas on sex, sexuality and gender are rather complex, and I think it is necessary to reiterate her position in order to identify the redescriptive potential. As in previous chapters, I will proceed to describe the policy documents and then redescribe them through the notion of reproductive agency. My redescription focuses on three points. The first is gender neutrality, to which the GOV report in particular aspires, although in the end it does not manage to avoid gendered perspectives; for example, questions related to working life are in many ways informed by gender. Secondly, I examine how some of the documents tackle the question of gender equality. Included in issues such as the distribution of housework and the labour-market structure are elements of inequality. The documents attempt to find solutions, but usually maintain specific gendered structures. Finally, I consider how women are seen as objects of population and family policies. Analyses of population policies in developing countries show that population control is primarily targeted at women. Although the aim in the Finnish documents is not to limit population growth but to encourage it, women are still the primary objects of measures aimed at increasing the birth rate. I study how this shows up in the documents, and what it means from the perspective of reproductive agency.

6.2 Expansion of the redescriptive tool: sex, gender and reproductive agency

I begin my examination of the connections between gender and reproductive agency with Drucilla Cornell and her notions about sex, gender and, to some extent, sexuality and reproduction. Her views on gender and sexuality can be described as mixed, and they have changed over the years. Here I present two somewhat different readings of her thinking, and incorporate selected elements of her approach to the concept of reproductive agency. On the one hand, she promotes the right of women to represent themselves more freely (see e.g., Cornell 1999, xxiii), and she has written about affirming the feminine within sexual difference (see e.g., Cornell 1993, 57). On the other hand, she theorises about the imaginary domain and insists that people should be free to form their own personality, which includes gender and how the gendered identity is understood. If such freedom were taken seriously it would also include overcoming the binary designation of gender.

Although the two viewpoints are not necessarily mutually exclusive, I argue that there are some tensions and contradictions, which I examine in this section. I will begin by charting Cornell's thinking about concepts such as sex, gender, sexuality and the sexate being. Psychoanalysis and Lacan have influenced her ideas about sexuality and gender. I consider some of these influences, although I have no intention of giving an extensive account of Lacan or psychoanalytic theory. A great deal of Cornell's thought is accessible without specific knowledge of psychoanalysis, and not all of her views on gender and sexuality lean on Lacanian theory.

A good starting point is Cornell's rejection of the separation between sex and gender:

I reject this understanding of the difference between sex and gender because it fails to see how the sexed body is symbolically constructed by a "space of interlocution" and an imago – a primordial image of how we hang together that each one of us lives out. (Cornell 1998, 6)

In Cornell's view, given that people always experience their bodies through a symbolic system, the separation between sex as a biological concept and gender as a cultural concept is not accurate. She uses both concepts, but usually distinguishes between the terms 'sex' and 'gender'. She writes in her book *At the Heart of Freedom* (1998) that she uses gender to refer to our everyday understanding that there are two 'kinds' of people, men and women (Cornell 1998, 6). She does not avoid using the word 'gender', but finds the concepts of sex and the sexuate being more relevant when it comes to her ideas about subjectivity and how people form as selves. She also notes that sex and sexuality are core issues with regard to people's struggle to form their personalities (Cornell 1995, 6). Together with how people orient themselves sexually, sex and sexuality are among the essential aspects of what it means to be a human being. She notes: '[a]s sexuate beings, we cannot mark out an identity without implicating who we are through a set of culturally encoded fantasies about what it means to be a creature with a "sex"' (ibid.). Nobody can escape the effects of cultural fantasies about sex and sexuality, even though what people do with these cultural influences is another thing.

In her book *The Imaginary Domain* (1995), Cornell charts four different aspects in her use of the term 'sex'. The first is that human beings are sexual creatures; this is a general notion, which means that people's lives involve pleasure and reproduction. Secondly, sex refers to activity: sexuality is not just identification, but also activity in which people engage. Thirdly is the aspect of internalised identifications, included in which is an assumption of the gender divide. This contrasts with the second aspect: sex is not just activity, but a part of our personality formation that involves different kinds of identification. Fourthly, Cornell mentions that each one of us has a sexual imago and a sexual imaginary. She refers to the psychoanalytic notion that people see themselves deeply and profoundly from 'inside' as men and women. Moreover, the sexual imago is part of the imaginary coherence that people strive for, the basis of an unconscious assumed person. (Cornell 1995, 6-7)

Cornell's notion of sex is multifaceted. It refers to identifications, bodily experiences and the formation of the personality. She also notes that in

using the word sex she wants 'to highlight how straight women, gays, and lesbians are treated as things rather than persons because of the meaning society gives to attributes of their bodily difference (in the case of women) or because of society's fantasies about their sexuality (in the case of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered persons)' (Cornell 1998, 7). The idea that societal meanings and values are attached to different sexes is connected to the above-mentioned issue that nobody can escape cultural and symbolic notions of sex and sexuality. As a feminist, Cornell wishes to show how some groups of people are not given full personhood, and that sex has played an important part in this process of denial of personhood.

Cornell uses the term 'the sexuete being' 'to represent the sexed body of our human being when engaged with a framework by which we orient ourselves' (ibid.). It is connected to sexual orientation in the sense that people have to orient, to direct, themselves sexually. She links the sexuete being with 'having sex and having a sex' (ibid.), meaning that people have views about their preferences when it comes to sexual activities – i.e. how they have sex – and this intertwines with how they see their gender, i.e. how they have a sex. She acknowledges that it is impossible to be totally transparent to oneself: assuming a persona always includes some notions about how one is sexed, and the idea of sexual orientation is relevant to the idea of a free person (ibid.).

Cornell considers sex and sexuality essential parts of being a human, and they are also important aspects in her idea of a free person. She remarks that there are as many forms of the sexuete being as there are people: everyone orients and lives out their sexuality and bodily being in their own way. She connects sexual orientation to the ideal of freedom, insisting that everyone should be recognised as the legitimate source of meanings and representations of their sexuete being. It should be possible to explore and work through identifications connected to the sexuete being as people are not ready personas, but in a process. The imaginary domain facilitates the process of exploring one's identification. (ibid., 8):

Since sex, gender, and sexuality are not just given to us, we need the space to let our imagination run wild if each of us is to have the

chance to find the sexual orientation that can bring us happiness. To even aspire to the self-representation of our sexuate being we need freedom to explore without fear the representations that surround us. This place of free exploration of sexual representations, and personas, is the imaginary domain. (ibid.)

The connection between the personality as a process and the freedom to work through the sexuate being implies in this context that sex, gender and sexuality are not stable or fixed identities, but something that people process throughout their lives. Gender, understood as the everyday experiences people have as sexed beings, is also very personal. Everyone has their own take on how they understand their gender. This does not, of course, mean that it is a totally personal creation without any cultural or social influences or connections, but it does mean that everyone interprets and assumes cultural and social norms about gender in their own way, and lives out and experiences them differently. When gender is understood this way, there is a strong implication that the meanings and values people attach to their sexuate being – gender, sex and sexuality – should be determined by the person in question and not by an outsider. Being free to define your sexuate being can also be a basis for overcoming or refusing the gender binary, and for imagining sex and gender differently and not just on the binary axis.

This very open notion of sex and gender does not cover all aspects of Cornell's thought on how they can or should be understood, however. Indeed, there are contradictions between her ideas about sex and sexuality and her feminist views on the position of women. In addition to writing generally about gender and sex as connected to how people construct their personalities, Cornell also focuses on how women's gender has been a basis for discrimination, and how women have not been granted full personhood legally or politically. Given that women have been trapped in a cultural and social representation of their sex that puts them in an oppressed position, there is a need for a re-

representation of the feminine⁵¹. She does not equate the feminine with the experiences of any specific group of women, nor does she wish to stabilise the associated meanings and values, and she notes the need for a re-representation of what feminine means. (Cornell 1999, xxvii)

There has been some development in Cornell's understanding of the new representations of feminine coming about. She writes about 'affirming the feminine within sexual difference' in her articles 'The Doubly-Prized World: Myth, Allegory, and the Feminine', (first published in 1990 and revised in Cornell 1993) and 'Sexual Difference, the Feminine, and Equivalency' (first published in 1991 and revised in Cornell 1993) (Cornell 1993, 57). She bases her account of how the feminine and, ultimately, the experiences of actual women could be transformed on Lacanian thinking, noting that feminism should acknowledge feminine experiences in its challenging of gender hierarchies:

If there is to be feminism at all, as a political movement that adequately challenges the gender hierarchy which necessarily repudiates the values of the feminine sexual difference, we must rely on a feminine voice and a feminine "reality" that can be identified as such and in some way correlated with the lives of actual women. (ibid., 58)

She continues suggesting that relying on a feminine voice does not mean that there are no differences between women, and that it is important to understand the metaphoric significance of the feminine within sexual difference. Metaphoric understanding does not reduce the feminine to a specific historical group of women and their experiences presented as universal, but aims at imagining it beyond current stereotypes by re-telling myths attached to women and the feminine, for example (ibid., 58-59, 108-109). She uses the term affirming the feminine, and although she denies that it conveys any specific understanding of the feminine or of what it means to be a woman, it does retain

⁵¹ Cornell notes that by feminine she does not mean femininity, which carries all sorts of characteristics that not only deny women their full personhood, but also include racialised representations (Cornell 1999, xxvii; 1995, 7-8).

the gender divide. It is difficult to see how, given her use of the term 'feminine', she is not affirming a group called women and correspondingly, in the current cultural and social situation, a group that is called men. Although she does not acknowledge a specific representation of men and women, in my view the conception of affirming the feminine is in conflict with the ideals of the free person and the imaginary domain, which could be interpreted as a tool for rethinking and overcoming the gender binary.

