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**Shore Girl, Sure Thing: Discursive Construction and  
Maintenance of a Sexual Stereotype**

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## ABSTRACT

Young women from Auckland's North Shore are the subjects of negative, gender-based stereotyping, as articulated in the catch-phrase "Shore girl, sure thing". Within the North Shore itself, negative stereotypes also exist for women from particular schools or suburbs. The current forms of these stereotypes appear to have only been prevalent since the 1990s, and are very different to those about young women from the area in previous years. These stereotypes are produced through dominant sexual discourses that function to maintain and reproduce a sexual double standard for women, and to reinforce existing patriarchal power structures. However, these stereotypes also draw on multiple intersecting discourses. This research examines the "Shore Girl" stereotype to enable the opening of spaces for resistance and for challenging these normative and oppressive discourses. Analysis of conversational interviews with twelve women representing two age groups was conducted to interrogate the dominant discourses involved in the construction, maintenance and change of the stereotype over time and how they produce positions for women. A feminist poststructuralist epistemology was utilised to enable exploration of the patriarchal power structures involved in the discourses, how this power regulates women's subjectivity and the social function of the "Shore Girl" stereotype in maintaining patriarchal dominance and the social status quo. It also enabled examination of the resistance exercised by the women towards the "Shore Girl" stereotype. Analysis included examination of the way in which the women located themselves and others in relation to space and place, and the co-construction of person and place. The construction of place-based identities established the relational landscape within which the stereotypes' meaning was produced. Two key findings were that women's privilege is represented as sexualised in other places through dominant discourses and that whiteness is constructed as normative as part of an ongoing process of colonisation. Future research could question and challenge the processes of subjectification within normative discourses of sexuality that sexualise women's privilege and also normalisation of whiteness as part of a process of decolonisation.

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## **CHAPTER ONE - Introduction**

### **My Position as Researcher and Insider**

The community in which we are born and raised cannot help but have a huge impact on our identity and colours our view of ourselves and society. It influences the way that we interact with the world, and how the world interacts with us. I was born on the North Shore of Auckland in the 1980s and have lived there for my entire life. As such, I have experienced a relatively privileged life in comparison to many. However, during my high school years, I could not help but become aware of certain stereotypes that are attributed to young women on the North Shore. “Shore Girls” are the focus of negative gender-based stereotyping throughout the broader Auckland region and much of New Zealand, as articulated in the popular catch phrase “Shore Girl, sure thing”. This catch-phrase illustrates the stereotype that young women from the North Shore are spoilt, promiscuous and non-selective in sexual partners, and who constantly party, drink alcohol excessively and wear revealing clothing. I remember having men make suggestive comments, or quote this catch-phrase directly to my face, when on “the other side of the Bridge” in other parts of Auckland. It was not only men from outside the North Shore who used such stereotypes. Within the Shore, there are also negative stereotypes about young women from particular schools or suburbs, often drawing on sexual discourses.

While there are other elements active in the stereotype at one time or another, they are all anchored in the sexuality of the “Shore Girl”. After discussion with other Shore-dwellers as well as friends in the wider Auckland region, I am not aware of any sexual stereotypes specific to men living on the North Shore, so despite men sharing the same ethnic and economic characteristics as women on the North Shore, this stereotyping is gender-specific.

The “Shore Girl” stereotype has become more widely known with the creation of the television series “Go Girls” following a group of “typical” young women living on the North Shore (Go Girls, 2012) and who are portrayed as regularly engaging in casual sex and being drunk, as they work to achieve annual goals they have set for themselves. The stereotype can also be seen in action by conducting a simple web

search. Numerous derogatory websites exist dedicated to the “Shore Girl” discourse. An example of the discourse is the Urban Dictionary, whose definition of “Shore Girl” begins with “From Auckland’s North Shore, in New Zealand, the shore girl is a very real phenomenon. Typically white, wealthy and arrogant, the best thing that can be said about them is Shore girl, sure thing,” and lists words related to “Shore Girl” including slapper, rootbag, skank, slag, slattern, slut, ugly, werepig and whore (Mongrelbeast, 2012).

Having the “Shore Girl, sure thing” catchphrase quoted to me was a disconcerting experience, and I didn’t understand what justification there was for the existence of the stereotype as it didn’t match my own experience of living on the North Shore. It felt invasive to have strangers make such statements about my sexuality, which I believed to be a personal and private matter. My emotional response was conflicted. On the one hand, I felt insulted and defensive, wanting to refute that I was promiscuous, while on the other hand I felt outraged that a young woman’s sexual choices should be anyone’s business but her own. Discussions with friends who are fellow “Shore Girls” indicated that this experience was shared among my peers, including resistance as we also quickly brushed the experience aside, not giving it much consideration despite its insulting nature.

The “Shore Girl” stereotype was already well-known when I began high school fifteen years ago. I was curious as to how long it had been present for, and how it had changed over time. I asked friends five to ten years older than myself, and found that they had been aware of this stereotype when beginning high school. However, when I asked friends’ mothers aged between fifty and sixty-five, I found that although there had been a stereotype of young women on the North Shore it was in some ways the opposite of the current one. The stereotype of young women from the North Shore shared an emphasis on being of relatively high socio-economic status, but this was cast in a positive light. In conversation among older women, the sexualisation of young women from the North Shore took the form of being difficult to attain and therefore status symbols. This form of sexualisation is in stark contrast to the sexualisation in the “Shore Girl” stereotype, and this contradiction opens a space to examine the processes at work in the creation, maintenance and change of these discourses.

When considering researching the “Shore Girl” stereotype, my first thought was to question the “worthiness” of such research, given the more visible oppression with much more tangibly detrimental consequences experienced by many others. I

immediately questioned whether we (women from the North Shore) have any right to complain about anything given the hand that society has dealt us, or whether anyone would be able to accept that a “Shore Girl” is oppressed in any real way considering the advantages that they enjoy. How could I justify looking at this when there are so many other women out there with ‘real’ problems? However, as I considered these questions, I came to the realisation that these questions are themselves symptoms of social control in action and the sexualisation of women and girls.

The privileges such as those experienced by women from the North Shore are themselves a means of social constraint, preventing them from expressing their experiences of patriarchal oppression and undermining the legitimacy of any complaints, casting those who speak up as spoilt little rich girls with first world problems. Exploring the experiences of these women enables questioning the embeddedness of gendered social relations as normative. To ignore forms of oppression such as the “Shore Girl” stereotype because they don’t seem as immediate or damaging as some others, would be to submit to patriarchy, and would follow the logic of those who argue that feminism is no longer relevant since we have supposedly achieved equality. Yes, we have come a long way, but does that mean we should stop travelling? Not only this, but “Shore Girls” do not exist in isolation from their geopolitical and social context. They are a product of a broader society that includes women from all walks of life, and all of whom are subject to social control and patriarchal oppression. The discourses that shape the “Shore Girl” stereotype are the same discourses that are at work in the lives of women throughout our society, expressed in a context-specific way due to the complex and intersecting relationships between discourses of sexuality and other dominant societal discourses.

Examining the “Shore Girl, sure thing” phenomenon has the potential to provide a way to access the discourses underlying negative sexual stereotyping, to explore the function these stereotypes perform, how they come about and are perpetuated, and the issues of power and resistance within these. The “Shore Girl” stereotype is not only informed by sexual discourses, but rather is informed by multiple intersecting discourses including neoliberal and post-feminist discourses and those of ethnicity, privilege, affluence discourses. Explorative research into the “Shore Girl” stereotype will enable the opening of spaces for resistance and challenging these normative and oppressive discourses, as well as traditional gender and sexual discourses.

The “Shore Girl” stereotype is ostensibly a sexual stereotype, yet in my own experience it appears that there are many other aspects to this stereotype, and while a stereotype assumes homogeneity, “Shore Girl” is applied to a very diverse group of women in varying ways. In particular, the “Shore Girl” stereotype assumes a level of affluence. The North Shore has median incomes slightly above the national median for all categories, although it houses people of a wide range of socio-economic status (Statistics New Zealand, 2012b). The stereotype involves “Shore Girls” all having wealthy parents who support and indulge them. Anything they own is assumed to have been bought for them by “Daddy”. “Shore Girls” are seen as confident, believing themselves to be superior to others, with a sense of entitlement. In a more positive vein, the stereotypical “Shore Girl” in her twenties is seen as successful, having completed tertiary education and working in a respected and well-paid career.

There may also be an ethnic element to this stereotyping. The North Shore is viewed as less ethnically diverse than many other parts of Auckland, with a much lower proportion of Māori and Pacific Island residents. This is despite the 2006 census statistics showing that Māori make up 6.3% of North Shore population (Statistics New Zealand, 2012b) whereas in Auckland City, this figure is 7.8% (Statistics New Zealand, 2012a) meaning the difference between these regions is only slight. However, the assumed ethnic homogeneity of the North Shore renders the Māori population somewhat invisible. The dominant discourse of ethnicity regarding the North Shore is a Eurocentric discourse of normative whiteness. The subject positions available within this discourse are those of either being white or being an immigrant, excluding Māori as the indigenous people and denying any space for Māori connectedness or sense of belonging on the North Shore. This lack of a space for Māori within dominant Eurocentric discourse is part of the ongoing process of colonisation and white territorialisation, functioning to disenfranchise Māori from their land.

While my family was not particularly well-off financially, the North Shore is seen by many as being home to the wealthy, regardless of the accuracy of that view, and by virtue of living there the privileges of wealth were to some degree extended to us. Despite having very little financially, we were able to attend highly respected schools, had access to an array of amenities including stunning beaches and parks, lived in a low-crime area, we were not exposed to seeing visible poverty and moreover, we were treated with a certain level of dignity. It was a sheltered life, and we were treated as insiders in that community, despite our lack of material wealth. Perhaps most

significantly, we were sheltered from many of the detrimental experiences, risks and negative outcomes that often go along with poverty.

As I have grown older, studied, spent time outside the Shore and travelled overseas, the invisible bubble of privilege that I had existed within has become visible. Of course there are plenty of people on the Shore who have very little in terms of money or material possessions. The privilege received for being from the Shore is not so much a financial privilege as membership to a culture of privilege that is so normal to those within it that they are sometimes unaware of its presence. It is an ideology that is bought into not only by those on the Shore but also, and perhaps even more so, by those in neighbouring areas. This culture of privilege has very real implications for life. Growing up on the Shore, it is assumed that you will attain a high degree of education, have a financially rewarding career, an enjoyable lifestyle, and be treated with dignity and respect. These assumptions often take on the form of self-fulfilling prophecies. To frame it in a negative way, it might be considered a sense of self-entitlement, but this sense of self-entitlement is constructed within the social context.

One might consider then, given the privileges they enjoy, that those from the North Shore are free to exert agency over their lives, control their own outcomes, and be free from many of the constraints that people in some other areas experience. To a certain extent, this may be an effect of Eurocentric privilege however the “Shore Girl” has become the object. While women from the Shore may not experience some of the constraints and challenges faced by women in other areas, they are subject to high expectations in terms of academic, financial and personal success, while also being expected to maintain the performance of a hegemonic femininity that is not always in line with their other expectations. It is partially as a result of this conflict between expectations of success and expectations of normative femininity that women from the Shore find themselves the subjects of multiple, often competing, discourses taken up by both those within the Shore and their neighbours in wider Auckland.

However, I am also aware of the uncomfortable contradictions in my own response and positioning in relation to the Shore Girl stereotype. I am very much an insider on the Shore, having never lived anywhere else for any significant period of time. I feel comfortable here and it is my home. The people of the Shore are my people, and I am one of them. I am not ashamed of living on the Shore. I disagree with many of the discourses about people from the Shore. So why is it that I seem to feel the need to distance myself from the Shore? It is certainly not something that I am consciously

aware of doing at the time, yet time and again when talking or writing about the Shore, I find myself trying to set myself apart from certain aspects of the Shore stereotypes. When talking to people from parts of Auckland other than the North Shore, I am quick to assure them that my family were not wealthy and that I never had anything given to me for free. I am quick to point out that I have worked since I was fifteen, paying my own way through my studies. But why do I feel the need to do this? Is it that despite my intent to reject discourses about the Shore, I have myself bought into them? That in my resistance I am actually lending my support to their existence? These are questions I would like to explore further through the process of this research.

As I undertake this research, it is important to note that the subject of analysis is not located in the women themselves, but rather is located in the meanings constructed in their social interactions and the relationships within which they are embedded (Gergen, 1985). This includes their interactions with me within the interview setting, with the implication being that I too am an active co-creator of these meanings. As a result, it is necessary to locate my own social context. I am 29 years old and am a New Zealand Pākehā woman with English and Scottish ancestry. I was born on Auckland's North Shore and have lived there for my entire life, primarily in the East Coast Bays. I also went to High School on the North Shore, attending Long Bay College. I am a post-graduate University student, having returned to study following travelling overseas and working on the North Shore. As such, my identity and experiences are closely bound up with my physical location on the North Shore.

## **The North Shore – History and Context**

Auckland's North Shore has a unique geopolitical history compared to that of other parts of Auckland. Surrounded by water on three sides, it was cut off from Auckland City until the opening of the Auckland Harbour Bridge in 1956, ensuring that its development followed a very different path than the rest of the Greater Auckland Region. This has contributed to the development of a distinct identity complicated by complex internal geopolitical boundaries, as well as a sense of separation and difference from the rest of Auckland. However, its geopolitical history has been marked by difference from the rest of Auckland.

In my experience growing up on the North Shore, I remember being clearly aware of a perception of the area as somehow younger, newer and devoid of history in

comparison to Auckland City. Auckland City had old streets and houses, and with the exception of a few pockets, such as Devonport and Birkenhead, the Shore seemed to have none of these things. It had its own brand of history, but it was a post-colonial history that seemed to begin out of nothing in the 1950s, with only infrequent hints at anything having existed prior to this. I remember being surprised as a teenager discovering that there had once been a Ngā Oho settlement at Long Bay Beach (Simmons, 2014) – a beach that had been such an integral part of my childhood and identity. It had never occurred to me that there had been people in the East Coast Bays prior to its current ongoing suburban form, so thorough had been the process of colonial territorialisation and the erasure of the past from the consciousness of its inhabitants. Even the local historical societies seemed to print endless leaflets with photos of houses and shops going back only as far as the 1950s. Occasionally there would be a photo of an older farmhouse, with the impression that they had existed within geographical isolation. There was certainly no mention of any pre-European life on the Shore, and common knowledge excluded this history.

This lack of connectedness to its past illustrates an outlook on life common to the Shore. It is constantly shifting and changing, both in terms of its physical manifestation, such as its landscapes, its buildings, and also in terms of its inhabitants who are characterised by waves of sudden demographic change through immigration and other movements across borders. A result of this constant change has been a population which places little emphasis on its past. Change happens quickly on the Shore, and whole areas are unrecognisable from one decade to the next. It is a population marked by a Eurocentric, neoliberal, forward-thinking, entrepreneurial and an aspirational way of life, always looking out for ways to improve, to develop, and to grow. It is a population that is always aware of the potential for change and movement, not built on long-established social systems, but always seeking newer, bigger, better. However, this is not to say that it is not in some way tethered to its past. Rather, this way of life has grown directly out of its (unacknowledged) past, through processes of exclusion.

The first people to arrive on the North Shore were Tainui in the 1200s, following which several groups of Māori attempted to settle the North Shore. However, despite its wealth of natural resources in areas like Devonport and Takapuna, such as fresh water, seafood and rich volcanic soil, the soil on much of the North Shore was clay. This, combined with a thick bush interior made much of the Shore unsuitable for large scale

settlements of Māori. A few Kawerau a Maki settlements grew in coastal regions, most notably at Devonport, and Takapuna and Long Bay (Simmons, 2014), but the North Shore never achieved the same population density as Tamaki Makaurau (Auckland). The Māori living on the North Shore were also significantly impacted by warfare, caught in conflicts between tribes to the North and South, as well as being impacted by the New Zealand land wars. The North Shore occupied a kind of no-man's-land, a buffer between the territories of powerful tribes, resulting in the frequent relocation of the local population, and preventing intensification of existing settlements. Finally, attacks by the Nga Puhi decimated the population in the 1820s and the survivors fled, leaving the Shore virtually empty of people and enabling colonial territorialisation to be successful. Although some returned in the 1830s, the next large settlements were those of European settlers (Heritage Consultancy Services, 2011).

British colonisation began on the North Shore from the 1830s, although due to the small Māori population, there were few opportunities for trade or religious missions. However, after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, the Crown acquired almost all of the land of the North Shore. This has meant that Māori have been displaced by colonial inhabitants and have been excluded from the history of the North Shore since that time. From the first days of its colonisation, development of the North Shore was driven by the dominant colonist discourse of white settlers who saw economic opportunity in its rich gumfields, which were worked during the week by men who would return to their homes in Auckland on the weekends. Colonial territorialisation decimated the indigenous Māori population of the North Shore through the 1860s when the Colonial Government decreed that all Māori in the area surrounding Auckland must swear allegiance to the Queen, leaving the North Shore to be dominated by the European settlers (Heritage Consultancy Services, 2011). It is only in recent decades that the Shore has seen the return of Māori in substantial numbers. Even today, there are only two Marae on the North Shore, and these are institutional Marae on the campuses of AUT and Hato Petera College, rather than being the traditional home Marae of a local population (Marae in the northern region, 2014). This suggests that colonial power has enabled the European inhabitants to ignore and exclude its Māori history.

While the gumfields gradually began to be exhausted and less profitable, neoliberal ideology continued to shape the North Shore's development, with some industry developed in small pockets of the Shore, such as Devonport and the Chelsea

Sugar Works in Birkenhead. These led to residential development in surrounding areas, and farms began to be developed in previously unoccupied areas, such as in the East Coast Bays, Glenfield and Albany. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, permanent residences were mostly confined to Takapuna and the southern parts of the North Shore, which had become fashionable residential areas for the well-off, while in the north, Browns Bay and other beaches became holiday destinations with holiday homes, guest houses and camping grounds. The North Shore was prized by many Aucklanders as a holiday destination with attractive beaches and a more relaxed way of life (Heritage Consultancy Services, 2011).

Following World War II, many Māori began to return to the Auckland region, while there was also an increase in immigrants from the Pacific Islands. However, the North Shore attracted far fewer than the rest of Auckland, due to a lack of support structures, housing, and unskilled jobs. Population increase was primarily due to British immigrants following the opening of the Harbour Bridge in the 1950s, while in the 1970s the opening of the Upper Harbour Bridge linked Greenhithe with West Auckland, and extensions of the motorway system opened up previously rural areas for residential and industrial development.

The population of the Shore has increased steadily and it is now almost entirely suburban or industrial. However, it has retained its identity as a relaxed and less conventional lifestyle choice. The demographics are also distinct from the rest of Auckland, with a high South African and Asian population, although the majority of the population remained Pākehā (Mare, Coleman, & Pinkerton, 2014), descended from immigrants throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The North Shore itself can be broken down into several distinct areas, the boundaries of which are marked by economic differences, with Devonport and Takapuna in the south positioned as elite, wealthier areas, while Glenfield and other inland areas house the lower end of the socio-economic inhabitants, as well as containing industrial areas. The East Coast Bays occupies the Eastern coastline of the North Shore and is made up of upper middle-class suburbia extending as far North as Long Bay Regional Park which marks the Northern boundary of the Shore. Albany is inland from the East Coast Bays, and is one of the most rapidly growing areas of the Shore with large-scale industrial and housing developments. To the West, the Shore extends out to Greenhithe, previously a rural area that is now experiencing increases in

suburban housing development. Within these areas are numerous smaller suburbs and areas, each with their own unique features and identity.

The North Shore's population continues to be predominantly European. Data from the 2013 Census (Statistics New Zealand, 2014) shows a large European population. Census data for the four Local Area Boards that make up the North Shore show that three of these have a higher percentage of Europeans than the national average. All four have lower percentages of Māori and Pacific Island populations than the national average, and three have much larger percentages of Asian populations than the national average. All four of these Local Area Boards have a higher percentage of people born overseas than the national average. For two of these, the most common overseas birthplace was England, which is in line with New Zealand as a whole. However, for the other two, the most common overseas birthplace was the People's Republic of China. The picture that emerges from this data is a predominantly European population with a large immigrant community, particularly those from England and China.

