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Negotiating Gender Relations in the Context of Heterosexual Intimate Partner Relationships

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Abstract

Contemporary neoliberal postfeminism portrays women as empowered and existing in heterosexual relationships where equality is negotiated between two equal beings. The current study is a feminist project seeking to understand how men and women negotiate gendered relations in the context of heterosexual intimate partner relationships. The research draws on individual semi-structured interviews conducted with six men and six women aged between 25 and 40, who had been in a heterosexual intimate relationship for at least two years, thus having experience in the area of interest. A feminist poststructural discourse analysis was used to attend to the gendered power relations and dominant discourses that enabled and constrained subjectivities and positioning for the men and women. This research indicates that whilst equality and women's empowerment are popularised ideals, the lived reality is quite different. In both their own gendered subjectivities and gendered performances in their intimate heterosexual relationships, men and women are navigating the positions/roles on offer in hegemonic masculinity, emphasised femininity and neoliberal postfeminist 'choice' femininity that are both enabled and constrained by heteronormativity. Heteronormativity produces discourses, subjectivities and positioning that are so dominant they are invisible, and are taken up as one's own individualised choices. Social sanctions make resisting or developing new positions difficult. The result is the continuing enactment of traditional gendered roles in intimate heterosexual relationships, rather than negotiating new positioning, which is reproducing inequality and the continued subordination of women.

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Table of Contents

Title Page	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter two: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review	5
Sex Roles	5
Feminist Standpoint	7
Heterosexual Relationships and Heteronormativity	8
Doing Gender	14
Positioning	16
Disciplinary Power and its Productivity	17
Agency	18
Recent Feminist Poststructural Research	21
Sex, sexuality and sexualisation	21
Violence	28
Chapter Three: Method	36
Ethical Considerations	37
Recruiting participants: Informed and voluntary consent	37
Respect for privacy and confidentiality	38
Avoidance of conflict of role/interest	39
Researcher safety	39
Cultural safety and sensitivity	39
Participants	39
Interviews	40
Transcription	41
Self-Care	42
Data Analysis	43

Chapter Four: Analysis and Discussion: Masculinity, Femininity and Contemporary Choices	45
Invisibility	45
Masculinity: Navigating Hegemonic Masculinity	46
‘Boys will be boys’: The irresponsible man	50
‘Grown up’: The responsible man	53
Femininity and Contemporary Choices	55
Emphasised femininity: Womanly	56
Contemporary choices: Neoliberal ideals	58
The Tension	61
Chapter Five: Analysis and Discussion: Romance and After	64
Romance: Attraction and ‘The Dream’	64
Attraction	64
‘The dream’: Hopes for living ‘happily ever after’	70
‘Happily Ever After’: The First Unwritten Chapter	75
From romance to coupledness	76
Choosing beauty	79
Conceding to coupledness	81
Dungeons and Drudgery: The Second Unwritten Chapter	83
Postfeminist expectations	84
Postfeminist performances	87
Meeting expectations	95
Chapter Six: Conclusion	100
References	109
Appendix A	121
Appendix B	123
Appendix C	124
Appendix D	125
Appendix E	126

Chapter One: Introduction

I became interested in how the institutions of heterosexuality and heteronormativity are at work in people's negotiation of their intimate heterosexual relationships through my work as a Programme Facilitator at the Department of Corrections where I deliver criminogenic rehabilitation programmes to offenders. I was facilitating a group of four men delivering the Community Family Violence programme. These men were from quite diverse backgrounds; African, Pasifika, European and Māori. Their ages spanned two generations. Their education varied from never having attended school to completing 12 years of formal schooling. Yet regardless of their demographic and socio-cultural differences, they all joined in discussions on ideals about how men and women should be in their relationships. These men could easily talk about their rights and responsibilities in relationships as well as expectations of their partners. Sanctions for non-compliance with social ideals, or in one case 'discipline', were varied. They could all identify with being told to 'man up' to keep them inside of a narrow form of masculinity. These men, and others in groups I have worked with, frequently made reference to being 'pussies' or 'puffs' if they were not dominant in their relationships. To them the 'slur' of being labelled as female or homosexual as sanctions from other men and society, were worse than assaulting their partner and damaging their relationships or going to jail.

I was hearing them speak of hegemonic masculinity in its crudest form and the possibility of sanctions from other men and society seemed to hinder any negotiation and respect in their relationships. I used this moment to enquire about what it was to be a man; I was a naive enquirer and as a woman wanted to know and understand. At the end of this session the men all reflected that they valued greatly the opportunity to have this discussion, as they had never had the opportunity before and they wanted to keep the discussion going throughout the following sessions.

At the same time, I was hearing conversations from other professionals who were struggling with working with men convicted of family violence offences and their partners. My colleagues' stories were of their frustrations with the women partners of men being 'difficult'. The general conversation identified both the man and woman as creating the abuse and frequently concluded that the relationship was dysfunctional, and they were both part of the problem. Some went further to conclude he was a victim of the system as she was just as violent as him, but when the

police arrived it was him that was charged and taken away. Men with family violence related convictions often have this belief as well.

In my personal life, I have oscillated between rejecting coupledness, feeling vulnerable while single, a failure for not making my first marriage successful, and triumph and peace from being in a relationship that is successful. My parents' relationship was very traditional, and my father was abusive towards my mother – not physically that I witnessed, but in every other way. For example, he controlled all the money, gave her an allowance and chastised and humiliated her about her money management to others, including myself and my siblings. Experiencing this made me determined to never be in a traditional marriage. I was a young woman of a new generation, a feminist, and I was never going to take any role subservient to a man. As a single woman in my mid 20s I started to feel quite anxious about being without a partner. I was worried about not getting married or having children: 'missing out', 'left on the shelf' 'my biological clock ticking'. I felt vulnerable. Ironically, and I knew this at the time, I met and married a farmer, with the role on offer being very traditional. It also turned out that I was more vulnerable in the relationship due to the many forms of abuse I experienced, although I did not know it as such since I was not being physically abused. When this relationship ended, I was devastated. What I had fought so long for, I realised in my grief, was the dream. I wanted a happy family, mum, dad and the kids. I was a failure. More than that, I had once again become an outsider to coupledness and was isolated from many aspects of society. Now, I have remarried and regained all the benefits of coupledness. In this relationship, there is no abuse. Instead, there is respect. We negotiate our roles and responsibilities; they are fluid and change. For example, while I am studying, he runs the house, buys the groceries, cooks and cleans. He is also the main earner as I am working part-time. When my study has finished, we will renegotiate our roles and responsibilities according to our individual and collective needs at the time. I have often been curious about how I, as a young feminist woman with intentions to reject the traditional institution of coupledness, ended up engaged in such a traditional role of a 'farmer's wife.' What did I see that as a young woman I was determined to reject? Why do I feel vulnerability outside of coupledness when I know that all too often the greatest threat is from within?

The combination of both my personal experiences and professional work has me interested in couples and coupledness. What I was seeing in the family violence work that I was doing were many heterosexual and heteronormative assumptions and expectations of relationships and these

were limiting the couples' ability to negotiate within their relationships. Inflexibility in gender relations precluded fluidity and negotiation. The family violence work and my own personal experience in my first marriage drew my attention to where the negotiations fail. The whole point of negotiation is that it opens up spaces for us not to abuse each other. Negotiations are respectful. Understanding where those negotiations fail is important in order to understand how non-violence is possible in relationships.

In New Zealand, 40 years post the 'second wave' of feminism, society endorses an ideal of men and women sharing equal rights in the workplace and in education. Family relations have changed over this time as well. For example, more women are in paid employment, separation, divorce and co-habitation are more socially acceptable, and there are also more 'single woman head of households' (Ministry for Women, n.d.a; Statistics New Zealand, 2014). Women are expected to have careers, as are men. Sexuality is no longer just about reproduction. Women's sexual expression and desire has become accessible through widespread sexual imagery (Gill, 2008). These changes have not translated through to top levels of organisations or income; women are still under-represented in leadership and are paid less than men (Ministry for Women, n.d.a). The responsibility for childcare still lies with the woman, even when both in the heterosexual couple are working fulltime (Ministry for Women, n.d.b). New Zealand also has a very high incidence of family violence and sexual violence. Statistics estimate that 24 to 26 percent of women will experience sexual and/or intimate partner violence (IPV) at some time in their life, though it is important to remember that a huge portion of IPV goes unreported (Boshier, 2011; Ministry of Justice, 2014). New Zealand is also the worst country in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) for sexual violence towards women (Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2016). The largest risk factor to being a victim of sexual violence or IPV is being a woman as women are almost twice as likely as men to experience IPV once or more in their lives (Ministry of Justice, 2014; Ministry for Women, n.d.c).

It is in these contexts that I am undertaking research that asks how adults are negotiating gender relations in the context of their heterosexual relationships. I am curious about how they are negotiating their own gender and gender expectations with their heterosexual partners. I am also very interested in how heterosexuality and heteronormativity are implicated in their gender expectations of themselves, their partners and their relationships. This thesis will explore these

issues in adult intimate heterosexual relationships in relation to heterosexual subjectivities through analysing the discourses available to participating women and men who talk with me about their day-to-day lives, and through which they navigate and represent their experiences and understandings.

The combination of my personal and professional experiences and my understanding of societal inequalities and abuses against women has supported the idea that the way men and women relate in heterosexual coupledom is gendered. This means that my research needs an epistemological theory and methodology that allows me to question processes of gendering. Feminist poststructuralism offers these opportunities and provides a theoretical foundation from which women and men's subjectivities can be analysed in relation to language, material conditions and cultural practices that constitute their intimate heterosexual relationships (e.g. Gill, 1996; Weedon, 1997).

Following this introduction, where I have set out the background to my interest in this topic, Chapter Two, 'Theoretical Framework and Literature Review', will position my research in the postmodern space and discuss the theoretical and research framework I have used for my thesis. In turn, this sets out the historical and theoretical relevance of feminist postmodernism and poststructuralism and discusses it in relation to literature on heteronormativity, gendered performances, agency, Foucauldian theory and discourse analysis. The third chapter, 'Method', is a reflective account of the ethical considerations and research methods utilised in gaining my participants, conducting the interviews, transcribing and analysing the data. Chapter Four, 'Masculinity, Femininity and Contemporary Choices', provides the analysis and discussion on the invisibility of heteronormativity, navigating hegemonic masculinity and femininity, and contemporary choices. Chapter Five presents the analysis and discussion on 'Romance and After' which includes romance, attraction and dreams for having a successful relationship and living 'happily ever after', the gendered nature of relationship progressions and division of labour in heterosexual relationships. Chapter Six, 'Conclusion', is where I return to my research question and reflexively look at how I have addressed it. Furthermore, I consider the outcomes of the research – the discursive positions that were taken up in relation to gender and heteronormativity – and reflect on my experiences throughout the research and my thoughts on areas for further exploration.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The characteristics of gendered relations include inequalities in wealth, social status, authority and control. Research over the past 40 years has highlighted that in spite of the changing of a woman's position in our society due to women having more access to education and independent incomes, a man's position remains privileged in heterosexual unions (Baker & Elizabeth, 2013; Crawford, 2004). Inequalities benefit men as they are given more agency and authority than women, and men's interests are regularly valued over women's (e.g. Baker & Elizabeth, 2013; Weedon, 1997). Social goods, such as higher earnings and social status, and the ongoing social norms of patriarchy support inequality and men's privilege. The power relations referred to take forms ranging from how labour is divided between the sexes and how we socially organise the raising of children to how we internalise the norms of masculinity and femininity that we live by. Patriarchy assumes that men and women are biologically suited for different social roles.

Before moving into the theories I am drawing on for this research and the more recent research on heterosexual couples and gendered relationships, I will look back at the mid-late 20th Century sex role research and the feminist standpoint theories and research. A historical approach is appropriate for gaining an understanding of postmodern criticisms of past research and the basis on which they turn away from essentialism towards language and power.

Sex Roles

From the 1970s through to the early 1990s, research into intimate heterosexual relationships or couples was predominantly empirically based and focused on 'sex roles'. Gender/sex differences in the manner in which women and men behave and relate in their heterosexual relationships was the central focus of the research. Measures based on the sex of the participant were used to determine the level of individual sex role orientation based on measures of masculinity, femininity and androgyny (e.g. Ickes & Barnes, 1978). Higher levels of expressiveness and to a smaller degree instrumentalness were linked to positive relationships. It was thought that people who viewed themselves as both expressive and instrumental, for example, are more androgynous and therefore more likely to start and maintain relationships that are satisfying than individuals characterised only as expressive or instrumental (e.g. Siavelis &

Lamke, 1992). Underlying this proposal was the conviction that androgynous individuals could utilise their instrumental abilities to start their interactions with their partners and then use their expressive abilities to focus and respond to the cues and reactions of others, and through this process they promote satisfy interpersonal exchanges (e.g. Siavelis & Lamke, 1992). In addition, research from this period and epistemology found traditional patterns of behaviour based on gender; men focusing on autonomy and women focusing on a relationship negatively influence the likelihood of a couple being happy and staying together. Couples responded poorly in marital therapy, had a higher tolerance of violence while dating, and showed greater miscommunication and power inequalities between them when they adhered to traditional gender norms (e.g. Antill, 1983; Henley, 1977; Henley & Kramarae, 1991; Lamke, 1989; Thompson, 1990; Thompson, Grisanti, & Pleck, 1985). Other findings pointed to gender/sex differences in language use, such as the different topics women and men talk about, how frequently they bring topics up and how they speak as the reasons for miscommunication in couples (Christensen & Heavey, 1990). Sex role theories supported the view that based on biological and social differences women and men behave differently in their heterosexual relationships (e.g. Buss, 1989; Daly & Wilson, 1983).

One theory that grew from sex role research to account for men and woman taking a traditional gendered orientation in their heterosexual relationships was 'sex role orientation' (Rusbult, Zembrodt, & Iwaniszek, 1986). This theory referred to the how individuals view others' behaviour, repeat it in their own behaviour, and then internalise gender appropriate behaviours and attitudes (Eagly, 1987; Frable, 1989). Social experiences then developed into varying levels of conformity to masculinity and femininity. The different levels of adherence to norms of masculinity and femininity were found in differences, for example, in non-verbal behaviours (Hall & Halbertstadt, 1981), self-disclosure (Lombardo & Lavine, 1981), conflict management styles (Baxter & Shepard, 1978) and relationship beliefs (Frazer & Esterly, 1990).

Sex role theories and research have been considered biologically essentialist within feminist standpoint epistemologies and postmodern feminism (Bohan, 1993; Riger, 1992; Walkerdine, 1989). Underlying biological essentialist epistemology are assumptions that there are universal truths (Bohan, 1993). Biological essentialist research is most often empirical research, which frequently focuses on finding facts about human beings 'nature'. Scientific production of facts purportedly provided certainty about the 'nature' of females and males. Underlying this research were assumed differences that can be found in all women and men (Riger, 1992; Walkerdine,

1989). For example, the portrayal of gender in biological essentialist models involves attributes that are perceived as persistent, internal and individual. Through this, gender becomes a vehicle to describe traits and qualities such as personality, moral judgment or cognitive processes. An essentialist perspective would argue, for example, that relationality is an inherent quality that is possessed individually. Therefore, if a person can acquire and maintain a relationship, the ability is attributed to personal qualities that allow them to achieve this success. Alternatively, if one's relationship fails, the failure is attributed to the person and/or the couple. From this epistemological viewpoint, individuals are generally devoid of the socio-political context of their life (Bohan, 1993).

Feminist Standpoint

In response to empirically based essentialist research and knowledge about heterosexual relationships and its support of patriarchy, feminist epistemologies focused their science on women because “what we know and how we know depend on who we are, that is, on the knower's historical locus and his or her position in the social hierarchy” (Maracek, 1989, p. 372). Women in different positions in the social hierarchy have knowledge of life from their own perspective and this diversity is important and worthy of attention, but so are the power relationships that position women differently in the social hierarchy (Harding, 1987; Henwood & Pidgeon, 1995). Feminist standpoint epistemologies criticised the sex role research and feminist empirical research for their inattention to diversity and power (Maracek, 1989; Riger, 1992). Sex role research did not allow women to express their own experiences. Issues important to women, such as housework or rape, did not focus on women's experience. They focused on including women in the research, but not using methodologies that allow for the diversity of different women to be included. Women's experience as knowledge in its own right was still ignored (Harding, 1987). Empiricist feminists added women to scientific research based on the same empirical models that they had critiqued as sexist (Harding, 1987). And concurrently sex role research and feminist empirical research had assumed that there is a commonality to all women's experience, based mainly on research with white, middle-classed heterosexual women. This practice gave credibility to the dominant group on two levels. Firstly, it reinforced women's positions in traditional roles as natural thereby reinforcing patriarchy's power, and secondly, the

universalising of women's experiences based on the dominant group further marginalised women already marginalised by ethnicity, socio-economic status or education (Riger, 1992).

Through feminists' focus on trying to give women's experience a voice in research and pay attention to power, it became apparent that language needed to be found, created and redefined that was both reflective of and able to effectively record women's experiences (Kelly & Radford, 1996). Finding language for women's experiences in relationships, such as domestic violence, allows analysis of what has been essentialised and 'naturalised'.

Institutions such as medicine, the law, psychiatry, psychology and the media have in many ways constructed knowledge that has become dominant and silenced women and their experiences (Kelly & Radford, 1996). Institutions created by men have had a substantial role in creating 'knowledge' about heterosexuality. "Within feminist critiques of heterosexuality, patriarchal dominance relies upon a variety of practices through which women's bodies are appropriated. Institutionalised heterosexuality sustains these practices and, by implication, gendered power relations" (Budgeon, 2008, p. 305). It is for this reason that feminist researchers and theorists turned to language in an attempt to make the invisible visible, to look and find language for women's resistance and to highlight the dominant narratives, the discourses that sustain these institutions and challenge them. Narratives, from a feminist postmodern poststructuralist discursive view, are seen as both constructing the "social world and being constructed by it" (Jackson, 2001, p. 308).

As the current study is focused on heteronormativity and its impact on gendered heterosexual intimate relationships, the following sections move into the postmodern space and focus on theories of heterosexual relationships, gender performativity, positioning, disciplinary power and agency that I will use for my research.

Heterosexual Relationships and Heteronormativity

From a postmodern feminist perspective, in our daily sexual and social lives, sexuality and gender are repeatedly being "socially constructed, re-constructed, enacted and re-enacted within specific social contexts and relationships" (Jackson, 2005, p. 15). Feminists have a particular interest in heterosexual relationships as they are troubled by the ways that heterosexuality relies on and assures gender division (Jackson, 2006). Heterosexuality is not just an individual form of sexual expression, it is about both gender and sexuality and this forms a critical intersection for

our social structure (Jackson, 2006; Budgeon, 2008). When one is living 'heterosexuality', non-sexual gendered practices are involved as well, such as being in a long-term monogamous relationship, sharing a living space and all the traditional roles in that space (Budgeon, 2008; Van Every, 1996). Heterosexuality is normative and institutionalised and works to regulate both those in its boundaries and sanctions to those who live outside them, regulating social life from both sides (Jackson, 2005).

There are a variety of socially expected norms that define how to practice heterosexual relationships. Men and women, whether or not they are heterosexual, are expected to engage in an entire existence that goes well beyond being in a sexual relationship (Budgeon, 2008). These include social norms of marriage and children, home-ownership, having barbeques and dinner parties, and receiving social goods such as family tax advantages. Such norms can be considered Eurocentric and middle class with connection to neoliberal economic systems (Madhok & Rai, 2012). Neoliberalism is a political-economic ideology and practice that is characterised by deregulation, privatisation and pulling back and/or withdrawal from multiple areas of social provisions by the state (Gill & Scharff, 2011). Moving away from the 'social state' to individual responsibility is the idea that state involvement in either daily or lifelong activities life should end and the individual should be liberated to be enterprising and responsible (Rose, 1999). Over time, neoliberalism has intensified further into individualism, which has created individuals who are calculating, rational and self-motivating and has normalised white middle-classed experiences of heterosexuality. In addition, individuals are encouraged to understand their own lives through the discourses of choice, freedom and autonomy. With no regard for constraints in their lives, limitations are dismissed (Gill & Scharff, 2011; Rose, 1999). Through the reduction of gendered relationships to individual choices, the possibility of social change or criticism of engaging in heterosexual social norms is obstructed as engagement is an individual's choice. The governing of people now happens through their aspirations and freedoms rather than in spite of them. This can result in women participating, unknowingly, in their own oppression (Baker, 2008).

The most respected and valued 'normal' for 'heterosexuality' is based on the 'traditional' gendered arrangement between a man and woman. In the 'traditional' heterosexual relationship, woman and men live as a monogamous couple for their whole adult life (Seidman, 2002, 2005). Underlying coupledness is an ideological force regarding marriage and family, happiness and

fulfilment, which is privileged and so institutionalised that it is rarely seen or questioned (DePaulo & Morris, 2005; Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003). Monogamy and long-term cohabitation, including marriage, are examples of norms around which identities are formed (Van Every, 1996). Normative identities can be consciously and unconsciously taken up and performed (Butler, 1990). They include subject positions that constrain options and choices so that individuals can do what they are used to doing in order to avoid being punished socially and because it is safer, easier and more comfortable. Through repetitive performance, normative identities become so taken for granted that they are invisible to those who conform with norms. In the marriage and family discourse, there are pervasive assumptions: everyone wants a sexual relationship, this relationship is the most important relationship, and when you have one it makes your life happier and more fulfilling than if you do not have one (DePaulo & Morris, 2005). Monogamous coupledness is to be the focus of adult lives at the expense of other relationships, thus the couple must build their lives around each other. The institution of coupledness functions with an underlying assumption of 'ownership' of the other (Jackson & Scott, 2004). To live outside of this institution attracts social sanctions that make it easier, safer and more comfortable to live inside it. Monogamous coupledness attracts support from 'other' closest relationships such as family and friends as well as society (McLaren, 2013).

The importance given to acquiring a heterosexual relationship, including romantic love, that will last or continue through all or much of one's life is produced culturally and socially but has become 'natural' or normalised in the institution of heteronormativity. Within heteronormativity, the couple relationship is placed in the centre of normalised practice of heterosexuality and the ideology that supports it is based on the ideological system that underlies marriage and family (DePaulo & Morris, 2005). Inside this institution, there are heavy ties to the ideals of containment and 'happiness' in our private lives; coupledness is psychologised as stabilising in our intimate worlds. When couples date, monogamous marriage is the desired and successful destination. "Mononormativity refers to the relations of power that stem from the belief that the monogamous dyad is a natural, morally correct and essential aspect of relating and being human" (Farvid & Braun, 2013, p. 361). This mononormativity is the dominant discourse within the West, existing alongside and privileging (romantic) 'love' relationships over other types of relationships such as friendships (Jackson & Scott, 2004). The assumptions of naturalness and the normalcy of monogamy are similar to the assumptions of heteronormativity: it is normal for

women to want and have these relationships as women are in need of men for social protection, financial support, sexual relations and to become complete psychologically. There is social respectability in traditional gendered relations and monogamy (Seidman, 2005). This perpetuates the idea that happiness for women is found in coupling with a man and, if they are deemed good enough, the right man will arrive and 'sweep them off their feet' into 'wedded bliss' (Farvid & Braun, 2006).

Within 'heteronormativity', heterosexuality is such an underlying presumption that it is invisible. This invisibility inhibits sexual practices at odds with patriarchy and the 'naturalness' or 'normality' given to heterosexuality. Adrienne Rich (1980) was amongst the first feminists to question what she termed 'compulsory heterosexuality', which could be argued was the precursor to the concept of 'heteronormativity'. She claimed that invisibility of compulsory heterosexuality, hidden by assumed naturalness, maintains a "pervasive cluster of forces, ranging from physical brutality to control of consciousness" all in aid of maintaining patriarchy (p. 20). Monica Wittig (1992) wrote from a similar view "I describe heterosexuality not as an institution but as a political regime which rests on the submission and appropriation of women" (p. xv). Both women, in their own ways, suggested lesbianism as an appropriate response to and means of escape from institutionalised heterosexuality.

Ingham (1996) criticises heteronormative ideology by naming what she calls the 'heterosexual imaginary', which she says hides the underlying conditions that produce heterosexuality as 'natural', necessary and assumed: patriarchy. Invisibility shuts down the likelihood and opportunity of "analysing heterosexuality as an organising institution, which like gender, is social and not natural nor inevitable" (Budgeon, 2008, p. 305).

Feminist theorists have problematised the heteronormative institution by criticising traditional heteronormative relationships for being based on gender difference and thus functioning to preserve inequality in power relations between women and men (e.g. Jackson, 1995; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1993). This argument includes the compulsory monogamy which founds most couples and keeps the unequal power base in place (Farvid & Braun, 2013). Heterosexual coupledness in the patriarchal institution "granted men rights to the sexual, reproductive and domestic services of a wife, and a bourgeois institution founded on a hypocritical morality and the protection of ruling class men's property and inheritance rights" (Jackson & Scott, 2004, p.152).

Heterosexuality has constitutive norms that are institutionalised in such strength that when one violates these norms, there are likely to be economic and social consequences (Jackson, 2006). These norms have rules for how sexual identities and practices need to be ordered to be recognised as valid. Thus, practices in intimate lives result in either access to privileges or denial of access and social marginalisation. Hegemonic prevailing gender ideology is exercised routinely in many and varied social practices, yet it can be contested (Lazar, 2007). The discursive nature of social relations means there is a tension between the practical activity and permanence of institutions such as heteronormativity. Such tension means that there can be ruptures to them in social relations. Focusing on when individuals transgress or are creative is important but needs to be considered in context of the possibilities and restrictions afforded by certain social practice and structures. Lazar (2007) warns that without the consideration of these relations, agency in isolation can be romanticised. In addition, she highlights that “going against gendered expectations in some settings could (inadvertently) result in reinforcement, instead of the eradication, of the existing gender structure” (Lazar, 2007, p. 147). For example, Lazar (2005) discovered evidence of a practice reversal where men who were fathers were at times portrayed as mothers. In this depiction, they were portrayed as ‘new age’ sensitive fathers who carried signifiers that are conventionally linked to motherhood, thus practically supporting mothering ideology rather than subverting it. Holmes (2005) showed that women in the workplace when negotiating ‘doing’ power in their managerial roles opt for authoritative style speech and stay away from a ‘feminine’ style of speaking to their workers. Feminising aspects of masculinity at home and masculinisation of talk by powerful women appears to contest and redefine traditional gender norms. However, at the same time, they perpetuate the dualistic structure of gender: they are taking on the behavioural ‘norms’ of the ‘other’. In these studies are also examples of how gender norm deviations are contained and policed in heteronormativity discourse.