The notion of the imaginary domain, and connected to that the freedom to define and give values to one's own sexuate being, are about being able to abandon the gender binary, or the gender divide. As Adam Thurschwell notes, Cornell's feminism incorporates the idea of 'liberation from gender' (Thurschwell 2008, 44). This does not imply that it will automatically be successful as it is dependent on things that are beyond the person who is doing the abandoning, but still the premise is that it is possible to think beyond the gender binary. The idea of affirming the feminine, however, does not get over the binary divide and in that way is in conflict with the imaginary domain. Cornell uses the term 'affirm' in her earlier article published in 1993, aiming to show that the feminine, which has traditionally been degraded and thought of as something inferior, should be valued (Cornell 1993, 72, 132). Although inherent in this idea is the notion that sexuality is not fixed, and that what or who women are is not defined, I read it as at least reiterating the binary divide, and thus to some degree strengthening it.

In connection with her affirmation of the feminine and her search for new representations, Cornell also reflects Luce Irigaray's thinking⁵², specifically wishing to bring out the utopian element by 'playing with what remains beyond intelligibility, [to] help to bring to the surface a mark of the feminine opening us to the future' (Cornell 2008b, 254). The idea of affirming the feminine can also be related to the Lacanian idea of sexual difference that is immutable, although Cornell rather takes a deconstructive approach to Lacan's theories. She is aware of some of the problems linked to thinking about the reconfiguration of sexual difference through the idea of affirming the feminine, and

⁵² See e.g., 'Introduction: Writing the Mamafesta: The Dilemma of Postmodern Feminism' in Cornell 1999.

modified her views somewhat after the early 1990s. She notes that her way of thinking could reinforce Lacan's analysis of sexual difference:

Indeed, part of the reason for my own critical engagement with my earlier formulation was a growing concern that any privileging of the feminine as the mark of difference understood here as what is new as well as simply Other, would inevitably downplay the significance of ethnic, national, and linguistic difference. (Cornell 1999, xxiii)

Cornell is concerned that her notion of affirming the feminine within sexual difference does not account for identifications other than gender. I do not think she adequately addresses the problem of sustaining the gender divide, however, which may be a consequence of how she uses the notion the feminine. After voicing the above-mentioned concern, she does write about re-representing as opposed to affirming the feminine. Her intention is not to stabilise representations, but she notes that she is 'enough of a Lacanian to defend the idea that the masculine and the feminine are constrained by a system of representations that holds enormous sway in our culture' (ibid., xxvii). The system of representations also includes the idea that representations of the feminine are devalued and conceived of as undesirable human characteristics (ibid.). Cornell's concerns are valid, but as noted above, she does not tackle the problem of strengthening the gender divide when promoting the notion of affirming or re-representing the feminine.

In sum, Cornell follows two different lines of thinking with regard to sexual difference. On the one hand she holds on to the ideal that people should be free to define their sexuate being:

We have to demand the widest possible space for expression, precisely because without it, we legitimate foreclosures on what can be said, written, or imagined, and thus undermine and reshelve the project of each of us representing her sexuate being in all its fluidity and incessant opening to new possibilities. (Cornell 1998, 25)

People should be able to reject the gender binary and define their gender and sexuality in new ways. Although this is difficult, it is a starting point for imagining new ways of thinking about sexual difference. On the other hand, however, she believes in re-representing the feminine. The feminine has been devalued and represented as not deserving full personhood, and this needs to be changed. One option is to re-represent what feminine means and what kinds of values are connected to it. The belief that sexual difference can be reconfigured by re-representing the feminine, however, also holds on to the differentiation between feminine and masculine, and related to that the difference between men and women. In my view the first approach mentioned above, defining and redefining gender and sexuality as freely as possible, opens up more possibilities for thinking about gender and sex differently.

Of relevance to my work are the connections to reproductive agency. If we consider sexual difference from the perspective of procreation and reproductive agency, we have all the more reason to include the imaginary domain in theorising about sexual difference, as it seems difficult to re-think reproduction and sexual difference on the basis of re-representing the feminine. Although Cornell differentiates between femininity – which has traditionally been tied to motherhood, for example – and the feminine, which would be a basis for re-thinking how women have been represented, in holding on to the idea of affirming the feminine she retains the connections between women and motherhood. This makes it more difficult to find new ways of thinking about reproduction, and new ways of thinking are needed if reproductive agency is to be taken seriously. Moreover, the need for re-thinking applies not only to the feminine, but also to masculinity and the masculine, and in this the imaginary domain is more fruitful in terms of finding novel approaches to sexual difference.

Sexual difference remains a very relevant theme in the context of reproduction. Although reproductive technologies have brought changes to the biological basis of procreation, and may bring even more significant changes in the future, it is still the case that men and women are differently positioned in the process. The purpose of the concept of reproductive agency is to broaden the

thinking about these positions and to denaturalise assumptions that are constructed through the notions of biology and nature as unchangeable and rooted in the natural order. If the imaginary domain is to be taken seriously, defining of values and meanings attached to motherhood and fatherhood should not be assigned to some outside political or social order, but should remain with the individuals concerned. Individual valuations are affected by social, symbolic and cultural representations of what it means to be a woman and a man, or a mother and a father. The purpose of the imaginary domain is to facilitate re-imagining, and the idea behind reproductive agency is to give people the freedom to define and redefine their parenthood, and their values and attitudes about procreation. Sex and sexuality matter in terms of how one sees procreation, and it is crucial to be able to re-think the values and meanings connected to them. The notion of reproductive agency therefore includes a conception of sexual difference that draws on the imaginary domain, as something that people create and re-create as part of the personality process.

6.3 Thematic description III

Gender is a theme that seems inevitably to come up in the debate on population policies and decreasing birth rates, and it seems impossible to discuss reproductive issues without at least some reference to it. In the following I describe the selected policy documents in terms of the gendered use of language, especially in the sections concerning the birth rate and measures to affect it. I note instances when gendered concepts (such as man, woman, father and mother) are used, and the contexts in which they are discussed. In general, the GOV report seems to be the most gender-neutral of the texts, measured in terms of explicit acknowledgement of gender or gendered structures and the use of gendered language in general. The EVA report and the FF Program cover both gendered and equality issues more explicitly. There are visible differences in the three texts, but I begin with some of the common features.

6.3.1 Women and the labour market

One of the most notable common issues in the three texts concerns the labour market and women's status in it. They all acknowledge that Finnish society is built on the assumption that both sexes are active participants in the labour force. The GOV report notes in a section that charts the premises and values of its policy considerations that both 'sexes participate equally in work and other aspects of life' (GOV, 13). It also refers to the importance of reconciling work and family life, which is directly connected to the idea that women work. The EVA report has an entire section dealing with the claim that women have fewer babies because they concentrate on work (see e.g., EVA, 20-22). The FF text also considers women's participation in the work force (see e.g., FF, 26-31). Both EVA and the FF have specific takes on the question of women's working, which I come back to later.

Women's waged labour can be seen as an essential part of the Finnish welfare state. As Raija Julkunen notes, the idea that the family has two breadwinners has been built into Finnish socio-political practices since the 1960s, and it is the predominant ideology in Finland that both parents work⁵³. Women's participation in the labour force is facilitated through maternity benefits, different kinds of leave policies and taxation. For example, individual (as opposed to family) taxation means that if only one parent is in paid employment there is no extra economic support for the partner who stays at home. (Julkunen 1999, 90-91) The ideology of two breadwinners is also evident in the three texts examined here. The documents do not question women's participation in the labour market,⁵⁴ but consider how it has been or should be taken into account. Having a stable job is even seen as an incentive for a woman to have children: the FF cites a study stating that a stable job is important for women who are planning their first child (FF, 30). In general, the very common worry about (young) women's fixed, short-term contracts, so-called atypical employment, is

⁵³ This does not mean that all women work or that children are institutionally cared for. The majority of children under school age are cared for at home and by their parents. This is facilitated by different kinds of leave systems, among other things. (Julkunen 1999, 91)

⁵⁴ The parliamentary discussion on the GOV report does include explicit arguments for improving the situation of families with one breadwinner, however, and questions the Finnish model according to which both parents work (see Eduskunta 2004).

indicative of the view that having a permanent job and working full-time enhance women's willingness to have children.

Two issues that all the texts deal with are related to the more general question of women's participation in the work force. The first of these is the above-mentioned atypical employment or short, fixed-term contracts that are common in the public sector and in some other areas in which women are typically employed. Secondly, there is the question of the more equal distribution of housework. On the question of fixed-term contracts, the GOV report states that parental allowances connected to short-term employment will be raised, and that regularising fixed-term contracts will encourage women to have children (GOV, 46-47). Similarly, the FF remarks that reducing atypical employment in the nursing and teaching sectors, in which women predominate, would most likely result in a rising birth rate (FF, 52). The EVA report examines the issue in a short separate section entitled 'Unbearable uncertainty prevails in the world of fixed-term contracts' (*Pätkätyömaailmassa vallitsee sietämätön epävarmuus*) (EVA, 26), describing short, fixed-term contracts for young women as a problem that affects their willingness to have children. The use of fixed-term contracts has been discussed a great deal in public forums, and it is generally acknowledged to be a problem. Short-term jobs are more common among young, educated women and in the public sector, which employs a lot of women (Palanko-Laaka 2005), and the incidence of atypical work contracts is connected in the policy documents to delays in having children.

