

## **,You Shall Not be Barren!’ – Conflicting Healing Paradigms in the Domain of Infertility**

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Infertility or involuntary childlessness is not only a personally painful but also socially highly stigmatized condition among the Setswana speaking population in Gaborone, Botswana. Having (many) children is seen as an evidence of wealth and blessing. To approach people who don't have children about their condition is seen as an insult, almost a curse. Yet, in a context where current reproductive dynamics among professionals lead them to decide to postpone their age of having children, and due to the rise of STD's, infertility has become more wide spread.

Pentecostal churches with a strong emphasis on healing through faith offer childless people help to conceive successfully. In addition, some pastors offer counseling to help the couple to overcome this situation and prayers to support them in their attempts to get a child. Childless members, however, find themselves in a paradoxical situation vis-à-vis these offers: on the one hand they need support but on the other hand they feel the need to keep their personal pain private as not to be embarrassed by their social environment, for instance other church members. The paper explores the conflicts childless members of two Pentecostal churches (Winner's Chapel International and Apostolic Faith Mission) are going through in their quest for children. These conflicts arouse from Pentecostal healing paradigms which are slightly opposed to scientific knowledge, the wish for privacy from the side of the childless couple and attempts of church authorities to prove their healing skills.