Within heteronormative ideals men are expected to be masculine and women feminine (Robinett, 2014). Gender beliefs within patriarchal heteronormative ideology posit that to achieve masculinity, men should be dominant, with other traits including: rational, analytic, aggressive, tough-minded, and promiscuous. Successful femininity requires passivity and other feminine traits such as emotional, nurturing, suggestibility, intuitive, talkative, and sexually loyal (Connell, 2009). Becoming what is regarded as a ‘normal’ man involves exercising power over

women and taking advantage of the social arrangements that systematically privilege males over females. Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe, and Thomson (2004) developed this understanding of gender ideals further with the term ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and its companion ‘emphasised femininity’. Others have built on this conceptualisation, but hegemonic masculinity remains understood as a masculinity based on ideology of heteronormativity and male domination:

Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Connell, 1995, p. 77).

Hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity are rules for expectations of how women and men are to relate. These hegemonic ideals help understandings of how gender is created based on “embodied cultural expectations” (Risman, 2004, p. 435). There is knowledge of these gendered beliefs within the majority of society; it is what is expected of others, and what one feels accountability to (Jakobsen, 2014). They became hegemonic not because of their overwhelming endorsement, rather because they are the rules “most likely to be enforced by socially advantaged actors and are the default beliefs that individuals presume to prevail” (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004, p. 517). For example, discourse analysis has shown the way that dominant discourses on hegemonic masculinity and femininity offer gendered subject positions in which men are likely to be positioned as ‘doing’ the sex and women ‘doing’ the emotion work or romance (e.g. Burns, 2002; Holloway, 1984, 1989). Male emotional illiteracy is constructed as ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ for all men and is frequently linked to genetics and universal predispositions (Burns, 2002). This dominant version of masculinity allows men to believe they are unable to respond by doing the emotion work for others, and misunderstanding others asking/wanting them to do so. The dominance of this form of masculinity implicates hegemonic masculinity “as a form of macho, heterosexual, emotionally inexpressive masculinity associated with the power to silence and resist alternative forms such as the supposedly emotionally articulate ‘new men’ or gay men” (Burns, 2002, p. 156). In contrast, there are expectations for women to ‘naturally’ do the emotion work for him. This maps two binaries together, the emotionality/rationality onto the female/male, which in turn reinforces the

divides of both.

Hegemonic masculinity and passive femininity have been found in heterosexual relationships where there have been abusive practices. Although the current project is not focused on IPV, it needs to be discussed as part of the domain of heterosexual relationships in the context of heteronormativity and patriarchy. IPV, control and gender intersect and gain support by assumptions that reinforce men's dominance and women's passivity as norms for successful achievement of gender (DeShong, 2015; Jakobsen, 2014; Towns & Scott, 2013). Femininity and masculinity are often joined to the public and private, and if the boundaries of these binaries are threatened then abusive practices can be justified as a response. Men use their hegemonic beliefs about gender to contain women's autonomy both in her sexuality and her movements (Deshong, 2015). Goldner, Pen, Sheinberg, and Walker (1990) propose that the use of battering by men reinstates gender dominance and difference, because of the intense fear that he is not being different enough, not 'masculine' enough and this overtakes him. Men need to attain enough masculine traits to be seen as "not feminine", then this endorsed their status as males" (McCarry, 2010, p. 20). At the same time, women are culturally pressured in our society to "deny their own agency" (Goldner et al., 1990, p. 352). The hegemonic ideal that men have more power and thus should be in charge implies that women must submit (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). "The hegemonic gender beliefs whereby women comply with their own subordination is theorised in tandem with hegemonic masculinity as 'emphasised femininity'" (Jakobsen, 2014, p. 551). Jakobsen (2014) adds that the woman should also show her submission, or this will be further evidence of her failure at emphasised femininity. These heteronormative patriarchal gendered beliefs ensure the vitality of hegemonic gendered beliefs by sustaining masculine dominance as identities and behaviours for men, which creates and maintains subordinate femininity messages for women. Conforming to traditional gendered roles is therefore seen and experienced as successfully 'doing' gender.

Doing Gender

From pre-natal scans to birth, a baby is announced as a boy or girl. Then in subsequent years progressing from a child, through adolescence and eventually to adulthood, one is tasked with the process of becoming a woman or man in a particular geographical, historical, socioeconomic and cultural context. The process of becoming a woman or man requires

participation in the social construction of gender. Judith Butler (1990) is an influential gender theorist who argues that gender is not something that is essentially or naturally pre-given, but rather something that one does. What is central to Butler's theory is that a person's identity does not exist before their actions. She theorises that gender is constituted through performances in which the subject accomplishes and re-accomplishes her or his gender. Thus, she proposes the elimination of the idea that every individual has a singular essentially gendered self. Butler draws on Foucault's (1979) disciplinary regimes theory to argue that the production of gender is both on and through the body. Further, it must appear as if gender is an unchangeable and stable basis of identity to allow heterosexuality to be maintained and sexuality regulated (Butler, 1990). The requirement of gender performance and gender instability means that there is a need for it to be constantly re-performed, and by this, it is remade: "this repetition is at once a re-enactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualised form of their legitimation" (Butler, 1990, p. 140).

Performativity as a concept is useful for analysing the multitude of ways gender behaviours are enacted. Conceptualising gender as uncertain and potentially unstable can help explain the compulsive and repetitive character of gender performances and the psychological, social and cultural anxiety that is evoked at any transgression of the norm.

Butler's earlier theories have been criticised for giving the impression that one can choose not to engage in gender performances if they do not want to. As Lloyd (1999) highlights, the distinction between performance and performativity, which are defined by Butler as a "bounded act" and norms that "precede, constrain and exceed the performer", is not clear at times (1993, p. 24). In her later work, Butler addresses this criticism and acknowledges its validity. In addition, Butler has at times overstressed the instability of gender and the possibility of gender performances that may transgress the boundaries and expand their limitations. But transgressions, as already highlighted by sanctions in heterosexuality and heteronormativity, are met by sanctions that in turn reinforce gender norms rather than undermining them. As Jackson (1995) highlights, transgression is not a certainty for progression.

Performing gender is not a matter of voluntary choices. Performativity is enacted within the context of both constraints and restraints. Normative femininity and masculinity are defined in varying ways depending on and in association with intersectional positions in social hierarchies,

for example, class, age, race, culture, ability, ethnicity, location and so on. Men and women negotiating the material and social realm do so in relation to these norms. This should not imply that they are purposefully trying to imitate a specific form of gender. As Butler states, “if gender is a norm, it is not the same as a model that individuals seek to approximate. On the contrary, it is a form of social power that produces the intelligible fields of subjects, and an apparatus by which the gender binary is instituted” (2004, p. 48). Gendered relations are firmly tied to ways of doing femininity and masculinity and depending on context and the other people one is with, acceptable ways of performing gender vary (Kehily & Nayak, 2008). Thus, gender performances are socially constituted, and the concepts of positioning, discourse and power are helpful in untangling how heteronormativity and gendered performances are related.

Positioning

According to poststructuralism, it is through discourse that gendered subjectivities are produced. Parker’s (1990) definition of discourse is widely used; he states that discourse is a “system of statements which constructs an object” (p. 90). ‘Subject positions’ are offered to individuals to step into through discourse (Holloway, 1984; Weedon, 1997). Historically discourses of marriage offer women positions as ‘fulfilled wives’ or ‘lonely spinsters’, with the former more socially desirable than the latter. Thus, the discourse provided women with the meaning of womanhood in relation to marriage. It is within discourse that subjects think, experience and act. What is known can be known through one or more discourses, therefore knowledge is constituted through discourse (Davies & Harré, 1990). For example, when a man or woman speaks about their relationship they are using at least one, and probably more, discourses.

In poststructuralism “subjectivity is used to refer to the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions or the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world” (Weedon, 1997, p. 32). Subjectivity is contested and negotiated as we take up subject positions in varying discourses. From within these positions we have a perspective which informs how we experience the world, and we recognise this perspective as our own. But given the limited positioning available, the positions we recognise as our own constitute our subjectivity and the possibilities for performing gender.

Discourses positions subjects and one way of interpreting that positioning is that it

attributes rights, duties, obligations and responsibilities to subjects of that discourse (Morgan & Coombes, 2001). Discourses offer a variety of subject positions within them, and these positions create 'identities' from within the discourses that we can claim for our own or resist. Certain ways of behaving and speaking are accessible through these positions. There is always an endless range of historical, social and culturally unstable and changeable subjectivities (Butler, 2004). These discursive positions can compete with others, contradict one another, and importantly, as is the case with men and women in relationships, they are not equally available to both genders. Within these subject positions, subjectivity – behaviours, identities, understandings – can be constituted, and the many possibilities offer varying levels of power and authority.

Power is mobilised in discourses through enlistment and constitution of subjects and how they then relate inside of or between discourses (Weedon, 1997). For Foucault (1979), the word 'subject' had two meanings. Firstly, being a subject means being bound to an identity by self-knowledge or one's conscience. Secondly, in Foucault's meaning of subjectivity one is also in connection to outside controls, thus it means being connected to someone else's control (Foucault, 1979). Therefore, there is a "connection between being a subject and being subjected to external control" (Magnusson & Marecek, 2012, p. 25).

Disciplinary Power and its Productivity

When we are 'doing gender' we are performing self-surveillance to enact our positioning in discourses that produce femininity or masculinity. Disciplinary power that promotes self-governance and subjectivity can also help explain why men, women and couples comply with the traditional 'normal' script of heteronormativity and their specific gendered roles without the need for threats or use of force (Gavey, 1992). Foucault (1979) proposes that self-surveillance is the origin of 'individualism' and the increased self-consciousness symbolic of modern times which is metaphorised in the design of a prison: the Panopticon. "In fact, Foucault believes that the operation of power constitutes the very subjectivity of the subject. Here the image of the Panopticon returns: knowing that he may be observed from the tower at any time, the inmate takes over the job of policing himself" (Bartky, 1998, p. 41).

Today in our modern societies, power has become implicit, with people conforming and maintaining their subjectivities through self-surveillance. Normative discourse provides

guidelines for living come with promises of rewards of happiness, fulfilment and good mental health, but also with threats of sanctions if violated. There is no surprise then why people willingly comply. The underlying dynamic of disciplinary power does not only constrain, but it enables as it produces desires; practices, identities and meanings “that people want to embrace” (Magnusson & Marecek, 2012, p. 26). Going against the grain is not forbidden, but daily life is shaped in such a way that going with the grain appears as the best or only option. As an option, compliance or resistance is experienced by the individual as their choice – an expression of their preferences and personality. Although groups, for example class groups, will make similar choices it still seems to the individual that it was an expression of their self. The simultaneous expression of individuality and conformity is the ‘totalising power’ described by Foucault. Foucault saw totalising power as the “political genius of modern societies, because power operates on individuals but remains invisible to them, leading people to embrace their subjection as freedom” (Magnusson & Marecek, 2012, p. 25). The normalisation process becomes the power of self-discipline.

Subjectivities offered to men and women, within mass media for example, often vary in form, agency and power (Gavey, 2005; Holloway, 1989). From this perspective, discourses are linked to a power/knowledge nexus where particular versions of the world are constructed as more ‘truthful’ than others, perpetuate dominant cultural understandings, and promote the interests of the powerful (Burr, 2003). Modern disciplinary power operates without direct force with people willingly subjecting themselves to self-scrutiny and engaging in self-surveillance, managing their conduct to suit what is considered normative or appropriate behaviour in various contexts (Foucault, 1979, 1988).

Agency

I have discussed how concepts of performativity, positioning, power and subjectivity in discourse shape how people both act and make decisions. But if people’s actions and decisions are determined entirely by discourse, how is it that there is variation in the ways discourse is taken up? And how is it that there is resistance both individually and collectively that leads to social change? When people say they have free will or equality in their relationships, does it actually mean they do?

Butler (1992) suggests the poststructuralist idea of agency comes from the practice of “resignification” which is a notion that “the subject is neither a ground nor a product, but the permanent possibility of a certain resignifying process” (p. 13). Or, as St. Pierre and Pillow paraphrase her work, “the agency of this subject lies precisely in its ongoing constitution” (2000, p. 7): It is the ongoing process of subjectification that allows agency to be possible. In addition, from a poststructuralist position, words do not hold inherent meanings and thereby when considering resistance it must be historically and contextually located. Agency and resistance in poststructuralist thought are provisional and contingent (de Lauretis, 1986).

Included in Butler’s theory of gender performativity is her suggestion that subjects are capable of both linguistic and discursive agency (Butler, 1997). When one is talking or acting there is the possibility of altered meanings in new contexts. Subjects are capable of re-inscription and resistance, which creates the possibility of social and political change (Butler, 1997). For Weedon (1997), a subject’s agency is embodied in their ability to create and recreate new subjectivities in their historical and social construction:

Although the subject in poststructuralism is socially constructed in discursive practices, she none the less exists as a thinking, feeling subject and social agent, capable of resistance and innovations produced out of the clash between contradictory subject positions and practices. She is also a subject able to reflect upon the discursive relations which constitute her and the society in which she lives, and able to choose from the options available (p. 121).

The political promise of the performative is that in that process of perpetual reiteration it is possible to create non-ordinary meanings to move performances out of the context in which they usually appeared and therefore to provide an unanticipated meaning that challenges the hegemony and open up the possibility for change (Butler, 1997).

The possible rewriting and re-inscription of dominant discourses is an important source of hope for social change for feminists and it is for this reason that agency is linked to active resistance to discourses that maintain patriarchal social relations and other discourses that benefit masculinity and/or men over femininity and/or women (Coleman & Ferreday, 2010). Feminist research has been focused on highlighting issues in discourse where there is no language or

power for women to resist (e.g. Kelly and Radford, 1996; Bartky, 1998). Feminists have also researched alternative ways to be a woman or 'do woman' in heterosexual relationships (e.g. McRobbie, 2000). This research has highlighted how and when women have resisted dominant sexual and gendered norms and illustrated the problems and limitations of resistance. Subjects may use performances, both unintentionally and intentionally, that are in line with dominant and normative discourses or that go against them. But as Butler (1990) discusses in her earlier work, the ability to rewrite or disrupt with a performance is dependent on where the performer is, who they are and the resources they have available.

There are often significant sanctions for performing outside of the norm of dominant gendered and heteronormative discourses so it is understandably possible that people choose to act according to their norms (e.g. Budgeon, 2008; Lynch & Maree, 2013). For example, one may be economically and socially disadvantaged. Refusing normative subjectivities can be a struggle, but when a person finds them imposed or if they are invested in them socially, politically, relationally, or orgasmically, they may feel compelled to take up the subjectivities on offer (Youdell, 2010).

What I have just discussed is agency in the context of performativity. Within feminism there is a more contemporary "turn to agency" in the context of the "widespread take-up and popularisation of postfeminist ideas" (Gill & Donaghue, 2013, p. 240). Neoliberal discourses, as discussed earlier, have added to the beliefs that equality between men and women is no longer an issue and what matters is independence and autonomy (Baker, 2008). The concept of 'postfeminism' has been used to capture a 'backlash' against feminism in contemporary culture and current feminist theories. Women's unhappiness has been credited to feminism, and either all of women's battles are now won or women cannot have it all, so they must give something up (Gill & Donaghue, 2013; Lazar, 2007). The first suggestion means women and girls can do and have anything they want if they try hard enough. In the second suggestion, the individualised autonomous woman lives outside of institutions of power, thereby she can resist and if needed to remove herself. But this focus on women's equality or freedom of choice may lead to a bias that is action-oriented, where women are only seen as having agency if they are opposing the patriarchal discourse directly. Neoliberal individualised agency and postfeminist contemporary theories have ignored issues of power (Gill & Donaghue, 2013). What a neoliberal discourse does in the context of agency is individualise through a process that makes normative discourse

invisible and creates the expectation that individuals will take responsibility for who they are and how they act (Coombes & Morgan, 2015). There is no recognition of the performativity of gender. It is re-essentialised and individualised, leading to a different understanding of agency which is much closer to individual choice than political action (Gill, 2008; Lazar, 2007).

The relationship between neoliberalism postfeminism, agency and gendered relations appears as operating on three levels (Gill, 2008). Firstly, individualism has replaced notions of political or social pressures that could constrain or influence the individual. Secondly, the neoliberal postfeminist individual is self-regulating and calculating; an autonomous subject who is active, free to choose and re-invent themselves. Finally, and this is where it is specifically gendered and returns to power and self-discipline, neoliberal postfeminist discourse calls on *women* in particular to be self-disciplined and self-regulate (Gill, 2008, 2016). Research from popular culture and the media has analysed an expected requirement for women to regulate their behaviour, transform themselves and present it as if it is their choice (e.g. Farvid & Braun, 2013; Gill & Donaghue, 2013). In this gendered expectation is a strong connection to sexualisation of the feminine subject. This will be explored in more detail in the next section on the recent literature.

Recent Feminist Poststructural Research

The feminist women engaging with poststructuralist research in relation to heteronormativity are working in the areas of sexualisation, sexuality, sex, and violence. The following is a discussion of the substantive issues these researchers are working with.

Sex, sexuality and sexualisation. Women of today are portrayed in the media as living in a perpetual state of empowerment (Gill, 2008). Neoliberal postfeminist subjectivity has not only individualised a woman's agency, but has added a required sexual agency that conforms entirely within heteronormativity as the agency on offer is in service of the heterosexual man and heterosexual relations. In this agency, women's bodies are presented erotically because that is how women 'want' to do it. The objectification of women to subjectification thus shifts to an empowered female sexual agency where "pleasing ones' self is a discourse of feminine empowerment" (Gill, 2008, p. 43). Research into the construction of female sexual agency in the media has highlighted the ways empowerment portrays female sexual agency as

autonomous choice but reinforces traditional gendered relations and embeds contemporary sexual agency in pornography. For example, in Gill's (2008) media analysis she found 'figures' of sexual agency for women which she calls the 'midriff' and 'hot lesbian'. In the first figure, Gill focuses on the portrayal of an attractive, young heterosexual woman who intentionally plays "with her sexual power and it is always 'up for it' (that is, sex)" which is known in advertising as 'the midriff' as this part of the body is frequently exposed (2008, p. 41). In 'midriff' advertisements, there are four themes: a focus on the body, a shift from sexual objectification to subjectification, pronounced attention to autonomy and choice and emphasis on empowerment. The shift has come from focusing on cooking and mothering – women's value to heteronormativity in the 1950s – to the body. The body is the capital a woman now has and its worth is judged in narrow confines of slender, toned, waxed, moisturised and clothed. This has signalled a profound shift from defining femininity through social and psychological characteristics to properties of the body. The second figure portrayed in Gill's (2008) analysis was the 'hot lesbian'. Lesbians were invisible in advertising until repackaged inside of heteronormativity for the heterosexual male gaze. Depictions of a girlfriend kissing another girl in front of her boyfriend are no threat to heterosexuality since it is for the pleasure of heterosexual men.

Gill (2008) highlights five reasons to not celebrate this version of empowered sexuality. It excludes anyone existing outside of heteronormativity because it is racially focused on white woman excluding other races, as well as older, disabled or larger women. In this subjectivity, it is not the woman that is important, but her attractiveness. This has a real emotional cost for the invisible woman and a financial cost for all who try to attain its ideals. Agency in this construction is problematic in that it is limited and tied to appearance and consumerism. Cultural ideals are no longer understood socially but are constructed as one's own. Idealised femininity, empowered femininity conforms to stereotypes of male's fantasy but it is 'owned' as empowerment by women enacting them (Gill, 2008). What used to be only in straight pornography is now brought to life as ordinary sexual practice; the distinction between the two has been blurred.

Women resisting dominant ideals of female sexuality as modest and passive, may engage with notions of sexuality that encourage women "to construct themselves as erotic objects" which is sometimes referred to as the pornographication of women's sexuality and subjectivity

(Whitehead & Kurz, 2009, p. 241). Another example of such research is in Whitehead and Kurz's (2009) study of 'pole dancing' as a recreational activity. While pole dancing classes are offered to women for recreation, Whitehead and Kurz (2009) wanted to bring debates on female agency to this activity. In the discussion among focus groups that included instructors of pole dancing, pupils who took the classes, and general university students, the participants' accounts repeatedly invoked choice and control, with pole dancing constructed as giving women the space to purposely revisit dominant ideals of female sexuality. The researchers highlighted the discourses of performance and the male gaze in the women's accounts (Whitehead & Kurz, 2009). The activity of pole dancing was constructed as inherently performative. Ideologically, whom the dance is being performed for signifies whether pole dancing is disempowering or empowering. A woman who performs for her heterosexual partner is doing it for love and it is then seen as an empowering choice. The women who do it for money are seen as disempowered as they are being objectified. The participants highlighted the benefits of taking part in pole dancing as helpful for them to conform to fitness and body standards in relation to the 'feminine ideal'. When performing for a male sexual partner, they were positioned as erotic objects. Whitehead and Kurz (2009) found it interesting that participants tried to construct pole dancing as politically neutral and ideologically palatable depending on the context in which it was performed. This works to move pole dancing from its origins in the sex industry to the empowered fitness industry, and re-position it as a form of art and artistic expression. They argue that moving what was pornographic and considered 'raunch' and 'disempowering' to mainstream and 'empowering' through art, discursively transitions pole dancing to an activity that is ideologically neutral. After this relocation, it is reconstructed as an artistic form for which women need skills just as for any form of dancing.

The use of pornography by men is normalised in evolutionary psychology (EP) and popular media engages EP to normalise traditional gendered relations in heterosexual relationships. Popular culture has been informed by EP's accounts of sexual differences between women and men as pseudo-scientific discourses accepting male consumption of pornography, and this acceptance requires women to adapt to this consumption in heterosexual relationships. García-Favaro (2015) explored the emerging relationship between feminist media/cultural studies and EP. She had noticed how research by EP scholars on the media was increasing and concurrently texts from the media were being impacted by EP discourses. She used global popular women's

online magazines/websites from Spain and the UK to explore a thread that was reoccurring throughout discussion forums in the publications; women were asking for advice, and expressing their feelings of concern, hurt, and self-doubt after discovering their partner's consumption of pornography. The advice analysed was from peers and editors. She examined what she termed 'postfeminist biologism' an ideological combination of evolutionary psychology and postfeminism. In the analysis, heteronormativity was found in postings regarding normative positions men and women take up in relationships. Women were "expected to undertake the nonreciprocal emotional labour of understanding men" (García-Favaro, 2015, p. 369). Biological determinism was used to make male sexuality unaccountable and unable to be changed "it's not his fault it's the testosterone" (García-Favaro, 2015, p. 369). Women were positioned as wanting a mate and children for the purposes of emotional connection and family, while men were positioned outside of this frame of reference as lacking in emotional investment because they are only there due to their biological drive to have sex.

Women were advised not to let their partners know they were unhappy even if it hurts them and to 'work on herself'. The advice implied an expectation for women to withhold their desires and views and make themselves over in an adaptation that will meet men's fixations. In a positive reframing for the women seeking support and advice, it was highlighted that when their men were using pornography at least they were not being unfaithful and were maintaining the monogamy of heteronormativity. This is seen as a positive in that men are biologically programmed to 'spread their seed', so using pornography is represented as a strategic choice for women who want their partner to remain monogamous.

García-Favaro's (2015) analysis shows discourses informed by evolutionary psychology ideologically position men as unable to change and women as needing to adapt in heterosexual relationships. Postfeminist neoliberal agency positions women as adaptive agents who are responsible for caring for themselves and increasing their well-being through looking at their costs and benefits strategically. They should leave behind any negative responses they have about pornography by realising there is scientific evidence that their men have biological programming to use pornography. In response, they should re-construct themselves as a smarter, adapting, feminine heterosexual subject: not questioning gender, accepting pornography use and making themselves over in a manner that will provoke lust in their partner and provide them with 'great' sex.

The media and popular culture often reinforce traditional gendered relations as the ultimate source for women's happiness, security and fulfilment. Alongside the neoliberal postfeminist empowered women's sexuality discussed above, with desires and rights to sexual activity and pleasure offering an empowered agency, women are portrayed in the media as needing/wanting a man with the goal of a monogamous long-term relationship (Farvid & Braun, 2006). Male and female sexuality is implied within the majority of accounts as predominantly heterosexual (Farvid & Braun, 2006). This representation has implications for women's gendered subjectivity, identity and sexual practice. Farvid and Braun (2006) looked at popular women's magazines to see how they constructed female and male sexuality and, like Gill (2008), found women's heterosexuality represented as 'empowered'. At the same time their analysis showed women were frequently portrayed as trying to find their 'Mr. Right' or 'the one'. Traditional gendered ideals of men's need for independence and autonomy were also prevalent. Women's femininity and sexuality was dependent on physical appearance, a femininity that was appropriate and attractive to men. In this portrayal, men are allowed to do two things: define femininity and relate to it heterosexually. Farvid and Braun (2006) identified the 'male sex drive' discourse was present with men represented as ready for sex any time while the 'have/hold' discourse positioned women in need of providing 'great' heterosex to hold on to her man and ensure his fidelity (Farvid & Braun, 2006; Holloway, 1989). 'Great sex' was depicted as stereotypical heterosex based on men's needs. Sexuality, in this sense, was framed as work for her; she needs to develop these skills and her success in the have/hold discourse is dependent on it. Men's infidelity was constructed as normative and if he did cheat, it was due to her inadequacy. Any depictions of a woman cheating were attributed to her poor morality and were condemned (Farvid & Braun, 2006).