The second theme, the more equal distribution of housework, is an old gender-equality issue. The FF connects it directly to the willingness to have children in citing research indicating that a more equal distribution of work in the family is connected to a higher birth rate (FF, 51). The EVA report notes that, despite the high participation rate of women in the work force, inequality remains and women still do the majority of the housework (EVA, 22). This being the case, they are reluctant to have children because it will tie them more tightly to the home and to household chores. The GOV report remarks in passing that fathers must be encouraged to take part in everyday activities at home (GOV, 47), thus although it does not discuss the theme extensively, it does recognise the problem. The documents address an existing problem in referring to the dis-

crepancies in the distribution of housework, and studies have shown that even though women often work full-time, they are still primarily responsible for the everyday household chores, and spend more time on them than men (Julkunen 1999, 92). In bringing up the issue, these policy texts confirm that the unequal distribution of housework is a relevant and valid concern.

6.3.2 From gender neutrality to gendered problems

There are themes that all the texts consider from a gender perspective, but they have specific profiles in terms of dealing with gender. The GOV report appears to be the most gender-neutral, and in this sense is also the vaguest. Although it briefly mentions some aspects of gender differentiation, it does not generally analyse gendered viewpoints very deeply, and often uses terms such as equality to refer to something other than gender equality, including regional, social and intergenerational equality (see e.g., GOV, 42-43, 55). Moreover, it tends not to deal with questions that could be considered gender issues explicitly from a gendered perspective. The family is seen as an important element when measures to increase the birth rate are discussed, but the family perspective does not include a gender view. One of the few instances in which such a view is visible is the passing statement that fathers should be encouraged to use their right to family leave and to play their part in everyday activities at home (GOV, 47).

The EVA report is much more specific on the question of gender and its connection to the population question. It refers to men and women in the very first paragraph of the introduction, stating that achieving an increase in the birth rate will require attitude changes among individuals, both men and women. The introduction also covers other gender issues, such as the need to change Finnish men's attitudes towards the family. (EVA, 3-4) Other parts of the text analyse the different positions of women and men with regard to reproduction, most visibly in a sub-section of Chapter two. Chapter two examines why Finnish people do not have more children, and the sub-section considers the claim that women concentrate on work and a career (ibid., 17-27).

The section starts with the general assertion that when women's earnings and education level rise, they have fewer children. This logic does not

seem to be valid in Finland, however. Women's participation in waged labour is very high by international standards, but the Finnish birth rate has also been relatively high. Moreover, in Finland women who earn more also have more children than women whose earnings are lower. The report further examines the connection between women's paid labour and the birth rate with regard to day care, concluding that the Finnish day-care system has had a positive effect on the birth rate despite the high female participation rates in the labour force (ibid., 22). It also acknowledges that, despite such active participation, women are still primarily responsible for the housework. Furthermore, men do not take all the parental and paternity leave to which the law entitles them, although they are more involved in the family nowadays. (ibid., 20-22) Social policies and family arrangements that are considered to affect the birth rate are examined from a perspective that takes account of gender and men's and women's differentiated positions. There are similar themes in the GOV report, but the EVA report takes a more overtly gendered stance.

The gender perspective is visible to some degree in the FF document. It is more explicit than in the GOV text, but the analyses are not as specific as in the EVA report. Like the EVA report, the FF text also includes an analysis of how women's education and working, the distribution of housework, and women's earnings affect the number of children they have (FF, 27-28). Employment and the question of women's participation in working life are very visible in all three texts, but the FF document is the only one to make a brief reference to what motivates men and women to have children. It is suggested that they differ somewhat in their motivations, although there is some overlap: both refer to the continuation of life and the experience of parenthood. Women also believe that having children will give meaning to their lives, whereas men are motivated by the idea of seeing their children grow up and develop (ibid., 31). It is clear from this differentiation that the FF does not consider procreation motives to be totally universal in terms of gender.

The FF also puts forward a gendered view of the population-policy measures in general. One of the most interesting gendered viewpoints in its report is the idea that the means of raising the birth rate should be differentiated based on gender. This differentiation relies on Catherine Hakim's classification

of women as home-centred (about 20 per cent of women), who are highly motivated to have children, work-centred (about 20 per cent), who usually are satisfied if they do not have children, and adaptives (about 60 per cent), who aim to combine work and family life. Hakim did not include men in her analysis, so in taking this classification as a basis for suggesting population-policy measures the FF restricts itself to women. (ibid., 30-31) The report notes that policies that treat women as a homogenous group are doomed to failure, and that different groups of women are motivated by different benefits. Policies should therefore be tailored to the different groups. A key target group in terms of increasing the birth rate comprises home-centred families⁵⁵ with several children. (ibid., 35) In basing its approach on theoretical reasoning about women's motivations the FF deals with the policy proposals in a very specific way. The EVA report also discusses the target group of the policies and how it is becoming more fragmented. Although EVA does not have a theoretically specified take on the issue, it refers mostly to women in a similar vein to the FF: there are women who work and women who stay at home and give birth, and this leads to the conclusion that policy measures should be tailored differently to different groups (EVA, 31). How such measures should be constructed and directed is one of the more gendered themes in the EVA and FF texts; it would be more effective to target the policies on different groups of women differently.

As this description shows, the three policy documents have some common aspects in how they deal with gender, but there are also differences. The GOV report frequently takes a gender-neutral stance, although it also briefly refers to women's different position in the labour market. Women's waged labour, combining family and work life, and questions of equality connected to these issues are among the most prominent gendered perspectives in the documents. In order to go more deeply into these aspects I will now re-describe them through the notion of reproductive agency.

⁵⁵ Here the text refers to families, not women.

6.4 Thematic redescription III

Some of the gendered aspects of the policy documents are very explicit, but in order to uncover the hidden logics I will redescribe the texts from the perspective of reproductive agency. I have broken the redescription down into three themes. First I examine the few visible gender aspects in the GOV report and how attempts at gender neutrality can be seen in relation to reproductive agency. I then move on to more visible gendered perspectives in terms of how the inequality that women face in working life or in relation to housework, for example, is dealt with in the EVA and FF reports, and how attempts at equality analysis fall short of resolving some problems related to gender. Finally, I examine how women are seen as the objects of family and population policies. This last sub-section concentrates on the EVA and FF texts, and may at first seem unconnected with the discussion elsewhere in this chapter. Nevertheless, it is in many ways connected to how inequalities are dealt with. After the redescription I draw the discussions together, considering some of the implications behind the gendered thinking in the three documents, and suggesting how the notions of reproductive agency and the imaginary domain could work in terms of providing tools for rethinking.

6.4.1 Gendered structures and attempts at gender neutrality

I start the redescription with the GOV report, in which the gender perspective is more muted than in the two other texts. The section charting favourable conditions for having children in particular uses largely gender-neutral language, projecting the concept of the family as a unified and opaque notion (see Chapter 4 in this study). Gender neutrality does not mean that there are no gendered structures, and even though a gendered approach is avoided, the issues that are discussed, in fact, are gender-specific. Although in the main the GOV report does not have an overt gender perspective, it is not totally devoid of explicit references to gender.

There are two places in the section of the report dealing with the favourable conditions for having children (GOV, chapter 6.1) in which gendered structures are made visible. The first is in the statement that '[c]ompensation

for parental leave paid to the employer of the mother will also be raised' (GOV, 46). This sentence refers to the problem that it is the mother's employer who carries most of the costs of parental leave, and this is something that should be changed. The other gendered argument also relates to the need to change or improve the system of parental leave so as to encourage fathers to use their rights and to take part in the housework (ibid., 47). In the first case when different kinds of leave related to childcare are discussed, it is mainly with respect to women and how work and family life could be better combined. The second case strengthens the first: fathers do not take all the leave to which they are entitled, and men are not involved enough at home. It is, of course, good that men are encouraged to do their share of the housework, but the wording implies that men help or assist, and are not equal partners, nor are they responsible for the maintenance of the home and the care of offspring.

Further to the idea that women have primary responsibility for the home and the children, the references assume heterosexuality of the couple. There is heteronormative complementarity in the references as it is mothers and fathers who take parental leave. These passing references could be taken to indicate the basic constellation of the family: a heterosexual couple (a mother and a father), both with a job outside the home, and with gendered responsibilities with regard to the home and the children. The heteronormative nuclear family is problematic from the perspective of reproductive agency in that it shuts out other kinds of family formations. It takes no account of other kinds of sexualities or other care arrangements.

Inherent in the portrayal of men as assistants or helpers to mothers in care and housework tasks is the notion that women are still primarily responsible for the home. This is the traditional view of women, which connects them to the private sphere of the home, including taking care of the children. It has been noted that the Finnish family-leave system does not destabilise the model according to which mothers are responsible for the care of small children (Rantalaiho 2003, 209). The GOV report, which incorporates the notions that women carry the responsibility for childcare and the maintenance of the home, shows traces of the thinking that defines women's social and legal position primarily through the role of the mother and the carer. Such a definition does not

give room for rethinking gender in the way the imaginary domain would allow, but reiterates sexual difference in the procreative and care processes.

Considering men as women's childcare assistants does not respect reproductive agency or the imaginary domain in that it defines men's and women's roles in a specific way. Men do paid work, and even though women also work outside of the home, they are still primarily responsible for the home and the children. Respect for reproductive agency would imply that these decisions are left to the individual, and that neither women's nor men's worth should be tied to their reproductive role in a way that makes them valuable only when they are fulfilling the role in the reproductive process. As Drucilla Cornell states:

If a woman is designated by a legal or cultural definition of her sex to be responsible for reproduction and child rearing, her right to represent herself is undermined. ... Part of our struggle is to explode the barriers of ... enforced sexual choices. (Cornell 1998, 27)

Thus the equal intrinsic value of women should be recognised, and women should be granted equivalent right to their personhoods as an initial matter (*ibid.*, 19-23). The value of women, or of anybody, is not defined through their reproductive roles. People should be able freely to define and give value to their sexualities, and public policies that define their roles in the caring process in a restrictive way do not respect the imaginary domain or reproductive agency. Although the GOV report does not deny women's position as participants in public and political life, positioning men as assistants with regard to childcare and housework and thereby making women responsible for them, assigns very traditional roles.