A commonly held view of the North Shore is that it is a wealthy area. This is borne out to some extent by the Census data, which shows that incomes on the North Shore for those over 15 years of age are higher overall than national averages (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). In addition, Mare, Coleman and Pinkerton (2014) note that degree holders, residents with high household income and returning New Zealanders high incomes and are present in high concentrations on the North Shore. This supports the idea that the North Shore is generally more affluent than averages for New Zealand as a whole.

## CHAPTER TWO - Stereotypes

### Space and Place

Social psychology has begun over recent years to examine the idea of place-based identities. Hodgetts et al. (2010) explain how such place-based identities can be seen in how and when people will tell others where they are from when telling who they are. They explain that these identities are formed through social practices and understandings of settings. People may form ‘a sense of place’ where memories are associated with specific locations, creating a sense of belonging, connection and history. In this theory, a person’s identity is not a fixed entity located within the individual, but rather is a malleable and multiple, ongoing process of identity construction that is interwoven with their physical and social location. In this way, people co-construct both their identities and the world around them through everyday life. They state that “human beings are always located somewhere, and this locatedness is central to understanding the social practices through which we inhabit our worlds” (Hodgetts et al., 2010, p. 287).

Therefore, it can be assumed that the identity of women from the North Shore is not something fixed or intrinsic to them, but rather is an ongoing process of identity construction in the context of their locatedness on the North Shore. The North Shore as a context is itself being constructed through this reciprocal process of meaning making whereby the Shore is simultaneously constructed by its inhabitants, even as it shapes their construction of themselves and each other. This process can be seen in the talk of women from the North Shore when they describe where they are from and what they speak of as significant about the Shore or areas of the Shore.

One means through which this co-construction of identity occurs, is through media representation, such as that of the “Shore Girl” stereotype. “Shore Girls” are represented in the television series “Go Girls”, in newspapers and magazine articles, and on the internet, such as in the “Urban Dictionary” and numerous blogs and discussion groups. Most mainstream psychology research with media is of limited utility due to several factors including its focus on identifying causal effects and the lack of attention paid to the social contexts in which people engage with the media. Chamberlain and Hodgetts argue for a critical approach to media research that explores the way in which media “sustains understandings and presents subjectivities” (2008, p. 1113) through the

re-presentation of dominant social understandings. They argue that people interact with the media in complex and multiple ways, including sustaining a sense of self and place. They state that media “constantly ‘educate’ us about how we should live and relate to others in the world” (Chamberlain & Hodgetts, 2008, p. 1110), highlighting the way in which media can impact on our trust or distrust of people or groups.

However, the authors also emphasise that media must not just be examined in terms of what it does to people, but rather it must also be examined in terms of what people do with it. They argue that media provides a space within which collective practices can occur through which senses of identity and belonging can be developed and maintained (Chamberlain & Hodgetts, 2008). In this way, media can be seen more as a social practice that does not simply enter people’s everyday lives, but rather is also created in their everyday lives.

An important point the authors put forward, is the way in which media allows us to witness stories and events that we were not directly present for, and to imagine the lives of others who are in fact strangers (Chamberlain & Hodgetts, 2008). In this way, we experience and interweave the impersonal and the personal, as we experience both our own directly experienced lives with those we know about through media representations. This allows us to feel that we know about the lives of those whom we see presented in the media, such as women from the North Shore. In this way, we do not experience the same boundaries between our own experiences and those we see represented, despite being exposed to limited and often inaccurate information, fuelling and maintaining existing stereotypes.

Given the recent interest of critical social psychology into place-based identities, it is important to examine the meaning of ‘place’. Coombes and Morgan (in press) describe ways in which ‘place’ can be understood in critical social psychology. One such way, is as a geopolitical region with its own historical identity, social and cultural norms and power relations. However, they extend this in a second way, understanding ‘place’ as not confined simply to the geographical boundaries of ownership or government, but rather as an ontological relationship to land, signifying complex histories of power, territories, sense of home and relationships to the land. This is in opposition to Eurocentric understandings of place and land as relationships between people and the institutions that govern and administrate these, including ownership.

A second important concept, however, is that of ‘space’. ‘Space’ can be understood as being located in the interactions between people and institutions within

which language is used to construct and maintain power structures and societal structures (Coombes & Morgan, in press). In this way, space and place can be used to examine not only the geopolitical landscape, but also the social and relational landscape, complete with power relations and relational organisation. Exploration of the construction of space and place enables attention to be drawn to the structure and effects of the “Shore Girl” stereotype in the lives of young women from the North Shore.

## **Stereotyping in Mainstream Social Psychology**

Stereotyping is inextricably linked to power, and by examining stereotypes, we can gain greater understanding of existing power structures. In Western culture, power-seeking is normalised as masculine. Stereotypical discourses of women are incongruent with power, and women are therefore often constrained from seeking or exercising power and agency both in their own lives and in their wider social context. Not only does society expect that a woman will behave in stereotypically feminine ways, but these stereotypes are prescriptive, and women who behave in non-stereotypical way are often penalised with negative characterisations (Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010).

Social Psychology has long been interested in the functioning and purpose of stereotypes, both gender-based and otherwise, and an examination of the literature demonstrates the mutually reinforcing interaction between power and gender stereotyping, as well as the material implications this has for women in their lives. Susan Fiske (1993) explores this interaction, proposing a theory of stereotyping whereby those who are in a position of power tend to pay little attention to those with less power, whereas those with less power pay attention to those with more power as they have the power to control their outcomes. The lack of attention paid to the powerless results in those in positions of power being more likely to engage in stereotypical categorisations. By contrast, the powerless are less likely to engage in this stereotyping. Rather, they form complex impressions of the powerful who can exercise influence over outcomes. In this way, stereotyping serves to maintain power structures.

While stereotypes can be descriptive, telling what a group of people are like, they can also be prescriptive, telling what a group of people should be like based on particular categories. However, this does not mean that women have no power to challenge gender stereotypes and social control. Fiske (1993) suggests that despite the existence of descriptive stereotypes, a person may have power without influence if those

that they stereotype resist prescriptive stereotypes and do not allow themselves to be influenced, regardless of the control that the powerful exert over their outcomes.

However, it is not merely those in positions of power who engage in stereotyping. People at all levels of power in society engage in stereotyping, although they differ in who they stereotype. While members of high-status groups tend to stereotype lower-status groups, members of lower-status groups have a greater tendency to self-stereotype (Latrofa, Vaes, & Cadinu, 2012). Latrofa, Vaes and Cadinu (2012) argue that members of lower-status groups feel more threatened, and therefore engage in self-stereotyping to protect themselves by enhancing similarities within their in-group. Specifically, they draw on the concept of “stereotype threat”, whereby negative stereotyping of the in-group by others is experienced as a threat to their self-esteem and identity. This may be coped with by engaging in particular strategies, using one of two possible options for reacting. One option is by increasing their similarity with the stereotype of the in-group. The other option is to reduce the similarity and distance themselves from that social category. The authors argue that members of low status groups are more likely to increase similarity, whereas members of high status groups are more likely to reduce their similarity. Regarding gender, the authors assert that as western culture has strong gender stereotypes that position women as low-status relative to men who are positioned as high-status, this in turn has an impact on women’s tendency to self-stereotype. They suggest that the gender identity of women is always under threat, and therefore they will be more likely to self-stereotype, which may have implications in the case of “Shore Girls” who may not only be the targets of negative stereotyping by (high-status) men, but who may also engage in self-stereotyping as a means of countering this “stereotype-threat”.

### **Stereotyping in Critical Social Psychology**

While social psychology has examined stereotypes and stereotyping through social cognition, critical social psychology has taken this study further. Critical social psychology attends to issues of power, shifting the focus of study from the individuals to their social and political context, resisting dominant hegemonic understandings by drawing attention to and advocating for the rights of those marginalised by mainstream, patriarchal psychology (Coombes & Morgan, in press).

Social psychology has approached stereotypes through the social cognitive tradition or self-categorisation theory, drawing a distinction between stereotypes, being the representations of groups, and stereotyping, being a cognitive activity. Critical psychology however, utilises a social and collective approach, drawing on social representations theory, ideology and discursive psychology. In this view, stereotypes are the products of social and collective processes which serve an ideological purpose in justifying existing power relations in a society. Augoustinos and Walker (1998) argue that by ignoring the social and ideological aspects of stereotypes, psychology does not attend to the important role that stereotypes play in the justification and legitimation of power and social relations in a society. In addition, they argue that stereotypes are inherently social, and are thus recognisable by all members of a society. Stereotypes are shared, symbolic representations of social groups, that occur within in a particular social and political context at a given time, and that are socially and discursively constructed through everyday interactions. However, the authors point out that not all stereotypes will be shared by all members of a society, given that some are particularly central to the lives of some people, and not others, and will therefore not be of significance to certain people.

Augoustinos and Walker (1998) also discuss the way in which the emergence of discursive psychology has challenged realist approaches to stereotypes. In discursive psychology, whilst also recognising that people use social categories when talking about the world, these categories are seen not as static structures or as located within people's heads, but rather as being discursively constituted in order to do particular things, or perform particular functions. Thus, whereas social psychology traditionally views stereotypes as biased or distorted views of real or valid social groups or categories, discursive psychology views these categories themselves as being social constructions in given contexts, whereby a subjectivity is created for the self and for the "other". Categories are seen not as something we talk about, but rather as something we construct, or do, through talk. As such contextually-bound, social constructions, verbal accounts are not descriptions of static categories and will necessarily be variable and inconsistent, and it is this variability and inconsistency that is of interest to the discursive social psychologist (Augoustinos & Walker, 1998).

## CHAPTER THREE - Sexuality

### Sexuality and Identity

The Shore Girl stereotype is strongly associated with adolescence and young-adulthood, which may have strong implications for the development of identity and sexuality of women from the North Shore. Through adolescence, young people appear to engage in the redefinition and reconstruction of their own identities and relationships, with heterosexual discourse playing a large role in this process, in intersection with other variables such as age, gender and ethnicity (Staunæs, 2005). The Shore Girl stereotype positions young women from the North Shore in particular ways within heterosexual discourse, influencing the availability of subject positions they can utilise in the construction of their identity and sexuality.

During adolescence, girls must find new ways of doing age and gender in order to present themselves as successful teenagers. The possible ways in which girls can *do gender* are regulated by the discourse of heterosexuality as heteronormativity. Staunæs (2005) draws on Judith Butler's assertion that sexuality is regulated through ongoing policing and shaming of gender, but argues that examination of this shaming and policing of 'female' gender in sexual terms needs to be expanded to also include the relationship with ethnicity. Her research demonstrates the way in which ethnicity has implications for the available ways of doing gender, whereby specific ethnicities come with certain expectations for how gender will be performed. Failure to perform according to these expectations results in policing and shaming as a means of control.

The policing and regulation of gender and sexuality, is due to the way in which sexuality is often viewed as threatening the social order in western societies, as evidenced by frequent moral panics in the media. Bernasconi (2010) asserts that sexual regulation marks an individual as morally responsible for their sexual practices. She examines the relationship between sexuality and self-formation in terms of the values through which individuals interpret themselves. Bernasconi's study of the narrative accounts across three generations of Chilean women, identified a change over time in the association between being a 'good woman' and 'sexual disembodiment,' noting that research has demonstrated that contemporary women position themselves as active subjects in their sexual experiences, which is often interpreted as resistance to

traditional discourses. However, Bernasconi argues that the women are not engaging in resistance, but rather are drawing on a different understanding of 'good' when composing their narratives. She describes this as a 'moral ontology' that underlies individuals' interpretations of sexuality. Therefore, changes in the narratives across these three generations are viewed as the result of changes in the moral orientations of the individuals. In particular, she identifies a theme of the 'privatisation' of sexuality over time. For example, the grandmothers viewed their morality as imposed by others, while the granddaughters viewed their morality as something that was deliberately constructed by themselves (Bernasconi, 2010). Sexual stereotypes of women from the North Shore certainly appear to have changed dramatically over time, moving from respectability to promiscuity within two or three generations. Therefore, it will be interesting to examine whether this change in sexual stereotypes is due to resistance to dominant discourses, or whether this is due to changes in the moral ontology that the younger women draw on, compared to that of their older counterparts.

However, the stereotyping of young women from the North Shore as promiscuous is not simply a reflection of sexual practices. Rather, it may be seen as an expression of forces of power and resistance. Lundstrom (2006) examines a similar case of the sexual stereotyping of young Latina women in Sweden who are viewed as "whores", examining the way in which discourses of femininity, ethnicity, 'race', class and (hetero) sexuality are intertwined within power structures. She explores the way in which the young Latina women develop their own identities while being continually cast in this role, challenging their position within the discourse. She asserts that in some situations, the use of the word "whore" may be viewed as a form of resistance to power as the young women attempt to create a space within which they can exercise agency and reject dominant discourses of femininity that cast the term "whore" in a negative light.

Lundstrom also explores the functions that the word "whore" serves within discourses of immigrants and gender. She suggests that while the word "whore" has obvious sexual connotations, in some contexts it appears to be less about sexuality and more a way of marking difference from either Swedes or Muslim immigrants. She also explores how "whore" also appears to be used to indicate aggression or being outspoken in comparison to other immigrants, noting that unlike with boys, aggression or outspokenness among girls is often described in sexual terms (Lundstrom, 2006). This same function may be seen in the Shore Girl stereotype where, despite ostensibly being

a stereotype of promiscuity, it in fact refers to a range of qualities or practices that mark women from the North Shore as different to those from other parts of Auckland, or mark particular groups of women within the North Shore as different from the others.

Western culture and language is replete with the tools required to categorise and regulate women through reference to sexuality. It is littered with derogatory labels denoting the promiscuity of particular women for which there are no male equivalents. They are sluts, slags, whores, skanks, slappers, tarts - the list could go on. As evidenced in the Urban Dictionary, the definition of "Shore Girls" applies several derogatory labels of promiscuity to young women from the North Shore, including slapper, rootbag, skank, slag, slattern, slut and whore (Mongrelbeast, 2012). Social groups appear to have reached consensus about the meaning of these labels, and the personal attributes that would justify them. However, through a closer examination of those women to whom these labels have been applied, it becomes clear that they often do not meet these accepted criteria, and while these labels are ostensibly sexual, there are much more complex processes and meanings underlying them (Cowie & Lees, 1981). It appears that labelling as promiscuous is a convenient and sufficiently derogatory way to denigrate, demean and position women as deviant, regardless of whether any actual differences in sexual behaviour exist.

## **Sexual Discourses and the Sexual Double Standard**

Despite shifts in the representation of female sexuality since the 1980s, in which the media portray women as sexually desiring and active, the double standard is still a dominant discourse (Jackson & Cram, 2003). Western society has traditionally held different expectations for men and women regarding their sexual behaviour. Women are subjected to the Madonna-Whore dichotomy wherein they are categorised as either pure or promiscuous (Crawford & Popp, 2003). Sexual activity has been encouraged for men, while simultaneously discouraged for women. Discourses of heteronormativity assume sexuality as natural and an expression of masculine identities; and through their sexual difference, women who engage in sexual activity outside of specifically gendered social relations, such as marriage, have been vilified and stigmatised. Taken together, the picture is one of a sexual double standard.

The sexual double standard can be explained as the way in which desiring sexuality is viewed as positive for men, but is viewed as negative for women. The

power in the sexual double standard is maintained through sexual reputation and the negative labelling of female sexuality (Jackson & Cram, 2003). This labelling is carried out not only by men, but also by other women, and often refers to any behaviour that threatens the dominant discourse of femininity, not just sexual behaviour.

Today, it is often suggested that social changes and advances in the rights of women mean that the sexual double standard no longer exists. However, while there have indeed been broad social changes in the ways women take up multiple sexual practices, the double standard has not vanished, although its form may have changed (Crawford & Popp, 2003). Despite discourses of egalitarian sexual freedoms, women are still subjected to oppressive conditions under which their sexuality is enabled or constrained.

Although traditional boundaries that imposed a moral boundary on women's sexual behaviour outside of institutions of marriage and family have transformed over time, the sexual double standard continues to condition women's sexuality in terms of the age at which she becomes sexually active, whether she engages in sex outside of committed relationships, or the number of sexual partners she has had. In addition, where the boundaries blur is always in relation to men, depending on whether they are viewing them as a potential marriage partner as opposed to a dating or casual sex partner. When evaluating a potential marriage partner, men still prefer women with less sexual experience (Crawford & Popp, 2003).

The sexual double standard provides a context to heterosexual dating practices. Schleicher and Gilbert (2005) studied the way in which heterosexual dating discourses, drawing on the traditional double standard, impacted on the dating practices of college students. They concluded that while contemporary women may appear to have greater power to define their roles in dating, this freedom is still constrained by traditional discourses of desirability and sexuality which shape relationships for men and women. They note that the male sexual drive discourse is the dominant discourse with regards to heterosexual dating. This discourse leads to the belief that men should always be ready for sex, and are not responsible for limiting sexual behaviour. Because women's sexuality has traditionally been viewed as complementary to men's, women are positioned as the object activating the man's sex drive, wanting him to find her arousing, and under pressure to give in to his desires. Women are socialised to express sexuality only within committed relationships and in terms of what pleases their male partners. Language, such the meaning of "stud" and "whore", perpetuates and reinforces

the male/female binary of “normal” sexual and deviant sexual, and the sexual double standard.

Schleicher and Gilbert’s study (2005) supported the idea that the sexual double standard has not disappeared, but rather has become more subtle and complex, and that the discourses at work in perpetuating this double standard continue to influence and constrain women’s heterosexual dating practices. The male sex drive discourse is a dominant discourse in western society, positioning women as sexual gatekeepers who are expected to limit sexual activity in particular ways. It is this positioning of women as responsible for limiting sexual activity that perpetuates the sexual double standard. The dominance of the male sex drive discourse can be seen in that while many people do not directly endorse experiencing the sexual double standard, their talk about aspects of their dating behaviour demonstrates its influence, and reinforces the continued unequal power relationships within normative heterosexual discourse. For example, in Schleicher and Gilbert’s study (2005) the discourse whereby a man should pay for dates was accepted by both men and women in the study, which is significant given the symbolic link between money and power in society. They also found that while men reported wishing for women to initiate sexual activities more often, women generally still reported preferring sexual initiative to come from men. Within the dominant male sex drive discourse, initiating sexual activities would place women in the conflicting roles of sexual gatekeeper and sexual initiator, which would be difficult to negotiate. The male sex drive discourse effectively authorises male sexual activity, while female sexuality is positioned as problematic.

However, despite the continuation of the sexual double standard, it does not necessarily follow that women have no possibilities for resistance to the power in these discourses. Jackson and Cram (2003) draw on the Foucauldian notion that where there is power, there is also resistance. Therefore, when a discourse wields power over women, there must also be the possibility of resistance to that power. The authors examine the ways in which women resist the sexual double standard, identifying means such as “challenging the language of the sexual double standard, articulating sexual desire, and positioning the self and (hetero)sex within alternative discourses” (Jackson & Cram, 2003, p. 113). Women have created spaces for resistance to the dominant discourses within the sexual double standard, but these are fraught with their own uncertainties, and therefore their resistance is often quiet and individual. Jackson and

Cram (2003) describe examples of resistance, including through counter-discourses, parody, dress or positioning in multiple and competing discourses.

Resistance to the double standard is complicated by the multiple discourses that function to sustain it in society. The negative labelling of women as promiscuous is not just imposed by men in order to exert power over women, but also by women in an effort to build and protect their own identity as someone who is not promiscuous (Allison & Risman, 2013). Allison and Risman found that despite a culture of “hook ups” now being normative practice, views towards frequent casual sex are still generally conservative and egalitarian, with the American college students they studied reporting a loss of respect for both men and women who “hook up a lot”. However, this egalitarianism may be misleading, as there were specific sex differences in the patterns of responses. For example, more women held conservative egalitarian attitudes, whereas men were more likely to endorse the sexual double standard, only losing respect for women who engage in frequent casual sex. Women were more likely to report a reverse double standard, only losing respect for men (Allison & Risman, 2013).