Gender differences naturalising masculinity and femininity are congruent with dominant gender ideology (Farvid & Braun, 2006). The message in the media was that these differences needed to be accepted rather than resisted. When it came to men's sexual performance, the fragility of his 'male ego' positioned the woman as needing to support and reassure him (Farvid & Braun, 2006). Again, this was within their traditional portrayal of femininity as passive and obligated to the 'emotion work'. The woman needed to recognise her man's feelings and inadequacy and reassure him, shifting the focus from her sexual satisfaction to his 'ego'. Men's heterosexuality in this representation is a central way for them to show their masculinity so any

perceived failures are a potential threat to it. The stereotypical gender ideals discussed here turn women's sexual agency again towards men's benefit, as in the pole dancing example above. The normative construction of men's cheating does not extend to women as a monogamous heterosexual relationship is constructed as what she should desire and the only way for her to be respectable. This limits her agency and ability to choose to be unfaithful.

Casual sex is regulated by the discourse of mononormativity (Farvid & Braun, 2013). Mononormativity is defined as having sex within a monogamous heterosexual relationship. When friends, strangers or acquaintances have a fleeting or singular sexual encounter it is referred to as casual sex. Casual sex is seen as risky within heteronormativity (Farvid, 2010). Marriage and monogamy are the dominant discourses for how women should conduct respectable heterosexual relationships in the West. But as I have already highlighted, monogamy has not served the best interests of women. Men's interests, possessiveness and jealousy are all promoted through this idealised view of romance. Farvid and Braun (2013) analysed online sources to see what discussions of casual sex could tell them about a contemporary heterosexuality. In this analysis, Farvid and Braun (2013) learned from the internet that casual sex is not 'natural', and although expert advisors provided information on how to do casual sex correctly, the advice bolstered heterosexual monogamy as the ideal way to have a heterosexual relationship. The ultimate goal portrayed was to find a person to be in a long-term committed relationship. Casual sex is only to be about sex, but ironically, it was presented in opposition to a monogamous romantic relationship that was still valued higher and prioritised as such: The more emotionally involved or committed a sexual relationship is, the higher its status. Casual sex was positioned outside of the respectability of normative heterosexuality. In addition, there was a consistent message that any sex is desirable. However, this message was gendered. They found 'sex differences' still governed underlying mainstream views of sexuality and "heterosexist/heteronormative" beliefs that men are sexual and woman relational (Farvid & Braun, 2013, p. 371). Casual sex is then portrayed for men as natural and woman something they need to learn so they can "do casual sex right" (Farvid & Braun, 2013, p. 359).

Heteronormativity is so dominant that alternate sexualities are still governed by it. Sexualities other than heterosexuality can be discursively reconstructed inside of heteronormativity as Lynch and Maree (2013) showed through exploring how heteronormativity functions in the discourse of women who identified as bisexual. They

considered how heteronormativity was functioning in the narratives of their participants particularly in relation to 'marriage and family' discourse. In their analysis, they noticed bisexual woman engaged with the marriage and family discourse from a number of positions. The first was from an idealised position as they talked of romanticised ideas of marriage and family from childhood. Growing up they had the belief that their future would be based on what they saw in their parents' lives and from what their parents said to them. Alternatively, the participants saw "bisexuality as competing with an idealised marriage and family discourse" (Lynch & Maree, 2013, p. 465). From this position, the marriage and family discourse was seen to threaten same-sex relationships. The inability of partners to provide a child to create a family threatens the existence of their relationship. The choice is then to take up a partnered position with a man, which is a threat to the same-sex relationship. This threat is the greatest in relationships where both partners identify as bisexual. Some participants assumed a third position, that of bisexuality as being incompatible with the marriage and family discourse, and this was because 'bisexuality' has been widely associated with promiscuity. Both partners have options of both sexes as partners, and because of this, women's same-sex bisexual relationship is not ideal for providing the lifelong outcome in the discourse. The final position the participants assumed was in resisting the family and marriage discourse (Lynch & Maree, 2013). They believed family could be achieved by same-sex unions but to assume this position they would still feel the loss of not achieving it in the 'traditional way', and to fully engage, they needed to let go of previous romanticised heteronormative ideals of family.

The marriage and family discourse shapes subjectivities and ideas of family and romantic relationships. Lynch and Maree (2013) noted that the participants neglected how the heteronormative marriage and family discourse could be negotiated with a man, nor how it could be re-articulated to accommodate bisexuality when relationships with men were discussed. This shows the invisibility and power of heteronormativity in the impossibility of an evolving position and identity as bisexual related to this hegemonic discourse. It appeared the marriage and family discourse did impact on their subjectivity in various ways and functioned as an overarching discourse that shaped their lives. The ability of this discourse to prevail despite the construction of an identity outside of heteronormativity was an illustration of how 'taken for granted' it is.

The poststructural research on 'sex, sexuality and sexualisation', for example Gill's (2008)

analysis of the media portrayal of the empowered woman and Farvid and Braun's (2013) exploration of 'casual sex', contribute to highlighting the 'taken for grantedness' of heteronormativity and allow it to become visible and thus analysed. Its 'taken for granted' status or invisibility that allows its power to continue, and it is research such as the ones discussed here that open possibilities for resistance and alternative positions to be created and performed.

Violence. Dominant discourses within heteronormativity make certain positions more desirable to women so that their 'choice' of partner, or whether to stay in a relationship, may mean living with abusive practices in their relationships (van Schalkwyk, Boonzaier, & Gobodo-Madikizela, 2013). Dominant discourses around family and marriage offer women positions that shape their social standing and acceptability. As previously discussed, when women achieve the social security of coupledness and marriage this marks success and affords them value and respectability. The strength and invisibility of heteronormativity discourses can result in women's agency appearing as choice: 'choosing' to be in, and stay in, relationships when their partners become violent is one consequence of heteronormative dominance. van Schalkwyk et al. (2013) interviewed women who were residents of a refuge for women experiencing IPV. They noticed that past research on women in heterosexual relationships where their partner is violent had been focused on their powerlessness; they wanted to focus on their agency. van Schalkwyk et al. (2013) were interested in the complex subjectivities of the women after separating from their abusive partner. In their discussions with the women, they noticed that participants needed to find a socially acceptable reason to leave their abusive partner since leaving involves resisting sociocultural pressures to maintain the family unit. Women who separate from their partners are frequently blamed for the breakdown of the family. There were known hardships the women faced as there were very limited socioeconomic resources for the women to utilise to survive outside the relationship. From this position, the woman was very dependent on her abuser for safety within and outside of their relationship. van Schalkwyk et al. (2013) noticed that before the positions of 'strong woman' and 'moral agent' could gain strength in the woman's identity, the position of 'wife' needed to diminish in significance. In addition, the 'moral agent' position stopped *the women* using violence on their partners, and was closely linked to their position as mothers. The women used

their identities as mothers as motivation to leave. Their accounts show they used ‘emphasised femininity’, which as discussed earlier requires passivity and feminine attributes such as being emotional and nurturing to justify staying in an abusive relationship and to account for separating. The analysis highlighted the contradictions between “their bad ‘abused self’” who wants to be violent in retaliation for the abuse and the more socially acceptable and valuable subjectivity of the “‘good self’/mother” whose choices favour their ability to still care for their children (Connell, 2009; van Schalkwyk et al., 2013, p.326).

Social, religious and hegemonic gendered discourses shape men’s use of abusive practices, the support available for women who are abused and their agency in achieving safety. Wendt (2008) was interested in the influence of local culture in a rural community with a strong Christian presence in South Australia on men’s perpetration of IPV and women’s experiences of it. She interviewed workers from local human services and women who had experienced IPV and analysed texts from local newspapers and tourist booklets. Her analysis identified three narratives that were commonly told about the impact Christianity had on IPV. The first was focused on the community she conducted her research in. In this narrative, the Lutheran Church was constructed as having a strong and powerful standing as a place that some couples went for help from the pastor because the church was comforting and welcoming. How the Church responded was both positive and negative as the Church had influence in setting the precedence for responses to IPV and how to address it. About half of the women spoke of receiving support and assistance. The other half had negative experiences that involved not getting access to a counsellor when they asked for one, having a chaplain offered as the only option, and a lack of training from the pastors on how to deal with IPV. The human services workers also criticised the church for not challenging the abusers in the community or church and reported that the abuse was frequently ignored. The Christian values that hold heterosexual marriage as eternal, sacred and uniting are influential on women’s decisions to stay in their relationships.

The personal meaning that Christianity had for some of the women and its influence on whether they decided to leave their relationships was the focus of the second narrative. Wendt (2008) identified women’s religious beliefs as creating another layer of sacrifice, guilt and anguish for wanting to leave, beliefs that “marriage was forever... for better or worse”, and that ending it was “a sin in God’s eyes” (Wendt, 2008, p. 150). However, in some women’s narratives it was also a source of agency, as a few women found it gave them optimism and

strength to help cope with what was happening when they left (Wendt, 2008). The contradictory possibilities of the Christian context are related to the contradictions identified in the earlier study that involves blame, shame and agency.

Heteronormative discourse not only blames and shames the women but it may strengthen the power of the perpetrator to conceal the abuse and to engage successfully with the women to provide services and interventions to her. Dominant heteronormative discourses, systems and institutions that silence, devalue and blame women affect women's agency in relationships. McLaren (2013) was interested in the nature of women's relationships with men who sexually abuse children. She conducted multiple interviews with women in South Australia who were mothers when in a relationship with child sex abusers. McLaren (2013) noticed that women whose children have been sexually abused frequently feel guilty, are shamed and held responsible and blamed for the sexual abuse their partners commit. When mothers do speak out they risk professional responses and social criticism that also use heteronormative discourses for 'bad mothers' having failed at protecting their children or for choosing their sexual partners poorly. The woman spoke of how the heteronormative discourse affected them (McLaren, 2013). For example, they were pressured to prevent their men from 'straying' by servicing his sexual 'needs' as it is a requirement of marriage and other forms of committed couple relationships.

Heteronormative discourses that produce this mandate silence mothers because they maintain notions that women are responsible and accountable for their partners' deviances. In addition, heteronormative discourses position women as instinctively knowing how to protect their children and managing their relationships when sexual abuse of their children is happening and exposed. But this was difficult for the women when they were held accountable by their social world and professional help services for the well-being of their children, their men's aberrant behaviour and the stability of their family. Fear of societal repercussions, the perpetrator and loss of the children can silence women and the blaming of the mothers diffuses the culpability for the abuse (McLaren, 2013). The threat from authorities to remove the children participates in the heteronormative discourses that expect protection and care from mothers in the family unit. This results in women leaving to keep their children safe without recognition of difficulties they face or appropriate supports. In fear of losing their support systems, relationship, financial wellbeing, personal safety and social standing many women stay in the relationship with false hopes of recovering their normal family life, stopping the abuse, and ensuring their

children are safe. There are benefits for couples participating in joint therapy regarding his behaviour, however professionals can become complicit in diffusing the responsibility from the perpetrator for the abuse. Heteronormative discourses support the women's expectation of doing the emotion work to stay with their partners through 'thick and thin' and prioritise their men's interests before their own (McLaren, 2013).

Dominant heteronormative discourses sway women's desires by offering love in idealised terms, with finding true love portrayed as 'bliss' and the closest a woman can get to happiness. However, what these discourses silence is the turmoil that results when love goes wrong and the fear and distress experienced by women with the prospect of finding herself unloved. Heteronormative discourses of romantic love impact on women's rank in society's hierarchy, where having a partner is essential for social respectability. In a recent paper, McLaren (2016) analysed the competing and intersecting social relationships that were influential to the romantic desires of mothers in a relationship with child sex abusers. McLaren (2016) identified normative beliefs that there was a need to take some chances for the women to make a secure attachment with a man and achieve their romantic desires. Once the man was secured, social approval of the union made it more secure, especially when it increased the woman's position in the social hierarchy. Women in relationships where abuse towards them was experienced invested much 'emotional labour' to portray him to others in a positive light. The women had narratives of emotional and social fears about being single, their attractiveness, how desirable they were and whether they would 'cope or not', which fuelled their attachment to coupledness.

Men's acts and threats of violence and other practices of coercion and control function to constrain women's actions. The personal autonomy of women is regulated when they are in an intimate heterosexual relationship that is violent. Positions available for women in heterosexual relationships, especially when the man's identity is dependent on hegemonic masculinity, leave women subordinate to men. DeShong (2015) interviewed women and men, some of whom were still couples, to explore the functioning of dominant narratives in perpetuating and reproducing subordinate subject positions. In her analysis, gender was used as a reason for the women to understand, and for the men to justify their control and limiting of where women went. Men positioned their partners as their possession, thereby reinforcing their authority and the women's powerlessness. These positions were normalised and 'natural' in the participants' accounts. The 'carer' or 'housewife' positions offered to women in the domestic domain were given as the

reasons for her social restrictions, yet at the same time the men were free to engage in the social life of their choice (DeShong, 2015). Some of the accounts from the women positioned themselves as a hostage, in a prison sentence with her imprisonment sustained by threats and violence. The reason given by the men for the need to control her movements were because the women lacked the ability to 'self-regulate'; as a man he was providing leadership for her and their union. Men also justified their regulation of their wives by drawing on romantic discourses of love and spending time together to build and sustain a strong relationship. However, there were challenges to the dominant gendered discourses when women very occasionally pointed out uneven distribution of power in their relationships.

Men's practices of coercion and control can be experienced as ownership. Towns and Scott (2013) spoke with young women in New Zealand about their 'ownership' experiences in intimate heterosexual relationships. They were interested in exploring "gendered proprietary practices of control" (Towns & Scott, 2013, p. 537). Their argument was that if these practices paralleled those identified by women who have experienced IPV, then using this knowledge they could provide an opportunity to develop interventions focused on the proprietary practice and the discourses associated with them. They identified three discourses: 'ownership' entitlement, surveillance and control of young women's identity (Towns & Scott, 2013). Young women gave accounts of their boyfriends making decisions which impacted their autonomy and 'choice' agency. The term 'ownership' entitlement was used to explain this experience and discursively it was a message about the authority and entitlement of the man as he did not deem it necessary to consult with her or negotiate. The young women described situations in which they experienced unwanted sexual behaviour from their boyfriends. This behaviour demonstrated to her and the world that he was entitled to all areas of her life when he chooses, including her body. The young women describe doing the emotion work of reassuring her commitment and resistance to the entitlement through trying to stop it.

Controlling practices may be difficult for young women to identify and/or resist because they are normalised in love and romantic practices. Young women who changed things about themselves, for example the way they dressed, captured the strategies that young women use to try to adapt themselves to what their boyfriends desire. The questioning of her own choices started to overtake her independent thoughts on matters. This dynamic is what Holland et al. (2004) proposed as 'the male in the head', a dynamic that works to govern and regulate women's

practices in accordance with masculine desires and privileges, and this dynamic serves to undermine the ability of women to clearly articulate from a position of their own needs and agency as a woman (Towns & Scott, 2013).

Men in relationships characterised by violence justified their use of control, coercion and force because of women's position as sexually empowered, which is in opposition to the postfeminist image of empowered women. In DeShong's (2015) research, men used traditional gendered discourses binaries of good/bad, Madonna/whore as justifications for controlling her movements. A partner's sexuality was viewed as threatening to his masculinity. Exclusivity in heterosexual relations means that a woman's sexual empowerment justifies his control of her to keep her faithful. At the same time, men may use masculinities that position their promiscuity as an initiatory rite into manhood, whereas women's promiscuity is seen as emasculating and therefore morally justifies his use of control and violence (DeShong, 2015). In addition, in Boonzaier's (2008) research, traditional femininity was used by men to demand that their woman partner be sexually available to him. If not, she was considered as failing at femininity (Boonzaier, 2008). Sexual fulfilment is core to the marriage discourse and gives the man full access to the woman's body. Women in these relationships either relented with the pressure or fear of further violence, or were forced and experienced unwanted sex as rape. If the woman did not comply, it was used as justification for infidelity. Men drew on the 'male sex drive' discourse (Holloway, 1989). What is communicated in this discourse is proprietary rights in the heterosexual relationship involving the woman or 'wife' as property of the man or 'husband' (Boonzaier, 2008).

How couples construct themselves, their partner, the relationship and the violence in their talk of their relationships can be contradictory and ambiguous (Boonzaier, 2008). Relationships can be conflicted and disorganised and it is through the narrative that couples individually try to create order in their retrospective accounts of the relationship. In these accounts gender is relationally constructed at certain moments that are social, intra-psychic, interpersonal and historical, and these constructions contain hegemonic gender ideals. Acceptable identities for women in relationships frequently involve the discourses of emphasised or passive femininity, romance and love. Women's adoption of femininity is like men's adoption of masculinity in as much as both are filtered through cultural, social and historical moments. Not a great deal of research has been conducted on couples' accounts of violence in their relationships. Boonzaier

(2008) was interested in understanding gendered, relational, and subjective dynamics in the context of abusive practices. She interviewed heterosexual couples and analysed how both women and men construct subject positions as ‘perpetrators’ and ‘victims’. Women, in line with a femininity from the ‘traditional’ discourse, positioned themselves as ‘victims’. They drew from the cultural discourse of femininity where they would have been perceived as a failure as a woman if the marriage did not continue in spite of the violence. Men also positioned themselves as ‘victims’ in their relationship due to being labelled as a perpetrator which stigmatised them through arrests and compulsory attendance at programmes for IPV. They additionally positioned themselves as ‘wounded’ from emasculation by their partners. Emasculation has been used as a cultural resource to explain the use of violence in an intimate relationship. Some women concurred with the men’s accounts, citing their use of agency and power in the relationship as a cause of the violence. For Boonzaier (2008), this illustrated how ambiguous the subject positions are for the individuals in an abusive heterosexual relationship. Certain subject positions are assumed in particular moments to achieve a purpose. For example, when the men construct themselves as victim they do so to minimise their reprehensible behaviour in their intimate relationships.

In constructing intimate heterosexual partners both the men and the woman used “a dual identity construction” when they discursively construct the “intimate relationship as a ‘cycle of violence’” (Boonzaier, 2008, p. 194). The men used this construction to maintain a positive form of identity when discussing their use of violence. From this position a man attributes his violence as a departure for his normally ‘good person’ who was just responding to situations out of his control that turned him into a monster with violence used to release tension. The women also use the dual identity construction to attribute the violence to just a part of him, the abusive part, and this part is a departure from how he is normally. This functions to allow women to rationalise the coexistence of both abuse and love in their relationship. Discourses of romantic love call for certain feminine and masculine roles. In the beginning of the relationship, the fairy tale prince charming arrives and ‘sweeps them off their feet’. It is from these spaces women can show why they are with their partner. The dual identity returns and the man is constructed as the beast and the prince. The abuse is to be endured until the softer side of the prince returns. Her feminine role of support and patience – emotion work – is again rewarded.

For me, the research in this section has highlighted how the subjectivities available in heteronormative discourse creates a vulnerability for women to experience an abusive relationship and the social forces that keep her there or limit her ability to mobilise resources, either her own or social ones available to her. The driver that perpetuates IPV for women is the desire for the love and happiness that is promised in the romance discourse and the want to gain and maintain social goods that come with achieving in heteronormativity. For men, this drive is instead the want to achieve the desired and respected hegemonic masculinity.

Many couples in New Zealand draw on patriarchal symbols and gendered arrangements in their heterosexual relationships (Baker & Elizabeth, 2013). Heteronormativity is so dominant and taken for granted that the requirement to think through what it means is not necessary. In addition, assumptions of how one is supposed to behave and the positions they are to assume in their heterosexual intimate relationships is prescribed in the discourses of heterosexuality, coupledom and gender. In neoliberal postfeminist discourses, power has been shifted from something that was being done to women (objectification) to something that is chosen by women and pleasurable through subjectification; women are still objectified but it is now in the form of self-policing or disciplinary power. What I am interested in is the impact this is having on women and men's subjectivities in their heterosexual relationships. Neoliberal postfeminism supports views that feminism is no longer necessary as women and men are equal now. One aim of this research is to provide an opportunity for men and women to share their lived experiences of their heterosexual relationships. The invisibility of heteronormativity stops these conversations from happening, so my hope is to have the conversations and illuminate what has been invisible. The current research also seeks to understand how women and men are negotiating their positioning and what discourses they using to navigate their own gender and heteronormativity in the context of their intimate partner relationships. Finally, this research is interested in how the technologies of self-surveillance in gender performances coerces and controls women in their relationships that reproduce their subordination and 'choosing' to behave in ways that maintain it.

Chapter Three: Method

To investigate or interrogate the technologies of self-surveillance involved in the invisibility of heteronormativity requires attention to disciplinary power. Disciplinary power is hard to detect and manoeuvres in a phantom manner, which makes it hard to identify, follow and resist (Farvid & Braun, 2013). Discourse analysis is able to explore how discourses create both social life and subjectivities in an attempt to make visible how power is operating to show how the discourse/s is enabling or constraining particular ways of being. For example, the way in which heterosexual practices are constructed. Discourse analysis can also highlight how different gendered subjectivities are organised and what this then implies for power relations, heterosexuality and heterosexual practice (Farvid & Braun, 2013). Disciplinary power that promotes self-governance and subjectivity can also help explain why men, women and couples comply with the traditional 'normal' script of heteronormativity and their specific gendered roles without the need for threats or use of force (Gavey, 1992).

Thus, in feminist poststructural Foucauldian discourse analysis I found a theoretical vehicle that was sympathetic in making sense of the contradictory, complicated and competing desires that exist in heterosexual relationships. Discourse analysis can assist in making sense of these complexities in ways that other models cannot. It can also highlight oppression and resistance, which makes it political. It is my hope that the outcomes of this research be used politically in that they may assist in understanding the underlying social, cultural, and gendered power dynamics which can enable it to inform policies and interventions in society to create knowledge that will challenge the dominant heteronormativity and patriarchal discourses. Challenging dominant discourses by unpacking what is considered 'normal' or 'natural' will hopefully create more diversity in relationships (Gavey, 2011). Diversity will enable couples to form their own gendered identities and behaviours in relationships, creating an opportunity for real equality.

Discourse analysis fits well with feminist poststructuralism as it is compatible to its theoretical views. Researchers in the discursive field subscribe to the notion that "language produces and constrains meaning, where meaning does not, or does not only, reside within individual's heads, and where social conditions give rise to the forms of talk available" (Burman & Parker, 1993, p.3). This supports the idea that subjects are changeable according to context. Thereby, discourse analysis allows the examination of what we normally take for granted in our

talk – the assumptions we hold. We do not see reality through discourse analysis, rather we get a feel for what people are doing and how they are doing it through their words. What we consider knowledge, our knowing, comes from at least one, or possibly more, discourses and therefore knowledge is constituted in discourse (Davis & Harre, 1990). For example, when a man or woman speaks about their relationship they are using at least one, and probably more, discourses. Analysing the text from this communication allows us to see the discourses used and what subjectivities the speaker is using in these discourses. By using this approach the multiplicity available and contradictory nature of subjectivities can be explored and exposed.

In my research, I have chosen to interview women and men from heterosexual couples because I am interested in gender and heterosexual relationships. Limiting the ‘couple’ experience, or gendered relations, to heterosexuals excludes those whose sexualities and intimate relationships do not conform to heterosexual coupledness and who may have their own way of negotiating their gender in their intimate relationships. How those who do not live in heterosexual coupledness negotiate their gender in their relationships is worthy of exploration, but it is outside of the scope of this research. A man who is a ‘husband’ understands ‘wife’ from his position as a man. His expectations of her and obligations to her are from his position as a man. Even in a gay marriage, a man would understand husband from his own position as a man, and in a lesbian marriage a wife would understand the position of wife as a woman. In gay and lesbian marriages, now legally possible in New Zealand, there may be similarities with some of the experiences of men and women in heterosexual relationships, but there are likely to be differences as well.

Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted according to the guidelines set out in the *Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations Involving Human Participants* (Massey University, 2015). Massey University Ethics protocols were used to determine that this research was low risk, and formal notification of the project was provided (see Appendix A).

Recruiting participants: Informed and voluntary consent. I recruited participants by snowballing; asking the people I know to ask the people in their lives if they or anyone they know would be interested in participating. This process worked well and I was fortunate to have

a positive response and agreement to participate from all but two of the 14 people who were approached and provided with the information sheet (see Appendix A). This left me with the desired 12 participants for my research.

When I became aware that someone was interested in being a participant, they were provided with an information sheet that outlined the research, their contribution and their rights in full. When they were interested, the person who we both know provided them with the information sheet which contained my phone number so they could contact me. On occasion, some participants let the intermediary person know they want me to contact them, and provided them with their contact details to pass to me and I contacted them.

Before the interview, the participants were provided with a consent form to sign after all their questions were answered and they indicated they were willing to participate. All the participants were proficient in English. Before the interview began, I asked the participants to sign the consent form (see Appendix C) and enquired as to whether they wanted the opportunity to read through and make changes to the transcript before it was used for the study. If they did not, I asked them to sign the Transcript Release form (see Appendix B). All documents were kept in secure storage.

One person wanted to see the questions I would be asking (see Appendix D) before agreeing to participate so this was provided and after reading the questions she agreed. When people agreed to participate, we set up an interview time and negotiated a suitable place to meet. The interviews were held in a private room, in a public facility, and at cafes. When we met for the interview I answered any questions they had, and provided any additional information necessary.

Respect for privacy and confidentiality. The participants' privacy was respected and protected through the removal of identifying details and the use of pseudonyms. The documents and recordings were stored in a password-protected file in my computer and the consent forms were stored securely during the interviewing process. Long-term, they have been stored at the School of Psychology. Any identifying details were removed during transcription therefore the transcripts identify the participants only by pseudonyms. Following the transcription, the digital recording was destroyed.

Avoidance of conflict of role/interest. I have been a therapist/counsellor in Hawke's Bay for many years and I now work the Department of Corrections. To avoid a conflict of interest, past clients or individuals currently on sentence with the Department of Corrections were not allowed to participate in this research project. This information was included in the Information Sheet (see Appendix A) used for recruiting and also on the consent form.

Researcher safety. To ensure my safety, the interviews were all conducted in a public space. With respect to my physical safety, I notified others of my whereabouts during the interviews and I had had my cell phone charged and with reception at all times. In my Information Sheet (see Appendix A) I used a cell phone number purchased for the sole purpose of this research and did not publish my address or home phone number on the information sheet or any other documents to ensure my own privacy and safety.