Gender is rarely visible in the section of the GOV report concerning favourable conditions for having children, the primary focus being the family and how families can be encouraged to have more children. As shown in the analysis in Chapter four, the notion of the family as a single unit is problematic, and hides all sorts of power structures. It ignores gendered and heteronormative structures and does not allow for different ways of seeing women's and men's

roles in the reproductive process. In many ways the few explicit mentions of gender support the traditional view of the family as a heterosexual unit with traditionally gendered duties with regard to the care of children and the housework. The family imposes limits on reproductive agency with regard to gender. Placing the responsibility for childcare with women and not questioning the family structure only strengthens sexual difference.

It is easy to think of gender neutrality as positive in that it does not differentiate women as a special group, but aims to treat women and men the same. It could be interpreted as a way of enabling reproductive agency, leaving room for the imaginary domain. According to this interpretation, people work through their sexual difference themselves, and the GOV text does not take an explicit stance on gendered roles. There are, nevertheless, problems in this way of thinking. If cultural and social norms are not questioned, the kind of gender neutrality included in the GOV report does not take the imaginary domain and freedom into account in an effective way. One example of such ineffectiveness is the way in which leave systems are discussed. The aim is to find flexible solutions that enable parents to combine family and work life (see e.g., GOV, 46). However, it is primarily the women who take the leaves (Lammi-Taskula, Salmi & Parrukoski 2009), and thus the underlying assumption that women are responsible for family life is not questioned when the issue of leaves is discussed in a gender-neutral way as a matter for families. Reproductive agency is limited by the existing structures and culture, which the gender-neutral approach does not call into question.

One might ask whether it is possible to renegotiate the current package of maternity, paternity and family leaves without explicit critical evaluation of the system. The current benefits are based on the idea that the mother is the primary carer (see e.g., Rantalaiho 2003), and living the system differently may well require unusual circumstances in the woman's job situation. The tweaking of the system by enhancing women's position in the labour market or encouraging men to help with the household chores will not change the basic binary structures that deal with the issues in a complementary manner. Reproductive agency as the possibilities to re-imagine and re-live, and thus overcome, the binary system is not encouraged in this setting. Living out the

gendered roles in reproduction and care differently often demand extraordinary efforts or resources, which in itself could be seen to limit the imaginary domain.

Although gender neutrality features most prominently in the GOV report, there are traces of it in the other two policy texts as well. For example, the FF lists measures to be taken by 2010 in order to increase the birth rate, and mentions that there should be more flexibility in working hours, more opportunities for part-time work and more family-friendly working environments (FF, 48); it does not mention that such measures mainly concern women. As in the treatment of the family as a single unit, this silence on the gendered structures of working life and housework hides the inequalities, or arrangements that do not support people's ability to freely form their personality and evaluate their life plans. The policies are meant to improve the position of working women, which can be interpreted as improving women's agency over their lives. Not questioning the basic structures and gendered roles does not enhance the freer formation of notions of gender, however. Sometimes it is important to think up and clearly articulate different kinds of arrangements regarding reproduction and the gendered roles connected to having children. Next I examine some more clearly pronounced views of the differentiated roles of men and women in the reproductive process, and issues connected to differentiation.

6.4.2 Questions of inequality

Not all three documents promote gender neutrality in the same sense as the GOV report. Both EVA and FF examine some of the issues from a gender perspective. In particular, the EVA report explicitly claims that women's position in society affects the birth rate. One of the most visible examples of this is in the chapter dealing with the question of why Finnish people do not have more children. One of the sections is entitled 'Women concentrate on work and a career', and it explores the claim that women's status in society is connected to the birth rate, specifically that the higher a woman's income, the fewer children she has. The effects of contraception and education are also briefly mentioned. The claim that women on higher incomes have fewer children does not seem to hold in Finland, however: more highly educated women on higher salaries have more

children. The report also acknowledges that men and women, mothers and fathers, have different roles with regard to having children, and that fathers have more of a supporting role whereas women still carry the main responsibility for the housework. (EVA, 20-22) The gender focus related to working life in the FF text includes the promotion of policies that would make young, single women less of a risk for employers through the more equal distribution of the cost of family leave and of domestic work. This would enhance young women's position on the job market (FF, 52).

As mentioned in the previous section, combining work and family life is often discussed without clear reference to gender. On the general level the argumentation is not explicit in terms of how it concerns women and men differently. However, it would be difficult to discuss certain problems related to the job market that evidently affect the birth rate in gender-neutral terms. The question of so-called atypical employment (*epättyypilliset työsuhteet* in Finnish) is one example. Short-term, fixed contracts are assumed to have a negative effect on the birth rate, and it is often explicitly stated that this affects (young) women in particular (see e.g., EVA, 26). There is almost unanimous agreement in the three documents (and, I suggest, also more widely in Finnish politics) that promoting women's employment enhances reproduction. This is connected to the financial aspect of having children discussed in Chapter five. The logic is that women's permanent employment brings more financial security, and that this makes women or families more likely to have children. In many other contexts, women's employment is considered a problem with regard to reproduction and the birth rate. One example of this is Catherine Hakim's preference theory, which is based on the assumption that women make choices between 'market work' and 'family work'; her classification of women as home-centred, adaptive and work-centred presupposes that prioritising paid work means that women have fewer children (Hakim 2003, 355-361).

In the Finnish context, atypical employment pertains mainly to women, and men's employment and its effects on the willingness to have children are not discussed. In terms of reproductive agency, the promotion of women's employment can be interpreted as positive. The idea that women should work signifies acceptance of their full personhood as participants in the

labour market, and does not portray having children and having a job as mutually exclusive. It thereby implies more freedom in pursuing one's life goals. It makes women financially independent and enables them to choose their life paths with regard to procreation or anything else. This, of course, may be restricted by presumptions or expectations about procreation that come from different directions. The idea of improving (young) women's position in the labour market is articulated from the instrumental perspective of promoting procreation, under the assumption that all women should have children and improvements in their position would make them more willing to procreate. There are also contradictions in the idea of promoting procreation in this way in that there is, at the same time, not strong enough questioning of the gendered nature of childcare and housework. The Finnish ideology of women in full-time employment and as primarily responsible for the home creates strong pressures on them in their everyday lives given the lack of critical assessment or acknowledgement of sexual difference with regard to childcare and housework.

Women's employment is one thing that is dealt with openly from a gendered perspective. Given the explicit treatment of inequality problems, stating the obvious cannot be deemed as negative, but can shed light on issues that are potentially open to rethinking. The EVA report states problems openly to some extent, but it does not dismantle the gendered structures and includes elements that are contradictory. It takes an individualistic approach to the question of procreation in the sense that individuals should take more responsibility for it. At the same time, it criticises selfish people who concentrate on work and a career instead of having children (see e.g., EVA, 35, 37). This contradicts the idea of individualism, and the contradictory structure is also gendered. It can thus be said that, when it comes to changing things, just stating the obvious is not enough.

One of the issues that is worth closer examination and is related to the promotion of individualism and women's role in relation to it is the general gendered nature of the claim that people are too selfish and do not want to have children. Although the EVA report does not state directly that women should stay at home and have babies, the section entitled 'Women concentrate on work and a career' gives the impressions that women are to blame for the low birth

rate. It notes that highly educated Finnish women have more children, and that successful day-care solutions have dampened the effects of female employment on the birth rate, but it also suggests that female equality has brought about a decrease in the number of women who become mothers. The connection between equality and the birth rate thus indicates an uneven development in equality, and insufficient support from men in housework and caring. (EVA, 21-22) Despite the caveats, the undertone is that women's actions matter with regard to the birth rate. Men should help, but having children remains women's responsibility, and it is women who have the doubts about having children, thus creating problems.

In terms of the imaginary domain and the rethinking of sexual difference, assigning responsibility for the birth rate to women is not very conducive to reconsidering gender relations, and this is an approach that is also visible elsewhere. The EVA report notes that not all modern women can be persuaded to contribute to the procreation effort (*lapsentekotalkoot* in Finnish) (ibid., 32-33). Some prefer to focus on a career, and thus do not fulfil their responsibility to have children. The idea of women shouldering the responsibility for procreation is evident in other parts of the EVA report. The section dealing with fixed-term work contracts and the uncertainty they create, for example, focuses only on women of childbearing age, explicitly stating that the fixed-term work culture mainly affects young, academically educated women working in the public sector (ibid., 26), and it does not refer to men at all. The problems related to working life are seen very much as affecting women. Although women are not explicitly blamed for the structural inequality of the labour market, they are still depicted as the ones who do not want to have children. This does not respect their imaginary domain, because if they are condemned for not wanting to have children, the implication is that it is their duty, or in their nature, to procreate. Such a construction ignores reproductive agency in that the choice not to have children is not considered a legitimate option.

The FF document similarly assigns responsibility to women in places. One of the FF targets is to increase the proportion of women giving birth to 90 per cent (it is currently 85 per cent but could, according to the FF, drop to 80 per cent). The proportion of those who are childless of their own volition is

about 25-30 per cent of all childless women, and in the view of the FF, the best chance of changing their opinions would be to promote child-friendly attitudes (FF, 32). First of all, it seems somewhat unlikely that women who do not want to have children for various reasons would be swayed by more child-friendly attitudes in society. Could it not just as easily have the opposite effect? Secondly, here, too, it is assumed that women have the responsibility to reproduce, or are responsible for the low birth rate. Of course, the capability to give birth puts women in a different position than men, but such a one-sided approach that concentrates on women treats women and men rather differently in terms of reproductive agency. The underlying assumption is that women ultimately have the responsibility for procreation, and it is legitimate to try to influence their reproductive decision-making. Women's own choices are seen as problematic and as something that should be changed.