The authors assert that gender gaps in sexual attitudes are small and appear to be narrowing. They suggest that this may even result in a single (or similar) evaluative standard for the sexual behaviours of both men and women, which they term as ‘a moment of “undoing gender”’ (Allison & Risman, 2013, p. 1202). They explain that while there is still a significant minority of men who endorse the sexual double standard, women’s critical attitudes towards men’s sexual behaviour may be having an impact on social norms among men. However, the authors also comment that despite these apparent changes in behaviour and attitudes, power differentials and male dominance over sexuality on campuses continue. They suggest that the historical power of a sexual double standard continues to dominate, even when it is only subscribed to by a minority of men, and not by women (Allison & Risman, 2013).

The discourses used in the production and maintenance of heteronormative sexuality constrain the subject positions available for people to take up in heterosexual interactions and relationships, and these positions are unequally available to men and women. Wendy Hollway (1984a) produced three dominant discourses of heteronormative sexuality that are utilised in western society and that function to reproduce the sexual double standard. These are the male sexual drive discourse, the have/hold discourse, and the permissive discourse.

The male sexual drive discourse is asserted to be the dominant discourse of sexuality. This discourse draws on ideas such as Bateman's Principle (Knight, 2002) and holds that men's sexuality is the result of a biological drive whose purpose is reproduction, and thus the continuation of the species. Within this discourse, women are positioned as the objects upon which male sexuality is enacted, rather than as active sexual agents. They act as gatekeepers, responsible for controlling male sexual urges by restricting their access to sexual intercourse. Hollway (1984a) asserts that this discourse is prevalent within western society, including amongst scientific and psychological communities whose experts perpetuate and legitimate biological difference as an explanation for social behaviour. By contrast, the have/hold discourse has its roots in Christian ideology, valuing marriage and family life. This discourse asserts that female sexuality is (or should be) geared entirely towards the goal of reproduction and thus satisfaction of maternal instinct and need for family life. However, despite this seeming denial of female sexuality, there is the simultaneous assumption of the constant danger of rabid female sexuality, threatening Christian family values. The solution to this danger is for women to be subject to the control and dominance of men, in order to preserve these ideals. In this way, women are divided into those who conform to Christian family values, and those whose sexuality is uncontrolled and therefore dangerous (Hollway, 1984a).

The permissive discourse challenges those discourses that value monogamy for women. Rather than viewing sexuality in a relational context, it locates sexuality within the individual, viewing it as something natural and desirable. Although similar to the male sexual drive discourse in this respect, it does not distinguish between men and women, applying the same assumptions to both. In this discourse, women are also viewed as active initiators of sexual relationships, with the same natural sexual urges as men. However, while the permissive discourse appears to construct equality between the sexuality of men and women, the differences between their positions in traditional discourses are still present in permissive discourse, seen in the differing effects of permissiveness between men and women, and serve only to affirm masculine sexuality to the detriment of women (Hollway, 1984a).

Dominant discourses of heterosexuality and sexual ethics perpetuate the male/female binary and have produced a point of contradiction and conflict in gender relations, with women who engage in casual sex being seen as causing problems, and often as socially unacceptable (Beres & Farvid, 2010). Beres and Farvid (2010) draw on

Hollway's three heteronormative discourses to examine heterosexual practices of sexual ethics in relation to casual sex. They argue that despite society's apparent acceptance of sex, in reality women face a sexual double standard, with women who engage in casual sex being called promiscuous and seen as responsible for any damaging consequences. Their research highlighted several traditional views on women's sexuality as gatekeepers, passive and secondary to males' sexual needs, and how women utilised sexual ethics of self-care in order to exercise agency and negotiate the conflicting discourses within which they were situated.

Traditional discourses of normative heterosexuality reproduce the male/female binary of normal sexual and deviant sexual double standard, casting casual sex as being 'risky' behaviour for women (Farvid & Braun, 2013). The social norms of casual sex view it as the practice of having sex (usually coital) outside of a committed or romantic relationship. It occurs between two single people, and may last one night, or be on several occasions. The key element is that it occurs without romantic feelings and without the intention for a romantic or longer term relationship to develop. This binary functions to perpetuate the sexual double standard, normalising negative consequences for women but not for men.

Monogamy and marriage are socially constructed ideals of heterosexual relationships, and are seen as the goal of dating or relationships for women, yet these types of relationships can have more negative consequences for women than for men. Western society is a heteronormative society, and 'mononormativity' is a dominant discourse within heteronormativity. In addition, the discourse of romantic love relationships is dominant over other forms of relationships. Mononormativity can be understood as the power structures maintained and reinforced by the socially accepted belief that monogamous heterosexual relationships are unquestionably natural, morally acceptable and necessary elements of human relating. Farvid and Braun (2013) take up a feminist critique of mononormativity to argue that such heterosexual monogamous relationships maintain power imbalances between men and women. They assert that traditional heterosexual relationships require more labour on the part of the woman than the man, remove women from politically activist communities and networks, and therefore prevent the rise of other alternative intimacy.

Dominant discourses produce conditions that must be met in order for behaviour to be socially acceptable, and which function to regulate and control, and these conditions in turn perpetuate the sexual double standard. Farvid and Braun's (2013)

study identified a set of socially accepted ‘rules’ of casual sex, with casual sex only being suitable for certain kinds of people, and those people being at risk if they don’t follow the rules. The rules included that discretion be maintained. Interestingly, men were advised to be discrete and refrain from bragging, whereas no such advice was given to women. The authors explain that in line with Hollway’s male sex drive discourse, men were constructed as ‘getting’ while women were constructed as ‘giving’ away for free. Therefore, men were seen in a more positive light, whereas women were seen more negatively (Farvid & Braun, 2013). Again, the male/female binary of “normal” sexual and “deviant” sexual is reproduced. With women being viewed more negatively, it is in their interests to maintain discretion in order to avoid social repercussions, whereas this is not a concern for men who engage in casual sex.

This positioning of men as ‘getting’ with women positioned as ‘giving’ are examples of subject positions available in a discourse introduced by Gilfoyle, Wilson and Brown (1992). They expand on Hollway’s three discourses of heterosexual sexuality (Hollway, 1984a), introducing a fourth discourse, which they refer to as the ‘pseudo-reciprocal gift discourse’, which also functions to reproduce the sexual double standard. Within this discourse, women are positioned as ‘giving’ themselves to men, while men are positioned as ‘giving’ women orgasms. This discourse supports dominant views of a binary of men as active and women as passive, thereby perpetuating and reinforcing the sexual oppression of women. In the pseudo-reciprocal gift discourse, men are the subjects while women are the objects. Men are seen as needing to have sex, with women required to surrender control of their bodies in order to meet this need. In exchange for this, men must try to give pleasure to the woman, usually by ‘giving’ her an orgasm. While this exchange may appear to be mutual, it is deceptive, as men’s dominance and power is reinforced by being the subject who receives the women, and the giver of pleasure to the women (Gilfoyle, Wilson, & Brown, 1992). In this way, women are not viewed as having pleasure or orgasms without men, with only men having access to subject positions within this discourse that allow for agency and control.

## **Feminist Poststructuralism**

Feminist poststructuralism rejects traditional empirical ideas about knowledge whereby there can be an objective truth or fact to be discovered and proven. The

poststructuralist conception of knowledge holds that it is socially constructed and therefore is not singular or fixed, but rather is multiple, changeable and contextual. In this view, knowledges are constructed through the use of language. Feminist poststructuralism holds that language is a means through which meaning and knowledge is constructed as gendered. Language is not seen as simply an expression of underlying meaning. Feminist poststructuralism draws on Foucault's notion that language is always located within discourses (Gavey, 1989). There are always multiple possible discourses that construct the world in different and often contradictory ways, and which offer many different subject positions. However, not all discourses are equally powerful or available. Dominant discourses can become normalised in that they are viewed as natural and beyond question and are accepted as truth. These normative discourses restrict the available subject positions to those they provide, thereby limiting and constraining the possibilities available to people for the construction of their subjectivities.

Those who control what is to be viewed as truth are able to maintain their own power and privilege and thus knowledge is also closely linked to power. Because feminist psychology recognises that patriarchal power is dominant in Western society, a feminist poststructuralist approach therefore recognises the influence of patriarchal discourses on Western knowledge, asserting that dominant ideas of truth, knowledge and reality are male constructions, and are linked to the perpetuation of male power (Gavey, 1989). For example, and of particular significance to this research, patriarchal power maintains the dominance of heteronormative discourses of sexuality which assume an essential difference between men and women, wherein sexuality is constructed as a natural expression of masculinity and is encouraged, whereas it is constructed negatively for women outside of rigid social conditions. In this way, heteronormativity maintains the sexual double standard for women, but due to its appearance as natural, it is accepted as knowledge or fact, restricting the opportunity to take up alternative discourses. Women's sexual subjectivities are constrained by the subject positions available to them within heteronormative discourses.

Anything that promotes the idea of essential difference between men and women runs the risk of perpetuating existing power structures and discourses. Rather than uncritically preserving forms of subjectivity, they must be subverted and challenged. The liberal humanist traditions of psychology and much feminist psychology privileges

human experience, and does not emphasise or examine language as a constructive process. Poststructuralist approaches hold that the understanding or expression of experience is never independent of language (Gavey, 1989) and language is not gender neutral. While the feminist emphasis on giving women's voices to women's experiences is important, it does not go far enough in actually challenging existing patriarchal discourse and power. Feminist poststructuralism provides a theoretical approach through which this challenge can occur. It differs from broader poststructuralism in that it emphasises the material effects of powers and locates the site for change. Feminist poststructuralism attends to the way in which language, discourse, institutions and consequential knowledge, subjectivity and practice are all interweaved so as to uphold power. It is understanding or questioning of power that offers potential avenues for change.

Because of the way it views knowledge, the goal of feminist poststructuralist research is not to discover or produce truth, reality or facts. Gavey (1989) proposed that poststructuralist gender-focused research should be concerned with developing understanding of historical, social and cultural conditions with the ultimate goal being to change oppressive gender relations. These oppressive gender relations are reproduced through the dominance of particular, patriarchal discourses of gender and sexuality. Gavey (1992) argues that dominant understandings of heterosexuality position women (and girls) as passive, producing compliance and submission to male sexual demands and thereby privileging men's interests. She asserts that heteronormativity is a disciplinary apparatus, or technology of power, that produces a certain type of subject embedded in a gendered relationship of domination and subordination.

Feminism questions dominant discourses. However the subject positions provided by alternative discourses are unavailable to most women. While individuals are positioned in particular ways by discourses, they are also constrained by their fragmented and often contradictory consciousness, as a result of the competition of various discourses that would provide differing and sometimes conflicting subject positions. Gavey states that despite a woman choosing feminist discourse to make meaning of their lives in their current context, "some aspects of a feminist woman's subjectivity may still be gendered in traditionally feminine ways, and she may retain desires and behaviours incompatible with the goals of feminism" (Gavey, 1989, pp. 464-465).

This often contradictory and fragmented subjectivity is understood by poststructuralism to be an illustration of the inauthenticity of individual experience. Feminist poststructuralism actively seeks to “de-centre the subject” as an aware creator of meaning (Gavey, 1989), and rather aims to contextualise experience and analyse its construction and relationship to power. In this way, it contradicts an essential female nature, which is a central concept in some feminist theory. It offers a way of recognising the contradictions between the multiple subject positions that an individual may take up in differing contexts.

## **Sexuality and Power**

From a feminist poststructuralist approach, the relationship between power, subjectivity and discourse means that most women are positioned within dominant discourses. There are multiple subject positions available to women within any given discourse, but they will only ever be partial as women negotiate multiple competing discourses. Women’s subjectivities are fluid and constantly changing as they negotiate multiple discourses, resulting in contradiction and ambiguity of experience (Gavey, 1992). Just as dominant discourses assert an essential difference and binary categorisation of male/female, Fine (1988) argues that in Western culture, sexuality has been categorised into two dichotomous categories comprised of consensual sexuality and coercive sexuality. In this way, women are either seen either as exercising choice and freedom in their sexuality, or as victims. However, the notion of women as having true choice and freedom is problematic, given their structural context, both social and economic, which is attended to by feminist poststructuralism. Fine states that “diverse female subjectivities emerge through, despite, and because of gender-based power asymmetries” (Fine, 1988, p. 41).

What we conceive of as sexuality is socially constructed practices, identities and desires that are produced and reproduced through what Foucault terms the ‘deployment of sexuality’ as a means of regulation and social control (Gavey, 1992). Women’s apparent complicity in their own oppression is in fact a function of disciplinary power. Drawing on Bartky’s analysis of women’s vigilance over their appearance and femininity, Gavey explains that women are self-policing subjects who ensure that they are complying with dominant heterosexual scripts, regardless of whether or not they feel desire. Feminist poststructuralism understands this as a result of the normalising of dominant discourses of heterosexuality. It is not entirely due to the actions of the

specific man involved in an interaction, but rather is largely due to the power involved. These heterosexual scripts are the result of the normalising social technologies of sexuality which is androcentric and which creates a version of heterosexuality where women's desire is not a priority, and women do not have power over their involvement in sexual interactions. Examples of these technologies are given, including representations of heterosexual relationships in media and the entertainment industry, sexual humour, religion, sex education, and legislation regarding sexuality and sexual violence (Gavey, 1992) all of which maintain and reproduce the sexual double standard.

There are positions that women can take up that do provide for women to have agency in their sexual relations with men and that acknowledge their desires. However, while this is the case, women are not able to achieve 'liberation' simply by taking up one of these positions when they are still within a material context of misogyny, as evidenced by the continued existence of violence against women. To ignore this material context is to come dangerously close to victim-blaming. In addition, there may be other factors, such as economic disadvantages that make compliance with male sexual coercion the best of the options available to a particular woman (Gavey, 1992). Women's engagement in unwanted heterosexual sex is a result of their experienced oppression. Despite being commonplace in society, it is something that is rarely recognised or addressed, and is even encouraged by society. Discourses of sexuality exert power that oppresses women and positions them in relatively passive and subservient to male demands. Compliance to these demands reproduces male dominance in heterosexual sex. Coercion of women into engaging in unwanted sex is not necessarily by means of physical force or violence, but is often much more subtle, and is a result of discourses of heterosexuality (Gavey, 1992).

A discourse of desire is missing absent from the education that adolescents receive regarding sex, with sex education in schools focusing primarily on the prevention of pre-marital sex and its potential negative outcomes such as disease and unplanned pregnancy, with no education relating to female desire (Fine, 1988). Rather, sex education presents a predatory male desire with females cast as victims of male sexuality and who must defend and protect themselves against this, thus reinforcing the sexual double standard and limiting the subject positions available to young women within dominant discourses of sexuality.

Western society constructs an essential difference between men and women and engages in the binary categorisations of male-female. In this binary, male is the

dominant categorisation, with female categorised as “other” to male. To be female is constructed as the absence of a penis. In this way, maleness is constructed as having substance, while femaleness is constructed as an absence or lack (Davies, 1990). In this system, women do not have a substance or identity of their own except in relation to men, and the same binary is at work in the construction of men’s and women’s sexuality. Men’s sexuality is constructed as active and present, while women’s sexuality is seen as passive, existing only in relation to men’s sexuality. Men’s sexual desire is acknowledged and spoken within dominant discourses, whereas women’s desire is silent and is not acknowledged. In these discourses, where women’s sexuality exists only in relation to men’s sexuality, there is no place for an active, autonomous female desire. The lack of such a discourse of desire for women has consequences for women in terms of power, with the only positions available to them being those offered by dominant discourses in which the focus is on a predatory male sexuality with women requiring control and regulation by men. Even in alternative discourses that do provide the appearance of sexual autonomy for women, such as the permissive discourse, women continue to be constrained by their context in a patriarchal society. They may appear to be free to make their own sexual choices, but these choices are all related to men’s sexual desires, in the absence of a discourse of their own desire.

Feminist analysis challenges the male sexual drive discourse, denying that the male sex drive is natural and uncontrollable. Rather, feminist analysis prefers to view the male sexual drive discourse in terms of the power that men have over women in a patriarchal society (Hollway, 1984b). However, Hollway cautions that to view the male sexual drive discourse in this way puts women in the position of being victims of the power of men, and ignores the power of women or the complex negotiation that is undertaken in heterosexual relationships. She argues that women do have power within the male sexual drive and have/hold discourses.

Hollway (1984b) argues that while the male sexual drive discourse has been challenged, it has been replaced with the concept of the power of the penis/phallus over women, positioning women as victims not of the male sexual drive, but of the male “power drive”. Her concept of power is as a part of social interactions, which are necessarily two-way, and which she sees as negotiated through every interaction. In this way, power and resistance are in constant interaction. While men are usually viewed as more powerful in heterosexual relationships, with women in the position of resistance, the opposite can also be true. Hollway asserts that men need relationships, and usually

they need these with women. Therefore, women do hold some often overlooked power within the male sexual drive and have/hold discourses. She states that women often “misrecognise” men, and that this is due to the gender-differentiated positions within sexist discourse which do not recognise the vulnerability of men. In this view, men place women as the subject of the have/hold discourse, and themselves as the subject of the male sexual drive discourse as a way of dissociating themselves from their feelings of vulnerability in sexual relationships. Hollway concludes that feminism should not position women as subjects of a monolithic power of men. Rather, she asserts that the heterosexual relationships is political because it is a site of contradiction, and is a primary site where women have power and men engage in resistance (Hollway, 1984b).

Foucault’s conception of disciplinary power operates through people throughout society engaging in relentless self-surveillance through the metaphor of the Panopticon, disciplining their bodies in such a way as to produce ‘docile bodies’ (Bartky, 1988). However, Foucault’s account treats men’s and women’s bodies as the same, failing to consider the ways in which women’s bodies are more disciplined than men’s, resulting in more docile bodies. Bartky describes the many disciplines to which women’s bodies are subjected, from exercising and monitoring weight and diet in order to attain and maintain the expected shape, controlling facial expressions, posture, gestures, and movement, to beauty regimes such as skincare, hair care, hair removal and make-up. She argues that these disciplines are not merely gender differences, but rather are the actual processes by which socially acceptable femininity is constructed. She asserts that the disciplines required for constructing ideal femininity require such extreme levels of bodily transformation that for most women, they will never be entirely successful. Thus, women bear a sense of shame regarding their bodies. Not only this, but they face very real economic and social consequences of failing to conform to accepted standards of bodily appearance, as this is a factor in economic mobility (Bartky, 1988).

Heterosexual discourse requires that women construct themselves as “object and prey” for men, and that this is the goal of all of the disciplines to which they subject their bodies as they perform their femininity. Bartky argues that unlike a performer in a theatrical performance where the actor is not inferior to their audience, women have no choice but to participate in their performance. The precise and inescapable criteria by which women are judged are symptoms of imbalances in the social power of men and women. For example, the requirement for slenderness means that women must not be larger or more muscular than their male partners, which has serious implications when

considering the issue of widespread physical abuse of women. Not only this, but women's bodies are expected to be as small as possible, and almost childlike, as are their faces, essentially denying their womanhood. Finally, even if a woman is successful in her self-construction as a desirable woman, while she may be admired, this will not result in her gaining any real social power or respect. There is a general depreciation of feminine pursuits, with concern for hair and make-up being dismissed as trivial. A woman's achievement will be seen as unimportant simply because she is a woman, engaging in female activities (Bartky, 1988).

### **Post-feminism and Neo-liberalism**

There is currently a belief that Western society is now post-feminist, meaning that feminism has been successful in redressing the power imbalance between men and women, and that any difference between the two should be viewed as due to the exercising of personal choice. However, this post-feminist viewpoint has been critiqued in that the concept of liberation is presented as being tied up in images of beauty ideals that women are encouraged to strive to imitate and against which they are judged (Stuart & Donaghue, 2011). In a study utilising a feminist poststructuralist framework, the way in which a group of young Australian women positioned themselves as exercising their free choice to overthrow oppression was examined in relation to the neoliberal conception of the feminine subject, wherein women freely choose to follow beauty practices, with resistance being constructed as inflexible or critical (Stuart & Donaghue, 2011).

Freedom of choice is often held up as a success of feminism, including freedom to choose to engage in beauty practices. However, despite the limited success of feminism in achieving access for women to choices and to social domains from which they were previously barred, women continue to be the subjects of intense surveillance and discipline. While women are now able to access new opportunities, they are still required to carry out the practices that maintain socially acceptable femininity. The increase in women's access to previously unavailable social positions can be argued to have been matched by a simultaneous increase in the focus on their bodies (Stuart & Donaghue, 2011).