Cultural safety and sensitivity. The code of ethics in relation to psychological research in New Zealand requires researchers to have an awareness of and commitment to biculturalism as recognised in the Treaty of Waitangi, and to be sensitive to all cultural groups (New Zealand Psychologists Society, 2002). This study did not aim to focus on exploring relationship discourses explicitly available to Māori or other specific non-European cultures, nor did it plan to generalise on cultural grounds. However, to support my ability to conduct the interviews and interact with participants and the data in a culturally safe manner, particularly with Māori participants given the possibility of Māori participation in the research, I gained agreement for support from my current Cultural Supervisor at my place of work. She agreed to be available to consult with me to discuss any cultural concerns I had and how to apply tikanga Māori principles and Treaty of Waitangi to the research project (see Appendix E). This was a preparatory arrangement and no consultation was necessary as the project unfolded.

Participants

This research looked to gather mature understandings of masculinity and femininity thus the participants were to be aged 25-40, had been involved in at least one heterosexual relationship for at least two years and had lived in New Zealand for at least 10 years. Using this age group and having the criteria of time spent in New Zealand enhanced the likelihood that participants

had been in an intimate relationship and their ideas on gendered relations were likely to have been influenced by living in contemporary New Zealand society. The participants were all professional people that were currently employed. All six women and three of the men were born and grew up in New Zealand, and the remaining three men were born in the United Kingdom but had lived in New Zealand for at least 10 years.

Interviews

For the interviews, I used a semi-structured format. Semi-structured interviews are often used as an approach for gathering narratives and producing texts as they have an outline but still allow the researcher to be responsive to what the participants would like to discuss. This then enables them to explore their own views, beliefs and ideals. The outline of questions also permits the researcher to focus the interviewees' attention on the research project's area of interest. Questions asked in this format may be closed for eliciting a specific focus and information, however the majority are purposely open-ended to encourage breadth on the topic to enable subject positioning to be revealed (Potter, 1996). In the interviews conducted for this research, I used a list of questions that I had prepared before the interview (see Appendix D) to get us started. In some interviews I asked all the questions and in others I only asked a few as participants covered the topics in their narratives without prompting by the specific questions. Initially I took time to build rapport with the interviewees and throughout the interview I encouraged a careful, respectful and hospitable conversation. Furthermore, I provided a cup of coffee and a muffin to show the participants manaakitanga (hospitality and caring for them).

I did not disclose much about my own past as most participants were not interested and were happy to focus on their own stories and experiences. However, there was chat at the beginning of our meeting and getting to know each other where I shared some details about myself, and I was open about being a parent and having been in heterosexual relationships including my current marriage. I did draw on my previous experience as a counsellor to be responsive and empathetic and listen actively to participants' stories.

The interviews were audio-recorded. This was discussed and agreed upon from the beginning, thus there was no surprise for the participants when the recorder was produced and turned on. I explained to the participants that the interview would start with a few questions but I was interested in what they had to say so the format would be in a conversational style. I also

informed them that at any stage of the interview if I asked a question, or the conversation was going somewhere they were uncomfortable they could always choose not to answer that question, or they could tell me they would like to change the direction the conversation was going and we would do that. The recording of the interviews did not appear to have any effect on the interviews; I noticed that most participants quickly settled into our discussion without paying attention to the recorder.

The interviews all went well. One woman was very nervous at the beginning and was quite stilted in her answers to my opening questions but with my reflective listening and further questions her nervousness settled within about 10 minutes and she was then very forth-coming with her discussion. One other man was quite direct in his approach to the interview. He was intent on being asked and answering questions and so I obliged and this interview only lasted about 30 minutes. The remaining interviews were between 50 and 70 minutes and this seemed to be enough time to generate rich data. Overall, I met some very interesting people and I am grateful to them for sharing their thoughts and experiences with me.

It was challenging to listen to some of the stories. Of the six women, five of them had experienced abuse in past relationships. They wanted to talk about it and found it helpful to do so. As I had stipulated in my ethics application, I did check with the participants who had disclosed abuse as to their level of wellbeing when the interview was over and if they would be interested in support by way of a referral to a counsellor or agency, including one man who had recounted experiencing physical abuse as a child. I was assured this was not necessary. All reported value in having had the chance to talk about previous experiences of abuse in the context of the interview. They said they had gained further insight that was helpful and were not distressed.

Interviews were planned with six men and six women, 12 people in total. Interviewing this number of people provided adequate data to analyse discourses used by men and women in their intimate relationships. It also provided the maximum amount of data I could cope with effectively in a research project of this nature.

Transcription

I transcribed all the interviews personally. The entire conversation was transcribed for integrity and context for the analysis, including my questions and comments, pauses and

hesitations. I ensured confidentiality by using pseudonyms and changing any identifying features such as names of partners, children and places. Only one participant wanted to read through her transcript. When I took it to her she had changed her mind on reflection and wanted only to sign the agreement for me to use her data in my research. After the transcription and analysis were completed the audio recordings were deleted from the recorder and my computer.

The processing and transcribing of discursive data is time-consuming and labour-intensive but invaluable for analysis. The researcher needs to listen to participants' talk multiple times to be saturated and familiar with emphasis and tone of the auditory data (Gill, 1996; Potter, 1996). I heard the original interview and listened carefully again while transcribing, and then I returned to the recordings for clarification and accuracy on occasions as needed. Due to the noise at some locations such as the cafe and the speed and clarity with which some participants spoke, at times the transcription was frustrating and difficult as well as time-consuming as others have reported (e.g. Gill, 1996; Potter, 1996).

Self-Care

I was emotionally affected by listening to the abuse stories. After one interview where the participant articulated the impact of the abusive relationship on her very eloquently, I noticed I was left with many feelings including sadness and anger that she had been through such experiences. I also felt respect for her ability to recover and express it so well. There were aspects of the women's stories, particularly those of abuse and coercion, that were similar to my own and this required an additional element of emotional processing following the interview. Because of my previous training and experience as a therapist, I have several self-care strategies which I employed to good effect. For example, one interview which had considerable talk about the participants' experiences of abuse which had many similarities to mine, I found I was quite affected when transcribing. To manage this, I restricted the time I transcribed this interview to 10 minutes of interview per day and transcribed another interview which was not so upsetting for the remainder of the day. I also used strategies for self-care such as my reflective journal, walking, yoga and talking with my partner about my feelings and the memories the interviews were evoking. I also discussed my feelings and the experiences that I was having with my supervisor.

Data Analysis

Discourse analysis is guided by the research question being asked, therefore there is no standard approach to analysis that is prescriptive and can be relevant to all projects (Gill, 1996). However, Gill (1996) suggests there are commonalities, starting with familiarising oneself with the data. My first step was transcribing the interviews. As I did so I took notes of my thoughts and reactions, potential discourses and any other features I felt were of interest. I then made more systematic notes on identifying discursive constructions or themes of talk. For instance, I noticed that the women who had disclosed past experiences of control in their relationships talked about the importance ‘freedom’ throughout their narratives. So I used the term ‘freedom’ to code these extracts. Once the transcribing was complete, I began reading and re-reading all transcripts and making comments on the word documents. The comments were made where I had identified discursive constructions or themes of talk, for example, about romance, or ‘the one’. Over this process I became more familiar with the data.

The analysis was informed by my literature review and research question, which both contributed to the creation of categories to code the data (Gill, 1996). From my first attempt at coding, the interconnectedness of the data became evident. For example, all the women interviewed talked about being a mother in their subjectification as women, dreams for their future and relationships, and experiences in relationships. I started coding mothering talk as ‘mothering’ but then realised it belonged in a broader category of marriage and family because it was interconnected with other things. However, in many ways it seemed arbitrary when I separated out some of the discursive constructions as they were all so interconnected. Similarly, other examples of codes that I began using but shifted and changed over the course of my analysis were experiences of abuse, infidelity and trust, single mother, and some aspects of the masculinity data such as the talk around being a ‘boy’ or ‘lad’.

It was difficult to untangle the meaning of participants’ gender in their relationships from emotionally charged topics such as the abuse the women had experienced. To do justice to their stories as well as identify the discourses through which they made sense of themselves and their relationships was always challenging. In addition, as I highlighted in the literature review, although this project is not attempting to deal with abusive practices specifically they are embedded in performances of gender that happen in heterosexual relationships. So the

appearance of talk of abuse suggests that this research has managed to generate accounts that are inclusive of emotionally sensitive gendered performances in heterosexual relationships.

Each time I developed coding categories, I would re-read them and re-code. Themes emerged, shifted and totally changed as I understood discourse analysis better, my ability grew in sophistication and my confidence to make decisions and trust my analytic interpretations improved.

Once the coding had been completed, I started the next analysis stage: looking for patterns, similarities and differences in the data. The themes initially identified were heteronormativity, romance and coupledness, marriage and family, and violence. These themes were colour-coded and the same-coloured sections from transcripts were copied and pasted into separate files. As I have already highlighted, the interrelated nature of this project led to revisiting and revising the themes several times before settling on four main sections organised thematically. The first theme considered participants' engagement with hegemonic masculinity, emphasised femininity and postfeminist 'choice' feminism. The second theme focused on the impact of the romance discourse on life dreams and expectations. The third theme was concerned with the gendered nature of relationship progressions and the final theme regarded the postfeminist expectations and performances of the division of labour in the domestic realm. Inside these four themes were related discursive constructions and how they informed participants' understandings of gender and assumptions about their own and their partner's gendered positions in their relationships. None-the-less, I produced my analysis from my own subjected experience as a feminist and woman. In each thematic section, I analysed the data in relation to subjectivities and positioning and how discourses supported or resisted the men and women to act – to perform or resist – the dominant discourses of heteronormativity.

In the following two chapters, the men and women's talk about the meaning of their gender and their gendered experiences in their intimate heterosexual relationships will be presented. Chapter Four is titled 'Masculinity, Femininity and Contemporary Choices' and presents analysis on participants' talk of their gender, while Chapter Five, 'Romance and After', analyses and discusses romance and relationships.

Chapter Four

Analysis and Discussion: Masculinity, Femininity and Contemporary Choices

This chapter begins by addressing the ways in which gender, sexuality and the invisibility of heteronormativity are evident in participants' talk about being men or women in their relationships. There is an inextricable link between gender and sexuality due to the critical role of heterosexuality in constructions of both gender identity and gendered relations (Coates, 2013). Contemporary masculine and feminine subjectivities are formed around heterosexuality. But, as already discussed, heterosexuality and the institution of heteronormativity are so dominant that they are invisible (e.g. Jackson, 1995). In Western culture, heteronormativity normalises and renders the process of gendered subjectification invisible and allows dominant discourses of hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity, and the more recent discourses of neoliberal postfeminist 'choice' feminism, to be taken up and performed without question or reflective engagement.

Invisibility

In my interviews, the first question I asked the participants was what it meant for them to be a man or woman. I was interested in the discourses they would draw on to discuss their ideals of masculinity and femininity. What was universal in the interviews was an acknowledgement of never having considered this question before. In addition, several participants reflected on the enormity of the question and realised the value in having the opportunity to reflect on and attempt to articulate the meaning of being a woman or a man for themselves.

Peter: Well, what does it mean to be a man? What, just in general? What does it mean to be a man? Far out!

Sophia: What it means to me to be a woman? Oh, my god! ... I guess it is a role, I have only ever been a woman so I haven't thought about it.

Frances: Felt like a woman? That's a really hard question, ... I don't know. It is a really hard question because I have never had to think about it.

Olivia: It puzzles me, it does, it puzzles me to think I can't define what being a woman means to me when I am a woman, I should be able to!

When the interviewees attempt to say what their gender meant to them it is often framed in relation to heteronormativity, within a heterosexual relationship and hegemonic masculinity or emphasised femininity. For instance, William stresses his success in his career as a marker of his masculinity:

William: That is a difficult one. I suppose to me there are levels to the question, for myself there is a whole lot of value in my career. So, I've got to be seen to be achieving a high grade and ... that's a good question. I guess you don't stop to reflect, I have not reflected on what it is to be successful as a man on the basis of what you are doing and how that makes you feel, or like why.

William's comment on the need to 'achieve a high grade' displays how he is taking up a position in hegemonic masculinity where performance includes achievement in career and financial accomplishments. In heteronormativity, hegemonic masculinity is valued as men are required to support their families financially and protect them, so having a masculinity based on dominance and achievement and being seen to perform well in these areas, means success has been achieved. Creating a subjectivity for a man means that they must negotiate hegemonic masculinity.

Masculinity: Navigating Hegemonic Masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity is made up of dominant ideals of what it means to be a man that are prescriptive of how men should behave in any given cultural context (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). According to representations of dominant cultural ideals, in heterosexual relationships masculinity is signified by men's emotional unavailability, dominance, sexual promiscuity and aggression (Lamont, 2014). In many Western cultures, men are privileged over women by these cultural ideals. In addition, certain men are privileged over other men with the middle or upper class white heterosexual male perceived as superior (e.g. Pascoe, 2007). As previously discussed,

men perform their gender through their masculinity either in accordance with hegemonic masculinity or in resistance to it. The goal of the performance is inclusion in masculinity because there are sanctions from others for not meeting masculine ideals, such as having your masculinity and heterosexuality questioned. There is complexity in the relationship between hegemonic masculinity for men, their positioning in hegemonic masculinity, and what being a man means for them. This is in relation to both their resistances of hegemonic masculinity and where women have masculine expectations of their men too. William explores what being a man means to him and uses a shared discursive term 'manly' that allows him to claim a masculine space and differentiate this space from a feminine one.

William: I guess it's just about being man enough to do the 'manly' things around the house I suppose. Knowing your responsibility as a man is one way to look at it, ... the protection, you have to have your wits about you in the evening times for noises and checking them out, ... you have to be able to protect your family as well.

William takes up the traditional position in heterosexual relationships by doing the outside jobs around the house which he referred to as 'manly', and then he adds the protector role. Looking at the history of 'manliness', by the mid 19th century in Edwardian England, there was a shift from Christian qualities such as fairness, altruism and compassion, to valuing emphasis on masculine qualities such as withholding sentiment, stoic endurance and forbearing pain (Roper, 2005). Roper (2005) describes how Public schools and other areas of society contributed to the education of manly independence. Military threat, imperial dominance and commercial competition between nations rendered self-control by young middle-classed men as ready for national duty. This was looked on as a normative standard, achievement in this singular 'manliness' was for ultimate social good and men were judged in their external and internal achievement of these qualities. William's earlier emphasis on career success values commercial competition, and the 'protector' role fits in with the idea of being 'ready' for national duty; ready to protect his country. The use of 'manliness' for the men draws on qualities still in line with this version of masculinity.

In addition, William uses another discourse from hegemonic masculinity, the hunter and food provider, when he talks about learning to perform his masculinity. But, due to having

daughters, he is able to resist adhering strictly to hegemonic masculinity.

William: When I grew up my dad was a hunter-gatherer, so we would go hunting and fishing ... and collecting food, that was probably quite a manly thing. ... Reflecting on my childhood that would have been where it started, collecting, killing animals and getting fish and bringing that home, that was probably the start point for myself. ... I take my kids out now and go fishing and stuff, ... I guess it's a part of who I am and it is good and healthy for the family. I still continue to do it.

Debra: And do you have boys or?

William: Three girls.

Debra: Three girls, how does that work with you passing on this kind of manly role?

William: I guess that's generational too, my kids coming after me will have those skills, that's how I view it. Traditionally, it was man to man type of thing, but for me it's just going to be the act of handing down those skills and keeping that tradition alive.

In this narrative, William is taking up the provider and hunter position to define his masculinity and is drawing on discourses from hegemonic masculinity. He is providing for his family by taking care of the outside roles, ones which traditionally require strength and are removed from the inside feminine jobs. Furthermore, he uses a hunter discourse; he is not only providing financially in a more neoliberal sense but also able to go out, find and kill food for his family. It is believed this necessity for food was the origin of the division of labour between the sexes (Wood & Eagly, 2002). From a biosocial perspective, men's greater size, speed and strength and the reproductive activities of women led to men's greater efficiency in this role and the division of labour has been drawn on by men for many years. William evokes his membership in traditional masculinity and draws on a gender-neutral parenting discourse, passing knowledge on to the next generation.

Hegemonic masculinity is not fixed and can shift with cultural and societal change, meaning that ideals of what it means to be a man and performance of masculinity may differ between groups of men (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Magnusson & Maracek, 2012). Middle-class men, educated men who consider themselves supportive of gender equality, may desire to distance themselves from masculine displays enacted by lower status men, particularly as men's

emotional indifference and dominance have been criticised (Messner, 1993). For example, in Dellinger's (2004) research, analysis highlighted how male accountants working for a pornographic magazine distinguished themselves from 'slime ball' working-class readers. Demetriou (2001) refers to the ascension of one group of males as internal hegemony. He identified two constructions of hegemony. The first, "external hegemony", is referring to the institutional social dominance of men over women. "Internal hegemony", the second construction, is referring to the social superiority of a singular group of men over all other men (Demetriou, 2001, p.355). In William's positioning, he does not explicitly evoke gender equality but he resists the traditional division of labour in provision for the family by teaching his girls to hunt and fish. In addition, in his talk of achieving in his career, protection and providing he does not explicitly evoke an idea of him being superior to other men.

Andrew's talk is an example of resisting hegemonic masculinity using discourses of equality and social superiority: modern positions of intelligence, geeky or nerdy, and arty. He questions the accuracy and prevalence of hegemonic masculinity; he takes up a position he deems is more evolved. At the same time, he concedes there is an irresponsible masculinity available in both.

Andrew: I am quite aware of the standard in New Zealand, (the) image ... of being a man is a rugby playing tough guy, earn money for your family, nothing hurts just get on with it, that stoic kind of thing ... and it's not me, I don't fit into that very well at all. I am the more modern (man), ... being a grown up and taking responsibility and looking after your family. ... I'm not sure it's been a problem, there do seem to be a lot of people that don't fit into that mould, so even though it's prevalent in the media, you get a lot of stuff on the news and social media and that kind of thing, ideally 'blokey'. ... At the same time, there do seem to be quite a lot of other people, men, that don't fit that stereotype and have no interest in fitting in. I'm quite nerdy or geeky. ... When I first came here [New Zealand] I was just over 20 and I hung around with quite a lot of guys who were (into) ... computer games and that sort of thing, it is still a similar sort of irresponsibility as, say, the 20-year-old plumber's apprentices drinking every night, not the typical kiwi bloke thing. I still see quite a few and they have all got married and had kids, but that stereotypical thing, I don't know many that do fit the stereotype. I am not sure if it's because there are a lot fewer, or the stereotype is bigger than the actual number of people that fit it, or if it's just the group of people that I know in my circle of friends. ... (We are) quite sort of arty as well, ... we do

know some people who are in the arts and they don't fit that stereotype either. I guess our interests and the sort of people we are friends with are not necessarily that type, we don't have a lot of contact with it apart from the media portrayals.

Andrew resists fitting in with what he calls the 'stereotypical man'. He takes up a position outside of hegemonic masculinity in which he is comfortable by drawing on gender neutrality/equality as if gender does not matter. He positions himself as being a geek or arty. He also evokes the idea of being mature; a man who is more responsible, thus elevating his status over the rugby playing stoic man. He questions how many men actually conform to the 'ideal New Zealand type,' creating a space he can belong to and questioning the validity of that stereotypical man for contemporary men. What is apparent in this narrative is that Andrew still needs hegemonic masculinity to try to define a position in resistance to it and assume how he is outside of it. To take up his modern position he first needs to articulate the stereotypical New Zealand rugby playing, providing, stoic man – already discussed as 'manly' – to say what he is not.

Typically, not meeting the ideals of hegemonic masculinity results in sanctions such as being called out by other men and women for being 'feminine' or 'gay'. Recent scholarship has documented a move to a masculinity that allows for performances that would traditionally have drawn sanctions to keep men inside of the ideal, opening up the possibility for more inclusive multiple masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). As already highlighted, being of a higher social and economic status allows men to perform their masculinity more flexibly from both the newer more inclusive masculinity and at the same time perform distinctions from those aligned with lower status (Bridges, 2014; Pascoe, 2007). As Andrew discusses, it is affirming for him to find other groups where he is more comfortable in his own masculinity and who also do not meet the 'stereotypical' hegemonic masculinity to which he refers. While he offers resistance to traditional positions for constructing his own subjectivity, he none-the-less engages hegemonic masculinity in constructing a version in resistance to it.

'Boys will be boys': The irresponsible man. In romantic and sexual relationships, cultural norms ascribe men with expected predatory and aggressive sexuality whereby they pursue any sexual opportunity, regardless of context, while at the same time avoiding emotional intimacy

and commitment (Holloway, 1989; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). Often this is explained through culturally accepted discourses of 'boys will be boys' and 'sewing wild oats'. In taking up this position, regardless of age men are still referred to as 'boys' or 'lads' and it is accepted within hegemonic masculinity and the permissive and male sex drive discourse that their engagement with women will be in seeking sex and avoiding commitment (Holloway, 1989). Essentially, they do what they like and put their own needs first.

Contemporary media representations such as men's magazines give men the powerful message that "the modern man should be able to act in any way he pleases, free of feelings of guilt, depression, anxiety, doubt or ethical complexity" (Stevenson, Jackson, & Brooks, 2000, p. 378). Masculine subjectivity is constituted as careless, carefree, and uncomplicated from this positioning (Farvid & Braun, 2014). This is not so different from discourses that have traditionally depicted young men for example as 'lads' and free to act in the permissive and male sex drive discourse as 'boys will be boys'. The men and women in this research drew on cultural discourses of 'boys will be boys' and 'sewing their wild oats' in their talk of what it means to be a man. In these discourses, men both took up positions and were free to do whatever they wanted until they became men and thus responsible in some way for other people's lives. From this position, masculine privilege is as much as doing whatever they like until they are responsible is taken-for-granted.

Peter describes how being a good man is about caring and providing for his family and living by his values. When asked if that had ever created conflict for him he talks about past relationships before he met his wife.

Peter: I have had a few relationships in the past that have fallen over because I have held true to my values and myself and have not necessarily aligned with someone else. ... I have wanted to do things to chase my dreams that come from my values and go to places to work that haven't aligned with what other people have wanted to do and that has sooner or later put an end to those relationships. ... I tried a few long-distance relationships and they never lasted that long, but I guess the whole reason they became distance relationships was that I wanted to go and do stuff. ... But if you're not living accordingly to your values you're never going to be happy and if you're not happy, you're not going to be a good person, vicious cycle aye? ... Being a man is very linked to my values of living my life well,

... but my values have always won out over those relationships. ... Maybe it's selfishness, I don't know, I've just always ended up doing what I wanted to do rather than compromising, which is what often is necessary in a relationship.

Peter describes a time in his life before he was in a committed relationship when his work, surfing and environmental values allowed him to take up the position outside of stereotypical hegemonic masculinity. The ideal way of being a man can vary depending on the group one identifies with (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). So while Peter is taking up the position of a good man with values, he also draws on neoliberal discourses of individual fulfilment and self-actualisation to explain the pattern he had with moving on and spending his time pursuing his own interests regardless of the interests and desires of his girlfriend. He reflects and changes his position at the end to consider the relationship when he questions whether that is selfish and acknowledges the necessity of compromise in a relationship.

Frances describes her expectations of her husband to “step up to the next level” after marriage. By taking up this position she accepts masculine privileges by a man or partner before marriage. However, she then goes on to use the responsible man or ‘grown up’ discourse to explain how this position changes after committing to a relationship.

Frances: After we got married he got worse, he went backwards in maturity, whereas, I thought we would get married and he would step up to the next level. ... I thought we would get married and it would be the next level and the next step and it wasn't, it went backwards big time. A quiet night for him was 18 beers with his mates on a Saturday. ... The next step would have been growing up more, ... I thought that we would start to do things like entertaining our couple friends and doing dinners and stuff like that. ... He just seemed to take partying to the next level for a while and he would not come home until he finished all the beers he had taken. ... He would eventually show up, probably incredibly pissed after being in the pub and spending all our joint account buying all his friends rounds, so that sort of stuff.

Not all of the ‘boys’ behaviour is tolerated as part of a youthful masculinity. Angelina comments on the behaviour of the rugby boys her husband hangs out with and the impact it has

on her ability to feel secure in her relationship. Instead of accepting it as a normal part of 'sowing wild oats' she condemns their behaviour and resists accepting this part of masculinity as normal part of manhood.

Angelina: With these rugby boys that he hangs out with and their behaviours and their infidelities, because I hear about things, ... I still find myself, bloody men, ... (inaudible) assholes. But they're not, but I know a lot of them are.

Angelina's comment on "bloody men" and "assholes" expresses one aspect of the gendered nature of heteronormative assumptions for women. She uses infidelity as an example of the tension where to achieve in heteronormativity, women need to successfully secure a mate and commitment from him while at the same time they are positioned as prey for the young man attempting to sew his wild oats. According to the romance and have/hold discourses which position women as wanting and needing a man, they must stay open to engaging with these men during this 'phase' of their lives. As they navigate this positioning, they hope to find a grown up and responsible man.

'Grown up': The responsible man. When a man is ready for monogamy and commitment in an adult relationship he is then willing to consider his partner's and his child/children's needs as well as his own (Dalessandro & Wilkins, 2016). This time is described by men as when they 'grow up' and become 'responsible'. As discussed, men often attribute the ending of their relationships to their youth and selfishness. It seems that age shifts how gender is understood in relationships and can be used to draw on discourses for varying purposes (Wilkins & Dalessandro, 2013). For both men and women, the journey to adulthood is more subjective and less defined than in past generations (Silva, 2012).

It is notable that in the positioning of 'grown up', the men participating in this study construct themselves as good/responsible men and distance themselves from irresponsible men. The good man is one who provides for his family, spends time with them, takes his roles in the family seriously, and 'helps' his wife. There is some use of egalitarian discourse in constructing a good man, but this construction also draws heavily on traditional gendered arrangements. Sam talks about the transition and describes his needs to work on change continuously.

Sam: I have always considered that I had a good heart and I was a wise person, but I didn't when I think about (my behaviour) at the time, I was very, very selfish. So, I am still dealing with lots of things and kids and the partner come first and it's getting there, but it's still a work in progress...

Brad also talks about the transition. He thought he was a man without responsibility when he was younger, but all the 'boy' was gone once he became a father.