There seems to be a curious double structure in the documents in their treatment of individualisation and women. Individualisation is something that should be respected in general, but when it comes to women living it out, the outcomes may be negative from a societal perspective. Therefore, with regard to the population and family policies advocated in the documents, women's reproductive agency cannot be fully respected because it may well lead to their having too few children. Neither the EVA nor the FF text considers women's right to their personhood and their personality values something that need to be respected in all situations. The FF's idea that women who are childless of their own volition should be persuaded to have children does not respect these women's personality formation or their ability to freely make procreative decisions. Being childless is not seen as a legitimate life choice. The EVA report has a negative attitude to state-based solutions, and encourages people to be responsible for their lives, but then it is also a bad thing if women concentrate too much on their jobs (see EVA, 33-34). Despite the pronouncements of individualism, women are expected to give birth, and thereby their reproductive agency is not respected.

The legitimacy of attempts to foster equality is not questioned in the discussion on women's equality and individualism, and it is acknowledged that men need to take more responsibility in terms of caring for children and doing

housework (see e.g., EVA, 22, 38 and FF, 51). Acknowledgement of such problems could be interpreted as an attempt to rethink gendered roles in the reproductive process and thus to enhance reproductive agency, but this does not necessarily result in efforts to dismantle deeper gendered structures. If we are to take the idea of the imaginary domain seriously with regard to gender, gendered roles concerning who is primarily responsible for childcare should not be forced onto or expected of anyone. This is not just a question of defining the woman's role through motherhood, but also concerns the man's role in taking care of children and in reproductive decisions.

The EVA report examines how mothers and fathers deal with parenthood differently (see e.g., EVA, 22), but it does not analyse why. For EVA individualism is not about the freedom to make any kind of decision. EVA promotes family-friendly policies in order to increase the birth rate. Women have suffered from inequality, and in many cases still do, but at the same time people are selfish and should concentrate more on the family. If the basic structures of gendered divisions related to procreation and caring are not questioned, the emphasis on family values actually reinforces the traditional male and female roles. Men and women who are expected to comply with traditional roles related to caring and reproduction are constrained in terms of reproductive agency. The options in terms of living differently and overcoming binary gendered roles are not increased, but are limited to certain modes.

In one sense, explicitly stating the problems but not questioning the underlying gendered structures echoes the challenges that so-called liberal feminism faces and on account of which it has been criticised. The promotion of social policies facilitating women's participation in the labour force is based on the assumption that the worker does not have a gender, or that it is not a relevant characteristic, but closer examination reveals that the human being with the right to work is, in fact, masculine. The aim in the various leave systems is not to re-think what motherhood and fatherhood might mean, but to create a situation in which women, despite being mothers, could be part of the waged labour pool just as men are. Women's employment is a good feminist goal in itself, but in this case women are compared to men and men are used as the standard. The setting also reveals why Cornell talks about representing the

feminine: the goal should not be to achieve similarity in men's and women's situations, but to transfigure the general assumptions about gender altogether. Men have traditionally had smaller roles in childcare and housework, and if the aim is to position men and women similarly with regard to both the family and the job market, the problem is that simply promoting only women's employment does not change the traditional setting in the family.

Situations in working life in which women are expected to behave similarly to men could constrict reproductive agency for women more than for men. In heterosexual relationships, men seem to have more choice than women in terms of taking a more or less active role in the lives of their children. As the three texts examined here imply, men are encouraged to help women with the children and the housework, but women are not given the same opportunity to take the assistant's role. One might ask what it would mean if men were considered the primary carers. Would it be possible to create policies based on the assumption that men clean, cook, take care of the children and take more leave from work than women? Moreover, would gender-neutral policies change sexual difference with regard to reproductive and caring processes?

One more example of the lack of challenge to gendered structures is that women are still strongly seen as the object of policy measures. This is evident in the chapter in the EVA report considering ways of raising the birth rate. One of the subsections describes how the target group of the policy measures is becoming splintered. Most of the discourse is about women, but at the end of the section it is acknowledged that the change is not only in women's lives, but also in families. (EVA, 31-32) Men are not considered part of the target group. The FF report takes women to be the object of policies even more explicitly, and this question is examined next.

6.4.3 Women as the object of policies

Both the EVA and the FF reports portray women as the object of measures aimed at affecting the birth rate, regardless of whether they are called family policies or population policies. The FF uses Catherine Hakim's categorisation of women, which is based on women's attitudes to having children and to family

life, as a theoretical tool in its assessment of the population-policy measures. According to Hakim, about 20 per cent of women are home-centred and are motivated to raise children, about 20 per cent are work-centred and are usually content not to have children, and about 60 per cent are adaptive and try to combine work and family life. (FF, 30) This theory is, of course, open to criticism from various perspectives (see e.g., McRae 2003 and Crompton & Lyonett 2005), but the content and the flaws are less relevant to my study; I am more interested in how the FF applies it.

Hakim's study, according to the FF, did not include men in the research (ibid.), and thus in choosing the categorisation it makes women the object of the policy measures. FF does not totally ignore men's reasons for having children, but considers women's motives more basic or related to how they see their lives: women have children in order to bring meaning into their lives, whereas for men it is the joy of seeing the child grow and develop (ibid., 31). There is no suggestion that men might add meaning to their lives through fatherhood. Conversely, having children is considered very basic to a woman's life, something that defines her being more deeply. Attribution of women's motivation to procreate to the meaning of life implies a strong commitment to the idea of sexual difference; having children seems to matter more to women than to men. Reproductive agency is not valued, and an outsider is defining the meaning of parenthood for both sexes. Differences in women's and men's attitudes to reproduction are also reflected in making women the object of the policies. Since reproduction is more important to women, they are chosen as the ones to whom the policies should be directed.

The FF considers women and their attitudes the key in deciding population-policy measures, stating that 'policies that treat women as a homogenous group are doomed to failure' (ibid., 35). In order to avoid treating women as a uniform group FF adopts Hakim's classification. The basis of its policies is that individuals and couples have the freedom to decide about having children (ibid., 7-8). The text does not mention women and men separately, and although it refers to individuals, its very formulation of population policies based on Hakim's categorisation, and making women the only target, does not respect women's reproductive agency the same way as it respects men's. The

individual freedom to decide about having children is denied in the actual policy proposals.

The EVA report also considers women the target of population policies. The section entitled 'The target group splinters' (*Kohderyhmä pirstaloituu* in Finnish) starts with the sentence: 'A set of difficulties in explaining the birth rate are attributable to the fact that the group in question - families, women, fathers - is changing and individualising at a rapid rate' (EVA, 31). This is a very interesting quotation as it posits all women as instrumental in explaining the development of the birth rate, but it only applies to men who are fathers. According to this logic, the behaviour of every individual woman affects the birth rate, whereas in the case of men it is only after they have become fathers that they become a factor in the development of the birth rate, and not all men are part of it. This dual understanding is a clear example of the differences in perception of the roles of women and men in the reproductive process: all women are potential mothers, whereas men as men do not feature in the birth-rate calculus or policy planning.

The paragraph goes on to posit that there is no homogenous group of women and their partners who could be the target of family policies (ibid.). The rest of the section charts how women have become diverse as a group. For example, there is a stronger division between labour-market producers and family-based reproducers. There is reference at the end of the chapter to the fact that families are also becoming more diversified. (ibid., 31-32) The report ignores the role of men and how they could be analysed as a relevant element in population and family policies and the development of the birth rate. Making women the object of the policies brushes aside the role of men in population growth and family life. Although women as the ones giving birth are differently positioned in the reproductive process, the idea of trying to affect men's behaviour through family policies is totally alien in the documents.

It is once again clear that women's reproductive agency is constructed very differently from men's. It is considered entirely legitimate to try to influence women's willingness to have children, whereas men are not discussed at all. All women as potential mothers are targeted in the policies, but men become objects only after they have become fathers. The way the policies are for-

mulated does not respect women's full personhood and limits reproductive agency. In addition, the scope for creating an environment that would foster rethinking and living sexual difference is limited in this thinking. Although agency in the context of performativity is about reworking the norms, policy proposals assigning women the role of the mother affect the reiterative potential in that the space for reconfiguring are subject to constraint; the options that people could even consider possible are limited.

The targeting of women in population policies is a familiar theme in discussions about the developing world, and double standards have been applied with regard to the roles of men and women in population control in the developing countries. Poor women in particular have been targets of many kinds of measures aimed at slowing population growth, and the measures are frequently discussed separately from issues connected with the human and other rights of these women. (Kajesalo & Topo 1994: 213) The Finnish context, of course, bears no resemblance to the developing world: the social, cultural and symbolic position of women is different, and women's reproductive agency is constructed differently. The positioning of women as objects of population policies in the policy documents is nevertheless a reminder that even in Finland, a country that prides itself on its gender equality, the reproductive capacities of women and men are viewed very differently. Moreover, the difference still places women in an inferior position with regard to agency.

When analysing policies that position men and women differently through the notion of reproductive agency, it is clear that they do not advance people's freedom to form their personalities with regard to procreation. The goal of family policies in this context is to increase the birth rate, and because the gender roles are not questioned, in practice the assumption is that women give birth and stay at home, and are the ones who have to give up or modify their goals and values. The individualisation the FF refers to with reference to respecting individuals' sexual rights (FF, 7-8), and which the EVA report emphasises (see e.g., EVA, 4) does not extend fully to women. Making women the target of policies treats women as a group who is defined by their attitude towards motherhood and having children.