The media focuses attention on the gains made by women in the realm of employment as evidence of the lack of ongoing need for feminism. However,

McRobbie highlights the lack of attention to those other forms of power outside of the realm of work and employment, and where women have not made the same gains. Allowing women a small degree of liberty, such as in the domain of work, allows for ‘a new form of capture or control’ (McRobbie, 2011, p. 180). This discourse frames women in individual terms, holding up examples of successful young women, ignoring women as a collective, and replacing feminism with competition among women.

McRobbie (2011) also introduces the concept of ‘a new sexual contract’ wherein women have been offered opportunity and encouragement in academic and employment areas. In exchange for working hard and achieving financial independence, women are entitled to a higher degree of freedom in terms of leisure and sex life. However, political engagement was never included as part of this new contract, and McRobbie states that women have not been given political power or freedom. She asserts that in this contract there is no place for feminism or any other women’s movement, which she describes as ‘the de-democratising effect’ of post-feminism. Women have a huge potential for political power, and for this reason, patriarchal power is engaged in subtle or unseen ways in order to limit this.

The neoliberal subject is the result of the merging of the postmodern concept of the self, wherein different versions of the self are created and utilised, depending on the context and agenda, with contemporary western culture’s focus on the ‘true’ individual self. The neoliberal subject places emphasis on individual responsibility, autonomy and accountability, and does not recognise the influence or constraint exercised through social or structural power. Through this, women are encouraged to embark on the construction of their own identities through making supposed ‘choices’, while remaining ignorant of the requirement to maintain normative femininity that continues to disadvantage women. The neoliberal ideology that all choices are good as long as they are made freely obscures the social sanctions that are attached to the options that are available. Attempts to examine the way in which women’s choices are constrained are often accused of undermining women’s agency.

Since the 1990s, media representations of feminists have often been as angry, humourless, man-hating, dour and unglamorous women. Simultaneously, there has been a rise in the rejection of ‘political correctness’ regarding feminism. There has been an increase in sexist imagery that is seen as ironic by younger media consumers. McRobbie (2011) argues that this is a form of anti-feminism that is promoted among younger women positioning them as more sophisticated than older women or feminists.

She asserts that this 'sophisticated anti-feminism' is prevalent throughout popular and political culture, and that it contributes to the ongoing maintenance of gender inequality and the oppression of feminists and feminism. She gives examples ranging from *Bridget Jones' Diary* to Silvio Berlusconi's political speeches. McRobbie terms this 'post-feminism', which she views as a type of symbolic power. She states that in this post-feminism, feminism is highlighted and brought to the attention of society for the express purpose of demonstrating it to be no longer relevant. In this way, it has become a sign of the intelligence and sophistication of young women who reject the need for a new sexual politics.

There is an ongoing process of the undermining of achievements of feminism in post-feminist society. McRobbie (2011, p. 184) provides examples of this such as political discussions on different levels of seriousness of rape, claims that middle class women taking university places are to blame for reduced social mobility among young men, a rise in the 'de-crime-ing of rape and sexual violence', increases in the amount and types of domestic violence, and attempts to retract the reproductive freedom women had attained.

Post-feminism has seen the re-sexualisation of women in ways that are currently viewed as acceptable, or at least not justifying complaint. Evans, Riley and Shankar (2010) present the rise of 'Raunch' culture and 'porno chic' as examples of the way in which culture has re-sexualised women, under the guise of women exercising agency and personal freedom. This sexualisation of culture draws on neoliberal, post-feminist discourses, such as those of individualism, consumerism and empowerment. Neoliberal discourses of agency, choice and self-determination have produced a particular kind of femininity, in which women are sexually sophisticated consumers. The authors term this 'up for it' female sexuality, and it is a shift from the previous discourses of sexuality in which women were passive and inferior to males. This form of sexuality challenges the male/female binary in regards to sexuality. In this sexuality, women are seen as much more active and confident, with increased importance placed on their own sexuality rather than their partners.

The authors note the debates and challenges of dealing with this re-sexualisation within feminist literature. They discuss how this 'up for it' female sexuality would appear to be the achievement of many of the goals of second-wave feminism. The challenge is how to value a woman's choice, when her choice is to take up a particular subject position in the re-sexualised culture, while also being critical towards the

cultural context makes that position possible. They argue that neoliberal discourses of individuality have moved disciplinary power to within the individual. They regulate themselves internally, so that even when women may appear to make a choice freely, they are in fact constrained in the choices they can make (Evans, Riley, & Shankar, 2010).

This re-sexualisation in culture can be seen in a recent shift in the way in which women are represented in advertising. Whereas previously women were presented as being passive objects of the male gaze, they are now often shown as being independent, powerful and agentic, and in particular, as displaying sexual agency (Gill, 2008). However, Gill utilises a feminist poststructuralist approach to examine the way in which this supposed sexual agency is in fact itself a means of regulation. This image of sexual agency requires women to once again mould their femininity to suit current expectations, in which they must not only perform the existing requirements of femininity such as being beautiful, and sexually attractive to men, but must also be “sexually knowledgeable/practised and always ‘up for it’.”

Gill (2008) argues that the discourse of empowerment, that has been taken up by women and advertisers in western society, is also itself a form of regulation. Again, it constrains women in particular ways as they are required to demonstrate their ‘empowerment’ in particular ways. She uses the example of the wearing of prestigious brands of stiletto heels, which are often seen as symbols of sexual empowerment, and yet which are themselves painful to wear.

Women are subject to disciplinary power, and rather than this power being wielded by particular people, this power is ‘everywhere and nowhere’ (Bartky, 1988). Foucault tends to position power within particular institutions, while Bartky produces a conception of power as unbound, anonymous and dispersed, stating that this situation results in the impression of the production of femininity through disciplining of the body as being something natural or voluntary, since there is no identifiable institution enforcing it, and disguising the inequality of the system and the way it serves to perpetuate male dominance (Bartky, 1988).

Modern, neoliberal society has witnessed the apparatuses of power becoming increasingly invasive and hidden, resulting in more restrictive social controls than were previously possible with institutions holding power. Rather than institutions engaging in overt discipline, power now transforms the minds of individuals so that they engage in policing and disciplining of themselves. In some ways, women’s behaviour is subject to

less restriction than previously, no longer being confined to a domestic sphere and with greater sexual liberty, divorce, paid work and less religious control. However, the modern, anonymous power that disciplines the body in order to produce ideals of femininity has totally invaded every aspect of women's lives (Bartky, 1988).

Neoliberal and post-feminist discourses are particularly salient when considering the aims of this research. These discourses present women from the North Shore as empowered, and enjoying autonomy and freedom of choice. However, these discourses also obscure the invasive and hidden apparatuses of disciplinary power that constrain and regulate them. The stereotypical "Shore Girl" demonstrates the 'up for it' sexuality that appears on the surface to be an expression of empowerment and of the successful achievement of the aims of feminism. However, this is simply another form of regulation wherein the women are required to perform their empowerment in particular ways. This research aims to make visible the disciplinary power that is still at work to constrain women from the North Shore, despite the appearance of empowerment and lack of oppression.

## **CHAPTER FOUR - Methodology**

### **Research Aims**

The research questions that this study will address can be broken into two primary areas of enquiry. The first of these areas may be broadly termed discourses and positioning. It is an exploration of the dominant discourses involved in the construction, maintenance and change of the “Shore Girl” stereotype over time. This will be accomplished through examining the discourses utilised by participants as they discuss the “Shore Girl” stereotype and their experiences of growing up on the North Shore. Further, it will examine how the women are positioned by the dominant discourses involved in the “Shore Girl” stereotype. Attention will be paid to the subject positions that the women take up within these discourses and how they negotiate conflicting subject positions within multiple discourses.

While the focus of this research is the “Shore Girl” stereotype, the meaning of this stereotype is produced through relationships and shared understandings. Therefore, it will be necessary to examine this relational context. In order to do so, this research will also examine the ways in which the women locate themselves and others in and through geopolitical and relational boundaries, as they produce an understanding of their place-based identities and their location in both place and space.

The second area of investigation may be termed power, feminism and post-feminism. It will involve an exploration of the patriarchal power structures evident in the involved discourses, how this power exerts control and oppression over women from the North Shore, and the social function the “Shore Girl” stereotype serves in the maintenance of patriarchal dominance and the social status quo. Of key importance, will be an examination of the ways in which these women exercise resistance towards the “Shore Girl” stereotype.

### **Feminist Poststructuralism**

Due to the nature of this research, the questions to be addressed and my own feminist orientation, I have chosen to take a feminist poststructuralist theoretical approach in this research, utilising Willig’s (2001) approach to discourse analysis. The

reason for this choice is in part due to the emphasis that poststructuralism places on language as a constructive process. Poststructuralist approaches hold that the understanding or expression of experience is never independent of language (Gavey, 1989). It is an approach from which it is possible to examine subject positions through language, cultural systems and conventions, and material circumstances. Examination of these subject positions allows for the exploration of gendered power relations. It provides opportunity to examine the intertwining of power and knowledge, and to therefore open up possibilities for the disruption of dominant, oppressive knowledges or discourses (Stuart & Donaghue, 2011).

Young people do usually draw on dominant discourses of heterosexuality when talking about themselves as sexual (Allen, 2003), and these discourses provide multiple subject positions which may be taken up. These dominant discourses are powerful, but Allen points to Foucault's concept of power and resistance, wherein for a discourse to exert power, there must be resistance. Allen found that some young people took up resistant subject positions within these dominant discourses when constructing their sexual subjectivities. However, she notes that the adoption of resistant subject positions was dependent on their context which influenced the positions available to them. In addition, this resistance involved negotiating multiple positions that allowed them to both accept and resist dominant discourses of heterosexuality.

Davies (1990, p. 501) advocates for "a world in which there are multiple ways of being that are available to everyone... not being organised around the male/female dualism." She addresses the contradictions that are often a challenge to feminism, such as the conflict between the desire to remove the binary categorisation of people as male and female and the desire for the appreciation of and respect for women's ways of being. She points out the contradictory desires of femininity and feminism, but argues that our desires are products of and organised around our gendered identities. We often hold multiple desires that are incompatible with one-another, but because these are bound up with our gendered identity, being aware of and examining these contradictions is not sufficient to resolve them.

This research aims to challenge existing patriarchal discourse and power. Even if women's qualities and experiences are cast in a positive light, anything that promotes the idea of essential difference between men and women runs the risk of perpetuating existing power structures and discourses. Rather than uncritically preserving forms of subjectivity, they must be subverted and challenged (Gavey, 1989).

## **Positioning Theory**

Davies and Harré (1990, p. 62) argue for the use of the concept of positioning as a means of analysing how people “do being a person”. Positioning focuses on the way in which both speakers and hearers are constructed in particular ways and are able to negotiate new positions through discursive practices. A subject position is a possible position in known discourses and is constructed through talk as individuals “take themselves up as persons”. Because there are multiple discursive practices and interpretations, many of which are contradictory, this theory explains the contradictions present in the construction of selves.

Individuals form beliefs about themselves that are not always consistent and may be contradictory. They construct multiple selves as they position themselves within multiple storylines or discourses, some of which may be inconsistent with each other, or even internally inconsistent. Yet they are able to move from one position to another as discourses shift without experiencing discontinuity of self. Furthermore, multiple discourses can be present in a single situation, and thus a person may position themselves in multiple ways at the same time. Because of this, people must find ways to negotiate possible contradictions in their constructed selves. Davies and Harré (1990) suggest that most people are comfortable with accepting contradictions in themselves and their environment, whether they are aware of doing this or otherwise. When making choices between competing demands, there is a complex intermingling of available positions and the meanings attached to them within various discourses.

A person is socially constructed as a unitary identity that is separate from the social world. Therefore, individuals expect themselves and each other to produce stories of their selves that are consistent and unitary, without being aware of the way in which discourses, and the positions they take up, influence these stories. In this way, people experience their selves as produced by themselves alone, taking up positions in discourses as if they are their own creations, and interpreting them according to their own experiences. These interpretations are shared across their various subject positions and through lived narratives, reinforcing a sense of continuity of self as a non-contradictory person despite the incongruity of many of the positions they take up (Davies & Harré, 1990).

Feminist narratives can disrupt this idea of the non-contradictory person, exposing the contradictions and multiple interpretations of the positions that can be

taken up, highlighting the multiple interpretations of any speech action, and demonstrating the link between words used and the social action that is accepted to have occurred (Davies & Harré, 1990). To discursively produce the self as agentic requires an appropriate storyline, unlike those available in traditional discourses which interpret actions of women as gender-based acts.

## **Discourse Analysis**

Willig's approach to discourse analysis is an appropriate tool for this research due to its emphasis on examining power relations. It draws on Foucault's view of power as not something that is possessed by individuals, but rather it is something that operates through them by impacting on their behaviour. As a result, the subject of study is not a person or a thing, but is the positions held in relation to multiple forces of power. These positions are not unitary, singular, continuous or pre-existing, but rather they are spaces formed between multiple forces in action. They are discontinuous and often contradictory. In addition, subjects are not bound by discourses. Because power acts on possible actions, the possibility always exists for acting in other ways, or for resisting discourses (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008).

Willig (2001) describes six steps for conducting a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. These consist of (1) discursive constructions, (2) discourses, (3) action orientation, (4) positionings, (5) practice, and (6) subjectivity. The first stage of analysis, discursive constructions, involves consideration of the discursive object to be examined. The discursive object will depend on the research questions. In this case, the research is interested in looking at how the "Shore Girl" is discursively constructed and therefore the discursive object will be "Shore Girls". The ways in which this discursive object is constructed and how the object is produced in the text must then be identified, through both direct and indirect references.

The second stage of analysis, discourses, consists of examination of the differences between constructions of the discursive object, and locating these constructions within the wider discourses that inform them. For example, the construction of "Shore Girls" may draw on discourses such as the male sex drive discourse, or the permissive discourse. The third stage, action orientation, requires an examination of the discursive contexts within which different constructions are utilised. This enables analysis of the functional effect of the use of particular constructions in

their context within the text, and examination of what the construction aims to achieve. For example, the use of the permissive discourse in the construction of “Shore Girls” by a woman who has had the “Shore Girl” stereotype applied to her may function to reduce negative stigma attached to her perceived behaviour, constructing it as the result of justifiable and legitimate choices. At another time, she may utilise the have/hold discourse to distance herself from the promiscuity implied in the “Shore Girl” stereotype, as her sexual experiences have occurred within the context of relationships and therefore cannot be considered instances of promiscuity.

The fourth stage, positionings, involves an examination of the subject positions available within the discourses that have been identified. This stage involves utilising Davies and Harré’s positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990). For example, the have/hold discourse positions men and women as active participants in moral situations, whereas the male sex drive discourse positions men as biologically-driven sexual predators with women positioned as the moral gate-keepers, responsible for preventing the men from acting on their sexual instincts. The fifth stage, practice, looks at the relationship between discourse and practice. That is, how discursive constructions and the positions available within them enable or constrain opportunities for different actions. The sixth and final stage, subjectivity, explores the relationship between discourse and subjectivity, and the meaning of the experiences of women as they are positioned by discourse or as they take up particular positions within discourse. For example, women may feel pleased that they have behaved in ways that they feel are morally justifiable and appropriate by only engaging in sexual activity within the bounds of committed relationships.

## **Method**

### **Sample**

Participants were recruited for this study by means of snowball sampling, whereby an initial group of potential participants were identified from among my own family and friends. These potential participants were provided with information on the nature and purpose of my research and what participation would entail, and invited to contact me if they were interested in participating. They were also asked to pass on the

information sheet (Appendix A) and my contact details to anyone they knew of who met the criteria for participating in the project. In this way, a diverse pool of potential participants was generated from which I was able to purposively select participants (Polkinghorne, 2005). Therefore, it was up to participants to volunteer to take part.

General criteria for participants were that they were women and had attended High School in the North Shore of Auckland at some stage. Two age groups were created to sense if there had been changes between generations. These groups were initially aged 25 to 35 years, and 55 to 65 years. However, as the research progressed, it was decided to widen the older age category to include women aged 45 to 65 years, due in part to the wide variation in experiences within this group. It was apparent that rapid social changes had occurred within this age group. It was therefore decided to expand the age range downward in order to further explore this change and include it in the data.

The information sheet provided to the women outlined the research goals and methods, the research process and their rights as participants. They were asked to read this information before finally deciding whether or not they wanted to participate. Women who volunteered were contacted, and interviews were arranged at a time and place that was convenient and comfortable for them. Despite a reasonably diverse pool across areas of the North Shore, there was a lack of ethnic diversity. Culturally, both age groups consisted of New Zealand Pākehā women, all of whom were born in New Zealand, with European ancestry. This was not specifically by design, but rather was a result of these women volunteering for participation. This may well have been due to the research being about “Shore Girls” which also has a Eurocentric connotation and therefore women of other ethnicities may have felt that the stereotype was not relevant to them.

The North Shore is a relatively small community and this, combined with my sampling method, means that I also have prior relationships with many of my participants, either as a friend, colleague or family member. Those with whom I did not have prior relationships were still socially linked with me through mutual friendships or acquaintances – an effect of snowballing.

## **Ethics**

The ethical conduct of the research was evaluated by peer review and deemed low risk by MUHEC. While the research was unlikely to have any harmful effects, participant and researcher safety were considered. For example, given that interviews were often located at the homes of participants, some of whom I had not previously met, my supervisor was advised of these interview times and locations, and was contacted prior to and following the interviews. This also provided the opportunity for debriefing as required. Participants were fully informed of the nature and purpose of the research, in addition to my commitment to ensuring their participation remained confidential. They were also fully informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point until analysis had begun, their right to refuse to answer any questions, and their right to review and make changes to their interview transcript.

## **Data Collection**

The interviews themselves were carried out individually, ranging between thirty-five minutes and an hour and fifteen minutes. All interviews were conducted by the researcher and at a time and place of the participant's choosing. Most interviews were conducted in the participants' homes, with others being conducted in my home, at the University campus, and via Skype (for overseas-based participants). The interviews were conversational, and the participants were knowledgeable about the topics I wanted to discuss with them. Conversation was based around a set of pre-established questions and topics. However, these were not rigid structures, and were kept as flexible as possible, functioning as prompts in order to elicit the women's talk. This was to ensure that the content included sufficient data for the purposes of my analysis, while still allowing a high degree of flexibility, freedom and rapport-building. This flexibility and rapport allowed the women to bring things that they thought were important into the conversation.

I had a set of questions that could guide the interview, such as how the women would describe people from the North Shore and what they thought people from outside of the North Shore think about them. However, my own insider status as a woman from the North Shore enabled conversations to move between topics as I shared many of the

participants' own systems of meaning. However, as none of the participants came from psychological backgrounds, I was careful to avoid the use of academic language that might be seen as overly formal or jargon, as this may be difficult for them to understand or widen any gap between us that might have a negative impact on rapport or shared understandings. I also considered the way I wished to present myself in the interviews. As I was already an insider in the community, I chose to present myself in my normal attire, rather than presenting myself as a representative from academia. This was in order to minimise any perceived power differential between myself and the participants and to elicit more open discussion as two women from the North Shore. Although such power could not be removed, it enabled their participation to be about what they wanted to tell. In addition, as many of the participants already knew me in a social or familial context, I felt that to present myself otherwise may have had a negative impact and been uncomfortable for both participant and interviewer. These considerations were not only for the sake of eliciting information more fully, but were also out of respect for the dignity and comfort of the participants.

Once a participant was greeted for an interview, a copy of the information sheet was read together by myself and the participant. I provided them with the opportunity to ask any questions or for clarification of any points, and ensured that they understood the research process. It was only once this had occurred that participants were asked to sign an Informed Consent form (Appendix B). After this, the audio recording device was switched on and the interview took place, on the understanding that they could request for the recording device to be turned off at any point, although none of the participants exercised this right. My goal was to elicit everyday talk around the women's experiences of growing up and becoming women on the North Shore, and any stereotypical ideas that they had encountered about women from the North Shore. Therefore, I took an active role in conversation, firstly in order to gain trust and rapport, and secondly to facilitate the social meaning-making of the women's experiences within our relationship as co-women from the North Shore and also as joint participants in conversation.