Brad: If I am honest, ... although I classed myself as a man ... in my early 20s, ... I would say I was a man, ... but not until we had our first son ... and now I have someone who's dependent, solely dependent on me, that I say (there) was no more of the boy in there. ... Certainly, you feel a lot more grown up when you've got someone who's dependent on you. ... I probably was much more of a mature man once I became a dad because you start thinking about things in a different way and your job becomes more important now because it's not just, oh, I haven't got a job now, I'll just have to get another one, it's, I've got a job and I have to support a family. ... You definitely become more grown up and your attitude to things change in that.

The 'provider role' positions men in the traditional discourse. This discourse prescribes that young men marry and then work in paid labour all their adult lives to provide for their families. The 1960s and 1970s ushered in an anti-establishment movement which included aspects of the gendered nature of heterosexual relationships. Russell takes up a superior position to his father and the generations of the 1960s and 1970s when his father had resisted traditional heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships.

Russell: My dad is a generation of the 60s wanting to reject all the old expectations. He will tell you to this day that he feels like people treat him like a kid. Part of that reason is that ... he doesn't want to take responsibility, what I consider part of being a responsible male or adult. He rejects certain roles and expectations that society has. I probably had a similar thing through my 20s where I felt very self-centred and everything was about me,

... it just seemed to be how I was. So, for my 30s getting married and having a kid was when I felt like I was being a man, ... that's when I felt a grown-up male. ... I was in the proper role as what I wanted to be, my role in my family, my wider family, my role as a father, a husband, those sorts of things.

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) remind us that “masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals. Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting” (p. 836). As we have seen, the men in this research take up positions in hegemonic masculinity that are in line with cultural expectations of them at certain ages and traditional expectations of them in heterosexual relationships once they have ‘grown up’. These masculinities are performed in relation to others; “gender is always relational, and patterns of masculinity are socially defined in contradistinction from some model (whether real or imaginary) of femininity” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 848).

I will now turn the focus on the companion to hegemonic masculinity – emphasised femininity and the more contemporary discourses of neoliberal postfeminist ‘choice’ feminism – which provides subjectivities for women in constructing their gender.

Femininity and Contemporary Choices

Contemporary women face complexity as they attempt to negotiate and create subjectivities through traditionally hegemonic emphasised femininity, and more contemporary, neoliberal postfeminist ‘choice’ femininity (Budgeon, 2014; Gill, 2008). A glamorous, confident and high-powered femininity that represents modernisation has developed through a cultural process where women are encouraged to base their understanding of their own subjectivities “around the twin poles of traditional feminine pleasures on the one hand, and embracing self-entitlement, self-reliance and individual freedom on the other” (Budgeon, 2014, p. 320; Goncik, 2006; McRobbie, 2009). Emphasised femininity practises such as beautification, domesticity, focus on fashion and associated passivity and submissiveness have been the focus of feminists since the 1980s when they were identified as technologies holding patriarchal structures of unequal gendered relations in place. ‘Girl power’ in the 1990s returned femininity to mainstream culture but it had been hybridised into traditional femininity with an agentic, confident and empowered

potential (Riordan, 2001). As Budgeon (2014) surmises “transformed gender ideals have materialised in the figure of the ‘empowered’ and autonomous yet reassuringly feminine woman” (p. 317).

When talking with the women in this study, I found there was a constant tension between creating subjectivities and taking up positions that were in line with both traditional emphasised femininity, and at the same time, empowered ‘choice’ femininity.

Emphasised femininity: Womanly. ‘Womanly’ and its binary construct ‘manly’ have generally been used to describe the traditional gendered roles of femininity and masculinity in heteronormativity. These terms have been largely based on a relationship between a woman and man, at least in Western cultures, to describe and prescribe proper conduct for heterosexual relationships. The heterosexual relationship is valued as the best unit in which to reproduce and raise offspring (Blount, 1996). Women’s suffrage, the opening of paid employment roles and education for women allowed women to step out of the traditional womanly role of domesticity and reproduction. But, with the end of World War II there was a ‘threat to masculinity’ with single women choosing not to marry or have children and achieving in their careers, such as teaching, which had previously not been possible. According to Blount (1996), who used the example of the teaching profession in the United States, the response to this threat was a pressure, mainly from the domain of white men, for women to reassume traditionally gendered roles and reaffirm the gendered polarisation in society. Single women were stigmatised and women were pressured into gendered appearance, roles and attitudes of traditional femininity (Blount, 1996). Below, participants Frances and Olivia draw on the traditional discourse of emphasised femininity to take up positions in femininity. Olivia looks to moments in her life as a woman and the positions available to her in the discourse of emphasised femininity to define her own subjectivity.

Olivia: When I left home I felt grown up, so that is part of it, but ... getting dressed to go out with friends, like at Uni ... we would all get dressed and put makeup on and things like that. ... Being pregnant and having my son was probably another big one, but that was not long ago. ... Probably, ... when I got married as well, ... I was filling a definite female role, I was becoming a wife ... and I had the dress as well. I guess dressing in clothes and

putting on makeup was definitely a female part of my life.

Frances: I think for me ... being womanly is, there is something nice about being able to cook and clean up after someone and it's nice to be able to wear a nice dress and do your hair when you want to and I do appreciate all those things, I think they are very important about being a woman. But, by the same score, I am also quite happy in mountain bike clothes and covered in mud, hanging out with the boys. So, I am comfortable in both.

Both these women situate their ideals of femininity or being 'womanly' within a traditional emphasised femininity where they are focused on domestic duties, their feminine appearance, and becoming a wife and a mother. Olivia uses poignant moments in the trajectory of heteronormativity to signpost the positions on offer for women in emphasised femininity. As already discussed in the literature review on heteronormativity, these positions are evident at times when women are perceived as having achieved success in performing their gender through emphasised femininity. Frances attempts to resist emphasised femininity with her comment on getting dirty. She does this by taking up a position in hegemonic masculinity; getting dirty with 'the boys'. Like Andrew earlier, Frances is not challenging the construction of gender hegemony; rather she takes a masculine position in opposition to femininity, thus maintaining gender binaries and hegemony of the genders as different or oppositional.

Budgeon (2014) explores this dynamic further in her investigation of gender hegemony, discussing how new femininities can assimilate the attributes of masculinity without disturbing hegemonic masculinity. Modernised neoliberal femininity is not about assuming masculine traits but about becoming individuals who are constituted in discourse through neoliberal individualism, which includes the ability to appropriate masculine attributes individually. Through this subjectivity, the femininity constructed promotes and normalises a "liberal 'de-gendered' social realm in which the dynamics that maintain gender relationality and hegemony are obscured" (Budgeon, 2014, p. 325).

'Choice' is also a bi-product of neoliberal postfeminist femininity. The discourses the women participants use to construct subjectivities from the positions available to them include neoliberal postfeminist discourses of choice, power and the individualisation of responsibility; they were not victims but rather took ownership of their lives because this is what they chose to

do. They are empowered by their choices, even when they are performing emphasised femininity; it is not as it was in the past when there were no other positions available to them, because they can choose.

Contemporary choices: Neoliberal ideals. According to contemporary ideals, the neoliberal postfeminist woman has many opportunities available to her. Media that support these ideals have celebrated the claim that ‘women have never had it so good’ (e.g. Gill, 2008). Earlier social constraints and expectations have been removed and there are no more gender restrictions on women’s lives. This allows the individual to be a choosing and enterprising subject. Gill’s (2007) reference to this postfeminist sensibility suggests neoliberal postfeminism misleadingly endows the modern woman with agency and choice, where she is no longer under influence or obligated to anyone. Rose’s (1990, 1996) Foucauldian work highlights the punitive and regulatory consequences of neoliberal subjectivities, highlighting that regardless of the disadvantages or obstacles one experiences, a neoliberal subject is obligated to live their life ‘as if’ they have the freedom to choose its course. The obscuring of constraints is problematic as these subjects of freedom and choice must construct their subjectivities as transformed and reflexive subjects. As Baker (2010) summarises, the impact of this dynamic is that any dependence is demonised, subjects are left with an illusion of autonomy and avoiding being vulnerable is the responsibility of the individual and self-surveillance is extensive. In the following excerpts from Olivia she describes how being a successful woman involves being everything to everyone, but not only that, she constructs a standard of achievement of successful femininity when she comments on a stressed woman at work who is unhappy about how much she has to do.

Olivia: Some of the most successful women I know ... have careers, they have families, they have friends and they are happy doing it. I remember talking to a friend at work about this lady at work who always seems stressed and was never happy. (She talked about how she did this and did this and was never happy about anything. ... Comparing her to a friend of mine I knew who worked fulltime and had three kids and still seemed to come to netball training and be happy, ... I think to be a successful woman they do have to be everything for everyone, not everyone, but you cope, and you’re happy with it. ... I usually manage to

keep the happy bit. ... That first question, ... what does a woman mean, ... I think there is pressure to be everything, and ... I remember talking about it with friends when I had my son, ... I come from a view where a woman can be everything, but then you can be everything, and then if you have kids, you have to fit that in as well, and still be everything with that added in as well. You have to keep your standards up to this level and just be perfect at adding that last bit in.

Olivia engages the neoliberal postfeminist discourse of successful femininity when she takes up the position of being able to do ‘everything for everyone’ and ‘be happy’. She constructs this position as superior to the women who are stressed and unhappy. Both positions are individualised. Her reflective talk, where she discusses having thought and talked about the dynamics of this position with her friends, suggests to me there is a space for questioning the positions available to women in this discourse as a production of cultural and social practices. In the reflective position, which allows her space from the neoliberal discourse to be critical, she is able to acknowledge the pressure to manage all the responsibilities perfectly and ‘be happy’ doing it. In the hierarchy of the postmodern performance of femininity, working, having a life and friends of one’s own and then becoming a mother and factoring the child’s needs in as well are all part of the modern women’s lot. They should be happy doing it or they are seen as failing and less valuable than a woman who can cope. Abby is currently single and raising young children. In her talk she draws on the same discourse and practices but she adds that modern womanhood should be free of needing a man.

Abby: I think for me it’s having to be and do everything really, kids and life, and make sure I do the things I want to do, but all those compromises as well. I think as well, ... me living my life, but not caring if there is a man or not, I do my thing I do, what I like and what I want to do and it’s not dependent on anyone else, but it is dependent on my kids.

The hierarchy of femininity in neoliberal postfeminist ideals involves a dilemma as mentioned earlier. One has to be independent, to not need a man, and yet not reject emphasised femininity entirely which would result in social sanctions (Baker, 2010; Budgeon, 2014). This is part of the postfeminist ideal; to be a feminist now is for the older generation and lesbians. In

Abby's case, she is shouldering the majority of responsibility for caring for her children. Her ex-partner is not reliable and she has adjusted her expectations of his support so she does not need or expect much from him. But, as Baker (2010) found in her discussions with young women in Australia, Abby has little empathy for her situation, even though she has experienced considerable challenges in her situation which she discusses further with me in the remainder of the interview. The positions she takes up in the neoliberal postfeminist 'empowered woman' discourse, as with Olivia's discussion of the pressure of being everything, leave little room for her to take up a position in a cultural and gendered discourse where she can be perceived as anything but empowered. Any experience of victimhood or disadvantage is rendered invisible. Like Abby, Christine is also single, working full time and raising her children on her own with little support from the fathers of her children.

Christine: I came from a high achieving family and it was about perfection, or at least an idea of some perfection. So, you're a top student and you're an attractive woman, you've got an attractive man and he's very rich, what the heck is your problem? And wanting to meet those standards and expectations that I had grown up with. ... It's like those hushed whispers ... went from being Christine's got it all together, Christine's got it going on, to what a mess. ... Which is interesting, because again, defining me completely by my success in a relationship, that was the defining factor of being a successful woman. I was like, that's bullocks, that's just rubbish, but that's what it was like.

Christine articulates the pressure and intersection of the neoliberal postfeminist and emphasised femininity discourses with heteronormativity, where to be a successful woman she had to achieve in education and attractiveness, and attract a man that would have historically and still contemporarily signalled success – a man with money who is physically attractive. When she left this relationship, in which she experienced many forms of abusive practices, she was seen as a 'mess' and the question raised was, 'what is wrong with her?' She only realised his behaviour was abusive when she attended counselling after the break-up. From this context, when she was asked what being a woman meant to her, freedom becomes central to her positioning. I think her emphasis on freedom acknowledges the gender hierarchy and the reality that the domination involved in hegemonic masculinity includes denying a woman's freedom.

Christine: I think for me, it's about freedom and how to decide, especially in relation to my children, ... important things about their lives. Having my options valued and being able to live a life I want to live without criticism or judgment, someone saying I shouldn't do that. I think the power to choose (is important) for me as a woman and especially in my relationship with my children. So, in more detail, it would be about being a mother and having a career, an interest, and being allowed to follow that interest and being supported in that interest, be like you can do that.

Christine is resisting the construction of independence as something she can achieve on her own. When she refers to 'being allowed to' and 'being supported' she is resisting the construction of individuality from the neoliberal discourse and she is situating her womanhood in a cultural and social discourse of gender hegemony where woman cannot have it all and there are still forces that maintain patriarchal power. In her comment on options and judgements of others that she 'shouldn't do that,' she is making visible the requirement for women to still defer to men and social expectations of women to achieve the ideal version of wife, mother and woman. Christine desires a position in 'womanhood' that acknowledges the gendered power dynamics and creates a space for her to have power to define what that looks like and to receive support for pursuing her own interests.

The Tension

There are many other examples of neoliberal postfeminist discourses, such as the participants' emphasis on the body and being attractive and the dilemma of being financially independent and committed to motherhood. What is apparent so far is the tension that these women attempt to negotiate between emphasised femininity, which is founded on heterosexual domesticity and relationships and is the 'other' to hegemonic masculinity, and the femininity of an independent, empowered, choosing woman. Angelina's narrative demonstrates multiple tensions and shifts in positioning as she attempts to construct a congruent subjectivity for herself in her navigation of this discursive landscape. For example, Angelina talks of what it means for her to be a woman and what it would look like if she was successful.

Angelina: I feel independent and I feel we (women) are out there on our own now and we

are empowered and independent and know what we are doing and where we are going. ... Being comfortable with who I am and knowing what I want and knowing that I can go out and get it and how to do that. ... My life's sorted, ... relationship, kids and I know where I am going with things and that's all satisfying stuff. ... I see a lot of stuff on social media about women ... there are ideas about what it is to be a woman everywhere, what it is to be a mum ... at the moment (I am) deciding whether to go back to work or stay at home. ... That comes into it as well, ... being independent, going out and doing your own thing, ... achieving your own ambitions and not being a woman with a man. ... Being strong, ... making your own way, not having to rely on a man. ... Even though I like to be independent, sometimes I also feel the pressure of what others think it is to be a woman. I think that I have to be feminine and a certain weight and a certain look and I do feel that pressure, but I also like to be those things as well, ... that is just what my personal preference is. ... You've got to be a little bit feminine and I guess it's associated with beauty as well. ... It comes back to that whole appearance thing, is that shallow? ... I don't know where that comes from. ... Doing my own thing, being independent, but also providing for my family. So, that means being a good mum, a good wife, being a good family member, both in my own family and my extended family. ... The mothering thing is a massive part of being a woman ... and I also think it's the appearance, I look after my appearance. ... If I can look after my own self from the inside and my appearance on the outside, I have succeeded in achieving being a woman.

Angelina's narrative displays the constant negotiation and renegotiation of the tension between the traditional positions available to her in emphasised femininity and the 'empowered' femininities of neoliberal postfeminist. Her gendered subjectivities are subject to and subjects of historical conceptions of femininity as a homogenous category, as are those of the other women and men in relation to this section. Since the new millennium, this homogeneity may have been challenged but the processes that organise gender differences are still in operation (Budgeon, 2014; Genz & Brabon, 2009). Cultural and societal influences as well as the internal processes of masculinity and femininity privilege certain femininities and masculinities and devalue others. The privileged form is still the white, western, heterosexual construction and as Genz and Brabon (2009) argue, it maintains its heteronormative hegemony despite the contradictory and

contentious forms that it manifests.

These dominant discourses and disciplinary power provide positions that mean men and women perform their gender in a manner that makes it seem like it is their choosing. In the participants' talk on the meaning and positions available to them in their own gender, they are reproducing or resisting hegemonic constructions of gender and their performances appear to be done without outside force. These men and women are willingly scrutinising themselves and surveilling their own actions to fit into what is normative. However, their willingness needs to be contextualised with their awareness of the sanctions for gender violations.

In addition, the performance and construction of gender is often contextualised within a heterosexual relationship. Masculinity and femininity play a role in sustaining each other relationally. Femininity and masculinity are complementary but they are also hierarchal (Schippers, 2007). The "implicit relationship between genders becomes a taken-for-granted feature of interpersonal relationships, culture and social structure. That is gender difference is institutionalised... but, importantly, so is gender relationality" (Schippers, 2007, p. 323). In the next section the focus will be on the relational aspects of gender performance in heterosexual relationships.

Chapter Five

Analysis and Discussion: Romance and After

From an early age, romantic storylines such as ‘one day my prince will come’ provide a context from which we understand the possible subjectivities available to us in the discursive context of heterosexual relationships, sex, love, romance and gendered desire (Burns, 2002). Romance is heterosexual and focuses on desire for the ‘other’ (Giddens, 1992). A romantic union is founded on assumptions of individualism and freedom for individuals to pick their own partners (Jackson, 1999). Langford (1996) asserts that power is ignored in romantic love because love and power are understood as oppositional and romantic love evokes ideals of freedom, which is an alternative to power. These narratives provide possibilities and norms for ways of being as gendered subjects. From within these myths, positions are available for subjects to take up, resist or construct alternative subjectivities from new narratives of desire and romance. In this chapter, the first section addresses the way in which the participants’ narratives connect with romantic story lines. The second and third sections deal with relationship progressions and the labour of coupledness – the unwritten chapters of the romantic narrative.

Romance: Attraction and ‘The Dream’

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the social institution used in order to survive a mostly harsh life was one’s family (Shumway, 2003). Kinship provided support, resources, and the insurance needed for safety and survival. Parents usually arranged marriages with intentions of securing the tenure of land and strengthening social and economic ties. The dominant discourse for marriage was one of security (Shumway, 2003). Over the following two centuries, with the rise of individualism and capitalism, the romance discourse allowed people to move between classes and choose mates based on personal preferences.

Attraction. Romantic discourse reconstructed marriage to enhance and prioritise individual happiness, well-being and sexual satisfaction (Jackson, 2001; Shumway, 2003). The need for financial security as the reason for choice of a mate in the security discourse was devalued. In the romance discourse, rather than status and inherited wealth, the quality that became essential was ‘attraction’. Attraction began to become the foundation for selecting a husband or wife and

sensuality was “legitimated as a vehicle of love” (Seidman, 1991, p. 8). As well as stressing the importance of sexual attraction for both men and women, there was an underlying assumption of heterosexuality that both woman and men had a ‘desire’ for sex and a mate of the opposite sex with their gender entirely fixed through hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity. ‘One day her prince would come’ meant all a woman had to do was wait to be ‘swept off her feet’ and ‘live happily ever after’. The man must be active to pursue and find his princess and get her safely to the castle before he could go back out to doing princely business and ‘slaying dragons’.

Romance stories have had a powerful impact on shaping sex, desire and love in heterosexual relationships. From a postmodern perspective, how people understand and reproduce their own experiences is related to the cultural narratives that are available to them. For example, Averill (1985) found that his participants claimed their own love stories were like the story he provided of a traditional ‘whirlwind romance’ even when the details of their own stories had very little in common with the story provided.

Feminists have criticised the traditional love story and explained that the desire it creates for a romantic union has concealed the likelihood of a less than ideal reality for married women. In the fairy tale, Cinderella escapes domestic slavery when her prince finds her, yet in women’s lived experience they have been repaid by their investments in romance and love with domestic service which is not what is promised in the ‘happily-ever-after’ of the fairy tale (e.g. Greer, 1970, as cited in Burns, 2002). Romance is the construction that men and women, despite their often-conceived differences, can be together. Although girls do not passively take up subject positions offered in the romance discourse, it is hard to resist romance when it seems so ‘natural’ (Walkerdine, 1989). In the following excerpt, Abby talks about attraction and relates it to biological chemistry and feelings. Abby constructs attraction as natural and necessary, it is there or it is not, suggesting that it is open to chance and nature.

Abby: It’s not so much a tick box thing for me, it’s the chemistry thing. ... The guy I almost married and the girl’s dad, there was really good chemistry and I realise that is a huge part of it. ... It’s a feeling, when you meet someone, just that excitement, the nerves, the butterflies and some people it is and some people it isn’t. ... I do wonder if it’s just the way they carry themselves as well; just confident in themselves. And I do like nice eyes, but it doesn’t have to be a certain colour, I call them kind eyes and that fits with that kind and

honest thing, not like hardened; real sort of open and caring and it comes out in their mannerisms.

In Abby's discussion, she takes up a passive position in the romance discourse of attraction. She elevates the importance of attraction over all other considerations. Her reference to the tick box is about an alternate position available in finding a mate based on qualities sought after: one makes a list and takes time to see if a potential mate meets the requirements. These often include attractiveness or attraction as only one item on the list. From Abby's position, if the attraction is not there then there is no chance for the romance to go any further. The nerves and butterflies also link in the romance discourse with the promise of not only sexual attraction but the prince finally arriving. When the prince arrives, there is the possibility of rescue from any challenges in life, as well as riches and love. But Abby then takes up another position from within the 'tick box' construction and she expands her idea of attractive to qualities she would like in a mate, although most of them are still bodily, which, like Sam's narrative reveals, is often the site for what is considered attractive.

Sam: Not to sound superficial, but my wife is very beautiful. ... She was doing beauty pageants, she was competing, ... she was very stunning. I met her in a night club and had a few drinks to build up the confidence to go and talk to her and it just sort of went from there. ... I am very fortunate. ... I just wanted to spend as much time together when we could, she was very beautiful, so the attraction was there.

Sam engages with attraction from the 'male sex drive' discourse (Holloway, 1989). He takes up the position of being in pursuit of a woman. After having made a connection, he wanted to spend as much time as possible with her, taking up a position in the permissive discourse where the attraction discourse's 'honey moon period' narrative includes an understanding that sexual desire is high (Holloway, 1989). He considers himself fortunate as he captured the object of his desire. His success is heightened by her having achieved so highly in the 'beautiful woman' category.

Andrew takes both an alternative and similar position to Sam. He creates a feminine hierarchy where the beautification and feminine qualities in emphasised femininity are devalued

at the expense of more masculine qualities, although he tempers that by saying beauty is still necessary at certain times and places. From this position, he attempts to draw on an elevated masculinity, which distinguishes him from a man who is only after a woman for her beauty, while simultaneously still considering it essential.

Andrew: She wasn't a girly girl, well in a good way, ... she was quite practical. ... She didn't look like she had been on the farm when I met her, she was practical and just got on with things, not fussy. There is a time and place to dress up and then there is a time and place to just get on and do stuff. She was into sports and things like that, so we clicked and even now I like the fact that she can get her hands dirty and is not afraid of giving something a go for the first time, no matter what it is. (She is) not worried about getting her hair wet, or getting covered in mud, ... not saying that all girls or all females are like that, but I do I know plenty of friends who don't like getting their nails scratched. ... But, for my wife, you don't have nails because you are just too busy working with the kids. ... Personality then becomes unique that way, you still are attracted to somebody for how they look, but not just that, there are other qualities.

From Andrew's position, he is recreating a gendered hierarchy. He values his wife's practicality and capacity for work as superior to a woman who engages more traditional feminine qualities, is more delicate and dedicates more effort to caring for her appearance. Yet he still requires her to be able to perform traditional feminine qualities at the right time and place.

The basis for Abby, Sam and Andrew's attractions is still highly gendered. Hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity are essential for drawing on or negating qualities that are attractive. Abby takes up another position in resistance to the attraction imperative when she tells a story about a man she had met recently and initially found attractive.

Abby: I had recently met a guy on a training, ... I thought he was lovely and we chatted lots and we hung out a bit and then he sent me some emails, I sent him some emails back. ... [After he answers her question about his relationship status and he tells her he is married]. For me it is an automatic and it's about who they are as a person as well. If they are taken and they proposition me, it's just very unattractive.

Abby is resisting 'the attraction' and taking up a position of being able to resist the sexual/physical 'chemistry'. She further undoes the importance of her previous statement by asserting that what is initial attraction can become unattractive because of the way the man is behaving and treating his wife. Interestingly, in this case, the 'chemistry' of physical attraction and romance is resisted through evoking monogamy which is another powerful heteronormative requirement of the romance discourse.

Hegemonic masculinity is a requirement of attraction for some heterosexual women. This attraction can be linked back to the security discourse which was the initial foundation for marriage and heterosexual relationships. Russell describes how when he first met his wife there were many other men very interested in her as she was quite sought after for her beauty. He was given a clear message from his wife that the reason he managed to secure her over other men was his ability to be a strong man and meet her father's dominance with his own strength.

Russell: One of the things that my wife has said to me is that she could never marry any of these men because she looked at them and she thought, my father would eat them alive, because he is a very strong willed person. So, I learned quite quickly, that one of the reasons why she thought I was attractive is that she could see that I was somebody who could be strong willed and stand my ground.

Angelina also positions the attractive male in hegemonic masculinity, desiring the qualities that align with manliness: virile, strong, attractive and physically active.

Angelina: Masculine men are very attractive, they are! I like men who are, and my current partner, he's very much a blokie bloke, into his sport ... and quite tall and athletic, but at the same time gentle. That's what attracted me to him, ... just no violence, manners, kind and sensitive. A man, but at the same time ... very strong and very assertive as well. ... I think it's still masculine, ... the kind of masculine that I like, the kind of man that I like anyway. ... I have been attracted to real assholes as well. ... Violence, mean. I have been in a violent relationship before and that did not work out well. Even though he was strong, he was caring, he was loving, he was all the things that I wanted in a man, but there was also that side to him that was a deal breaker.

In the discussion about masculinity, Angelina names and talks about a dark side to hegemonic masculinity. In her construction of attractive masculinity, she includes hegemonic traits like strength but explicitly values caring and loving to resist the association of strength with dominance, control and violence. From this position, she qualifies the attractiveness of hegemonic masculine appearance and performances by asserting the critical importance of more romantic performances of care, sensitivity and kindness that successfully temper violence. The romance discourse does not provide positions in relationships beyond the initial attraction. 'Happily ever after' became problematic for Angelina's earlier relationship because of violence. For Christine, even though she achieved an almost ideal 'princess' status, wealth included, it was not ideal for her long-term needs. In the following account, Christine draws on the romance discourse of attraction and her attainment of cultural and social ideals.