6.5 Conclusion

My aim in this section has been to give an overview of the gendered structures that are present in the selected policy documents. The texts vary in their treatment of gender, from attempts at almost total neutrality to explicitly tackling various gendered problems. The GOV report aims at the most gender-neutral approach, and widely employs the notion of the family in its discourse on increasing the birth rate. Gender-neutrality could be interpreted as an attempt to overcome sexual difference and to rethink gendered duties in connection with the procreative process. However, this does not mean that the gender question could be avoided. To some extent, attempts at gender neutrality, in a situation where many social structures such as childcare or housework are gendered, just perpetuate the gendered division of labour and care. Nevertheless, the GOV report in places, and the EVA report and the FF Program to a larger extent, acknowledge the uneven distribution of housework and childcare, and they address these issues explicitly.

Explicitness in terms of gender usually means that the texts demand a more equal distribution of housework and of the burdens that different leave systems place on employers. Men are encouraged to take part in the everyday maintenance of the home and in caring for the children, and to use the parental leave to which they are entitled. All these aims are, of course, positive, and are admissions that in the current system responsibilities are not equally shared. However, they do not produce policy proposals that would change the bigger picture with regard to the gendered structures of reproduction and caring. Women are still expected to carry the main responsibility for the home, and men are assigned an assistant's role. A further implication is that it is women's duty to be the primary carers. Despite the attempts at more equal arrangements, it seems that without a deeper rethinking of the gendered roles and assignments, and without more respect for the imaginary domain, the changes will only be piecemeal. Thus the policy documents do not fully respect women's full personhood, which is frequently connected to motherhood.

An example of how the woman's role is still very much defined through the notion of motherhood and reproduction is the targeting of population policies at women in both the EVA report and the FF Program. Women are

the ones who need to change their behaviour if the Finnish birth rate is to start to grow, and this places the responsibility on them. Even though there are no explicit demands for women to stay at home, for example, the implicit message is that they should recognise and respect their responsibility and their duty, and have more children. Men are merely women's assistants in terms of childcare, and their choices are more diverse. There is thus an assumption of different duties for men and women with regard to reproduction.

As Thomas Laqueur notes, there are various perspectives on motherhood and fatherhood, and some feminists go back to the idea that the category of mother is something that is natural, more than culture, and that fatherhood is just an 'idea' because the biological connection to the child is materially different from that of the mother (Laqueur 1992, 157). The conception of motherhood as natural is also evident in the three policy documents analysed here. The proposals may advocate equality, but they still hold on to the idea that motherhood is somehow more natural, and that fatherhood is, in the end, secondary in terms of caring for the child, despite the ideal that fathers should be active and present in their children's lives. This is problematic with regard to reproductive agency. Such a precise and constrained definition of what it means to be a mother and a father influences people's imaginary domains, how they think about parenthood and their own relationship to it. It also has effects on their options when they think about their own values related to procreation and the meanings they attach to their reproductive capacities, be they men, women or something else.

Furthermore, in the rare cases in which men are considered an object of family or population policies, it is only after they have become fathers. Women, conversely, are objects even before they become mothers, so in terms of reproductive agency they are treated very differently from men. It is perceived as legitimate to try to affect women's decisions to have children in general, and to consider all women as potential mothers. Decisions about fatherhood are not an object of policy measures, and men are targeted in the policies not as men, only as fathers. Moreover, making women the primary object of the policies does not enhance the imaginary domain with regard to sex, sexuality and how one sees one's gender. Presenting choices as limited does not promote the re-thinking of sexual difference as something other than binary.

Reproductive agency and the notion of the imaginary domain are indispensable to the analysis of gender in the three documents, but would seem to be somewhat inadequate if the aim is to propose alternative policies to those examined in this study. All policy proposals offer a limited set of choices and aim to steer people's behaviour in certain directions, and it is difficult to see how the idea that the only source of life choices is the person concerned could provide substantive content. Suggesting policy content is not the task of this study. The imaginary domain is an ideal and as such is a good evaluation tool. One can, of course, entertain the idea of re-imagining sexual difference and the reproductive process, starting, for example, with what it would mean if men were primarily responsible for childcare and housework, or with defining masculinity so as to incorporate more caring values. I would like to think that the whole binary gender system could be re-imagined differently, although as this study shows, it is a difficult task.

7 Conclusion

This dissertation describes and redescibes three selected documents dealing with population policy and the declining birth rate in 21st-century Finland from the perspective of reproductive agency. The aim of the redescription is to elucidate the values and logics supporting the texts and the discourse. The population question has worried European governments for a long time now. It has been the subject of public discussion for decades in Finland, too, but concern about population growth has intensified in the 21st century. One sign of this is the publication of several reports on the population question during a relatively short time in 2003-2004.

I focused in my examination on three documents that were published during those years: the Government report on the future called 'Finland for people of all ages: Government report on the future: demographic trends, population policy, and preparation for changes in the age structure' (GOV) published in 2004, the Business and Policy Forum EVA report, called 'Condemned to Diminish? Finns and the Difficult Art of Procreation' (*Tuomitut vähenemään? Suomalaiset ja lisääntymisen vaikea taito*) (EVA), published in 2003, and the Family Federation's 'Population Policy Program' (FF), published in 2004. These policy documents were published within a relatively short time, and reflect the renewed interest in the population question. In addition, although the interests of the organisations publishing the reports are different, the texts deal with largely similar issues

I have deliberately concentrated on the three particular documents rather than conducting an extensive analysis of population discourses in recent years. I have used as an analytical tool the concept of reproductive agency, which facilitates redescription of the texts from a specific perspective. My redescription focuses on three themes that are prominent in the documents: the family, economics and gender. It seems that reproductive agency, which concerns the freedom to form one's personality, is insufficiently taken into account with regard to these three themes. The texts depict the family as monogamous and heterosexual, for example, and such strict definitions are problematic in

that they affect the possibilities to imagine reproductive processes. The notion of the family is also connected to my second theme, economics in that economics features strongly in family policies, which play an essential role in population policies and policy discourses. Family policies provide certain economic incentives for having children, and economic factors feature strongly in the texts when the aim is to raise the birth rate. In addition, the two themes are gendered, which means that the roles of women and men in the procreative process are seen differently. Although I do not analyse the Finnish population-policy discussions in their entirety, I believe that in employing the concept of reproductive agency I provide information that is also relevant outside of these specific texts, and give further insights into the wider debate on population policy.

The emphasis in the Finnish political debate about the population varies, one of the major factors being the birth rate: if the birth rate is in decline there are worries about the declining population, whereas when it is on the increase, concern about population issues is less visible. The population question was not particularly evident as a political problem in the 1980s and 1990s, although there were organisations such as the Family Federation that brought concerns about the size of the population into the public arena. The public discussion about the need for population policies was somewhat livelier in the media and in political forums during 2003-2004, which is when the three policy documents on which my study is based were published. I chose the three documents because they give different perspectives on the population question. EVA clearly represents business interests and favours market-based solutions in social policy. The FF concentrates more on Finnish families and their wellbeing. The GOV document incorporates many viewpoints; Finnish governments are coalitions, and various worldviews have to be incorporated into the policy proposals they put forward. Thus each of the reports represents specific views on current population questions.

I base my analytical tool, the notion of reproductive agency, on Drucilla Cornell's thinking, specifically on her concepts of the imaginary domain and bodily integrity. Behind her thinking is the idea that people are not ready personas, but are always working through who they are and who they want to become. They seek the sense of a coherent personality, which also includes a

bodily aspect. As they aspire to achieve coherence, they need to be free to sort out the identifications that comprise their personalities, and in the process of sorting through their identifications they need the imaginary domain. The imaginary domain is a moral and psychic space which people require in order to be able to process the identifications that form their embodied personalities. I use the notion of embodied personalities to reflect the idea that the body and the mind are not detached, but are inseparably linked as a person aspires to bodily integrity. Bodily integrity is imaginary: it is something that is always in the future, but it is an essential part of personality formation. Cornell attaches importance to the notion of freedom in personality formation. Freedom in this context means that people should be the only source of the values and meanings connected to the identifications that comprise the personality, although they are also inevitably shaped by the surrounding society and culture and thus cannot be free in the sense of being totally autonomous and removed from the social and culture.

An important aspect of the embodied personality is reproductive capacity. Cornell considers sex and sexuality an essential element in how people see themselves, and procreation is connected to this. Decisions about parenthood are among the most basic in terms of personality formation. It is vital that such decisions, and the values and meanings connected to reproductive choices, are constructed as freely as possible, so that the source of the values and meanings about life is the person concerned. It should be borne in mind that, for Cornell, freedom, bodily integrity and the imaginary domain are ideals, which means that they cannot be achieved in themselves, but are something to be strived for. Consequently, and because the personality is a process and not something that is fixed and stable, the environment and the social, cultural and political worlds in which people live influence how they strive to reach their ideals. The idea of freedom as an ideal makes the environment in which the personality is formed even more important given that people are socially constructed, and are affected by their social, political and cultural surroundings.

I have also employed some of Judith Butler's notions, in particular her concept of performativity. As identities are performatively constructed, there is no absolute difference between the self and the discourses and social

structures that form the self. Performativity implies agency in that inherent in the idea of the iterability of identity is the potential for change. The environment in which the personality forms can also be transformed when the personality is iterated differently. Thinking about the subject or the personality as processual facilitates thinking about change, both in the political and social environment, and also on the level of the personality. Agency can thus be understood here as chances to iterate the personality or the self differently.