Once an interview was concluded, the participant was thanked and asked if she had further questions. Following this, during the transcription phase, the recording was transcribed verbatim by myself, including repetitions, pauses, hesitations, and non-verbal utterances such as laughter or sighs. Names and other identifying information were excluded from the transcriptions, to be replaced with pseudonyms at a later date,

and the original recordings were deleted following transcription. The signed Informed Consent forms and interview transcripts were kept separately and securely in a secure place and password protected files. It was agreed with participants at the time of interview that a copy of their transcript would be emailed to them at a later date, in order for them to review, make any changes or voice any queries. At that stage, participants were asked to sign a Release of Transcript form (Appendix C), on the understanding that once this was signed, analysis would begin and they would no longer be able to withdraw from participating or request changes to the transcript.

## **Analysis**

As I transcribed the interviews, I kept a diary noting discourses, positioning, instances of resistance and contradictions as they emerged from the textual data, as well as my own responses and thoughts regarding the content, and any observations made during the interview itself that were not captured in the transcript. This formed an initial basis for analysis and was recorded in a separate document and organised to enable me to cross-reference for commonalities and differences between the transcripts and between the two age groups. I also examined my own contributions to the conversation. This was important as I was also an active participant in the conversations, and I myself, despite my position as a feminist researcher, am still located within the same social context and am subject to the same dominant discourses. Therefore, I also considered how my own talk contributed to the use of discourses, subject positionings, and the contradictions and resistances within my own talk.

Once the women had given consent for the use of their transcripts, the data was analysed utilising Carla Willig's method of discourse analysis. This involved following her six steps, and consisted of (1) consideration of the way in which the discursive object, in this case "Shore Girls", was constructed in the text, (2) locating the various constructions of the discursive object within wider discourses, (3) analysing the functions that the constructions were intended to achieve in their interview context, (4) exploring the subject positions that were available within the discourses that were drawn on by the women in their constructions of the discursive object, (5) examining how the subject positions available in the various constructions of the discursive object impacted on the possibilities for action open to the women, and finally (6) looking at the

way in which the subject positions available to the women influenced their subjective experiences.

### **Reflexivity**

This was an explorative research process and as such it was a journey. While I began with an idea of what I expected to examine, other discourses and issues emerged from the interviews. I expected to be examining sexuality, and was surprised to find that this was not where the participants led the discussion, nor were discourses of sexuality the primary discourses that the women drew on. When discussing their understanding of the “Shore Girl” stereotype, which is on the surface a sexual stereotype, many of the women did not engage in talk about sexuality or sexual behaviours. Rather, the women appeared to be more interested in discussing how they understood their socio-political location within discourses of affluence, sense of entitlement, immigration, and their ideas about and relationships to different suburbs or schools on the North Shore. Even when asked directly about the “Shore Girl” stereotype, many of the women appeared not to immediately engage with it, instead responding in terms of their own locatedness, resulting in much less talk around the stereotype than I had anticipated.

Initially, this caused me some concern as to whether or not my research would be successful. Perhaps I had over-estimated the relevance of the stereotype to the experiences and identities of women on the North Shore. I was somewhat confused since in my own experience as a woman from the North Shore the stereotype had seemed to be significant, and this had appeared to be corroborated through informal conversations and interactions with other women from the North Shore while growing up. Did the “Shore Girl” stereotype simply not have meaning to the women? I began to consider how our positions as a researcher and participant within the meaning-making context of the interviews might affect the discursive construction of the “Shore Girl” stereotype. It occurred to me that in my day-to-day interactions with women from the North Shore, my position was different than that of a researcher, and in that setting we were assumed to share common understandings and meanings of our social world. However, it was possible that the change in my position, now as a researcher, this assumption no longer held and the women found it necessary to construct and establish markers of meaning in order to contextualise the “Shore Girl” stereotype. We were able to talk about the “Shore Girl” stereotype in daily life because we were operating in a

relationship of shared meanings that did not need to be negotiated and constructed before the stereotype could be meaningful.

As I continued to interview the women, patterns began to emerge in their talk. When constructing the discursive object, “Shore Girls”, the women undertook a process of locating themselves and others through the construction of multiple boundaries, both geographical and social, in the construction of place-based identities. It became clear that in order to examine the “Shore Girl” stereotype, I would first need to attend to both space and place, and the co-construction of person and place. The first task that the women undertook was to locate themselves and others in relation to both space and place. Before they could begin to construct their understanding of the discursive object, “Shore Girls” and the “Shore Girl, sure thing” stereotype, they first constructed their own place-based identities in order to establish the relational landscape within which the meaning of the stereotype was produced. They achieved this through the construction of multiple boundaries, both geographical and social, as a means of defining themselves and others, and positioning themselves within the discourses that they would utilise in making sense of the “Shore Girl” stereotype.

I had expected that their social context would be important, in that it is the context within which meanings are produced. However, I had not anticipated that the co-construction of place and person would be so significant in examining the “Shore Girl” stereotype, or how sexuality discourses intersect with ethnicity, privilege, invasion, difference, colonisation and empowerment. The women negotiated multiple and complex positionings within these discourses, along with neoliberal, post-feminist and sexual discourses before the stereotype and its meaning began to emerge in their talk. Therefore, an unexpectedly significant portion of the analysis needed to be dedicated to the examination of discourses constituting place and person. It also required that I rework the literature to locate this research within the context of the women’s narratives.

## CHAPTER FIVE - Analysis

### Place-Based Identities

The interviews carried out with both the older and younger groups of women were ostensibly about the “Shore Girl, sure thing” stereotype. All of the women who participated in the research were informed of the goal of the research, which was to examine dominant discourses of sexuality that lead to the creation of stereotypes about women, such as the “Shore Girl” stereotype, how they are maintained, their function, how they have changed over time and also women’s experiences of these stereotypes, and their reactions to them. However, while all of the women in the younger group and the majority of those in the older group were familiar with this or similar stereotypes of young women from the North Shore, none of the women were able to talk about this immediately or in isolation. The meaning of the stereotype itself is produced through relationships and shared understandings, and therefore, it could only be discussed in the context of these relationships. The women first established this context by undertaking a process of locating themselves and others on the North Shore through the construction of geopolitical and relational boundaries, producing a shared understanding of the place-based identities of themselves and others in this relational and geopolitical context.

The “Shore Girl, sure thing” stereotype also positions the women in particular ways through multiple discourses, including neoliberal and post-feminist discourse, as well as discourses of privilege, difference, invasion, colonisation, empowerment and sexuality. Therefore, during the process of the interviews, the women undertook a complex negotiation of their often contradictory positionings within these multiple discourses. In so doing, the women first “set the scene” of the North Shore and their social context, constructing an identity and locatedness for themselves and others on the North Shore, and positioning themselves in particular ways within the discourses at work in the stereotype. As they engaged in positioning themselves within the salient discourses, the stereotype and its meaning to the women began to emerge in their conversation. Only once this process had been undertaken, were they able to discuss the stereotype itself, and how they understood their relationships with the stereotype and their social contexts.

## **'Like an Island' – Boundaries Between Places**

One of the key tasks that the women undertook in their interviews was the construction of boundaries. This boundary-making draws on multiple discourses in the construction of both place, being the geo-political region, as well as space, being “where social relations are produced and reproduced as texts, where the signs and symbols, stories and meanings of connectedness and exclusion become sites of contestation” (Coombes & Morgan, in press). These boundaries perform different functions. At some time they relate to physical areas, while at others they are relational boundaries between groups of people, constructing a sense of difference between themselves and others in order to position themselves in various ways within dominant discourses.

The making of boundaries between places and people is critical to the women's construction of their own identities and locatedness. This can be understood through the concept of place-based identities (Hodgetts et al., 2010), whereby a person's identity is not a single, fixed, intractable entity situated within that person, but rather is multiple, changeable, and ongoing. A person's identity is forged through their relationships with other people, institutions and locations. The women form a sense of belonging, connection and history in the North Shore, or parts of the North Shore. Their identity is bound up with their location, and the two are co-constructed through the women's everyday lives and social relationships. An intertwining of location and identity was produced within the meaning-making context of the interviews. For example, many of the women made explicit connections between location and identity, such as identifying themselves and each other in terms of the schools they attended, the suburbs they grew up in, or places where they socialised. For example, one participant locates herself within the Browns Bay area due to that being the area where she socialised. The Browns Bay location is constructed as forming a part of her identity, and she referred to herself as a “Browns Bay Bum”.

Turning first to the physical, place-based boundaries that the women constructed, these took many different forms depending on their conversational context. For example, when conversation was about the wider Auckland area, the women constructed boundaries around the North Shore, whereas when the conversation was specific to the North Shore, that boundary around the North Shore became less meaningful and the women therefore constructed different boundaries within the North Shore.

One of the major boundaries constructed by most of the women in their interviews is the broadest of boundaries, between the North Shore and its relationship with the wider city boundary of Auckland. This boundary clearly establishes a sense of difference and can be seen as an illustration of Coombes and Morgan's (in press) understanding of place as more than just geographical areas, but rather as an ontological relationship to the land. The boundary between the North Shore and its relationship with wider Auckland does more than simply delineating boundaries between two regions. It provides positions through which the women can locate themselves and others. The boundary the women construct produces a dichotomy of who is in and who is out. Boundaries construct the complex map of inclusions and exclusions that texture identities. In their interviews, the women emphasised the geographical and cultural separation of the North Shore from the rest of Auckland. They used the metaphor of the North Shore as being like an island or another world, to construct it as separated both geographically and culturally from wider Auckland.

*Susan: ...and it's probably more that the North Shore's almost like an island. If you think about it, because it's got a rural boundary as well as a sea boundary. The rural boundary's disappearing, but it's got one. So it's almost like an island, and people that live here think that because we live on an island, like Waiheke, the whole island culture sort of thing of being our own little state almost, and...so they've built up their own culture... But I think that almost being an island mentality that they've developed their own little...little culture.*

*Amanda: ...They seemed to think it was like another...Island, or another world.*

*Mary: Because that was the other thing about Shore girls, we tended to stay on the Shore (laughs) but why should you leave? It was perfectly alright. But I can always remember going over there, and it was like literally going to another world.*

*Carol: Um, I suppose it is a beach-orientated kind of area, and you've got that division. You're not part of the city. You've got to cross the Bridge... to get to us. You're from a different world.*

The women reinforced this construction of difference as more than just a geographical difference, through describing experiences of having initially been unaware of differences between the ways that people on the North Shore live compared to those in other parts of Auckland, due to its isolation. In the context of their interviews, the women used the boundary between the North Shore and wider Auckland as a marker of privilege, positioning the North Shore as privileged, with the other side of this boundary as outside of this privilege. However, the women's talk about and emphasis on difference and isolation having been brought up on the North Shore often demonstrated an uncomfortable contradiction between constructing themselves as being privileged, and a desire to not be viewed as believing themselves to be superior, entitled, or lacking in social conscience. Their comments often demonstrated a desire to explain that they were not aware of their privilege when they were growing up until they were exposed to areas outside of the Shore.

*Jennifer: I think I didn't realise, because it's you know, your own bubble is your start point...and then you realise yea, the Shore definitely shaped the type of upbringing that I had. It's not everyone's upbringing. Yea, so that's when I realised and started to question the whole Shore thing.*

*Melissa: Seeing as how I now see sort of Auckland in a broader light, rather than being insular and from the Shore and thinking in terms of the Shore...I mean, now I see the whole Auckland picture and...*

While the women used the boundary between the North Shore and the rest of Auckland to position themselves as privileged through their relationship between their geopolitical and social location, this sits in contradiction to another difference that they construct. The boundaries constructed by the women produce dichotomies, and most of these are used by the women to define what they *are*. However, in some cases, they use them to define what they are *not*. For example, many of the women used the example of Remuera, and other affluent suburbs in Auckland City, to define excessive privilege, and were clear in stating that the North Shore did not enjoy the same levels of wealth and excess. Many women drew on a neoliberal discourse (McRobbie, 2011) which values individualism and self-responsibility with economic success as the just reward for personal effort to justify the affluence experienced by women on the North Shore,

while simultaneously decrying the wealth of the women from areas such as Remuera, whom they constructed as receiving wealth from others without having worked to achieve it. They appear both to value the attainment of economic success, but also to distance themselves from excessive wealth.

*Heather: I mean, not many people really want to get with a rich Remuera girl. They'd rather get with a Shore girl. (Laughing) So um...because they're a bit more down to earth! We live in this planet while you're over there where you believe everyone's rich and you've got everything. Um, they work a little bit more. So, they actually work for their money. They, they're not that rich, so they still have to...you know, bring it together.*

*Linda: Yeah, but one of [husband]'s good friends met and eventually married a girl from Remuera, and I would say they viewed the Shore Girls as lower...*

*Sandra: They're just...oh my God. They're just...they have such privileged lives. Like, it's just so different to what I was like. Oh yea, like financially and what they do. Their whole time is spent wining and dining, and I just think oh God, that's so shallow. And buying dresses and that. It's just so different to what we're used to. Like, your whole time wasn't spent like let's go to lunch. I just find it really hard. It's just so shallow.... Like all the kids' parents have all got baches up at Omaha and that, so they go up to Omaha (posh voice), and I just think oh God, you know (laughs). It's just a bit much.*

There is a clear sense of delineation between “us and them” produced in the women’s interviews. Despite their taking up of neoliberal discourse, much of their talk demonstrates their simultaneous discomfort with affluence, and even a sense of embarrassment at being seen as too privileged or affluent. This affluence is perceived to be attached to house prices, which is a major concern in Auckland currently, with house prices in many areas having seen dramatic increases in recent years resulting in people being priced out of many suburbs. Because of their unaffordability, living in these areas has come to be a marker of affluence and privilege with the value of a house becoming tied up with a range of character judgements. Sandra made this explicit in her comment:

*I always feel slightly embarrassed. Once someone said where do you live and I said Milford and they're like ooooh, and I was like what does that mean? But it is an area that when you look at house prices and that, it's quite an expensive place to live. So we've got a tiny house!*

However, Sandra made it clear that she is aware of negotiating the contradictions in how she is positioned by discourses of privilege. In some contexts she is aware of being included within the boundaries of privilege, while in others she is excluded:

*But when I 'm with them [friends from Epsom] I always feel like we're just poor church-mice or something, which is really weird. And I suppose it bothers me a bit that I feel like that, but...yea, it's interesting that! It really depends whose asking that. Like if it's someone from Epsom or Mt Eden or...some of the more expensive places...I feel like we are poor and we're not as good as them sort of. And I feel a bit embarrassed about that. And then if I talk to people like we have friends in Beach Haven and I feel a bit embarrassed when I talk to them because I live in Milford.*

*SG: So you're very aware of...*

*Sandra: Aware of how I'm judged because of where I live... So it's interesting eh, because it depends who I'm with how I feel. There's no grey, it's always black and white...*

The women employed discourses of privilege and difference to serve the function of destabilising stereotypes of women from the North Shore. The women used these discourses to position the "Shore Girl" stereotype as simply a marker of this privilege and difference, rather than as an accurate reflection of the supposedly promiscuous nature of the women. Many of the younger women used the boundaries they had constructed to perform this function by providing an explanation for the existence of the Shore Girl stereotype. There can be no challenge to the fact that the stereotype exists, so in this way, they are able to provide a rationale for the stereotype that they find to be acceptable, and avoid being positioned within the stereotype in ways that they find unacceptable. By producing an alternate explanation for the stereotype,

they are able to refute that it is an accurate and justifiable description of differences in values or sexual behaviour, and assert rather that it is a marker of geographical separation and difference.

*Amanda: I think the Shore is kind of a contained unit...so instead of, what would you call this, "over the Bridge", you have Remuera and like St Lukes, and it's not big enough really to have their own stereotypes...whereas the Shore is just easily contained and talked about...*

*Heather: Which is not necessarily true. I just find that when someone comes from out of town, it's more appealing to a Shore Girl! (Laughs) Because they don't all know them! So they're more likely to sleep with you because not everybody's going to know about it!*

A major difference they constructed as performing the function of contributing to the creation and maintenance of the stereotype relates to the way in which the perceived safety of their location on the North Shore becomes entwined with their location-based identity. The co-construction of their identity and location can be seen in the way they constructed themselves as products of this safety, behaving in ways that would be risky in other parts of Auckland. They see their identity as more carefree than women in other areas of Auckland and are able to attribute the Shore Girl stereotype to this difference.

*Jessica: I thought perhaps...people coming in from the Shore, and because we enjoy a good party and things like that and it's quite a safe environment...like, say you come in from West Auckland or South Auckland, or somewhere where it's a bit more dangerous... Where there's lots of gang...activity out there. If they came into the North Shore and see how free and carefree most of the women were, um...women have to be very careful you know, not to get your drink spiked and stuff like that because that at our age...wasn't that prolific then, because fish in a barrel. There's loads of women around, they're being free spirited...*

However, it was not just the younger women who employed boundaries to perform certain functions, such as the construction of place-based identities and defence against threats to these, such as the Shore Girl stereotype. Many of the older women also utilised these to distance themselves from the Shore Girl stereotype. The older women all stated that the stereotype was not present when they were young and that it is a recent phenomenon. However, most of the older women have daughters who fall within the younger age group, who were brought up on the North Shore, and whom they do not believe to be accurately represented by the Shore Girl stereotype. Like their younger counterparts, these women cited geographical isolation as a key factor in the development of the stereotype. However, rather than emphasising separation now as responsible for the stereotype, they constructed looser boundaries than those of their youth, and used this reduction in geographical isolation as a possible reason for changing attitudes towards and stereotypes of the North Shore.

*Mary: And I think they sort of, we lived within our own little area, and I think things have probably changed now. I know with my kids when they were growing up, they were all over Auckland but in those days with, because of transport, or we didn't drive, or what it was, um, but I think that all sort of led to the idea of being unattainable because we were so flipping far away!*

*Mary: Shore girls are kind of a part of Auckland now. Whereas before they weren't part of Auckland. But we were our own, we were happy, we were insular, and we were good girls.*

The boundaries constructed by the women were not always as broad or clear-cut as that between the North Shore and the rest of Auckland. Both the older and younger women also made boundaries *within* the North Shore, dividing it up in multiple and sometimes contradictory ways, depending on the conversational context. A major boundary or division the women constructed within their talk is that between the East Coast and more western parts of the Shore. They constructed the Shore as being made up of two areas, one of which is the more stereotypical North Shore, comprised of the East Coast Bays ("The Bays"), Takapuna and Devonport, while the other is comprised of the western and inland areas including Glenfield, Beach Haven, Birkdale and Northcote, which are considered to be lower class than the rest of the North Shore and

not sharing the same lifestyle. Again, this boundary is a boundary of privilege and is closely linked to notions of class and wealth, with the eastern area included within the boundary of privilege, and the western area excluded.

*Jessica: ...in my mind, the Shore is the strip that runs along the coastline. You know, if you can't get to a beach within a few minutes of walking...having said that...Glenfield's not that far away but when you get into it!... It's like there's that barrier on the other side of the motorway. And you're like nope, it's on the other side of the motorway. Nope, it's not in there. So yeeeeaaa, it is on the Shore, but it's not on the Shore Shore.*

*Melissa: Um, there's always the Beach Haven stigma (laughs), about it being poor people and gang people.*

*Linda: Yes, well there was a time, because we lived in Castor Bay when we came up and that was quite a high class area. Then later we moved to Glenfield and that was a cheaper area and you would've met all the ones from Glenfield who didn't have the wealth. So there was quite a difference.*

*Mary: Westlake is just, was just...I don't know, it was a little bit seedy, a little bit...dare I say it, lower class... Um, because I suppose they also fed in from Glenfield and Northcote and those areas, while we were just Shore Girls.*

*Sandra: ...I do think of it [Glenfield] as separate from East Coast Bays. Yea definitely. And Northcote. I think 'cos there's beaches and things, and I don't know, geographically it's different. Like you have the beaches and that's inland and you have the parks and yea, definitely.*

The women's comments about the various areas demonstrate the way identity and location are intertwined. This can be seen in the way the women position the people within different areas, marking people from some areas as rough and others as pretentious. In this way, the people's identities are constructed through their location. However, the co-constructive nature of this relationship between identity and location can also be seen when the reverse is true. The women's comments also demonstrate the

way they are also engaged in the construction of the locations themselves. For example, geographically the western parts of the North Shore, such as Glenfield, Beachaven, Birkdale, Bayview, and Island Bay have a comparable amount of coastline and beach as the East Coast Bays, yet it is positioned as inland, with the East Coast Bays having the beaches. The beaches are utilised as a marker of privilege, and since the western area is outside the boundary of privilege, its beaches are not acknowledged, despite their geographical reality.