Christine: I met him in a pub, he got me a drink, he's gorgeous. ... He was a farmer which ... interested me and he had travelled a lot, he talked about travelling, so I thought, here is someone who's into the country, he's travelled a lot and he's gorgeous, so that was the initial attraction or interest. He was also stable, he had a good job and was financially stable, but also interested in the world. ... He was so attentive at the start, we just enjoyed spending time together, amazing chemistry. ... Sounds fickle, ... he was gorgeous and he had lots of money. When I think about it now I think he was completely the wrong kind of person for me. It would not be the main basis on which I would choose a partner now. ... I want someone ... who loves people, loves difference, who is happy in themselves, ... into what they are into and passionate about what they do. So, gentle people, non-judgmental people. The kind of man I look for now as a father for my daughters is probably exactly the kind of man I needed when I was younger, but couldn't see it. ... I was caught up in image at that age, wanting to be successful in my family's eyes, in my peer groups eyes, lots of money, physically attractive people, ... who had holidays overseas every year. When you're in your 20s living that lifestyle, it was what I was caught up in back then, ... but now that doesn't mean nothing, money, status, means nothing. It's just how someone is with me and my children.

Christine articulates how she had achieved success socially and culturally. She had found

her prince, he was attractive, attentive and provided her with wealth and the lifestyle that is held up in our culture as the ideal. Now she has left and has had time to reflect, she has taken up another position that is resisting the romance discourse and draws on the mothering discourse to articulate the shift. She is no longer looking for the prince but now a father for her daughters, which changes the criteria she is looking for in a man. There are many rewards on offer when one achieves in heteronormativity, including the promise of a happy and fulfilling life.

‘The dream’: Hopes for living ‘happily ever after’. Historically romantic stories in Western cultures have been inclined to reproduce an idealistic and all-consuming love created around the stereotype of a romantic everlasting union between a heterosexual man and woman. Romance stories consist of poignant moments: the lovers meet, there are challenges to overcome to be together, and when all is resolved the lovers get married. These stories tell of a romantic love that will continue through the wedding and the years ahead, the lovers get their ‘and they all lived happily ever after’ but they do not tell how this happens (Shumway, 2003). Although the man’s quest is for love, what drives the story are her emotions (Burns, 2002). This dynamic is still alive in contemporary romance fictions; it is her life that is dominated by the opportunity to have a romantic union, her own happily ever after, whereas his life is not as constrained (e.g. Wetherell, 1995). The strength of this cultural narrative has seen its reproduction in subjectivities and positioning available to be taken up by heterosexual men and women in many generations through the centuries. So much so that it too has become invisible. William’s questioning of how he came to want the heteronormative dream highlights this.

William: ... I grew up with both my parents, so I guess that was how I wanted myself to grow old as well, was to have a family, a wife and kids, so the more family the better. ... That was how I, ... well, I don’t know, I guess I don’t know. I don’t know if that’s because I grew up in that scenario, or if that was what I knew I wanted because I liked it, or if it’s just each individual has their own sort of view. It was what I knew I wanted.

William uses a neoliberal discourse to individualise his dream for his life. His subjectivity is based on the autonomous choosing subject with his desire for this dream as something inside of him. He also uses the idea of his dream being connected to his family of origin, which is a

common developmental account of individualised choices. Peter creates his subjectivity as a rational and successful man who is desiring success for not just himself but his wife and children as well.

Peter: I just want us to grow together and see our kids grow and be healthy, strong and successful. And I want to see my wife be successful as well in what she does and what she loves doing and support her in that, whatever it may be. You are in a relationship for the long term and mainly just to be happy. Happiness comes, ... for me anyway, happiness ... is related to being successful in what you do and enjoying what you do, whether that's bring up your family, or your work, or something else.

Success in hegemonic masculinity involves performances as a rational achieving man (Burns, 2002; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Peter takes up the rational worker position as he relates to his dream for his future, he would apply his work and success ideals to both situations. In addition, he is taking up the 'good man' position, which demonstrates his superiority over other men who are less likely to be considerate of their partners' needs, achievements and successes. Happiness is valued but based on achieving and success, not just for himself but for all his family members. Alternatively, Sophia's subjectivity is based on the romance discourse and the fairy tale happy ending. Her happiness depends on an emotional understanding.

Sophia: What I did visualise is I have my little house, my little family with my dogs and everyone's happy and we would eat marshmallows and it's very homely. I'm a very homely person, so, just hugs, and give the person freedom to do what they want. If I want to go out I can. My past relationship was controlled ...

Sophia's happiness changes as she remembers a time when attempting to find her dream in another relationship she lost her freedom. She uses the neoliberal individual discourse when she takes up the position of needing freedom. The romance discourse has positions available for women to take responsibility for men's dominant, controlling and abusive behaviour. The 'Cinderella' position is where goodness and passively accepting victimisation is rewarded by the prince's rescue. The 'Beauty' position gives women full responsibility for using their power of

pure love to transform privileged and abusive male behaviour (Jackson, 2001; Towns & Adams, 2000). Yet, as Sophia intimates with her closing comment on an otherwise happily ever after dream, the promise is often not lived up to (Jackson, 2001). These tales have never told anything about life after 'happily ever after' in an intimate relationship. They do not show the challenges that will be faced, such as paying bills, sickness and stress. Another challenge that reveals itself to the couple is when the intensity of the initial attraction wears off and the prince and princess turn out to be ordinary and flawed human beings. What happens then?

Angelina further highlights the potential disappointments of fairy tale romance through her positioning on happiness and sadness, and further on how it is safe for now but there are no guarantees for the future. The happiness is now and the future holds more possibilities of sadness.

Angelina: ... that's sort of what I thought love was. ... When I've been in relationships, that's when I've been the happiest that I've ever been, I've also been the saddest. ... I always hated being alone when I was younger. I think now if things didn't work out with my husband down the track, I would be a lot happier to be independent for a while, but back when I was younger I didn't like being alone. I thought that was what the definition of happiness was; being in a relationship and having a family. Now that I am, I think that it's true, it's awesome, I love my family. ... And for now, safe for now, ... I just couldn't say what it is going to be like in 10 or 20 years' time. I've seen relationships, ... I've seen them deteriorate. My husband's parents, for example, are just horrible and they just say, wait until you've been together for this many years and when you are our age. ... I don't believe them though, I keep believing that we are going to be good forever, though we'll see.

Angelina constructs being out of a relationship as being alone. The positions of successful femininity on offer for women in heteronormativity are in a married monogamous heterosexual relationship; endings are seen as failure and come with the sanctions of being outside of coupledness. Heteronormativity, as discussed earlier, values the heterosexual relationship above all others. There is a tension between the positions Angelina occupies. In the one position, the dreams come true and she achieves her happily ever after. In the other, relationships deteriorate and become abusive. With her experiences, she can no longer occupy the position where she is

unaware of this possibility.

Abby talks about the readjustment she had to make to her dream after the ending of her relationship with the father of her children.

Abby: ... (the dream was) meet someone, get married, have children, have a life together and grow old with that person. That had to be readjusted in my head [the relationship has ended]. ... It probably doesn't help that in my family relationship breakups, marriage break ups, haven't happened. ... I think that's a real difference in generations as well. I think about my grandparents and they hated each other, but they stayed together, so ... I think my ideals are different to the reality. ... I suppose I used to want to get married and my experience so far, with being almost married twice, I've changed my opinion about marriage and it is not something that I aspire to. I don't think being married would have made any difference to the relationships that I have had. And it's funny, because a lot of people when me and my ex-partner broke up, would say, oh, you guys weren't married, and I think ... having children together was way more of a commitment for me. That whole, you guys were just in a defacto relationship, doesn't make any difference to me. Marriage or defacto relationship is the same. So, now I don't aspire to get married, I just want to find someone I want to be in a relationship with and that would enhance my life.

Abby resists the cultural ideal that the only form of heterosexual commitment is marriage and the devaluing of her experience as a heterosexual partner outside marriage. She takes up a position in the parenting discourse where raising children is a more significant commitment. She has developed a new position for herself outside romance discourse and now wants a relationship that does not need marriage although she still requires coupledness to enhance her life.

Constructing subjectivity outside of romance discourse is possible but the trajectory of heteronormativity creates the same outcome. Andrew articulates this when he attempts to take up a position in resistance to romance in the rational male position and describes how he became married with a family, meeting what he perceived as the expectations of society.

Andrew: I guess (my dream was) getting married and having a family. It means a more traditional relationship. ... I am not sure it is a male stereotype, it's hard to know how

much is the expectation thing. I have generally got through most of my life following a lot of expectations, certainly all the way through school. The expectation was you go to school, you do your high school stuff, then university, get a job and those are the expectations which I just followed. I didn't think about what it was I wanted. I am not romantic, so a lot of it was, okay, what's next then? I didn't necessarily go, what do I want to do?

The rational male position Andrew presents here is conforming to expectations without questioning whether those expectations are consistent with his individual aspirations. Andrew referred to getting through his life, which to me signifies the 'regimes of truth' in heteronormativity whereby the most rewarded and respected ways of life are to follow this trajectory; they are the 'right' way to live a life that is valued in this historical and socio-cultural context. The invisibility of heteronormativity makes it unnecessary for him to be reflexive on what he wants to do or question the value of the 'expectation thing' for himself. Cultural narratives, such as the fairy tale, serve as vehicles for the proliferation of cultural knowledge on heteronormative social expectations.

Connell and Hunt (2006) assert that the romance discourse has been founded on false ideals of pureness and equality in relationships. Giddens (1991) describes the pure relationship as consisting of mutual respect and trust and both people can have their needs acknowledged and met. But, as the analysis of participants' stories attest, relationships are gendered and are performed in their historical and socio-cultural context. The power differential between the genders means that it will influence the power differences enacted at the personal level. The discourse of romance normalises, regulates and reproduces heteronormative positioning which reinforces these power imbalances in gendered relations (Gavey, 1992).

The portrayal and necessity of women being passive and submissive in the romance narrative creates a vulnerability to abuse (Jackson, 2001). Varying features of romantic love divert attention away from male behaviours of control of women. Chung (2005) found in her discussions with young women and men that these behaviours are being interpreted as signs of love and commitment. Jackson (2001) found that when abuse did occur, young women may have been encouraged to endure it, fix it through their increased love and affection, or resist it through ending the relationship.

In addition, interpersonal dilemmas arise in negotiating traditional romance stories. Young women may attempt to refute the subjectivities and positioning on offer in the romance discourse by; trying to expose the abuse; having positive experiences over the range of sexual and romantic experiences just for their own desires; or developing other meaningful relationships like friendships or heterosexual relationships that are not founded on romantic discourse (Jackson, 2001; Korobov & Thorne, 2009; Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003; Tolman, 2002). Walkerdine (1990) describes how performing or resisting heterosexual romance norms is challenging and always partial just like the taking up of subjectivities in femininity.

The literature and the participants' narratives highlight that whether performing or resisting positioning in the romance discourse, the social expectations produced are well known to them. If one is outside of coupledness, one loses social goods and being 'single' has often been constructed as a troubled subjectivity (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003). Success in performing romance is used as a social measure of a woman's worth (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003; Tolman, 2002). The 'love conquers all' romanticism can position women as looking for their soul mate, desiring to be courted and treated chivalrously, enjoying the wedding and other traditional pageantry of ever-lasting love (Korobov & Thorne, 2009). What becomes apparent in the narratives of participants is that after the initial attraction and the hopes of having attained 'the dream', the relationship either progresses or ends. In the next section I will look at the gendered character of relationship progressions.

'Happily Ever After': The First Unwritten Chapter

Narratives and discourses of romance and love pervade popular culture, but romance tales depict closure prematurely. After the couple affirms their love, no details are given about the 'happily ever after', or what happens after this, for example, whether the couple continue to affirm their love or get married (Burns, 2000; Wetherell, 1995). Once the prince has come and swept the princess of her feet, the story ends and we never see or hear about what happens next. In the romance discourse, the gendered progression of a heterosexual relationship follows the initial attraction with dating, a more committed exclusive girlfriend/boyfriend phase, and traditionally, the man on one knee with a ring proposing marriage. In the story, it is the Prince who ultimately decides if the princess is to his liking, and once he has, he holds the power to progress the relationship into the 'happily ever after' phase.

Men remain in charge of heterosexual relationship progressions as they shift from casual meetings to dating, living together and ultimately to marriage (Baker & Elizabeth, 2013; Sassler & Miller, 2011). Interviews with men and women have found that men predictably have retained more control in heterosexual relationships than women, despite improvements, for example, in some women's earning capacity or education (McRobbie, 2009; Sassler & Miller, 2011). Men both expect and are expected to propose that the couple transition through the levels of commitment mentioned. The girlfriend or female partner will accept the authority of men in these transitions by waiting for him to ask her and/or hinting or making it into a joke to get an agreement that they will marry (Sassler & Miller, 2011). Baker and Elizabeth (2013) found their research with New Zealand men was consistent with other international studies in that their participants assumed that they should initiate progression of the relationship when they decide they are ready for commitment or assuming responsibility for financial support of others. In addition, the decision may not be 'official' in the sense of being acceptable to share with others unless the man agrees and approves when it is happening.

From romance to coupledom. Relationship progressions are likely to happen when the couple thinks their relationship will last. At this stage, the couple can see a future together including children, and, depending on their financial security and assets, a wedding and home (Hewitt & Baxter, 2012). Most contemporary couples need both people to be working to achieve and maintain expected standards of living and their wedding nuptials. Frances uses a timeline of the romance discourse to describe the progression of her marriage that had recently ended.

Frances: We got engaged on our fifth anniversary and within four months of being engaged we bought a house and got a dog, got married, got another dog, got separated. ... People (said), why on earth did you get married? ... And, why did you say yes to getting engaged? And I am like, well, I wasn't planning on leaving him, so if you say no then you are going to be ending it. ... I suspect that he probably asked and I probably said yes ... not because if I don't say yes we are going to break up, but I think we were both comfortable with how things were going because we had been together for so long. We kind of felt like society almost expected that we would get married, you've been together for five years, why aren't you married yet? Why aren't you engaged? And I think the social

pressure, or perceived social expectations probably led to it as opposed to it necessarily being viewed as, this is the right relationship and I want to be with this person forever. It was more, well, we are not planning on breaking up, things are going okay for now, it's the next step. ... We [with her girlfriends] had talked about it when we were young, how long should you be with him before you work out you want to marry him? And the answer being, two years.

Frances is positioned in emphasised femininity from the options available in the romance discourse around relationship progression. Even with the amount of time she said that they have been together, it was her partner who decided when to propose. At this stage, she articulates that the only two positions available were to say yes or become single again. She then highlights the heteronormative pressure from others in her social world. As discussed earlier in the literature review, there are social goods that are available to women only in relationships with men and there are sanctions for women who live outside heteronormativity. At this point, it seems that when a man asks a woman to marry him, she has the final say and is making a choice. However, in her account it was her partner who decided when and how the relationship should progress. Both Frances and her boyfriend, as highlighted in previous discussion of 'the dream', are facing social pressure to stay on the heteronormative trajectory rather than negotiating another way of being together. It is understandable why Frances sensed that there were only two positions available to her and why she agreed to the engagement.

Christine also describes her experience of positioning on a heteronormative trajectory when she tells of what happens after she has achieved what is valued in emphasised femininity then resists it and leaves her marriage. She is describing the social position women face when they achieve a successful union and the social goods are powerful. Her story also highlights the use of the neoliberal discourse to position her as defective because she would say no to a man and her acute awareness of the social sanctions that come with being a 'single mother'.

Christine: It is interesting looking back on it now, ... for so long I just shut the door, but looking at it now, ... my life is settled and I'm in a good space and it's quite good to look back to see what happened. ... I think for me, coming from the families I came from, high achieving, it was about perfection, or at least an idea of perfection. So, when you're a top

student, you're an attractive woman, you've got an attractive man and he's very rich, what the heck is your problem? And wanting to meet those standards and those expectations that I had grown up with. ... Like single mother! And the only other single mother in my family is my cousin and it's like, oh, that cousin. And it's like, CYFS [Child, Youth and Family Services] and suicide and mental health for Africa! It's everywhere. Being put into her box, what the hell happened to you? All that judgment.

Christine manages to take up a position of resistance when she talks about her awareness of the social sanctions but yet she still ended her relationship and she is able to reflect as she considers herself to be 'in a good space'. Like Frances, she also articulates how there were familial and social pressures on her to use her looks to marry well. Regardless of other achievements in a woman's life, achieving highly according to the romance and marriage and family discourses is still the highest valued position available to her.

More recently, Christine has been dating and stopped the relationship proceeding. In this narrative, she recounts facing social pressure and sanctions from others. She is revisiting the heteronormative messages she hears as she is trying to create a life of her own with her children.

Christine: [The men she has dated have told her] because you are a woman, or now a mother, you can't do that. Or, ... I don't want a girlfriend who is away all the time, or ... is more interested in her career than me, or, you spend too much time on that and not enough time on this. When people say things like that to me I didn't like it. ... Even some women in my family would give me messages like, you just need to settle down and ... what's wrong with that bloke?

The men Christine has dated were trying to define what they need from her to stay in and progress the relationship. They were inviting her to take up the emphasised femininity position of passivity and put their needs first. When she resists and stops the relationship from progressing she receives messages from her family that, in the neoliberal individualised discourse, hold her responsible and in error. It is possible the men were taking up this position as they were attempting to be helpful to her to achieve their ideals of the 'right one' so they could progress the relationship. Nonetheless, Christine resisted their 'help'. These men also took up the

authority over whether the relationship will progress or not. In the next section both the men and women take up positions that enabled this authority to remain the 'norm'.

Choosing beauty. In the previous discussion of hegemonic masculinity, it was highlighted that men focus on their own needs and interests until they 'grow up' and become responsible. And as Baker and Elizabeth (2013) emphasised, men expect and are expected to initiate the progression of the relationship, and this progression usually happens when both individuals in the relationship expect it to last. It becomes apparent to me from the narratives of the men in this project that these men draw on the hegemonic masculine position of privilege when they articulate their requirements for identifying someone with whom they would want to advance a heterosexual relationship. In their positioning, they also position their partners in emphasised femininity since their partners' success depends on them agreeing to the men continuing to prioritise their own interests; for a woman to be successful she needs to join in with the man's life. As we will see in the next section, this creates tensions when children come along. However, initially positioning themselves through privileged hegemonic masculinity also allows the men to see themselves as good men, since all they need is to find the 'right one'. Brad's discussion of meeting his wife, how they 'gelled' and he could 'make time for her' and 'have a proper relationship', provides evidence of this positioning.

Brad: I never had any long-term relationships until I met my wife. ... I always hoped I would meet somebody that I would want to make more time for, or just have a proper relationship with. ... I had probably just accepted the fact that I might not have long term girlfriends because I never had long term relationships and I just thought, well, when the right one comes along and likes me for who I am, I'll probably stay and we will probably get on pretty well and just stay together and then the relationship will be long term. I think that's what happened when I met my wife. ... We just happened to meet and it just gelled right and I didn't have to change who I was, or be manly, or be whatever. It was just, she loved me for whatever reasons and I liked her. ... I think when I met my wife she was like, it's cool and we would go and do stuff and it helped that she was quite sporty and that we were both outdoorsy and it was good. The relationships I had prior to that I never met anyone I quite gelled with in that way. ... The only reason you keep seeing somebody is

because you click ... and it worked. That was me making a change and if she wasn't the right person for me I might have dated a few times and I might have gone and not seen each other again. But, we obviously clicked and I decided to do everything I could for the relationship, so that's how things change, isn't it? You do things to spend more time together.

In positioning his partner for 'liking him for who he is', Brad represents her as passively allowing him to continue to live his life and gain the rights of being a man in a relationship without making any changes to meet her requirements for a partner. He articulates how it would be him who would choose not to see her again if they did not gel based on his lifestyle, but when he found someone who was willing to live with him in his life, he chose to 'make time' for her.

Peter draws on a similar position in speaking of the progression of his relationship. He takes up the good man position when he talks about his 'values' to explain leaving another woman because she resisted his surfing and work commitments. He places his wife in a higher feminine position because she does not resist. Living his life is even better if he can chase his dreams with someone.

Peter: My wife, now she is beautiful. I don't know, sometimes it's just a spark. I can remember meeting my wife, I was in a rubbish relationship and meeting her and thinking, I just need to get out of this relationship and then I can get together with my wife, if there are girls like that out there I've got to get out of this relationship, because this is rubbish. ... She was just a nightmare, she used to play lots of games, ... our values didn't align. ... You are chasing your values and dreams to do work and people are getting shitty at you about it and wanting to do other stuff outside the relationship. ... I still go surfing plenty ... that's why my wife is so great, ... she still lets me go surfing. It is compromise, especially family life, fitting everything in together. ... We are in a good space at the moment. It's funny, it's a cliché living life to chase your dreams and I reckon it's true, if you can chase them with someone else as well, it's even better.

As discussed in hegemonic masculinity, Brad and Peter, like the prince, find their princesses, but then want to go back to slaying dragons. The previous position of growing up signalled an

end to the days when their focus was just on pursuing their own interests, but in this narrative, the perfect princess is one who will allow them to continue their pursuits. Now, however, they have the goods and resources of a heteronormative relationship and the benefits of a woman partner in an emphasised femininity position, which eventually includes childcare and domestic duties as we will see in the next section.

Conceding to coupledness. In the following excerpts, both Olivia and Peter follow the hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity positions in the romance discourse, with the woman positioned as wanting love and commitment, and the man in the dominant position of deciding when and if the relationship will progress to marriage. Peter did not want to get married, but, as he described above, once he found someone who wanted to live his dreams with him and she wanted to get married, he conceded.

Peter: I never thought I would get married until I met her. I never considered getting married, ... I thought getting married was just a religious silly ceremony. ... Jennifer! [changed my mind]. Jennifer had always wanted to get married. ... I guess initially it was for her and then actually getting married, I enjoyed it. It's nice and it's a good excuse to have a big party with all your mates, some you haven't seen for ages, that side of things was cool. ... So, I guess in the end it did end up being for me as well. (It was) lovely and it is nice to confess your love for someone to the world. ... Coming back to your first question, how to be a man, is finding someone to love maybe.

Peter takes up a position in hegemonic masculinity as being in charge and a rational male. He decided to marry initially for his wife's sake and he takes up the 'wild oats' discourse when he talks about partying with his mates to justify enjoying the wedding. While he engages the romance discourse when he talks about love and his pleasure in confessing his love for his wife, he remains focused on the event of the wedding rather than the commitment he makes to marriage. Even though his engagement in the romance discourse is quite different from the positions he takes up as resisting the institution of marriage, it seems to me that his romantic positioning is uncomfortable for him and requires drawing on a more hegemonic masculine positioning to explain his concession to marriage.

In Olivia's story about the progression of her relationship she describes how she has changed her position against marriage and taken up a position in the romance discourse where she is 'grown up' and in favour of marriage because of 'him' and their 'relationship'. She needed to hint this change to him so he could know that it was time to propose and they could take their relationship 'to the next level'.

Olivia: For quite a long time I was quite anti-marriage, but that changed when I was with my husband. After we had been together, at some point we had a conversation ... about how my views on marriage had changed, just giving him a hint I guess. ... I can only assume it was because of him and the relationship really. ... I think (my anti-marriage position) was being anti of anti-stereotyping, or possibly anti-church and of those, don't have sex before your married, don't live with someone before your married. I think it was anti those sorts of statements and then once I had grown up and got over all of that, I realised (that) ... it came from anti-authoritarian, rather than a negative view of relationships.

Resistance to marriage is something Olivia sees as needing to get over, and like the men in the analysis on hegemonic masculinity, readiness for marriage signifies a 'growing up'. The heteronormative trajectory is used by Olivia to define her maturity. Throughout her interview, Olivia has frequently drawn on the gender-neutral positioning in the equality discourse. The equality discourse has an underlying assumption that social goods and power are equally available to all, but, as already established, a woman's positioning in society is dependent on her success in performing heteronormativity, which is different to men's positioning and performances. Therefore, although Olivia uses 'growing up' as her justification for changing her decision about marriage, she contextualises her immaturity in relation to youthful anti-authoritarianism since she cannot draw on the privileges of hegemonic masculinity.

I think that in all of these romance stories there is an overall similarity of how the prince has come, he met his perfect princess, she has secured her prince and that it is the end of this story; 'they all lived happily ever after'. This is a dominant cultural narrative for a reason, it feels good and holds the promise that heteronormativity has provided for many generations. Attaining success in 'the dream' holds great riches such as love and a happy life and failure to do so brings

social sanctions. On reflection, I appreciate how embedded I am in these same narratives. For instance, I find myself re-reading the book 'Pride and Prejudice' every summer (Austen, 1995). I like to think it is because I love the writing and the English language used but really I enjoy and want to believe in 'love' and happy endings; this is another classic heroic tale of love conquers all. But what happened when Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy got married? Who did the cooking, the cleaning, the inside and outside jobs? When the children came along, how did they negotiate (or not) the performances of care for their children? I can imagine that at that time many of those roles would have been prescribed very traditionally within hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity. But has this changed? In the following analysis, I look at how participants take up positions and position their partners in relation to the tasks of everyday life: what roles, rights and responsibilities they assume and evoke in the division of labour, or as I shall refer to it, another unwritten chapter in the fairy tales, 'Dungeons and Drudgery'.

Dungeons and Drudgery: The Second Unwritten Chapter

The fairy tale prince and princess likely had nannies, house servants and cooks to care for their daily needs but the average couple must negotiate the daily chores and demands of coupledom and family life for themselves. The princes and princesses were created in a time when gendered roles were well set along traditional lines and what was expected of each gender was clear with little room or need for negotiation. In the 'happily ever after' the couples love 'lasts forever' and is 'enough' to give them the dream they were hoping for.