Combining the notion of the imaginary domain with Judith Butler's idea of performativity of gender, i.e. that gender is doing, allows the re-thinking and the re-living of sexual difference. The imaginary domain offers an arena, a space or a tool for rethinking, and Butler's notion of performativity over time facilitates theorising about the reiteration of sexual difference. The iteration does not create the gender identity once and for all, nor can the change be once and for all. Change is piecemeal, not necessarily something that can be directed, and happens over time, but it is still possible. As Moya Lloyd notes:

For every reiteration of the norms and practices that produces gender identity is a reiteration *with a difference*. Butler's theorization of performativity indicates, unlike some other accounts, how the subject's constitutive practices can be the raw material for its own transfiguration. (Lloyd 2005, 26, emphasis in the original)

Performativity, and agency connected to it, can also be considered in relation to reproduction. Reproductive agency refers to the possibilities to live one's procreative life or personality with regard to procreation in different ways, especially in relation to norms and hegemonic understandings of how one should reproduce. It is about living one's reproductive life as freely as possible, in the ideal sense of freedom, meaning assigning values and meanings to one's reproductive capacities and choices. The concept of reproductive agency also incorporates the notion that people have possibilities to live their reproductive lives in personal ways, hence allowing for change in the hegemonic understandings of what procreation means.

Understood as the potential for freedom in procreative personality formation, the notion of reproductive agency can be used as an evaluative tool with which to examine policies, and what specific policies offer in this context. Reproduction is a crucial part of being a human being, and this evaluative tool should therefore not be restricted to policies that explicitly address the question of reproductive agency; it is something that can be taken into account in different contexts in which people's lives and procreative options are discussed. Given that family policies and the need for population policies are very much about reproduction and influencing procreative decisions, the notion of reproductive agency facilitated examination of the three policy documents. It would, of course, be possible to analyse several things, but I chose to concentrate on three issues: the family, economics and gender. They are issues that are at the core of the debates covered in the documents, and although the texts deal with them differently, they are all present in all of the texts in one way or another.

The first issue, the family, is highly visible in the three documents in that it is considered the primary location of procreation. Although there is some acknowledgement that there are different kinds of families, the basic assumption in all the texts is that it is a heterosexual, monogamous unit that is based on the sexual relationship of the couple, and children are seen as the expression of conjugal love. The least defined approach in regard to the family is in the GOV report, which treats the family as a single, opaque unit and restricts reproductive agency to this unit rather than to separate persons. The EVA report and the FF Population Policy Program have a more open notion – the EVA report acknowledges that families have become different, for example – but they still do not question the very basic assumptions about the importance of families when it comes to reproduction. It is also assumed that the family is automatically important to people, and that everyone should, or should want to procreate.

When the family question is redescribed in terms of reproductive agency, it is clear that the documents do not take sufficiently into account the possibilities of living the family differently. If the imaginary domain is to be respected, there should not be one definition of the good family, or a preference for any one type (e.g., the biological two-parent heteronormative nuclear fam-

ily). Although procreation is very rarely covered without reference to the family – thereby making it seem like a natural element in the reproductive process – it is worth remembering historicity and constructed nature of the family, especially the nuclear family, which currently appears so natural. In portraying procreation as happening through the family, the documents affect reproductive agency through creating and expressing expectations about what a family should be like, and these expectations form the environment in which people construct their personalities. Family policies also include implicit notions about the structure and the roles of the people involved in the formation of the family.

The second theme of my redescription is economics. The population is often a significant variable in different kinds of development calculations, and is in many cases considered essential to the economic development of a nation. The three policy documents treat economic development as an unannounced rationale that is indispensable for a nation. The population as a whole and in terms of numbers is then associated with continuous economic growth, and population growth is considered crucial for the economic development of Finland. Family policies foster population growth in offering economic support for families. There are thus two levels of economic argumentation in the three policy documents. The first is the macroeconomic level, which refers to major aspects of economic growth including the GDP, dependency ratios and the employment level. Secondly there is the level of family policies, which are assumed to influence the reproductive decisions of individual families that make decisions about procreation based on financial factors. Having children is strongly portrayed through the lens of economics, and the decision whether or not to have children is considered to be based on whether a family can afford it or not. The GOV report in particular does not discuss the values connected to procreation, and deals with the question from a strongly economic perspective. The EVA and FF reports do acknowledge that people have motives other than financial ones when they consider having children.

Redescription through the notion of reproductive agency reveals that macroeconomic argumentation is rather problematic in that it fosters the assumption that all people should, or should want to reproduce, and that it is, in fact, a duty. The duty argument is often directed at women, who are positioned

differently in the reproductive process from men. Reproductive agency is not fully recognised, because understanding procreation as a duty does not leave much room for people's own values and meanings. On the other hand, family policies may enhance reproductive agency if they provide economic support to people who could not afford to have children otherwise. As Cornell has shown (see e.g., Cornell 1995, 64-69), the imaginary domain and the formation of the personality also require certain kinds of societal and economic arrangements in order to enable people to exercise their freedom, and providing economic support for families is one way of making sure that those who want to have children are able to do so. However, family policies always contain definitions of the family and in what kinds of life situations people are entitled to benefits. Allowing an outsider, such as the state, to define the family can be seen as a violation of the imaginary domain as it has effects on people's ability to freely work out what the family is for them and how and what kinds of values they attach to it. Considered through the notion of reproductive agency, family policies have contradictory functions: on the one hand they enhance reproductive agency in certain contexts, but on the other hand they always define the family and limit individual freedom to imagine and live different kinds of family formations.

Connected to the economic perspective is the opposite view that having children should not be thought of as an economic decision. Focusing on other than economic issues challenges the more common approach to population growth, which emphasises the economic conditions for having children. Many of the arguments promoting non-economic values of procreation are very conservative as they hark back to so-called family values, i.e. to the idea of the traditional nuclear family. They also assume traditional gendered roles for men and women. Therefore, with regard to reproductive agency, calls for family values and the rejection of economic thinking are usually not very helpful either to men or to women.

My third redescriptive theme is gender, which intersects with many of the issues the policy documents deal with. Gender is visible differently in the three documents. The GOV report aims at neutrality in the sense that it avoids using explicitly gendered language. The EVA and FF texts analyse gender and gender inequality explicitly with regard to the birth rate. Although the GOV re-

port avoids explicitly gendered language, and leaves room for the imaginary domain, many of the issues it deals with are gendered. The problem with aiming at neutrality is that it leaves untouched many of the structures that position women and men differently and ends up repeating the same unequal and differentiated practices with regard to reproduction. For example, the GOV report fails to point out that the various kinds of leaves related to having children are usually taken by women, and policies that seek to combine family and work life in a gender-neutral way do nothing to change this set-up.

The EVA and FF reports project more explicitly gendered viewpoints, and the EVA text in particular analyses the position and role of women in the development of the birth rate from various perspectives. It is good to state inequalities clearly in that it makes it possible to analyse and change them. The EVA and FF documents do not question the deep gendered structures either, however, so in a way their work is left half-finished. Analysing the unequal distribution of housework or young women's problematic job-market status is, of course, useful, but the very basic constellations of gendered roles in the situations remain unquestioned. Women as mothers seem naturally to be in a position that is different from men, and implicit in this is the idea that women are, in the end, responsible for the development of the Finnish birth rate. Men should help women with the housework and caring for the children, but women are in charge of the children and, by implication, also of the birth rate.

Implicit in the idea of the imaginary domain and reproductive agency is the notion that sexual difference and the binary gender system are things that one should be able to challenge and live differently. However, the policy texts end up not creating productive discourses for reproductive agency with regard to gender and gendered roles. The fact that women are in a special position when it comes to the birth rate means that they are treated in the EVA report and the FF Program as objects of family and population policies aimed at raising the birth rate. This merely perpetuates the hegemonic view of sexual difference in that women's reproductive agency is considered something that can legitimately be limited, and can be an object of policies and subject to influence and change.

As the redescriptions show, reproductive agency is seen very differently for men and women. Women's role in the reproductive process is understood as much more highly defined in that their role in the labour market, for example, is defined through the notion of motherhood. Cornell has written about the importance of separating the role of a mother and what it means to be a woman, as the conflation of the two means that women are treated unequally if they are not given the right to define and process the meanings and values connected to procreation (Cornell 1998, chapter 4). Making women the object of policies constructs their reproductive agency differently than in the case of men in that it is considered legitimate to try to affect their behaviour and to expect all women to be mothers. Men, in contrast, are understood to have more freedom to decide about fatherhood, and their role in society in general is not defined by the role of father or by fatherhood.

From the perspective of reproductive agency, it can be said on the general level that there are places in the three documents in which people's need to decide about procreation as freely as possible is recognised, but the policy proposals are based on restricted views on the working of the reproductive process. There is no dismantling or questioning of the basic structures of procreation, which would be a starting point for a more open approach to reproductive agency. The documents assume that the family is the main place of reproduction, and that it is primarily a biological, two-parent, heterosexual, monogamous nuclear unit. There are some signs of cracks in the notion, however, given that it is impossible to deny the existence of different kinds of families created by divorces, different kinds of sexualities and single parenthood, for example. These alternative forms are nevertheless seen as exceptions; the norm is still the two-parent heterosexual nuclear family. Family policies are usually formulated on this basis. Policies and policy proposals are then part of the performative possibilities and discourses that create the environment where reproductive agency is acted out.

Family policies are one of the issues that illustrate how reproduction and having children are approached from the perspective of economics in the documents. The macroeconomic success of the Finnish nation, and the role of demographics in it, are considered important, but the financial conditions of

individual families is also a concern in that decisions about having children are often seen to be based on economics. All these issues involving the family and economics are then intertwined with certain notions of gender. The assumption is that women are primarily responsible for the children, although equal parenting is talked about. In the end, however, men are portrayed as women's assistants in childcare and housework.