Interestingly, in the context of boundaries within the North Shore, the women sometimes drew on different discourses regarding privilege than they did when discussing boundaries between the North Shore and the rest of Auckland. While many of the women drew on neo-liberal discourse to justify greater or lesser privileges being enjoyed by the North Shore compared to other parts of Auckland, this was not always the case when discussing greater privileges being enjoyed within parts of the North Shore compared to others.

Some of the women did draw on neoliberal discourses regarding individual responsibility, such as Mary who made a connection between low income and other aspects of behaviour. Neoliberal discourse values individual responsibility, autonomy and accountability, and to Mary, a lack of success is indicative of a difference in values. A lack of economic achievement was cast as a lack of individual responsibility and accountability, and became generalised from a difference in values to looser morals when she talked about Glenfield:

*I mean, for some reason there was a lot of state housing in Glenfield as well...which probably sort of tips the influence, 'cos let's face it, people in state housing tend to be struggling with every aspect of life, so their kids tend to be maybe a bit looser, I don't know... Um, I think you're more likely to go to somewhere like Glenfield and have more promiscuity than you'll get on the North Shore. Ah, but I think, you know, that's probably education-based and family-based and that whole background that goes with developing sexuality when these girls are secure and safe.*

However, many of the women drew on a more collectivist discourse that directly rejected the individuality and self-interest valued in neoliberal ideology, constructing those people in areas that they viewed as less privileged as being in some ways morally

superior to those in areas viewed as more privileged. The women's talk implied the idea that those who are privileged are in some ways fake or superficial, and lacking in substance, whereas those who do not enjoy the same privilege are warmer and enjoy more depth of relationships. Since the boundary of privilege was constructed as geographical, again location was involved in the construction of identities as the women cast people as either fake and superficial, or genuine and caring.

*Jessica: Tell you what, there's some really nice people went to Glenfield school! Just really good, honest, happy, nice, caring people... they are just really good people... But they're really, really good people. Nice, caring, honest people...they're just...the kind of people you sort of wished there had been more of at Long Bay so that you could have forged the deeper relationships with them and carried on being friends with them instead of the people who were – they were like chameleons at Long Bay. One day they were like this, the next day they were like that, and they're constantly trying to evolve to continue being popular instead of just getting on with life.*

*Carol: So, I worked around Beach Haven, Northcote. Totally different. Whole different way of life. But having said that, all the people I met in those areas would...like I would go to somebody's home, and they would have nothing. Their house would be bare, but they would always make you a cup of tea. They would always want you to sit and talk...Even though they had nothing and sometimes you'd look at the tea and the cup and think ugh, must I? (Laughs) Whereas the other side of the Shore, the Bays area, people were much more stand-offish to you. If you weren't part of their group, you were not therefore that welcome. You know, they'd deal with you, but that was....you're not part of it. You're not really going to be included socially. They're, and they're very self-assured. They're generally middle class, well-off. And I suppose mainly white! Yea, um, yea they are not, well I certainly didn't find them as welcoming. But they're very self-assured in their own little world, you know. They don't...yea. They don't need anyone else...*

Another way in which the women constructed boundaries was by classifying people in terms of the school that they went to. This can be seen as an illustration of

Coombes and Morgan's (in press) concept of space, which is located within the interactions between people and institutions, and is the site within which language constructs and maintains power and societal structures. As they explain, space can be used to examine the social and relational landscape within which a person is situated. When talking about people from the North Shore, the women often spontaneously described people who went to particular schools. Each school becomes more than just an educational institution. Each also contains a myriad of other social signifiers in terms of socio-economic status, ethnicity, behaviour and ideology, and they have complex and often contradictory relationships with each other.

*Jennifer: And so I went to Albany and we had "alliances" as you could say (laughs) with um Long Bay Primary, and I think Torbay Primary... Um, and we had a healthy competition with like, um, Sherwood and Coatesville... And I think it was the more...affluent ones I suppose...or that was our perspective, that we were the, you know, regular ones and they were the ones that were more money. I think definitely around Rangitoto and Westlake Girls...probably not so much Carmel...but yea, those ones, generally the ones with more money.*

*Jessica: And this is gonna sound really bad, but a lot of girls from Westlake and Carmel College and stuff had really bad – oh I mean they're all girls' schools – but had really bad names for being...a bit...slutty and trappy and stuff. And I mean...my friend cheated on almost every guy she dated so there must be some...back-up to it. But yea, they...were known for being bad. I think Rangi wasn't as bad as Long Bay's, um, image. But then again, Long Bay had such a bad image. We were known as the drug school and, you know, dropouts and stuff like that, but...I wonder if it's changed. (Laughs)*

*Jessica: Although, having said that, Long Bay was accused of being stoners, Rangitoto was accused of being sporty, stuck-up people, Westlake stuck-up sluts...so I guess it all...it all bleeds into one another about – because, let's face it, to go to Westlake you have to have a lot of money, and to go to Rangi you um, you either need to be in the zone or pay a lot of money, and Long Bay's kind of like the...you live in the good area that's the school you can't really afford to send your kid anywhere else 'cos you paid too much for your house! (Laughs)*

*They're going to Long Bay! (Laughing) So it's kind of like the bogans and the riff-raffs of the well-to-do parents who are at – Although, then there's Glenfield as well.*

*Amanda: ...people would always say that Carmel College had the highest pregnancy rate. And, and Westlake similar. Um, Rangitoto we would think they were all....up themselves maybe! And Glenfield College always had – although I didn't really notice it but apparently – always had a rivalry with Birkenhead College. And I know people's perspective of Glenfield College was that it was a rough school and not a good place to go to school.*

*Nicole: I don't think it was so much about where you lived so much as obviously a rival college or something, you'd talk about them and sort of things like that. For instance, the whole drama between Rangitoto girls and Long Bay girls and things like that...(laughs) Well it's just that Rangitoto's...a much larger school. It's like, twice the size and it's more expensive, so it seems a bit more prestigious. You expect richer people to go to those schools and things like that. So, you know, there was....a bit of animosity I guess, between the two schools. But then it's the same between the guys as well. The jocks and stuff...And then it's like, Glenfield College is where you'd expect all the hood-rats and stuff. It's just more the schools as opposed to the...*

*Sandra: Glenfield College had a really bad reputation and it was really rough and just...we would never go there. Birkdale College had a reputation too...Westlake was always our big rivals. Well not really rivals, but just like Westlake girls yea they're easy... And Glenfield College, oh God they're trash. We didn't know anyone from Glenfield (laughs) it was just what you'd hear.*

*Mary: Westlake is just, was just...I don't know, it was a little bit seedy, a little bit...dare I say it, lower class... friends I'd made at Intermediate that then went on to Westlake, so...apart from the fact that we thought it was a school for dummies (laughs) which that was probably wildly incorrect, um...we did a bit, at Rangitoto College we did consider ourselves as a notch above every other school on the Shore.*

*Patricia: So all us nice girls were bussed out, as I said before, to Westlake...And Rangitoto...only the local kids went to Rangitoto and that was considered very rough. It didn't have a very good reputation.*

The women use the schools to form a 'sense of place', with the schools being associated with memories to create a sense of belonging, connection and history, thereby constructing place-based identities (Hodgetts et al., 2010). In this process of the construction of place-based identities, a co-construction occurs as the women's identities are constructed by their relationship to their environment, institutions and each other, while the women simultaneously construct their environment through their conversation and daily lives.

Schools as a boundary and a place may be a result of the culture of change that is present in the North Shore. The North Shore is a relatively young residential area and is marked by a constant state of development, growth and change. New housing areas are constantly being developed and older ones intensified or changed. Not only this, but the people themselves are constantly changing at a demographic level due to the influence of immigration and its implications for diversity. Demographic change is a constant feature of the North Shore and appears to occur dramatically, with large numbers of immigrants either from other countries or just from other parts of the country. Perhaps it is this constant change and newness that is responsible for the emphasis on social mobility and personal development and achievement on the North Shore. If people from the North Shore do not feel that they are constrained by the social position that they were born into, they can work to create the life that they would like for themselves. As they construct place-based identities, this changeable nature of their location and context influences an identity that is not viewed as static but rather is characterised by change and personal development.

This culture of change, development, and social mobility may be able to explain the way in which people from the North Shore often characterise people in terms of the school that they went to. This can be seen as an expression of neoliberal ideology in action wherein a person is required to construct their own individual identity through a process of making supposed choices. The focus is on individual responsibility and autonomy, making a person's actions more important than where they were born. However, neoliberal ideology fails to take into account the structural constraints on the

choices a person makes. A focus on the school a person attended gives clues as to the choices and actions a person may have made, but it fails to consider the structural constraints that lead to attendance at one school rather than another. However, in a neoliberal society such as that which the North Shore is a part of, it may be that it is less relevant to ask someone where they were born, but rather to ask what they have done.

Many people on the Shore were born in extremely diverse locations, and it has little or no bearing on the position they hold on the North Shore. Asking someone where they live now may not tell much about who they are, given that many areas of the Shore did not exist as residential areas as little as ten years ago, or are undergoing huge change, despite the continued importance of the boundary between the North Shore and wider Auckland. However, the characteristics of the schools on the North Shore appear to have held constant between the high school years of the older and younger women. It may be that this is therefore perceived as conveying more useful information about a person. The school a person went to on the North Shore seems to provide information on a person's socio-economic background, their values, their personality, their educational opportunities, and likely their level of educational or occupational achievement post-school.

The way in which people from the North Shore identify with the school they attended is woven into the way they position themselves or are positioned by others, whether they embrace or reject the subject position offered to them by discourses of belonging and identity. Not only this, but a discourse of belonging through connection to a school links people to each other in a way that can be seen as analogous to the ontological relationship between land as place and indigenous understandings of land as a home or place of belonging. A sense of home is formed through genealogical connections to communities (Coombes & Morgan, in press). Therefore, in identifying with a school, people are able to form a sense of belonging through connections such as shared genealogy, history and community. Being a resident of a new subdivision can be seen as more analogous to a new settler, without the continuity and connectedness through shared history and genealogy. Forming these connections through identification with a school allows people to organise and make sense of their relationships to one another, and also allows them to construct a sense of belonging to the North Shore in a way that being a resident of a new subdivision does not immediately allow. It links people who have gone through the shared experience of coming of age on the North Shore to each other and to their environment.

The sense of connection and belonging to a school was evident in the talk of many of the women, such as Jessica who drew on her historical connection to Long Bay College to justify her sense of belonging and pride, despite the context of the conversation being the poor reputation of the school:

*Um, like when you say you go to Long Bay College a lot of people frown at you. "Oh the drug school". And you're like, well make of it what you will, you know, I went there, my mum was a foundation pupil there, it...you know... I'm proud to go to Long Bay. Don't care what other people think about that.*

It is evident in the women's conversations about the schools and the people who attended them that the schools act as markers for a range of social identities. One of the more obvious is as a marker for socio-economic status. However, they are also markers of other identities such as sexuality, religious beliefs, and stereotypical images (jocks, goths, hard-drinking, hood-rats, drug-users, snobby). Again, the drawing of boundaries between people based on the schools that they attended serves the function of identity-construction through the formulating of a binary "us and them" view of the world. In this way, identity is constructed through boundaries that demonstrate what a person is or is not.

The importance of schools to a sense of belonging and a place-based identity within the North Shore was highlighted in the case of Heather, who did not identify with any particular school on the North Shore. Heather moved house a lot as a child and teenager, and therefore never attended any particular school for long. Heather described how this was problematic for her identity as a teenager, as she was aware both on her own part as well as on that of others, that she was not able to be categorised as one or the other.

*...I was kind of disassociated from other people ... I wasn't pigeon-holed anywhere. Which, as you'd probably know, it would've been nicer for me to have been pigeon-holed but I wasn't like that... It was quite hard for me being in the middle, especially since I was brought up in the Sunnynook kind of area and I was going to school in Long Bay... I didn't fit anywhere, so I was just this girl. People knew of me. I didn't know of them. Growing up there I found it quite difficult because I never really got put anywhere, or was accepted anywhere*

*particularly until I was older, an adult kind of thing... But...I don't know, I was just really aware of the fact that I did not fit anywhere at all... I was kind of an in-between.*

Heather's comments highlight the problematic nature of being located between boundaries, rather than fitting into one side or the other. The women's identities are constructed based on boundaries forming a complex map of themselves and others. There is no place in a binary view of "us and them" for someone who does not fit into the usual boundaries. On the one hand, Heather was brought up in Sunnynook, which positions her on the outside of one boundary of privilege, while on the other hand she attended Long Bay College, which is firmly within that same boundary of privilege. Because of this dual positioning, she is unable to firmly position herself in either camp. Growing up in Sunnynook marks her as different from others attending Long Bay College, while attending Long Bay College marks her as different from those in Sunnynook. This leaves her in an uncomfortable and exposed position where she is unable to construct her own place-based identity within the same rules as those around her.

### **'The Originals' – Boundaries Between People**

Not only did the women construct boundaries between physical locations or institutions such as schools, but they also drew symbolic boundaries between groups of people. Many of the women talked about demographic change as a significant factor in their social context, with many of the women drawing a clear distinction between what may be described as the "originals" and newcomers. The originals are not the first inhabitants of the North Shore. That distinction goes to the indigeneity of Māori who lived there prior to the arrival of Europeans, and intermittently during the earlier days of colonisation. Nor are they the first European settlers of the Shore. Through the establishment of the binary of originals and newcomers, particular histories of colonisation and territorialisation are excluded, constructing the originals as the beginning of the North Shore in its current form. The originals also do not appear to be clearly defined or distinct, but appear to be those who moved to the North Shore during

its early suburban development over a long period from roughly the 1950s to the 1980s and their children who were born and raised on the Shore.

Many of the women positioned themselves as originals within a discourse that can be described almost as one of invasion or colonisation, despite their own colonial heritage. New Zealand, including the North Shore, is a postcolonial context, dominated by white settlers who hold a position of power despite the principles outlined in Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi. This perpetuates an ongoing process of colonisation with hegemonic whiteness as the norm (Coombes & Morgan, in press). The women constructed various social identities such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity and lifestyle to produce a cultural distinction between themselves as the original colonisers and those viewed as newcomers. The originals were constructed as middle class families, Pākehā or British, and living a more relaxed, humble and beach-centred (island) lifestyle, as opposed to the newcomers who were constructed as being wealthier, of varying ethnicities (particularly Asian and South African), and a more extravagant, showy lifestyle that is incompatible with the previous North Shore identity and does not meet the same cultural markers. Many of the women presented the newcomers as changing the fundamental character and way of life on the Shore, as well as driving up house prices so that originals can no longer afford to live on the Shore. Despite their continued position of power as the dominant cultural group, without having experienced dispossession or dislocation, the women were all careful to discursively position themselves as originals within a discourse of invasion or colonisation.

*Jennifer: Um, no, because I just remember I was born and raised in Albany when it was a tiny little village with a few chickens running around and not much else. And it was very much rural and farming and that sort of stuff and so I saw the development of Albany from the little village to the massive, you know, almost little city in itself that it's become!*

*Jessica: Because a lot of people on the Shore...are, I mean people that have...bought into the Shore and have come here and have money are quite toff-toff, whereas you know, when my parents bought the property they bought, the last motorway off-ramp was at Sunset Road. You know, and everyone was like "you're moving WHERE?!" Mum was a foundation pupil at Long Bay*

*College... Mmm, so she's been on the North Shore her entire life. For the people who bought into it later who've had money, it's kind of brought a culture of affluence.*

*Jessica: I do feel the need to defend myself with the whole Shore title when people get all like "oh, you're from the Shore", well yeah, I am! I've lived there my entire life, my parents bought there because they had no money and it was a good place to set up home and it's served them really well. Um, I wanna bring my kids up here because it's safe, it's nice. I don't know if this whole Shore thing is gonna be around when I have kids but...the connotations associated, the negative connotations associated with it, like the skankiness, the richness, the kind of sense of entitlement, I don't feel like any of that...belongs to me.*

*Patricia: Yes, and we were different people. I remember when I think of the people at Mairangi Bay, Murrays Bay, they're all upwardly mobile and have all got a purpose and all wanted to live there and can afford it. Well we just kind of lived there because Dad had a shop there, and everyone came for different reasons. It was cheaper there, or you could buy and build, so we were probably a little bit more of a mix of people I think.*

*Sandra:*

*I certainly wasn't aware of a lot of money. My parents weren't really rich. Nor were (husband)'s parents I gather. I just don't think there was a lot of money, and certainly not showy money.*

Positioning themselves as originals within a discourse of invasion or colonisation allowed the women to distance themselves from what they view as negative aspects of stereotypes of people from the North Shore, such as those relating to affluence. They positioned newcomers as the true subjects of negative stereotypes about people from the North Shore, allowing themselves to negotiate a problematic incompatibility between the pride and pleasure they take in their home, and the condemnation of the perceived culture of conspicuous wealth. The women located themselves as belonging and connected, drawing a boundary between themselves and the newcomers as reflecting that stereotype. They made multiple statements stressing

various changes to the face and culture of the North Shore to construct and reinforce the image of the Shore as somehow changed from its true original nature as they remember it.

*Jessica: It was way out in the middle of...uncultured, undeveloped North Shore. And then of course –*

*SG: With the clay and trees you had to cut down to build!*

*Jessica: Yea! And it got more desirable because of the location. I mean, it's stunning. As more amenities, people tended to flock here in droves.*

*SG: Yeah*

*Jessica: And now you've got some of the highest property values in Auckland on the North Shore. So I'd say the later people coming, there's a lot of...you know...rich people. (Laughs) Pretentious people, fake people. You know, the people who care about the cars and care about the aesthetics of their houses and their Jimmy Choo shoes and...all that junk. But then you've got the people living in, say Birkdale, which wasn't developed, and Bayswater, and they're the people who are honest young families, trying to have a better upbringing for their kids. They've been forced out now so the next generation can't afford to live on the North Shore, so they're forced into areas that are lower decile. But even that's coming up now because the younger families have got better jobs, renovated their houses, you know...*

*Melissa: Yea. But that is changing because...you know, that movement that I just mentioned, you know, like I've moved from the North Shore to West Auckland. I think lots of my friends have moved from the North Shore, so it's sort of...what's the word....diluting a little bit, or...and because there's so many immigrants living on the North Shore it's not the same group of people that we grew up with.*

*Carol: It was like a beach place. People were relaxed, they were sporty, they...yea, they were very, I suppose, just carefree. And now, um, I don't think there's that same...I mean, obviously there's still that beach culture but it isn't like it was. It's not like the same, I guess...I guess that's just changed with the communities I think. The Asians come for the schools and the lifestyle, and*

*therefore they're far more academic, and that, I guess, reflects in their outdoor activities and everything else that they do. That's just not that same emphasis on the beach.*

Another boundary that the women constructed between groups of people through their positioning of originals and newcomers within this discourse of invasion or colonisation is that of ethnicity. The women constructed the originals as being Pākehā (New Zealanders of European ancestry), with people of other ethnicities as newcomers. They constructed a North Shore that used to be predominantly Pākehā, with demographic change in terms of ethnicity providing apparent evidence for the discourse of invasion or colonisation.