Feminists have focused on domestic work as a fundamental site of the oppression of patriarchy on women since the 1970s (van Hooff, 2011). Throughout the past several decades, there has been a shift from the traditional model for heterosexual couples which has seen husbands as financial providers and wives as homemakers' to a new model where there is sharing of responsibilities (Askari, Liss, Erchull, Staebell, & Axelson, 2010). Research has consistently shown that the increase in women's paid employment has not been matched by an increase in men's participation in domestic work, with women still performing the majority of chores in the home (e.g. Baxter, 2000). When women are working outside of the home, men's participation in domestic chores does increase but is insignificant in relation to the extra work the women have taken on, resulting in women enduring a 'double burden' (Jamieson, 1999). While some theorists and researchers have asserted the demise of the division of labour based on

traditional gendered roles as a 'pure relationship' based on equality, according to Baxter (2000), the gendered division of labour is remarkably stable.

Couples are influenced in what they want for their relationships by dominant cultural and social ideals. I have already highlighted the use of the fairy tale in ideals of romance and discussed the influence of postfeminist neoliberal ideologies that assume there is no longer a need for feminism because equality has been accomplished. Ideals and lived experiences are not always matched. For example, Askari et al. (2010) found that although young men had ideals of increased participation, many young women also want a relationship where there is equality but still expect to do more than their male partners. In the following section, I discuss participants' talk about their ideals for the labour of coupledom. I was surprised by the emphasis the participants placed on the division of labour in understanding gender in their relationships. It seemed to be their 'go to' discussion and the most readily accessible shared understandings. In the postfeminist context, the discussion includes empowered women and equality in intimate heterosexual relationships.

Postfeminist expectations. The discourse of equality and neoliberal postfeminism position women as now able to 'have it all' and gender inequality has passed. No longer is the assumption of domestic work being women's work socially acceptable in many Western cultures. These gendered assumptions and expectations have persisted in more complexity through neoliberal individual choice, preferences and standards (Beagan, Chapman, D'Sylva, & Bassett, 2008; van Hooff, 2011). Ideals of gender equality are present in the empowered narratives of the women in this project and it seems these women also believe that traditional gendered roles no longer exist in postfeminist neoliberal ideals. Frances articulates this when asked to reflect on what is important to her as a woman in a relationship.

Frances: For me, it is being very capable to be independent and support yourself and doing your own thing. But if you are with someone in an intimate relationship it is very important, as the woman, that you can do those traditional roles as well, on occasion, not all the time, ... I don't think that. ... You are not being successful as a person if you are accepting that you do that and they don't clean, cook, any of that sort of stuff. That is not being successful as a person, which for me is being a woman. ... There is something nice

about being able to do those woman roles as and when needed, ... but if you are doing it all the time you are not achieving being a successful woman because you are just being a doormat. That's an old-school relationship that I don't believe exists in the modern day for my generation. ... The idea of expecting a man to financially support me I am not okay with. I like having my own money, that I can make my own decisions to spend it. I don't want to rely on a guy, ... a man is not a financial plan for today's modern woman.

Frances takes up positions in both emphasised femininity and neoliberal feminism when she talks about the independent woman who can choose when she steps in and out of the traditional emphasised femininity roles involved in heterosexual relationships. She evokes postfeminist ideals in her talk about 'old school' relationships and constructs a hierarchy of femininity when she refers to women taking the role of 'doormats'. In addition, Frances articulates the empowered position for women as based on financial independence because with money she feels free of constraints. Not relying on a man for financial support is also constructed as a position in femininity that is superior to a woman who is dependent on a man for financial support. This creates an ideological dilemma for women who are navigating the many discourses that are available for subjectivities when they are for example, having children, parenting on their own, disabled or unable to get employment.

The effects of the gender equality discourse have created a shift in the cultural and social landscape that has meant that household responsibilities, paid work, mothering, and being a good 'wife' or 'partner' are all able to be achieved through postfeminist rhetoric of independence, empowerment, choice and agency. There has been a significant ideological change from the 'traditional' provider role for men (Kahu, 2006). Empowered women are positioned as providers and economically independent. There is pressure for women to have and do it all as Olivia said in the discussion on emphasised femininity and postfeminist neoliberal feminism, "to be a successful woman, I think they do have to be everything for every, you know, not everyone, but you cope and you're happy with it".

Emphasised femininity and neoliberal postfeminism create a tension whereby the success of a woman's performativity is judged on requirements that are incompatible. For example, a working woman who leaves her babies in childcare may succeed at the provider role, but be negatively judged for leaving her infant for others to care for. Frances's positioning on

housework as turning her into a 'doormat' if she does it all is an empowered position, but socially a woman's success in emphasised femininity is dependent on her home-making and mothering success within the 'traditional' discourse. Olivia articulates how taking up an emphasised femininity position in the traditional discourse worked for her and her partner. They had discussions about negotiating their time and her partner ideally valued them sharing the responsibility.

Olivia: Before we knew what we were getting ourselves into my husband always said it would be great if we could both work part time, so we could share [the parenting]. We haven't quite got that because we are both working full time, but it is enough so that we can share it. ... I'd never intended to give up work, I was never going to be a stay-at-home-mum. ... When I took time off when I had my son, when my husband had work, that was a good. ... We were fulfilling stereotypical roles and it was nice and it was good not to have to work. It was quite nice feeling, like I was fulfilling that mother role and when I was doing that it worked for us, for a time.

It seems that Olivia tempers her husband's ideal by saying 'before we knew what we were getting ourselves into' and this comment makes me wonder if now they are sharing and both in full time work and whether this is still his ideal. They are both taking up roles as providers for their family and the time they are parenting she describes as equal. Although she reflects on the time she did fill the fulltime mother position and how comfortable it felt, she later describes how disruptions to traditional roles can disrupt what works for her. By taking up the traditional mothering position, Olivia is able to achieve in the mothering role and as a couple they have achieved in heteronormativity. He is providing and she is mothering; they have successfully produced a child so the fairy tale has come true. Olivia makes her commitment to the traditional gendered division of labour conditional by stipulating a finite time within which she was willing to take up this position.

The institution of heteronormativity still favours the nuclear family where there are two parents, a mother and father, and the children are raised by the mother. As already discussed, there are many benefits of positioning in the heteronormative coupledness and family discourse including a sense of identity, social status and resources. The equality discourse has shifted the

primary gendered responsibilities to be shared between the couple. Andrew articulates the ongoing importance of caring for the family and ideally sharing this responsibility.

Andrew: Looking after the family, I see it as a husband and wife responsibility. It's not just one person stays at home and does everything at home and one person goes out to work. ... I see taking care of the family as a very important thing and not something that is left to just one person.

Andrew is resisting the positions available to him in hegemonic masculinity that are based on dominance in the home as the head of the family. He is positioning himself and his wife as equal in their responsibilities. Using the fairy tale discourse, I have been demonstrating the ideals formed from understandings of heterosexual relationships in our social, cultural and political worlds. Forums such as popular culture, the media and discourses that are privileged through them perpetuate these ideals, however the lived reality can be quite different. Relating back to this project, while ideals of gendered equality and opportunities for new subjectivities unconstrained by traditional gender arrangements in heterosexual relationships are commendable, the lived realities are quite different.

Postfeminist performances. In Andrew's talk and positioning above, his ideals of shared responsibility should be relatively easily achieved in the gender-neutral/equality discourse. However, the reality of adjusting traditional gendered positioning is not. The power and dominance of heteronormativity and the discourses of hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity make taking up a position in resistance challenging and uncomfortable, and as Andrew highlights, both he and his partner are left questioning his identity and success as a man.

Andrew: We changed roles when I was at Uni for a while and during that time I wasn't really in a position to help with the housework and running the house, so Tess was doing most of that. Then I was working for a bit and I was bringing in the money and Tess was looking after our daughter and the house and the family side of things. She didn't like that. ... We have changed now and she is bringing the main money in and I am doing the main mum role. I get our daughter ready and take her to school, go to work at a part time

job, pick her up, cook tea and Tess comes home. That's not a role I see as mum's job, it's not a role I necessarily see as a mum's or dad's role, it's just where we are at the moment. ... If a time would come where I could get a job where I was earning more than she was and she decided she didn't want to work anymore and stay at home and look after our daughter, we could do that. ... We have talked about it before, but she's got this sort of ingrained expectation that I go out and do the work because I am the man. And at the same time, she knows that is more to do with the way she was brought up than what she necessarily thinks, when she stops and thinks. ... It can sometimes be difficult for her because it's not the traditional thing that she expects and it is associated with stability. But, when I was working and she was at home that drove her nuts as well because she wanted to get out and do stuff. ... We talk it through ... and it can be a bit uncomfortable because then I am confronting a more traditional view of a man and I think, okay, that's what I should be doing. That can be uncomfortable on different levels, it can be, oh my god, what am I doing with my life? ... Who am I?

Through different circumstances Andrew and his partner have changed roles a few times. When they were in the traditional roles, he says his partner did not like taking up the 'stay at home role' but does not comment on his experience of the provider role. When he takes up the 'stay at home role' he stays within traditional gendered roles by calling it the 'mum role' which he then recounts and positions as gender-neutral as if gender does not matter. Andrew describes the unsettling subjectivity that this change evokes in his partner and himself. As discussed earlier, the heterosexual couple was historically a social tool for stability and security, and Andrew positions his partner in the traditional discourse when he talks about her expectations of him as the provider. He describes how she needs to be reflexive in those moments and they need to communicate as they continue to negotiate their ways through the discomfort. Andrew is also able to reflect on how this questioning troubles his gendered subjectivity and makes him question his value and identity as a man. Equality ideals and adopting alternate positions requires couples find a way to make sense of their experiences as Andrew did by individualising and rationalising Tess's fears.

The equality and empowered ideals many young women hold can be quite different to the lived realities of coupledness and family life. As van Hooff (2011) identified, when expectations

or ideals are not met there needs to be a reason or justification why they cannot work.

Heterosexual couples have been found to justify or defend the unequal division of labour in their homes as temporary or practical rather than resisting or challenging it (Bittman & Lovejoy, 1993). Olivia articulates the importance of equality in her relationship. She justifies the unequal division of labour in the home with reference to her partner not thinking it is important or being unable to do the tasks to her standards.

Olivia: At home my role tends to be in terms of the jobs ... I do the traditional female role and he does mostly outside stuff. It is sometimes nice to think about keeping your house and those sorts of traditional things. ... It pretty much just happened because he wouldn't, no, mainly he just doesn't do the bathroom, the insides good enough. I'm like, I will do it myself. ... He probably wouldn't clean the bathroom for a long time as he doesn't see it as a priority. He will vacuum, which is good and he will do benches and things like that. It just works better that way and I'm not fussed. I guess I would rather do the inside stuff and make sure it is done the way I want it.

As mentioned, research has found that there has been little change in the division of domestic labour and the focus has shifted to the reasons for the division, including the methods that couples use to explain their own arrangements (van Hooff, 2011). Jamieson (1999) suggests that couples use their creative energy to disguise inequality rather than undermining it. Bittman and Lovejoy (1993) argue that couples in heterosexual partnerships defend rather than challenge their unequal division of labour as temporary or practical. Wives who are working outside the home misreport or condone their partners' unequal sharing of household chores, creating a 'false consciousness' and covering the fact that the gendered dynamic on the domestic front has stayed much the same despite changes to women's paid workforce participation (Brannen & Moss, 1991; Lewis, 2001). Gendered expectations are now existing in increasingly complex forms by being dressed up as individual choice, preferences, and standards (Beagan et al., 2008). Olivia individualises her preferences as she justifies the traditional gendered division of household chores between herself and her partner. However, her husband's period of unemployment provided them with the opportunity to negotiate new positioning.

Olivia: A time when it was more difficult was when Barry wasn't working and I was. There would be periods of resentment, well you are at home, you should be fulfilling that role, all that role, which created issues a few times. ... It was quite a difficult time because he was getting down about not having work, so I couldn't be too mean. The bathroom is the key issue, he did the other stuff quite well and he certainly did while he wasn't working. ... I know he has this feeling, this need to be the man and to provide, so I have always felt that part of my role is to make sure that he feels good about that. ... I do that by letting him know he is appreciated and sometimes it might be asking him to do things I probably could do myself. ... I couldn't be too hard on him, in fact, we didn't communicate very well about his job stuff, a lot of it was just leaving him to it to not make him feel worse and then ... trying to awhi [support] him along about the stuff he was doing, noticing the house was done and adapting to how he was doing.

As with Andrew's situation earlier when his partner unsettled his masculinity because he was not fulfilling the provider role, Olivia's partner being out of work did not mean that re-negotiated new positions outside of heteronormative hegemonic gendered ideals were performed. Olivia does take up the masculine position of provider and positions her husband as the homemaker/caregiver, the 'mum role', asking of him what men stereotypically and historically demanded of women. However, the situation and her requests create 'issues'.

The other position Olivia takes up which is different to the traditional masculine position, is doing the emotion work for her husband while he is unemployed and his masculinity is vulnerable. She admits asking him to do things she could do for herself just to help him feel good about himself and possibly better about his masculinity. As discussed in the literature review, women are expected to do the emotion work for men in relationships and emotional illiteracy is normal and natural based on the biological and evolution discourses (Burns, 2002; Holloway, 1984, 1989). Engaging in emotion work means assisting others to feel good or special, letting them know that you admire and care for them, and being sensitive with their feeling so they do not feel bad (Burns, 2002). This is consistent with Burns (2002) finding that stereotypes of gender differences were pervasive and are enduring in the form of women as emotional and a care-giver and men as the rational worker in discussions with men and women about their heterosexual relationships.

In the following quote Sam recounts situations where he received feedback from his wife where she feels he has not supported her.

Sam: I don't feel that I am quite up to speed reciprocating that favour because there have been situations where she has said, you need to support me on this, and ... I haven't because I believe she is wrong. But her point of view is, my husband, no matter what, you need to (support me). So, this is something that I need to sort out, because she has the mentality that I probably would not be there as much for her as she would be there for me. ... She is very strong minded and she won't back down from any fight. She is, however, very impulsive and my rationale for not jumping the gun on that is to try and calm her down, think about it, because her impulsiveness is on another level.

In this account of their interaction, it seems that Sam's wife is looking for emotional support and Sam is taking up a position as rational. He is positioning his wife as irrational, impulsive and emotional because she does not think he will be there for her, as she will for him. Rationally he thinks she is wrong yet she wants emotional support and he provides logic. Sam is taking up a hegemonic masculine position as the rational man. In his case, it seems to be a cause of conflict, but in Brad's narrative, it seems helpful for making decisions about how to manage providing for the family after the children come along. In the following quote, I had asked Brad how he and his wife decided how they would balance work, providing and childcare.

Brad: I have stayed working because I get paid more than she does, so it makes more sense for me to work. She likes not having to work ... and she is breast feeding, so it makes sense. I can't breast feed, so it makes it easier if I am at work. ... Those roles, we haven't decided on those, that was what we thought would work best for the kids. ... I still get up in the middle of the night, several times a night, to try and get the little one back to sleep just to give her a break, however, I don't go every time. ... I don't know how they were chosen, it has just kind of evolved, I respect her and I just want to try and help where I can. I can't feed him, but I can still try and get him back to sleep because he probably doesn't need a feed, he's just stirred. ... I don't think we've chosen them though, ... out of respect for each other they have just developed naturally.

In this quote, Brad takes up the rational man position in his justifying his fulltime paid role outside of the home and draws on the worker role. He constructs work inside the home as 'not having to work' and uses the biological, reproductive and mothering discourses to justify this division of labour. Brad then takes up a position as a 'good man' when he recounts his 'giving her a break' and his respect for her. Finally, he talks about their division of labour as natural. I am uncertain whether this is positioning in the biology discourse again or the traditional discourse but I believe this narrative highlights the strong interconnection between these discourses. Naturalising the division of labour through the connection with biology means that there is little need for negotiation or the creation of new positions for the heterosexual couple. Additionally, using the concept of a natural division of labour means it is unnecessary to evoke justifications based on neoliberal choices.

Abby talks about her experience of the transition from being a couple without children to a couple with children and the changes that meant for her and her relationship.

Abby: When I got pregnant and started to realise you have to change some of your life style habits, you can't just go cruising around the country, I had to change because I was feeling tired. I felt like he kept having that lifestyle, which didn't fit with having children and settling down. ... We didn't have any responsibilities, but then, when we did, I felt like I stepped up, like I have to be responsible for these children, which I did. Obviously, with women everything changes for you, whereas with men, they have to mentally make those decisions to change because it is not affecting them. ... There was too much pressure. ... I was at home looking after baby (and) pregnant with the second one. I had them quite close together and he would spend less and less time at home. Going off surfing and not telling me and doing the things he obviously wanted to do. He didn't make the choice to be a part of the family. He started lying to me about where he was going because he felt like I was pressuring him to be responsible and he didn't want to do that, so he was lying about what he was doing. ... He would take days off work to go surfing and I would catch him out on a lie and I would be like, why won't you just tell me you want to go surfing, I want to go for coffee with my friends. I could still see how it could be a partnership and how it could be equal, whereas, he felt I was just pressuring him to not do what he wanted to do. ... And he put that first and I felt like I was down the

list of priorities. ... I think back to myself then and how much I didn't like how I was, snappy and nasty and I was unhappy all the time and it was not so much the kiddies, it was more we were not good and I was having to struggle along. ... We did a lot of relationship counselling to try and work things out.

Abby identifies how she had to take up the 'responsible' position because she was carrying the baby whereas her partner could and did continue to 'sew his wild oats'. She justifies this using the biological and gender differences on offer in discourses constructing parenthood. Abby was looking for equity and was open to negotiating work and leisure, responsibilities and opportunities, but her partner found strategies to resist joining her. She uses an individualised discourse to explain her nasty and snappy behaviour. Instead of talking about how she did not like how she was treated, she talks about not liking her reaction to being positioned by her partner as solely responsible for the children and his parenting/partnering.

Norms in heterosexuality and heteronormativity that are embodied in romantic love, reproduction, marriage and fidelity have been resistant to societal change, particularly the narrative of maternal care (Sevón, 2012). This is not just due to historical influence but also because of their centrality in women's subjectivities (Kahu & Morgan, 2007; Fox, 2001). Relationships in the family are traditionally characterised by solidarity, care and responsibility and, as discussed with emotion work, there is still a pervasive assumption that women are responsible for and will maintain the couple and parent-child relationships (Sevón, 2012).

Contemporary narratives of shared parenting have provided an alternative to intensive mothering, emphasising shared responsibilities equally and stressing companionship. Yet, they have been shown to hide power and gender imbalances (Gatrell, 2007; Vuori, 2009). Gender equality ideals in parenting are linked with more recent ideals in marriage where gendered roles are supposedly more negotiable and freely defined. The shared parenting narrative also supposes neoliberal postfeminist ideals of free choice, reciprocity and equality (Sevón, 2012). But research has highlighted that women are taking on responsibility for their partners parenting/fathering so much so that it has been referred to as the new and hidden responsibility for women. The extent of this dynamic, Gatrell (2007) argues, has made parenting the central area of couple's power struggles. However, Sevón's (2012) research showed that the transition to motherhood could happen smoothly where there was effort and willingness from both parties in the couple to resist

the intensive mothering position and achieve shared parenting. Angelina highlights the challenges of this transition in her discussion about becoming a mother and moving from being a couple without children to a couple with children.

Angelina: We are both very ambitious people and support each other and know exactly where we are going and what we are doing and ... it has never been much of a problem. ... Adding a child to the mix does make things a bit more complicated. ... Wanting to go off and be independent like I do, wanting to work and do my study and I have to ask for support to sit down and do some work, whereas, he just does his own thing. He's getting better at being a fall back, helping me out and asking if I need help. ... Sometimes I remember when I first had my son, I felt like I was asking him to babysit. I would be like, can you just look after the baby? And I stopped and thought, hang on a second, this is your child, you should be looking after him too, I shouldn't have to ask. ... I think sometimes I feel like I am mum, I'm nothing else but mum and that's my sole job, but then there are other parts to me as well.

Angelina's narrative resonates with Abby's account of her experiences where once she becomes a mother, she is positioned as responsible, and, as with the other research, she assumes responsibility for ensuring her partner's parenting as well. Although she attempts to resist this positioning, in doing so she becomes the caretaker for ensuring or facilitating his parenting. In addition, her subjectivities change from being multiple, as ambitious, worker, and student to singular – 'mum'. Later in the interview she discusses how this is creating conflict in her relationship and how she is not pleased with her partner's level of engagement when he did parent.

There is much complexity in current discourses informing the division of labour in heterosexual relationships. The co-existence of neoliberal 'choice' discourse, naturalisation of the division of labour and new expectations of women's caretaking create complexity. However, gendered relations in intimate heterosexual relationships become less complicated through adhering to traditional gendered expectations.

Meeting expectations. The following three quotes are from participants who took up positioning in the traditional discourse to meet their partner's expectations. Russell justifies the arrangements in his relationship as meeting his partner's cultural and their shared religious expectations. Christine's justification relates to making her partner happy, attempting to stop conflict and appeasing his critical and jealous 'nature'. Frances assumes the traditional feminine role to 'save' her relationship. In Russell's interview, he spoke with me about his previous marriage where he was performing much of the domestic labour because of his ex-wife's interests. In his current relationship, although he felt he had to learn and was challenged in developing the ability to be the head of the household, he reports feeling more comfortable in this role.

Russell: I think from the beginning my wife looked at me as, ... you are the man, so you are expected (to do) certain things a man does. ... I grew into that role and was happy to and felt honoured ... that she looked at me that way and that I was capable. I had to be what she was looking at me to be. ... There are a number of things she doesn't expect to do because it's what I do and it's my role and what I would prefer. Maybe not deliberately, I never went, I have to find a wife who is going to do this, but as I learned what her expectations were and learned what I needed to do to fit in that, ... I'm comfortable with it and she's comfortable with it, we just feel normal. ... My wife honours me in a certain way, ... my wife is an extremely intelligent and capable person, but she defers to me just to check, is it okay for me to do this? It's not something I demand, but it's just something that she acknowledges. Christian wise, it's acknowledging that the husband is the head of the family and ... according to the bible the husband is the head (of the family). ... What the bible says is, wives submit to your husbands and husbands love your wives, so ... I don't demand anything, the bible doesn't say, husbands make your wives submit, it just says, love your wives. ... As a husband, part of that not being about yourself is, that you care for your wife, ... when you get home and things are crazy and I am tired, I just do the dishes to make it easier for her, or else they just pile up and she gets stressed. So, often, that is part of my role. ... A big thing that she appreciates about me is that I am working and supporting the family. Again, ... if she wanted to work I would have no problem with that, but she is quite happy not working at the moment and although we struggle financially, as

a husband, I have no thought that she should have to work. ... I think another part of the role is, as much as possible, just trying to make sure the family is okay, that she is okay and they are okay. ... Part of my role is to be a protector, the person who provides for the family financially and I think a big part of what I have felt as a male is sacrificing for your family, it's not just about me in a lot of what I do. So, on my weekends, a lot of what I do is not because I want to go to this place, but because I want them to have that experience of going to that place, so those are the sort of things are what I feel is my role as a male, as a father and husband.

Religion and culture define the divisions of labour Russell and his wife perform in their relationship. Although they are prescribed it seems there is some room for negotiation under the guise of love and respect. Russell has discovered that the masculinity of traditional positioning has obligations that allow him to develop subjectivities that he is proud of. He is adopting hegemonic masculinity but the addition of his religion and love and respect enables him to justify the dominant position through responsibilities for care and protection. He does garner certain privileges but at the same time expects to meet his obligations. Christine has a different experience of traditional expectations from her farmer ex-husband. His expectations of her are to take up the position of 'farmer's wife' and the traditional performances that accompany that role. She is no longer in that relationship but is able to reflect on the positioning she took up and her motivation during the interview.

Christine: Playing the role helped the relationship to work for him, and for me, in terms of minimising conflict. ... Like a twin edged sword really. It meant, okay, so I won't follow my career, but I will do the garden and I will do his washing and I will make tea and I will do all those things and then he'll be happy with me. Which means that he won't be on my case and I'll think, great, and I will have this lovely, happy life, right? Seems like a simple equation. It worked in terms of minimising conflict, ... but it also didn't work because the underlying problems were still there. ... I became more isolated, I didn't go to Uni, I wasn't working and I didn't go and socialise. ... I had a small group of friends I didn't see very much because he was a very paranoid man, a very jealous man. So, just being home more meant that those issues weren't in my face every day, but they were still there, it

reduced a bit. I was trying to make him happy. I just didn't want to fight and I didn't want to be criticised. ... I wanted to make him happy, it was all about making him happy and so that's what I thought would do it. ... Did it make him happy? Maybe in some ways, funny ... yes and no. ... He went for me for being an independent and intelligent woman and ... as soon as he got me, and I've seen him do this with other woman, he crushes that, he doesn't want that anymore. So, it was like, okay, you've got me and I've changed me to make you happy, and you still think, you don't earn any money, or, what do you do all day? There was still criticism, but it changed. It was like, bro, can you make you happy! ... My solution didn't fix his paranoia, his jealousy, his judgmental, critical nature, it was still there. I just felt so distraught, I didn't know what to do to make it work. ... But I'm stuck in this, I'm sure I can make this work, I'm sure I can make him happy, I'm sure it's just me, all that classic kind of thing.

Christine's attempts to make her husband happy, doing the emotion work, requires her to take up a passive position in emphasised femininity to submit to her husband's demands. She recounts how this positioning was not enough for him and his demands and criticism of her did not stop. His jealousy is similar to the performances Towns and Scott (2013) talked about in their research as 'ownership practices'. In Christine's husband's position in hegemonic masculinity as wealthy land owning farmer, she became a 'farmer's wife' which entitled him to ownership of her as well as a dominant position in the relationship where she had to be passive to his demands and expectations. This position is also a very powerful position in hegemonic masculinity and makes no distinction between 'good men' and those 'others' who use their dominant positions, especially in relation to this story, where all the characteristics of abuse are evident. This is quite different to the respectful and loving position taken up in Russell's narrative.

Like Christine, Frances's partner was questioning her femininity by criticising her engagement in their domestic affairs and her relationships and activities outside of their home.