The fact that women are considered the more important partner in the reproductive process fosters the idea that policies should be aimed at women. Their decisions about procreation are considered more important than men's, and they are regarded as legitimate objects of population-policy measures. The imaginary domain is thus not fully respected when it comes to gender and sexual difference in the procreative process. Although women's biological capacity for bearing children and for lactation places them on a different position from men in the gestation process, in the moment of birth and in certain respects after it, there are many issues related to reproduction and childcare that are not dependent on women's biological capacities and could be dealt with differently. There is a need for re-imagining processes considered biologically unalterable, but this does not happen in the three documents.

It is not the purpose of this research to analyse all the discourses on Finnish population policy that have been going on in recent years, and therefore I cannot evaluate the prevalence of my observations. However, I think it is fair to assume that the viewpoints represented in my study are not uncommon in the population policy debates. Although it is not explicitly stated that women should stay at home and have babies, it seems rather clear that women are considered to be in a very different position from men, even when it is nothing to do with their child-bearing capacity. It is also worth pointing out that defining women's role in a restrictive manner also limits men's reproductive agency in that their role is considered complementary.

Redescribing population policies through the concept of reproductive agency raises questions about legitimacy of population policies in general in that not having children should be as legitimate and as freely accepted as having children. The basic rationale behind population policies is that people should have children, which is the assumption in the policy documents examined here.

In addition, there is often a further assumption that everyone should want to have children. There are references in three texts to the fact that not everyone considers procreation a duty or an inevitable part of their lives, but such attitudes are seen as something that should be changed. The policy proposals are solidly based on the view that it is natural for everyone to want to have children, and it is logical to introduce policies that encourage procreation.

Redescription has turned out to be a useful tool in shedding light on issues that are taken for granted or considered natural. Reproduction is a case in point. It carries not only cultural and social assumptions, but also assumptions labelled as biological that are often taken as a basis for certain kinds of arrangements related to procreation and childcare. My purpose in bringing some of these assumptions to light is to provide the ingredients for reimagining things. Cornell notes that even in science one 'must imagine otherwise to know the truth of what is' (Cornell 2008a, 90), and furthermore that imagining otherwise does not automatically bring about a new and more just world, for that requires political struggle and ethical commitment (Cornell 2008a, 90). Questioning current assumptions and things that seem natural or are understood as biological is one way to start the re-imagining process.

In terms of analytical power, I suggest that redescription is a good tool when the material in question is limited. It would be interesting to chart the development of the Finnish debate on the birth rate and population policies, and this would reveal certain things about Finnish politics, but it would not be possible to go very deeply into the values and meanings behind the discussions and the vocabularies. The strength of redescription is just this: it makes it possible to see issues that are taken to be self-evident in a new light. It can also be a force in processes that promote change or the development of new concepts.

I have redescribed the texts through my concept of reproductive agency, major elements of which are the notions of the imaginary domain and bodily integrity. Cornell's formulation of the imaginary domain emphasises each individual's freedom – or to be more precise the ideal of freedom – to form their personalities, and to decide on the values and meanings they attach to their identities, an aim being to be freed from the limitations on the current way of seeing themselves. Of course, one is inevitably influenced by one's society and

culture, but the basic premise of the imaginary domain and the performative notion of agency is that these can be rethought. Given that the personality is embodied, one aspect of its formation is bodily integrity, meaning that people imagine their bodies as whole. Bodies always have an imaginary dimension, which in turn means that people do not have any direct, unmediated connection with their bodies. Such conceptions are formed in an on-going performative process. Bodily coherence is thus something that people need to work on continuously, although a great deal of the processing is not conscious. The concept of bodily integrity is of major significance in this study on account of its close connection with reproduction and reproductive decisions, and with the values and meanings people connect to their bodily being.

The notion of reproductive agency is used as tool to illuminate the social and political conditions constituted and expressed in the three texts: the conditions under which decisions about reproduction are being made. As far as my analysis is concerned, it brings in new viewpoints that I might have missed if I had used some other method for examining the documents. First of all, drawing from the notions of the imaginary domain and bodily integrity emphasises the overcoming of sexual difference. It provokes new ways of thinking about masculinity and femininity, about the consequences of overcoming the binary construction of sex. This, of course, is known from feminist and queer theorising and is not new as such. The way the notion of reproductive agency combines the political and personal levels is, however, notable. Emphasis on freedom as an ideal in the imaginary domain fosters thinking about sexual difference as a very personal issue, not as something that could be created without others, but still something that each one of us processes, reprocesses and struggles with throughout our lives. The processing is connected to politics, as politics for its part creates the conditions in which each one of us forms our personality. Politics and policies can be evaluated against the idea of the imaginary domain, and politics can be thought of through the notion of freedom.

One of the unique aspects of my concept of reproductive agency is connected to how the body is understood. Women's right to decide about reproduction and about their bodies is one of the basic demands of feminists. My understanding of reproductive agency brings in a different perspective. Demands

for reproductive rights often rest on the assumption that bodies are something that women own, or at least the body is something that can be controlled and women should have the sole right to control their own bodies. As political demands these may be effective, but the notion of bodily integrity is more widely relevant. Inherent in the concept is the specific idea that people are not in full control of their bodies. This being the case, the social and political conditions that affect the formation of the personality and of bodily integrity assume all the more importance because they should be such that they strengthen the little control people have over their embodied being. Bodily integrity is a fragile achievement that has to be processed again and again, which makes the conditions in which people do the processing especially important. The conditions also have to be developed continuously. Aiming for the ideal of the imaginary domain means that society is never 'finished', and one should strive for more freedom and more choice in forming the personality.

The fact that the personality is never complete, and that bodily integrity is a continuous process, gives relevance to the concept of reproductive agency. The focus widens to the creation of an environment – social, cultural and political conditions – that enhances people's ability to form their embodied personalities rather than giving them specific, separate rights, although they are also important in promoting a more equal society. Reproductive agency is about the bigger picture. Enhancing people's ability to freely form the meanings and values they connect to their reproductive capacities calls for profound changes in society and in the culture in which we live. This is also connected to the above-mentioned idea that it is just because people cannot control their bodies that bodily integrity, and by extension reproductive agency, matter with regard to different kinds of public policies.

A significant aspect in my notion of reproductive agency is that it is not just about the physical being, but also includes something that is an essential part of people's personalities and how they see themselves. The denial of or limitation on reproductive rights, such as controlling women's procreation, is often seen in terms of the physical being, and as such overlooks the deep insult and psychic violation that efforts to control or influence people's ability to decide about their procreation involve. It is sometimes assumed that people are in

full control of their bodies, and it is enough if they are given freedom of choice. Reproductive agency and the imaginary domain emphasise that reproduction is an essential part of how people see themselves, not just something connected to the body understood as a mere physical entity. If the human being is thought of not only as a physical being, but also as an embodied personality, separate and piecemeal changes in laws concerning equality, for example, are not enough; reproduction as part of personality formation concerns wider social and political changes and opportunities. Reproductive agency is not only about distinct rights related to issues such as control of one's body, it is also about enhancing understanding of how a person can sort through the identifications that form the self, and how the process of personality formation can be enabled and secured.

The fact that the concept of reproductive agency stresses the individual's ability to give meanings and values to life implies that when I talk about it I am referring not only to women's right to reproductive decisions, but also to everyone's right to decide about procreation. Both men and women should have the freedom to form their personalities, meaning that men should also be able to decide about the meanings and values connected to their reproductive capacities. Men have traditionally been able to exercise more freedom in their reproductive decisions, but this does not mean that there are no expectations placed on them. Issues of parenthood are often considered complementary, thus there is a need to re-think the roles of both men and women: indeed, changes in one often create changes in the other. The overall aim is to change the binary way of thinking and to re-imagine reproductive roles that are based on aspects other than gender.

The notion of reproductive agency as a redescription tool has specific advantages and brings in novel insights, thereby triggering fresh ideas about the policy documents. Reading the documents through this perspective highlights the issues I have charted in this study, which would not otherwise be visible. The concept of reproductive agency, and by extension the imaginary domain and bodily integrity, are very useful in the redescription process in facilitating the rethinking of many reproductive issues connected to the policy documents and beyond. One might ask what alternative policy proposals the concept of the imaginary domain could offer. Creating proposals or any kind of

policy analysis is not the purpose of this study, although it has to be said that the concept of reproductive agency is limited in terms of providing substance for policies. The imaginary domain is a normative concept to some extent. It can be interpreted as a universal notion to be taken into account and, together with bodily integrity, respected in all public policies. Nevertheless, the ideal of freedom demands that the state or the legal system do not define the content of our imaginings or how we construct our personalities. All public policies, no matter how they have been devised, do to some degree define the parameters for living, meaning that the imaginary domain cannot be fully respected in any of them. In Chapter 1 of this study I quote Susan James: 'it is difficult to see how the state can take on the obligations that amount to protecting the imaginary domain' (James 2002, 192). I believe that the protection of the imaginary domain can be a goal and a tool in state policies, but as has become clear, it remains an ideal and an evaluative instrument.

Cornell sees the imaginary domain as an ideal, as something that is strived for but is never actually achieved, and as such it can be helpful in examining policies and considering their effects. Every substantive policy proposition influences how people form their personality, and every policy has its effects on the imaginary domain in one way or another. This does not mean that the notion is of no use in political practice, however, as ideals are always needed. Cornell notes that as soon as ideals are articulated and defended, they become exclusionary at the very moment of their defence (Cornell 2004, ix). She also notes:

Ideals neither emerge out of thin air nor do we simply dream them up. They are part of historical and social reality and, indeed, they have been critiqued as nothing more than expressions of the interests of the most powerful. These are criticisms that can never be answered once and for all. They must be taken into account as part of a complex and nuanced defense of ideals. (ibid.)

Political processes are not simple, and ideals do not have to be reached. They are something to aim at and the process is on-going. Political evaluation based

on ideals can be a force for change, and in this study I offer alternative and new viewpoints on the discussion concerning the need for Finnish population policies.

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