*Melissa: When I was growing up at College there was I think maybe one...you know....person that you could describe as full-blooded Māori. Not that he really was full-blooded Māori.*

*SG: Were you aware of any Māori or Pacific Islanders when you were younger, like in your schools?*

*Nicole: ...I cannot think of any in Primary School. Um, Intermediate...only one or two, and....pretty much only a handful, like five to ten in College. I really can't think of many.*

*SG: Yea. Do you think that's changed at all since you were at school?*

*Nicole: No. I don't think it has. Not Māori and Pacific Islanders. I think more Asians.*

*Mary: I suppose our parents would have considered the area because they moved from somewhere else to the Shore. There were a lot of people there that were...that were migrants, you know, that were English. So it was very much an English background if you like. That was the commonality.*

*Patricia: I wouldn't have seen any Indian children, or Pacific Islanders. There was a Māori family in Rothesay Bay...um...and when I went to Westlake Girls there were some Māori girls who seemed to be fostered... But I think that they would've been fostered by Pākehā families probably...oh, might've been some*

*Chinese a bit later...but not in my year. No it was really white kids... I didn't see a Pacific Islander until I was working, and he and I almost bumped around a corner in the City, and the girl I was with – because I worked with her and we were having lunch in Queen Street – and she said something about him being an Islander, because she was from Mount Roskill. And I wouldn't even, I probably would've thought he was a Māori or something because I wouldn't have known any better! So that was at eighteen! The main thing then was English people coming out that would be the newest immigrants. Um, we didn't even have Dutch kids because I think it was Protestant schools and I think that the Dutch people probably went to the Catholic schools.*

*Sandra: Rangitoto, no. It was mainly white kids. Actually, it was really interesting, when I was at Birkdale North Primary there was a boy there, and he was half caste. Like, his mother was um, I think his mother was white and his dad, I don't think she was white, I don't know what she was. And his father was Māori, so he was like half caste. And there were like, never mixed marriages back then, so we noticed. He was half-caste you know, and that's what everyone knew him as the half caste boy. And he was kind of like a light chocolate colour (laughs). I fancied him like mad! But yea, so it was really interesting that we were really aware of that. There wasn't mixed marriages back then that we were aware of. You were either Māori or you were white. But at Rangitoto College, as far as I can remember it was white kids really...I can't remember any Asian kids in there.*

Interestingly, despite this discourse of colonisation, the lack of acknowledgement of Māori as the indigenous group was unchallenged by the women in their talk. The ongoing colonisation of the North Shore and New Zealand as a whole has produced a dominant Eurocentric norm, rendering the oppression of Māori invisible to the women in their everyday lives. The women only mentioned Māori in the interview context when they were specifically questioned. Few expressed discomfort with the oppression and dispossession of Māori. Only Heather voiced any discomfort with the ongoing process of colonisation:

*SG: What about in terms of Māori and Pacific Island...?*

*Heather: No, we've declined.*

*SG: Mmm?*

*Heather: We've declined.*

*SG: Do you remember any Māori or Pacific Islanders when you were growing up? Were there many in your schools or...?*

*Heather: Um, not too many. Nah.*

*SG: Ok, and you'd reckon there's even less now?*

*Heather: Yep (emphatically). They've moved towards South Auckland and areas like that. So we've lost a lot of that, which is really quite sad but – and the worst part about it is the only ones that we really kind of do have are in the...state housing areas. And they're not being done up, or they're being torn down, putting new things up and they're being kicked out of the area. So slowly but surely, they're being pushed out.*

*SG: Right.*

*Heather: Unless they've got money and they've actually worked towards becoming teachers or anything like that and they move onto the Shore. Then they have money and their children are exactly the same to us, so...yea.*

The exception to this view of the originals as having been Pākehā is seen in the women's descriptions of Beach Haven and other lower socioeconomic areas. These were portrayed as having had a higher number of Māori. However, this was usually commented on in association with comments about the differences between these areas and the rest of the North Shore. Comments about Māori in these areas were usually located in discussion about higher crime, lower socio-economic status, and cultural differences, and the presence of Māori appears to be used as symbolic of being excluded from the boundary of privilege surrounding much of the North Shore. Again, this has the effect of reinforcing internal boundaries within the North Shore, whilst still maintaining a clear boundary of privilege and whiteness around the North Shore as a whole. Indeed, in acknowledging the higher number of Māori living in a single area of the North Shore, this further highlights the absence of acknowledgement or awareness of Māori across the North Shore in general. The dominance of the white settler remains unchallenged with Māori repositioned as a deficit.

*Sandra: It was scary living in Beach Haven. It was really scary. And it was the Māoris and I know that's really awful, but it was, and my friend that had the car over here came and visited me once, and we were going out, and it was quite late at night and we were driving down the road, and there were these Māori guys and they had rocks and they were beating this white guy up!... It was really scary... And I know it's awful, but they were always Māoris doing this stuff, you know. Oh it is true. It was really scary... See it's interesting, because of my churchy group, there were quite a few Māoris, and they were lovely, and we loved them, and they were great people. So it's not the Māoris, it's just some people. But unfortunately for them, it was always Māoris who were making trouble. Like, it was never the white kids or anything. Which is awful, but it's true... There was one street just up from where we lived, called [...] Street, and it was all Māoris and it was all gangs, and you would never walk down [...] Street. It's been renamed that street, because it got such a bad reputation, the council have actually given it a different name now.*

The women all talked about demographic change, with large immigrant populations entering the North Shore. In addition to drawing on the discourse of invasion or colonisation, thinking about this in terms of the concepts of space and place, we can see how the women often associated various ethnic groups with particular areas of the North Shore, building up a social and relational landscape. The primary groups that they constructed were Asian, South African and British, and these groups were often associated with specific geographic locations. Again, these are further examples of the complex boundaries that were drawn not only around the North Shore, but within it, and which texture the identity of the North Shore and its inhabitants on the grounds of their ethnicity.

*Jennifer: I think that definitely the P.I. population definitely more around the sort of Glenfield areas, although my friend is Tongan and she went to Westlake Girls. But definitely like, the North of the North Shore, that's obviously the bottom start of the East Coast Bays but certainly further up through Torbay and Browns Bay is definitely the white area, the South African area as well. Um, where is it around? Kind of like... Around kind of like the Rosedale*

*area...um...That's more Asian...yea...that's the more recent built-up areas with the more modern places and stuff...*

*Amanda: Ah, I think more Asian communities in the Bays maybe ... Um, more Pacific Island and Māori communities in Northcote.*

*Jessica: ...we've got a lot of South African people living in Browns Bay! People call it "Little Africa" now, Browns Bay. Um, there's a lot of Asian people...and especially like where I am in Torbay, I'm up in...There's a lot of Asian people living up there.*

*Melissa: ...I know that there's a lot of English and South Africans living there. Um, still a lot of Asians.*

*Nicole: Um, especially sort of Torbay, Long Bay area, there's a lot of South Africans. Um, more and more groups that I've noticed. But um, there's also a lot of Asians in the Albany areas. Sort of...getting all the apartment buildings and things close to the shops and the motorway. You notice a lot of Asian families there.*

*Mary: ...it's become predominantly Asian, so you're getting a lot of Asian migrants with a lot of money living there... there's a lot of South Africans!*

*Mary: But the majority, you know, the average surname, like when I was at school there was one Pacific Island family there. I can still remember the surname. It was the -. One family. One dark family in all of Rangitoto College, whereas these days, you see them coming out of school and it's actually getting harder and harder to pick the Pākehās, because they just sort of blended into this Asian background, and it's sort of...It'll be interesting to see what it's like in another 10, 15 years.*

*Sandra: ...we always think of that road by Northcote Shops, we always call that Chinatown, because we go there and it's all Asian, and it's all Asian shops and signs and that.*

Again, positioning of themselves as originals within a discourse of invasion or colonisation allows the women to distance themselves from what they perceive to be undesirable aspects of stereotypes of the North Shore, such as those relating to affluence, which is also a part of the “Shore Girl, sure thing” stereotype. Immigrants, or those who fall outside the ethnic boundaries constructed by the women, can be positioned as the true subjects of the current stereotypes, assisting the women in their negotiation of their multiple positionings within dominant discourses relating to the North Shore. The women are able to reject the positioning offered to them by the “Shore Girl” stereotype, by positioning themselves as outside of this, as originals for whom the stereotype is not relevant. Again, the women drew boundaries between “us and them” in order to define their own identities.

However, the tensions between their multiple positionings are made visible in the way in which, despite their discourse of invasion or colonisation and their associations of parts of the North Shore with particular ethnicities, in other contexts many of the women emphasised that the North Shore remains predominantly white. This again maintains a boundary between the North Shore and wider Auckland and demonstrates the deceptive complexity of the boundaries around and within the North Shore. While the women acknowledged that there are a large number of immigrants, when drawing on a discourse that separates originals and newcomers, they tended to include British immigrants with the originals.

*Jennifer: ...the Shore is just so white! It's you know, like-minded people and all that sort of stuff.*

*Jessica: Um, a lot of white people. You just don't see, you know, many black people or African people around...unless it's like in the State houses in Awaruku, which they've sold all of but one now. But yea, so it's mainly, predominantly European people...*

*SG: What about in terms of British immigrants and things, because I think we've got quite a lot of those on the Shore. Do you notice that or...?*

*Heather: Yea, we've got quite a lot of them. They kind of blend. They blend but there are quite a lot of them.*

*SG: Yea.*

*Heather: But they've blended.*

*SG: Right, I get what you mean.*

*Heather: They just blend in with us. They all blend in because we're all basically English, British descent really. So really they do just blend in with us.*

*Nicole: In general, most of them you would expect to be sort of richer, white people... They blend in a lot more, because I don't really to be honest notice them as much. You definitely notice all the South Africans, but not so much the UK.*

*Patricia: Well, we do have friends at Mount Roskill, and he's always saying to us that we don't realise how lucky we are over here. This sounds terrible, but because of all the immigrants, the Middle Eastern immigrants and all that... Um, so we're seen as pretty white I suppose.*

*Sandra: I myself, I would say it's mainly white people...*

The inclusion of British immigrants as originals rather than newcomers demonstrates that whiteness and British culture are key criteria for inclusion within this boundary, overriding any immigrant status. This inclusion raises a contradiction between discourses of invasion/colonisation and a post-colonial Eurocentric discourse, whereby white immigrants are somehow exempt from being positioned as invaders due to their inclusion on the grounds of their whiteness. British migrants are acceptable to the postcolonial hegemonic white dominance, while Asian migrants are positioned as the true invaders, excluded from post-colonial belonging and entitlement due to their lack of whiteness, their difference.

The discourse of invasion or colonisation cannot be disentwined from its physical and social context. The North Shore is characterised by constant and visible newness and change, both to its physical environment, with large-scale developments being a constant feature of the Shore since the 1950s through to the present day, as well as at a demographic level, with immigration from both other countries as well as other parts of Auckland and New Zealand. There is also a lack of awareness or emphasis on history on the Shore. For example, when I began this research, I had barely heard any

mention of the pre-European history of the Shore, and those I spoke to had not either. Growing up in Torbay, we had the Torbay Historical Society who would publish frequent articles. However, these rarely went back earlier than the 1950s, and if they did, they were focussed on early European farmsteads and homes. This Eurocentric lack of attention to the early history, and particularly Māori history of the North Shore reinforces the ongoing process of colonisation and bolsters the boundaries that function to exclude Māori from privilege on the North Shore.

There is a sense of social mobility on the North Shore as a place that is not rooted in tradition. This may lend itself to the constant change on the Shore. For example, when people immigrate to Auckland City, or other more established areas, they have to live wherever they can find available homes, and are therefore dispersed among the existing population. On the Shore however, with its newness and constant development, new arrivals are able to create whole new communities, resulting in greater visibility of immigration, as whole areas become known for particular ethnic groups, and meaning that demographic change (in terms of ethnicity) is more dramatic, with whole sections of the population appearing to change on a large and noticeable scale. Added to this, the lack of historical tradition and constant valuing of change may feed into a culture unlike that of more traditional areas, where people “know their place”. Rather, it may foster a more entrepreneurial culture, taken-for-granted social mobility, and valuing of self-improvement that may be seen as alien or threatening to dominant culture in wider Auckland which is more traditionalist and set.

*Jessica: Also, I don't think religion plays a really big part in the North Shore.*

*SG: Mmm*

*Jessica: Like, I think a lot of cultures in South Auckland, West Auckland, are either heavily Christian and so it's kind of frowned upon.*

*SG: Right, so there'd be that sort of control over the women's behaviour?*

*Jessica: Yea, the bringing up with the parents always you must protect your virtue and stuff, whereas...we do have an undertone, a kind of Christian undertone on the North Shore, but it's just an undertone...*

*SG: More like a historical thing?*

*Jessica: Yea, it's not like a doctrine on how we should live. It's more like take this and try and be a better person, instead of you know, God will smite you if*

*you have unprotected sex and get pregnant when you're in your teenage years and...*

*SG: Would you say that the Shore maybe has more modern values or?*

*Jessica: I actually would. I mean, to me it's just a personal opinion...*

*SG: Oh yea!*

*Jessica: ... 'cos all religious stuff is really. Um, I think that it is old-fashioned to cling to these things.*

*Mary: And, um, I still think it is today to a certain extent, but a lot of people's houses started off as baches. And it was only sort of the Bridge, the Harbour Bridge that it started being people moving out there, looking at it as a viable option.*

*Susan: Oh the North Shore was definitely separate. It was all new. It was new. Devonport was the oldest part and I guess the further up you go, and on the whole, people would be, oh they'd say oh the North Shore (meaningfully). Or you lived in Howick. It was the North Shore and Howick from what I remember. That might just have been my family's attitude. You were ok if you lived in Howick too. Because it was new too. A newer sort of suburb, or most of it was.*

*Carol: ...originally the Shore was just a holiday place where wealthy people had baches, and then wealthy people built big flash homes to start with, and then...I don't know.*

*Carol: And then we started getting lots of South African.*

*SG: Yep.*

*Carol: Um, and by the time I was in my late 20's, South Africans were flooding through.*

*SG: Oh, so there were quite a few South Africans coming in when you were young as well?*

*Carol: Yea. In my late 20's and certainly in my early 30's, because I was working at the Health Department then, and they were Doctors and things all coming to the Shore, and I can remember because I worked for the Ministry of Health and they had to um, sort of supervise new Doctors. They actually put a*

*stop on the number of Doctors, GPs, working on the Shore at one point, because there were so many that they were no longer a financial viability (laughs). And the majority was South African Doctors coming in and wanting to set up on the Shore.*

*SG: Oh how interesting.*

*Carol: Yea, and that was back when I was in my early 30's, so 30 years ago. So they were starting to flood through then. And then of course now you've got a lot of Asians, um, a lot of Indians...and it is definitely even the Shore...although you see I don't live on the Shore now, I live in the West... there definitely are a lot more Asians on the Shore. I mean, I'll give you an example. A couple of years ago, it must be two years ago, I decided I would go to midnight mass at St Joseph's at Christmas. Hadn't been for a while, and it was something we always did as a family, always went to midnight mass. (Husband) was working, so I thought, oh, I'm sitting here on Christmas Eve on my own. I'm going to go to St Joseph's. I went there and...there was nobody I knew there, whereas always years before, and even, because (husband) and I have been since we've been back, there was always people you'd recognise. There was nobody...and they were all, almost exclusively Asian or Philippino.*

*SG: That's really interesting.*

*Carol: That whole congregation had changed, and that's because that whole - it feeds from Takapuna, and so many Asians have moved there because of the schooling.*

*SG: Right.*

*Carol: Because that's where they want their children and...*

The culture of change on the North Shore ignores the history of the area and the people who live in it, offering the women only the position of temporary residents like the other waves of immigrants or the disconnected lack of a sense of home like settlers without a shared genealogy, history and community. However, by employing a discourse of invasion or colonisation, the women are able to position themselves as originals, drawing a boundary between themselves and those that they view as newcomers. This position as originals on the North Shore contributes to their ongoing process of identity-construction, as they build up their place-based identities.

## **'Spoilt Little Skanks' – Stereotypes about women from the North Shore**

This research sought to examine the 'Shore Girl, sure thing' stereotype, how it has been maintained or changed over time and the ways in which the women are positioned by the dominant discourses. Having examined the way the women use the construction of boundaries to establish their own identities, it is now necessary to begin to examine the women's talk regarding sexual and gender stereotypes specific to women from the North Shore, especially 'Shore Girl, sure thing'. While the women expressed a range of ideas about what they believe others think about women from the North Shore, a strong theme emerged in their talk. In broad terms, the women described a stereotype of women from the North Shore as displaying a sense of entitlement, affluence, lack of self-responsibility and promiscuity. Some of these qualities would seem to be in line with dominant neoliberal ideology, consistent with ideas of autonomy, freedom of choice, individuality and self-accountability. However, all of these are seen as negative traits in the context of women from the North Shore, and there is an overt sexualisation present in stereotypes of these women who are viewed as "spoilt little skanks". There are two main elements to the stereotypes, namely snobbery as a result of affluence and entitlement, and irresponsible sexual promiscuity.

*Jennifer: There's a stereotype that they're blond and, um, bimbo-y, they're easy, um, yea that they're daddy's girl, that they live on daddy's money or daddy's credit card.*

*Amanda: And then I think people outside the Shore think that we're maybe stuck up... And spoiled, and don't... Um, so yeah, I think that people think that girls and women from the Shore are snobby, and easy, and entitled...hmm...*

*SG: Um, would you be able to explain what you understand that stereotype to be?*

*Jessica: Shore girls are eeeeasy. (Laughs)*

*SG: (laughs) Yea, that's the main thing?*

*Jessica: Yep. Like basically if you put a little bit of effort in, you'll get a lot of reward.*

*SG: How do you think people from wider Auckland view women from the Shore in general?*

*Jessica: Ugh (shudders). Spoilt little skanks! (Laughs) Probably. Or pretentious, rich skanks.*

*Melissa: ...I think everyone from the rest of Auckland sort of looks at people from the Shore as, again, people with that sense of entitlement. You know, mummy and daddy got money, mummy and daddy brought them up well...but because they had money they didn't have to work, they got bought the new car anyway...um...*

*Nicole: ...I would think they'd see us as very entitled, rich, snobby girls and...you know, parents buy them whatever they want and things like that.*

*Sandra: Um, I probably think they think we're a bit pretentious... I think they probably think we're a bit snotty. Um, mostly white. Probably focussed on health and beauty and nutrition and go to the gym and have your nails painted and legs waxed and, kind of like worried about appearances. Probably think we're a bit shallow. Um, maybe a bit hard. Yea. Maybe that we think we're a bit exclusive.*

The Shore Girl stereotype is constructed through multiple discourses such as neoliberal discourse, and sexual discourses including the male sexual drive, the have-hold, permissive and the Madonna-whore discourses. Neoliberal ideology values individual responsibility, autonomy and accountability, and this discourse positions the women as failing to take this up and achieve their own successes, rather relying on the resources of their wealthy parents. In a discourse where the attainment of economic success through individual effort and choices is celebrated as desirable, the women are positioned as enjoying affluence that they have not earned and therefore any pride or sense of entitlement that they express is seen as false and undeserved. They are positioned as irresponsible within this discourse, and this irresponsibility is carried through into their positioning within sexual discourses. The subject positions available to women within dominant sexual discourses require women to guard themselves against sexual advances unless they are in acceptable relationships with the man

involved. In either case, female sexuality is seen as needing to be regulated and controlled, either by the woman herself or the man with whom she is in a relationship. However, the sexuality of women from the North Shore is seen as unregulated, and they are positioned as promiscuous, engaging in irresponsible sexual behaviour outside of the bounds of acceptable relationships.

While the women talked about this as a stereotype held by those outside the North Shore, many of them also engaged in characterising particular women in the same way, assuming women to be irresponsible, self-entitled and promiscuous. They were unable to resist the stereotype in its entirety, and rather positioned themselves as separate from it. This was achieved by positioning others as the true subjects of the stereotype.