Frances: I took up my mountain biking in the last 18 months of our relationship. I'd say, I am going out riding with the guys tonight after work. ... He would be like, ah, for fuck's sakes, all you do is ride your bike, you never do anything around the house, and I was only riding one or two days a week. ... I would try and come home and panic. I would say to the

guys, sorry, I can't come out, I have to do this and this. It became a very controlling and emotionally manipulative thing, very much household cleaning focused. ... Panic, control and emotional abuse. ... (I felt) belittled and it did not make me feel very good. ... I knew it was done and dusted, ... that (last) five months was the worst in terms of feeling inadequate as a wife and really trying. ... I made a conscious decision while he was gone [on holiday] that I was going to try and reconnect by doing things that I perceived that he wanted as a wife role. Doing things like making his lunch and making sure that dinner was being cooked for him each night, that sort of thing. I was trying to take on more of the wife aspects that I thought he was after and I am not sure if he was after those or not, but that was certainly how I attempted to reconnect with him was to try and demonstrate my appreciation of him as a wife by taking on those gendered roles, ... traditional gender roles, that my mum would have had. It didn't work, but that was something that I did try. Okay, I will be more caring, more nurturing, try to clean the house more often so he did not have to and clearly it did not work. ... When I was with him, the idea of having a family with him, I couldn't get my head around it, that idea just made me panic.

In Frances and Christine's accounts of their experiences, emphasised femininity and heteronormativity are used as tools to belittle and control. The hegemonic masculine position their partners took positioned them in emphasised femininity and, since it is women's femininity and worth that are devalued when they cannot make their relationships work, these women undertook the work of femininity they thought would reduce conflict and meet their partners' expectations. Both women adhered to the 'empowered women' and 'equality ideals' of postfeminism but faced with having their femininity questioned and their social worth devalued they accepted being positioned in the passive position of emphasised femininity.

The traditional gendered divisions of labour are understood and justified as being natural, necessary or a choice. Dividing domestic labour based on the 'natural' abilities of men and women using the biological discourse justifies maintaining tradition as men are biologically, physically and rationally suited to outside chores, mechanical tasks and providing for the family after children. Deeming the traditional division of labour necessary when there are children, as was the justification and example in this research, means because the man is earning or the woman is breastfeeding, it makes sense for the woman to stay home and do the traditional

feminine labour. The neoliberal 'choice' of the woman doing the work because he does not do it well enough positions her as empowered because of her 'choice' and ignores issues of power and traditional divisions of labour that attribute her with responsibility to ensure that domestic standards are met at least well enough. Such understandings and justifications ignore the social context in which the cleanliness of the house, the care of the children and the provision and quality of food is something she is judged for, not him. In addition, these reasons can position men as 'helpers' in the traditionally feminine roles and is a way that men can avoid performing an equal share of the work (van Hooff, 2011). The results of these understandings and justifications are heterosexual relationships that continue to be immersed in performing traditional gendered division of labour.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This research was motivated by my interest in how gender was being negotiated in intimate heterosexual relationships given my experience in my work and personal life. To conclude this research, I will reflexively consider how I have addressed my research question and the research outcomes which are the discursive positions that were taken up and performed in the context of gender and heteronormativity. In addition, I will reflect on my own experiences during the research and discuss possibilities for further research.

To address the research question I developed, I talked with six men and six women between the ages of 25 and 40. The age range was chosen because participants would have had time to have been in an intimate relationship and possibly have reflected on their experiences, and their gender. I attempted to address the research through generating rich narrative accounts in interviews based on what the participants' gender meant to them, how they performed their gender in their relationships and their expectations of their partners.

The literature review took my attention from focusing solely on negotiating gender to negotiating heteronormativity. It is heteronormativity that informs and limits the possibilities of gendered subjectivities. Heteronormativity and its historical, social, economic and cultural power has informed what is and is not acceptable and desirable in heterosexual relationships through its stories, social goods and sanctions. The literature review set out my theoretical framework in relation to heteronormativity and reviewed the recent feminist poststructural research concerning heterosexual relationships. Reviewing the literature highlighted that although heterosexual relationships and gender have been the focus of recent research, no studies had looked at them together in the general population or in relation to subjectivities and positioning.

I wanted to understand the dominant discourses men and women draw on for their own gendered subjectivities and their performances in their heterosexual relationships as well as how discursive positioning impacts on their enabling and resisting actions and choices. A central objective of this research was to explore the language, social and powered practices of heterosexual men and women. In addition, I was interested and how dominant discourses of these practices were informed through the cultural, economic, political and social realities of their daily interactions. This is of importance because it is through discourses that women and men construct their lived experiences of being masculine and feminine which impacts on their

performances of their gender in their heterosexual relationships. In addition, discourse constructs obligations, rights, responsibilities and expectations of intimate relationships and it is the institution of heteronormativity that privileges certain discourses that position, manage and control women in their gendered heterosexual relationship.

Feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis was chosen for the methodology of this research because through its focus on language, power and positioning, it aims to understand how discursive practices and discourse impact on subjectivities (Weedon, 1997). Feminist poststructural discourse analysis allows for collecting an in-depth analysis of data which can be used to challenge dominant discourses and produce social change. It also allowed me to be a subjective part of the research, bringing my own personal and professional lived experiences to my analysis. This has added to the richness of this research as it afforded me the ability to connect with the participants in their interviews and with their data to tell their stories with ethical respect for them but in a way that honours the objectives of the research to which they knowingly contributed.

In the interviews, I was surprised by the lack of consideration the participants had given to their gender, their focus on household chores as a site of discussion about heterosexual relationships, and the lack of discussion of sex. All the participants commented at least once on never having considered what their gender meant to them. When they did, it was in the context of a heterosexual relationship or heteronormativity (Gill & Scharff, 2011). Although I was surprised, the participants' taken-for-granted assumptions about their gender affirmed my belief that it was an important topic which deserved to be researched and represented in psychological literature. There was also an assumed emphasis on the division of household/domestic chores in participants' attempts to discuss their gendered relationship experiences, as if domestic tasks provided most ready access to the meaning of gender. It was very surprising that only one participant mentioned sex. I reflected on this absence and the questions I asked and decided they had been open enough for participants to have the opportunity to discuss sex as a part of heterosexual intimate relationships. I am now curious how talk of gender and intimate heterosexual relationships does not elicit discussion of sex and wonder if I had been asking the participants directly about their sexual experiences in heterosexual relationships, whether they would have initiated discussions on other aspects of gender. This is an area that I believe is worthy of exploration.

On reflection, I am curious about the impact my gender had on the engagement and stories told in the interview. If it had been a man interviewing, would the data had been any different? What other discourse might have been used? Recently, in the context of the presidential election in the United States, the news broadcasted video of candidate Donald Trump talking disparagingly of women to other men on a bus (No Producer, 2016). Trump justified his talk by saying it was locker room banter between men and that is how men talk with each other. When women in the street were asked for their comments there was acceptance of this justification by saying men are 'just like that'. If indeed men speak to each other in particular ways about women when women are not present and many women accept it and take it for granted, then what would participating men have said to a man interviewing them? What discourses would have been used and how would my analysis have changed? This is also a question that is worth exploring further.

In my analysis, I began by identifying the dominant discourses within the data. After reading and re-reading the transcripts and undertaking preliminary coding, I organised the data initially into four central themes: Heteronormativity; Romance and coupledness; Marriage and family; and Violence. These initial themes were shifted, changed and reorganised as I understood the data better and started to form what I hope would be a coherent narrative representative of participants' accounts of their experiences, organised through discourse, subject positioning and relating to existing literature. Thematic organisation changed and extracts from participants' transcripts were moved several times as I tried to find a way to represent the participants' accounts of their experiences in the analysis. Positioning and subjectivities were analysed for their construction and how they enabled or constrained the performances of the women and men.

The analysis and organisation of themes was challenging because of the interrelatedness of all the gendered positions engaged in participants' talk about themselves and their partners. For example, there was discussion about being a mother in three sections of the analysis. It was difficult to decide when to focus on positioning in relation to mothering so I just had to make the decision that I thought was best, which is not to say that someone else would have addressed it differently. There were many other examples of such complexity and when and what to address was a constant consideration.

The other dilemma I faced was with the women's narratives of experiencing abuse in heterosexual relationships. This research did not set out to focus on intimate partner abuse, but as

five of the six women included it in their narratives, there was substantial data related to abuse. In consultation with my supervisor, I chose to address abuse in the analysis and discussion chapters as it was relevant to other experiences of gender in intimate heterosexual relationships. I did this because as already highlighted in my introduction and literature review, New Zealand has a high prevalence of IPV. Among the discourses constructing IPV is a form of 'othering' that says it only happens in certain areas of society and to people who would be socially identified as vulnerable. My research highlighted that IPV happens to women who are educated and employed and who would not usually be thought of as vulnerable. None of these women's experiences were ever reported to authorities and thereby they are part of the 'under-reporting' of IPV. It is my hope that this research will contribute to placing IPV in the mainstream context of intimate partner relationships and highlight the underlying heteronormative practices that are sustaining violence and abuse against women. If I had not included these narratives, I would have sanitised and misrepresented my participants' experiences and would not have been able to analyse or include the discourses they used. I think that the analysis managed to place the discourses and positioning used in relation to IPV experiences within the normative context of heterosexual relations, hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity. The normativity of traditional performances of masculinity and femininity is at odds with the positioning available in the neoliberal postfeminist context.

There were other examples related to heterosexuality where the data was rich enough for me to have analysed but I chose not to because my research question focused on heteronormativity. I chose to stay focused on the question rather than follow a whole range of other interesting areas that were opened up by the data. For example, all of the participants related their narratives on discussion about relationships back to their families of origin. By doing so they were individualising within their families – 'well my mum and dad did that' – instead of attributing their knowledge and experiences to cultural practices. At one stage I had coded this data into its own theme but I later found that the data was best used in other themes which supported my analysis in order to stay focused on heteronormativity.

In emphasising heteronormativity, my research question particularly concerned how men and women negotiate their gender relations in the context of intimate heterosexual partner relationships. What became apparent in the narratives of the men and woman I interviewed was that not a great deal of negotiating had occurred in their relationships. Remembering that

Holloway (1989) had been advocating for negotiation almost 30 years ago because it had been absent among her participants added weight to arguments in the literature that a contemporary postfeminist sensibility does not signal significant change in gendered social power relations. It seems that heteronormativity helps create positions, obligations, responsibilities and duties for men and women that support the limited gendered subjectivities available through hegemonic masculinity and its companion emphasised femininity. It is possible to develop subjectivities that resist these dominant gendered positions but in this research, resistance remained in a constrained relationship with hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity. For example, when Andrew was attempting to define and live a masculinity outside of hegemonic masculinity, his efforts towards alternative positioning resulted in his partner, and then himself, questioning his masculinity with reference to the performances necessary in hegemonic masculinity. In addition, the men participating in this research found it difficult to identify or resist the privileges of hegemonic masculinity.

However, the women and the men had one other option through the discourses of neoliberal postfeminism to justify their own or their partner's choices. I noticed that these discourses appeared in constant tension with hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity. Neoliberal postfeminism held great promise with its ideals of empowerment and choice but once in a heterosexual relationship and being positioned through heteronormativity, many women found themselves in lived experiences of traditional emphasised femininity. Like Gill's (2008) feminist empowered sexy womanhood, the participants' emphasis on women's appearance suggested that it is a priority for doing femininity well. This is similar to other literature that has looked at what appears to be or is presented as women's choices but turns out to be conformity to emphasised femininity. And sadly, this includes many experiences of abuse. As, for example, van Schalkwyk et al., (2013) surmised, the invisibility and strength of heteronormativity may result in women's agency appearing as 'choice'. It can appear that women, like those who participated in my research, are 'choosing' to be in violent and abusive relationships. For this to change it is necessary for heteronormativity to lose its invisibility so that the meaning of gender for individuals is given some consideration, allowing the possibility of negotiating alternate subjectivities and how they will be lived in their intimate relationships.

My research was similar to the research discussed in the literature review in other aspects too. As Towns and Scott (2013) found with their participants, the women in this research

experienced ownership and controlling practices by their partners. Their desire to achieve in the romance discourse left them vulnerable to abuse and reverting to emphasised femininity in hopes of maintaining the relationship. Similar to McLaren's (2013) analysis, heteronormative discourse provided for a woman's worth if she is successful but these same heteronormative discourses and institutions also devalue, silence and blame women which ultimately affects women's agency in relationships, as was evident in, for example, Christine's experiences of social sanctions when she left her partner. Furthermore, as Boonzaier (2008) found, the women interviewed would construct the abusive or violent behaviour as only one part/side of their partners, trying to maintain a positive identity for him. I also found several examples of norms where women were expected to do the emotion work as García-Favaro (2015) discussed. In addition, as Farvid and Braun (2006) found portrayed in the media, there were underlying assumptions from the men and women that the women want and need a man and *their* ultimate goal is the committed relationship. This was the most desired position for the women whereas the men had a period of accepted irresponsibility that eventually required a committed relationship and family. But then again, as Farvid and Braun (2006) discussed, the men returned to independence and autonomy. These gendered differences continued to naturalise hegemonic femininity and masculinity (Farvid & Braun, 2006).

The dominance of heteronormativity creates fertile grounds for the cultural and social narratives of romance and the dream of participants' lives to be married and have a family, living 'happily ever after'. These dominant narratives position women passively and finding love becomes a 'natural' trajectory for women's lives. The women in this research, despite accounts of bad relationship experiences, still believed in love and the possibility of living 'the dream'. The discourses of attraction and chemistry still had men and women basing their choice of mate on constructions of stereotypical qualities of hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity. Although, I do wonder if there had been more specific discussion on this topic or focus on sex whether the postfeminist discourses of the empowered and 'sexy' woman explored in the recent literature might have been more realised in the participants' interviews. However, there were some clues as to what the narratives would have been due to the participants' emphasis on women's appearance. Although the men and women emphasised women's appearance differently, it appears to me that it remains a priority for 'doing woman' well, which is in line with postfeminist empowered 'sexy' womanhood.

Hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity served as the guiding positions when talking about progressing relationships. Progression is a construction created from the trajectory or timeline of heteronormativity. There seemed to be an unreflexive understanding or 'knowing' about the trajectory of life as defined by heteronormativity through the progression of a relationship towards monogamous commitment and the creation of a family. When it came to the progression of relationships, even the women participants who strongly took up positions in the 'empowered woman' discourse in relation to other domains of their narratives waited or required their male partner to ask the question or signal it was time to make the more valued commitment of marriage or permanent partnership.

In the committed heterosexual relationship, the heteronormative ideals of 'the dream' and 'happily ever after' meant that couples did not discuss or negotiate their expectations of each other. They relied on 'traditional roles' in hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity from generations past, with the variation that some women were working in paid labour outside the home. The invisibility of heteronormativity appeared to inform participants' ideals and expectations of what would happen once they were in the committed relationship and in some cases once the children came along. However, there was little reflexivity or negotiation on how they would divide the emotional, financial, household and child related labour. The absence of negotiation seemed to support taking up positions in the traditional roles of hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity, with women labouring outside the home as well as in it. In some cases, when there were abusive behaviours occurring towards the women by their partners and they were performing the emphasised femininity emotion work of trying to make their relationships better, the option that seemed the best to them was to invest further in performing emphasised femininity. They hoped to please and appease their partners and end the abuse.

The analysis shows that in New Zealand's predominantly Western culture, the discourses men and women use in their narratives about their own gender form subjectivities through heteronormativity. Heteronormativity is so normalised that it is invisible. This invisibility means that women and men perform their gender in their relationships, create their subjectivities and take up positions they think are their own within the limited and naturalised positioning available in heteronormativity. Invisibility limits reflexivity and negotiation but does not mean it is impossible for women and men to become more reflexive and negotiate positioning outside of

the dominant discourses of hegemonic masculinity, emphasised femininity and neoliberal postfeminist 'choice' feminism. Heteronormativity is not invisible to everyone, and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and/or intersex (LGBTI) literature has recognised it for its exclusivity and explored how 'othered' sexualities perform or resist it (e.g. Lynch & Maree, 2013). Also, as highlighted in Chapter Two, feminists have criticised the heterosexual relationship and heteronormativity for its preservation of inequality in power through, for example, compulsory monogamy, which functions to maintain inequality and patriarchy (e.g. Jackson, 1995; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1993; Farvid & Braun, 2013). Heteronormativity has been on the feminist agenda for some time, but there is strong social and cultural resistance to feminism, which may also be working to keep heteronormativity invisible.

As I disclosed from the outset of this project, this is feminist research, so I was particularly interested in men and women's talk about women's lived realities in heterosexual relationships. What is apparent from this research is that heteronormativity supports inequity and the dominance of traditionally gendered positions in heterosexual relationships that limit the development of alternative positions, and maintain women's subordination and inequity in the division of labour. This in turn supports the development of masculinities and femininities, relationship ideals and social tolerances in which accepted behaviour includes men's dominance and control. It was evident in the men's narratives that even when trying to develop a masculine subjectivity in resistance to hegemonic masculinity, they remained in relation to hegemonic masculinity, which signals to me its continued dominance. Even when attempting to resist hegemonic masculinity and narrating from discourses of equality, men benefitted from masculine privilege.

The invisibility of heteronormativity and the benefits of masculine privilege do not suggest that women participants were passive, unable to resist or create alternative subjectivities or new positions. They attempted resistance and challenge and spoke of times of reflectivity and the creation of new dreams with increased awareness of their own needs in heterosexual relationships. They also talked of times when they put their ideals of romance aside. It seems that positioning as 'mother' supported women to develop subjectivities that are valuable outside of heteronormativity, even though mothering outside a heterosexual union still attracts social and economic sanctions. Discourses of 'freedom' and 'happiness' reflected the confines experienced inside heteronormativity and new subject positions from which some of the women could find

safety and space for new ways of performing their gendered lived experiences.

There were limitations to this research. Feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis does not strive to generalise to all, instead it uses a limited participant group so the data is valuable for its richness rather than abundance. There was homogeneity in the sample due to class and education; all but one of the participants were university educated, and all were currently employed in professional roles. This research does not claim to represent the discourses or lived experiences of women and men of other ethnicities, educational backgrounds or socioeconomic status. But despite these limitations, the use of the snowballing technique provided a sample that was supportive of the purpose of this research, rather than a random sample which may not, and allowed the study of this select group of people and provided meaningful information (Kahu & Morgan, 2007). I hope this research has contributed to the body of knowledge on gendered heterosexual relationships and heteronormativity by examining the meaning of gendered relationships in the context of intimate heterosexual relationships.

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Appendix A



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
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AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGĀ TANGATA

Negotiating Gender in the Context of Intimate Partner Relationships

INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher:

Kia ora, my name is Debra Campbell and I am conducting this research. I am a student at Massey University enrolled in a Masters of Arts in Psychology and I am undertaking a qualitative research project as part of the qualification. The project will be supervised by Mandy Morgan. Our contact details are below.

Debra Campbell: phone 027 2103012 or email: debslife@xtra.co.nz.

Professor Mandy Morgan: phone (06) 356 9099 ext. 85075 or email: C.A.Morgan@massey.ac.nz.

Please contact us if you have any questions or alternatively I can answer questions at the interview, should you decide to participate.

Please note: Due to my experience as a Therapist and current employment with The Department of Corrections it is important that you have never been a client of mine, nor are you currently under any sentence/s being managed by the Department of Corrections.

Summary of Project:

I am interested in masculinity and femininity. It seems that both men and women have ideas about what their roles and responsibilities should be in their relationship as well as how their partners should meet their roles and responsibilities. When people don't meet their own ideals they sometimes feel they have failed and if their partner does not it may be a source of disappointment and conflict. I would like to talk to people who are or have been in an intimate heterosexual relationship and would be willing to discuss their thoughts, ideals and beliefs about how being a particular kind of man or woman has affected your current or past relationships.

Participants

I will be asking people I know to ask the people in their lives if they will participate in my research; a process known as 'snowballing'. To be included in this study participants must be between the ages of 25-40 years old, and have been in a serious intimate heterosexual relationship for at least two years at some stage in their lives. I will aim to recruit 6 men and 6 women as this is the maximum number of participants that can be managed in the size and nature of this project. As appreciation for your participation I will provide tea/coffee and biscuits for our meeting and give you a \$20 petrol voucher.

Research Procedure:

Participants will be interviewed and interviews will be transcribed word for word. Then the transcript will be returned for checking and editing. Finally, transcripts will be analysed to identify how understandings about gender shape and influence our expectations of intimate relationships.

Participant Involvement:

Your participation will entail a single one-to-one interview of approximately 1 hour. The interview will be conducted at a time that is convenient and we can meet at a coffee shop, a private room at the local library, or your workplace (if it is suitable for your privacy and with your employer's consent). I will have a few questions ready to get us started, however I am mostly interested to hear what you would like to tell me about your experiences, thoughts and feelings.

With your consent, the interview will be digitally recorded in audio only. I will then personally transcribe this recording to maintain and protect your confidentiality. All identifying information will be removed during transcription. Once the recording has been transcribed, the audio recording will be destroyed and a copy of the interview transcript will be provided to you. You will then have the opportunity to amend the transcript before granting your approval for analysis.

Your privacy will be protected at all times. Interview data and any information that you provide will be stored securely in password protected files on a password protected computer. Your details will not be disclosed to anyone and any identifying information (such as person or place names) disclosed during the interview will be replaced with pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. If you would like to hear about the results from this research please let me know, and I will provide you with a summary of the research findings when it is completed and available.

As is the nature of heterosexual relationships it can be good to discuss them and it can also be upsetting. If you get upset during the interview I will take care that when you leave our meeting you are not in a distressed state, and I can recommend counsellors for you to visit in the future if you wish.

Participants Rights:

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time up **until you have released your transcript for me to use in reporting the analysis;**
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

Thank you for your time

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researchers named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researchers, please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 356 9099 x 86015, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz

Appendix B



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
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TE KURA PUKENGA TANGATA

Negotiating Gender in the Context of Intimate Partner Relationships

AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature:

Date:

Full Name - printed

Appendix C



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
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TE KURA PŪKENGĀ TANGATA

Negotiating Gender Relations in the Context of Intimate Partner Relationships

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

My data will not be placed in an official archive.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature:

Date:

Full Name - printed

Appendix D

Introduction

I really appreciate you giving your time to be interviewed. I will ask you some open-ended questions, but my main concern will be for you to have the opportunity to talk about your experiences.

If you are not sure about anything in this interview, please feel free to ask me at any time. Before we begin, at this point do you have any questions for me?

Questions

1. To start, I am interested in learning what it means to you to be a man/woman?
 - Can you tell me a time when you felt like a man/woman for the first time? What happened?
 - What is important to you now to be a man/woman? You answered ... (based on responses from above question) and I'm wondering if that is still relevant to you.
 - How do you know if you are successful?
2. Can you think of a time when (based on responses from above questions) has made your relationship satisfying and work well for you? Can you think of a time it has created conflict?
3. When you first met ... (partner's name) what was it about her/him as a woman/man that attracted you to her/him?
4. What satisfies you in your relationships?
 - Can you remember a time the relationship or your partner met your expectations?
 - Can you remember a time when your expectations were not met?
5. What do you expect from your partner to fulfil her role as the woman/man in the relationship?
6. When you broke up what happened? What contributed to the relationship breaking down? (only use if relationship has ended).
7. What were/are your hopes for this relationship?

Appendix E

From: ARMSTRONG, Tui (WELLIS)
Sent: 15 April 2016 1:56 p.m.
To: CAMPBELL, Debra (HAWKSC)
Subject: RE: request for cultural support for my research

Kia ora,

That's great, thanks for the extra information. I can confirm that I will be available to support with this, and if it issues lie outside of my level of expertise, I will point you in the direction of someone from the Maori Services Team who can support.

Have a lovely weekend.

Tui Armstrong | Senior Advisor Cultural Supervision | Lower North Region | Department of Corrections *Ara Poutama Aotearoa* | National Office, Mayfair House, 44-52 The Terrace, Wellington | Private Box 1206 Wellington, 6140 | Phone 027 886 6687 | Tui.ARMSTRONG@CORRECTIONS.GOV.NZ |

From: CAMPBELL, Debra (HAWKSC)
Sent: 15 April 2016 10:31 a.m.
To: ARMSTRONG, Tui (WELLIS)
Subject: request for cultural support for my research

Hi Tui,

As we have discussed in person at cultural supervision on 12/4/16, my request is that you are available to support me during my research in the event that a cultural issue arises and I need support and advice. I understand that you have limited time available and if the need becomes too great I will need to access cultural supervision more formally from another cultural supervisor with more time available.

Below is the summary of my research project as requested.

Project Summary

Gender relations have been identified as central to how couples see themselves and their roles and responsibilities in their relationships. Past research has explored differences between the sexes as if they were universal biological differences. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that men and women will sometimes take on the traditional gendered roles they do, expect or demand in their relationships. The research that seeks to understand men and women's own experiences, has examined gendered perspectives in couples. This has highlighted the centrality of partners' understandings of masculinity and femininity to the way men and women in heterosexual relationships perceive their roles, rights and responsibilities. While previous studies have covered areas such as parenting, caring and intimate partner violence, the present study does not have a focus on such specific issues. This project aims to explore the socio-political impact on prevailing masculinities and femininities and how they contribute to the underlying power dynamics in couples and therefore in our society.

The researcher will use semi-structured interviews to have an outline and yet be responsive to what the participants would like to discuss, thus allowing them to explore their own views, beliefs and ideals. This research is looking to gather mature understandings of masculinity and femininity based on Eurocentric heteronormative assumptions predominant in New Zealand society, thus the participants will be aged 25-40, have been involved in at least one heterosexual relationship for at least 2 years and have lived in New Zealand for at least 10 years. Using this age group and having the criteria of time spent in New Zealand

will enhance the likelihood that participants have been in an intimate relationship and that their ideas on gendered relations will have been influenced by living in contemporary New Zealand society.

The data will then be analysed using Feminist Poststructuralist Foucauldian Discourse Analysis for a gendered analysis of the understandings and power used by the participants, which are informed by the ones that are available in our society, and the power structures they support.

Any questions please let me know.

Kind regards,

Debra

Debra Campbell | Programme Facilitator | Napier | Department of Corrections *Ara Poutama Aotearoa* | 60 Station Street, Napier | PO Box 8080 Napier 4140 | Phone **06 834 2204** | Ext 36204
debra.campbell@corrections.govt.nz |