*Jennifer: ...and there was very distinct groups, and I think there was one particular group that fitted the whole – they weren't all blond – Um, but they definitely were the ones that came from you know the more wealthy backgrounds and all that sort of stuff. They were the...far more confident and extroverted and all that sort of stuff. Um, and I don't even know if they actually were more sexually active, but that was certainly the image that, I don't know if they wanted it to be portrayed, but they were certainly...they didn't do anything to say no I wasn't, or they were quite comfortable with that image being there.*

*Melissa: And the females I did hang out with were sort of more like me. You know, very ordinary, not interested in...hair and make-up and the perfect little mini-dress and high heels and stuff, which is what I perceived the group of people who hung out at R'Toto to be. The pretty people. The people with money and...yea.*

*Susan: I see them at the beginning of each semester. Ah, a definite Shore Girl culture, definitely. Sit in a class and look around. I go to the first class of the semester and I'll sit up the back and just look. All you see is blond, tanned, those girls are Shore Girls you know. Those ones may not be, but those ones are... There's definitely a look. Very much sort of um, I don't think superior, but an attitude that they're saying they're it, the North Shore. We're not Westies, we're not whatever people call themselves. But no, we're definitely the elite. ...It's*

*very much like probably the Valley Girls of California, that sort of thing... (unclear). You sit back and watch and see what the fashions are for this year. Very very short skirts and very very high heels.*

*Carol: They could be pretty stuck up.*

*Carol: But yea, the Shore girls, you always had that inferior feeling. And even at work and all, when they talked about things, I was thinking oh God, I don't... it's just not my background. I don't know what they're talking about. And shopping and things like that even. I just don't do that kind of thing. And they know what to wear, and they can wear it because they've been brought up with it. We weren't brought up with that kind of background, so... just a wealthier, um, more social – socialites, I guess.*

*Carol: And, um, they assumed that everything would be there for them to... take and... yea... Just a little bit... superior than people from the other side of Auckland... it's kind of the spoiled brat image (laughs) I guess. And I suppose they're so used to everything being available... They have the money. They can do what they like. It's all there for them.*

One of the key elements to stereotypes about women from the North Shore, and which the women demonstrated awareness of in their talk, is that of pretention, which is closely linked to affluence and socio-economic status. This involves an idea that women from the North Shore are primarily interested in appearance and image, with a lack of community spirit or depth. The image evoked is one that can be described as that of the 'nouveau riche', that is "all money, no class." Women from the North Shore are portrayed as displaying a kind of vulgarity, engaging in overt displays of affluence and status, and this is often linked to their ethnicity.

*Jennifer: ...The Shore's quite an image-conscious place. Image is everything... Um, they want like affluence and abundance and being comfortable and well-off and um, I guess that goes in with being successful and being someone. Being important and being noticed... The first thing that I thought right then was pretentious and fake. Because a lot of people on the Shore... are, I mean people*

*that have...bought into the Shore and have come here and have money are quite toff-toff...*

*Jessica: And then you get all the...big, pretentious people... In their Audis!...driving past Kristin School to go to work, holy crap! These kids are in like brand new Audis and things like this! And they're being dropped off by their Dad in a Maserati, a Lamborghini, a, you know, Aston Martin, and I'm just thinking that car is worth like, more than my apartment was when I had my apartment! So they've got to be out there somewhere...and they're on the North Shore.*

*Jessica: And they were saying to me, did you move to the Shore recently?... And they'd be like, oh, oh well I expected, you know, to be different, like, 'cos let's face it, I don't wear the latest trends and all this crap. I can't afford it. And even if I could I'm not gonna spend thousands of dollars on a pair of Jimmy Choo shoes. Not gonna do it. And they were like, oh, well I expected you to be a bit different... And so these people were like oh, well we've heard, or our experience of people from the North Shore is different. You know, people are pretentious, stuck-up snobs and stuff, so...I think...given where you went to school does play a large part in that. Because you know, most of the people who I went to Long Bay with were not like that fake stereotype.*

*Sandra: It's just got everything you need on the Shore. Good lifestyle, awesome lifestyle, but I just don't like the pretentious side, and I don't...some of the houses are just ridiculous, like on the beaches and things. You just think who needs a house that big? (Laughs) They're massive! It's crazy! Just way too much money!*

*Susan: ...when I was young my mother was like that. There must have been other people she was friends with who were as well. Had to be seen to be mixing with the right people and doing the right things and um, not going certain places.*

*Carol: Yea, Shore people are...particularly to Westies, Shore people are a bit pretentious.*

When discussing pretention, the women drew on many of the same boundaries within and around the North Shore that they had drawn on in the construction of their identities. For example, the boundary between the East and West of the North Shore was still evident, as were boundaries between suburbs.

*SG: How would you see someone from Glenfield as the same or different from someone from the East Coast Bays?*

*Jennifer: Um, I would say generally probably lower socio-economic, um, stuff, and so that's gonna influence the schools' resources and opportunities and all that stuff. Um, I found them generally more down-to-earth, or more grounded...Um, yea, just more about...it's not about the material stuff, and it's not about being seen or the image.*

*Jessica: But then you've got the people living in, say Birkdale, which wasn't developed, and Bayswater, and they're the people who are honest young families, trying to have a better upbringing for their kids...But I think that silly little divide that pushed Glenfield out has made them not so...pretentious.*

*Sandra: ... it's probably people that are a bit more well-off. That's just the impression I get, especially in Milford. Um...I think some of them can be quite pretentious. 'Cos like, Takapuna people are really pretentious, so we kind of avoid Takapuna. We think Milford is more down-to-earth people. (Laughs)*

*Sandra: I actually feel when people ask where do you live and I say Milford, I actually feel a bit embarrassed about that sometimes because I think they might think that I'm a bit pretentious and I like to think I'm not like that.*

While this idea of pretention appears to be related to people from the North Shore in general, the same ideas of vulgarity, pretention and lack of “class” recur in the ‘Shore Girl’ stereotype, which is ostensibly about the women’s sexuality, raising the possibility that the stereotype may be at least partially a result of this vulgarity being

generalised to the women's sexuality and other behaviour. If we accept this theory for a moment, we must ask why such generalisation to women's sexuality and behaviour would occur.

As discussed by Cowie and Lees (1981), Western culture and language contain many tools for the categorisation and regulation of women through their sexuality. Labels that appear to signify sexual promiscuity have much more complex meanings and significance. Western culture often views sexuality, and female sexuality in particular, as dangerous or threatening to social structure and order, resulting in sexual regulation (Bernasconi, 2010). For this reason, the policing of women's sexuality is a more familiar, convenient and acceptable means of denigrating and positioning them as different. It would be more difficult and complex to attempt to do this in terms of their perceived affluence given that neoliberal ideology, which would seem to support their affluence as positive, is a dominant discourse in Western society, where affluence and power are intrinsically linked, and to do so may result in ambiguity and ambivalence. However, dominant heterosexual discourse is virtually unanimous in its condemnation of female promiscuity. Therefore, to position women from the North Shore as promiscuous within dominant heterosexual discourse has the unambiguous result of shaming and marking as different and transgressive from social norms. The policing of a woman's sexuality is a more effective method of control and of bringing her into line with dominant societal expectations.

### **'Go-Getters'**

Much of the stereotype of women from the North Shore is overtly sexual, however in their talk the women often prioritised privilege, and this was clearly viewed by them as the salient part of the stereotype. While the spoilt brat image of girls from the North Shore appears to be a dominant one, it sits somewhat in contradiction to another common idea about them. The stereotype turns also to career and image, so that the women are seen simultaneously being "spoilt little skanks" and also career focussed. Women from the North Shore are often viewed as highly educated, occupationally and economically successful. They are often seen as the stereotypical "career women". Unlike irresponsible sexual promiscuity and reliance on parents, this part of the stereotype is in alignment with the neoliberal ideology. The neoliberal subject focusses on individual responsibility, autonomy and accountability, and being career-focussed

fits this context. However, as we have also seen, the neoliberal subject does not necessarily recognise the constraining influence of social or structural power, and it is this power that positions career women from the North Shore in a negative light.

As has been explored previously in social psychology, women who are in high status positions or in non-traditional roles, such as “career women”, often face challenges due to their high status being perceived as incompatible with their performance of femininity (Giannopoulos, Conway, & Mendelson, 2005). One way to reduce this incompatibility is to ascribe them more masculine characteristics, such as being sexually active or aggressive, excessive use of alcohol, and greater self-confidence and sense of entitlement. All of these characteristics can be found in the Shore Girl stereotype that is applied to women from the North Shore, however the talk of the women reveals that they themselves draw on these characteristics when describing themselves and other women from the North Shore. This apparent complicity in their own oppression demonstrates the functioning of disciplinary power as it produces “docile” bodies (Bartky, 1988). The women are self-policing subjects, maintaining vigilance over their appearance and femininity to ensure that they meet the requirements of dominant heterosexual scripts (Gavey, 1992).

Dominant gender discourse in western society positions women as lower status, and high status women, such as many of the women from the North Shore who are economically, educationally and occupationally successful, present a challenge to male dominance and superiority. This is not only due to the fact that they are successful, but specifically that they are successful in a pursuit that is viewed as masculine. In order to defend this dominance, women’s success needs to be moderated. Casting these women as different, masculine and outside cultural norms of acceptable femininity, through labelling them as promiscuous, is a means of regulation and control. Such labelling is a serious social sanction to face, with the potential to have real damaging social and economic repercussions. This encourages these women to be more vigilant in the policing of their femininity in accordance with dominant societal expectations. To be too successful can be seen as breaching expectations of normative femininity, whereby women are expected to be less driven or aggressive in their pursuit of educational and career success. Rather, women are expected to perform their femininity by disciplining their bodies in accordance with strict criteria to successfully construct themselves as ‘object and prey’ of men. However, success in this performance will not result in any increase in social power or respect, due to the general lack of value ascribed to feminine

activities. If a woman achieves success in the performance of femininity, this success will be seen as unimportant simply on the basis that it is feminine (Bartky, 1988).

The young women from the North Shore were powerless to combat this dominant patriarchal discourse in its purest form. However, they engaged in another form of resistance by taking up an alternative “Girl Power” discourse (Gill, 2008). Rather than challenge the existence of such ideas about them, the women engaged in resistance by subverting these ideas, claiming their difference and positioning themselves not as failing in the performance of femininity, but rather as active, agentic and competent, presenting these “failures” as positive aspects of their identities.

An alternative discourse that the younger women drew on in their interviews is one that may be referred to as a “Go-Getter” discourse. Gill (2008) discusses a discourse of empowerment that shares many similarities with the “Go-Getter” discourse. She asserts that western society and advertising has embraced a discourse of empowerment for women, but that this in itself is another form of disciplinary power at work to regulate femininity. Whilst it is ostensibly a discourse of empowerment, drawing on neoliberal ideals of freedom of choice, it merely creates a new set of expectations and requirements of femininity. It constrains women as they are required to demonstrate their ‘empowerment’ in particular ways while simultaneously silencing resistance. The Go-Getter discourse casts the women of the North Shore being self-confident, independent, determined and driven to succeed and improve their position. The women drew on this discourse as a positive quality of women from the Shore, and one that marks them as different from other women. The ideology of the North Shore is described as one of independence, being driven to achieve success, aiming high and not recognising constraints on what can be achieved, rather assuming that it is achievable. While many of the women noted that this could result in a demonstrable sense of entitlement, they again drew on neo-liberal ideology, assuring that women from the North Shore do not expect things to be given to them, but rather that they work hard for what they have, valuing education and achievement in their careers.

*Jennifer: ...and they were always... very driven...to succeed, to be the best, to be number one. Um, you're perfect or you're special, or...there's something great about you that you're gonna be the greatest.*

*Jennifer: Um, I think the, it gives you a level of like, independence or autonomy. You can go out and you can hang with your friends at the beach and you're generally reasonably safe. Um, and you can go and do that stuff and build that sense of identity and self and, I'd hardly call them life skills, but you know it's not like you have to survive the Shore but just, yea, just being able to do stuff for yourself and think for yourself. Um, and definitely education.*

*Jessica: And I guess that's how the affluence came to the North Shore. You want to live on the Shore you have to have a big job.*

*Jessica: Yea, but out of the great - I'd say 20% of the people that we were associated with at school would fall into that category. I mean, even [name] who had very affluent parents, she still got her own job and made her own way in the world.*

*Heather: They've actually been parented in that way. So, in a lot of ways I find that I think they find themselves a little...what's the word? Indestructible.*

*Nicole: I would say that most people, even though they get given everything, I think they're more driven to get good careers when they leave school. I mean, you don't see a lot of them dropping out and doing nothing with their lives. A lot of them seem...It's like they see what their parents are doing and yea. They don't wanna give those things up! (Laughs)*

While less common, the same discourse about go-getter women appears to be present in the talk of some of the older women about certain young women on the North Shore when they were growing up and in their observations of today. However, these older women did not engage in the same level of resistance to dominant discourse. Some of their talk, despite drawing on the same notions of the young women as go-getters, does not contain the same element of agency. Rather, the women were sometimes cast in a more passive role, and they were positioned as achieving only as a result of expectations placed on them rather than as a result of their own desires and goals. This change over time illustrates Gill's (2008) assertion of the more recent social acceptance of a discourse of empowerment. The younger women are regulated by the

requirement to perform their femininity in socially expected ways that demonstrate their 'empowerment', whereas when the older group were young women, this was not a dominant discourse and they therefore do not face the same expectation to demonstrate this.

*Linda: They were go-getters. So those girls were going places...*

*Mary: It's a bloody good school. Very high achieving. And our big thing was to come back, and this is in the more senior years, to come back, um, the following year to find out who got more scholarships... Um, and bursaries.*

*Patricia: I remember when I think of the people at Mairangi Bay, Murrays Bay, they're all upwardly mobile and have all got a purpose and all wanted to live there and can afford it.*

*Susan: I don't know. I think there's probably a lot of pressure on young people on the North Shore. On most young people. I don't think it's necessarily around some areas.*

*SG: What sorts of pressure are you referring to?*

*Susan: Probably pressure to achieve at school mainly. I can remember one suicide from when I was at school, when I was at Westlake, a very bright family and this was the youngest girl I think, and she committed suicide. Probably pressure from her parents pushing her a bit hard.*

*SG: Mmm. Do you think there's quite a culture of achievement on the Shore, would you say?*

*Susan: Yes, I think so. Yes, I think that the expectations of parents are, dare I say it, judgemental statements here, higher than say those in the West because we've got some of the friends from the West and two or three of them have become primary school teachers too. But there was no expectation that they would. You know, no expectation that they would do anything other than work in a factory or one of them was working in a call centre. There was no great ambition. And that's I think that area of Auckland kind of thing.*

*SG: Right, and on the Shore you'd say there's more...*

*Susan: More pressure to take up a professional career or a tertiary education. Parents have higher expectations I think.*

*Susan: I think of among my daughter's friends. Most of them went on to tertiary education of some sort. Yea, most of them did that I know. Definitely a drive to do something professional rather than something vocational if that's the right word.*

*Carol: I suppose Shore Girls, they're all bright, young, career-minded, um....and I think perhaps always have been. Even in my day they were all career-minded um, yea very self-assured and knew their place in life. And, um, they assumed that everything would be there for them to...take and...yea...Just a little bit...superior than people from the other side of Auckland.*

However, some of the older women also spoke about the constraints on women's achievements when they were younger, which they viewed as no longer being the case. The younger women did not make any reference to constraints on their ability to achieve, suggesting that while they may face some social sanction for failing to conform to dominant norms of femininity, they face less structural barriers to gaining further education and career success than their older counterparts. This change is evidence of some social movement, whereby the conditions of possibilities have changed, allowing the younger women different opportunities than their older counterparts. However, this does not signify genuine freedom of choice or empowerment, but rather it signifies a different set of expectations of femininity.

*Patricia: I was in the top ten of the school really, when I look back, and we weren't really encouraged to go to university, and so I still remembered that. Now I know Westlake is great for girls, and you know, girls can do anything, but it wasn't like that then and it should've been... And obviously all of the teachers had degrees, and some were married and had children, so you could have a career and children, whereas we were brought up you had to kind of choose. So if you stayed single, you had your career... Um, but once again, we didn't have any examples of women who had stayed single... Apart from some dreadful blue-stocking teachers at Westlake. Awful!...you didn't want to be like them!*

*Patricia: You'd never...like my daughter says what did you want to do? What were your goals? Because you guys grew up with goals. We never grew up with goals. I said just life, you just chugged along and as you came to a fork in the road you chose different things.*

Despite the variation over time, this go-getter discourse seems to be a common thread amongst the talk of the women interviewed. While this may be viewed as a very positive discourse about the women of the North Shore, it exists alongside dominant discourses of “traditional” femininity whereby women are passive, communal, warm and occupationally incompetent or limited through social expectations of the time. Within this discourse, by being go-getters women from the North Shore could be seen as failing to conform to appropriate notions of femininity, by being career-oriented, and aggressive in the pursuit of success and their goals. It may be that this carries over to generalisation about their sexuality. In dominant patriarchal discourse, they can be seen as taking on more accepted masculine traits in terms of their education and employment, and this therefore is cast in terms of their sexuality also, as sexuality is a site of controlling women and femininity. They are therefore portrayed as sexually aggressive and unfeminine, rather than traditional notions of female sexuality as passive and repressed.

### **‘Shore Girl, Sure Thing’**

The meaning of the “Shore Girl, sure thing” stereotype is produced through relationships and shared understandings and as a result of this it cannot be discussed in isolation from its relational context. The women interviewed first had to go through a process of establishing this context by locating themselves and others on the North Shore through the construction of geopolitical and relational boundaries in order to produce a shared understanding of their place-based identities. By following the women through this process, we are able to come to this shared understanding of relational and geopolitical context within which “Shore Girl, sure thing” meaning is produced and reproduced. Only now that this relational context and the discourses active within it have been examined, can we make meaning from the “Shore Girl” stereotype.

The primary stereotype that this research aimed to focus on was the “Shore Girl” stereotype, as expressed in the commonly used phrase “Shore Girl, sure thing” and therefore all of the women were given this phrase and asked whether they had heard it and what they understood it to mean. The women’s answers to these questions provided demonstration of a clear change in the discourse surrounding the sexual behaviour of young women from the North Shore from when the older group were teenagers to when the younger group were teenagers.

The younger group all expressed awareness of the stereotype and how it marks people in particular ways, and all engaged with it in ways that drew on dominant discourses of sexuality to make meaning through it. Traditional sexual discourses subject women to a Madonna-whore dichotomy, wherein they are positioned either as pure, virginal and engaging in sex within the bounds of exclusive heteronormative relationships, or as promiscuous and easy (Crawford & Popp, 2003). In this way, women having sex is either viewed as an expression of love or as promiscuity, with love as the socially acceptable and desirable of the two. This discourse of love/promiscuity was evident in the younger group’s talk about the Shore Girl stereotype, with Shore Girls positioned as promiscuous.

*Jennifer: Oh, um, that people are easy. Yep... And that, you know, if you need a ride home kind of thing, that she’ll pay you in sexual favours and that sort of stuff. Or just give her a few drinks and she’ll be yours at the party, and...yea.*

*Amanda: Oh! I never thought about anything other than the sexual thing. I just, I always thought it meant if you’re with a girl from the Shore, then you’re likely going to be able to have sex with her because she’s not gonna....she’s a sure thing.*

*Jessica: Like it says, Shore Girl, sure thing. You’d go to a party out west or something and you’d meet someone and they’d say where do you live? And you’d say North Shore, and they’d be like oh sweet! (meaningful tone). I mean, you’re all Shore Girls, oh sweet! Gonna be getting some tonight!*

*Melissa: Promiscuous females. Get them drunk and they’re a sure thing.*

However, this was one of multiple discourses of sexuality that were at work in the women's talk. Hollway (1984a) produces a dominant discourse of sexuality in Western society as the male sexual drive discourse, which positions men's sexuality as the result of a biological drive, and a natural state, with women as the passive objects of their sexual attentions. This discourse could be seen as present in the talk of many of the younger women as they constructed their understanding of the "Shore Girl, sure thing" stereotype. Men's sexual urges, actively desiring to have sex with women whenever possible, were implicit in much of the women's talk. The way in which the women do not deem it necessary to make this explicit is a demonstration of the acceptance of this as natural. However, despite positioning Shore Girls as promiscuous, easily persuaded to engage in sex without love, mention of the women's own sexual desire was conspicuously absent. Rather, they were cast in terms of male desire. For example, Nicole describes Shore Girls as "...that blond beach girl...and expecting them to be flirty and...flirtatious and easy-going and...yea." In this image, being blonde is equated with male desire, and the Shore Girl's desire is not mentioned.

Heather's understanding of the stereotype differed from that of many of the other young women, in that she resisted the negative view of promiscuity in the Madonna-whore dichotomy. While she described Shore Girls' behaviour as being what most would classify as promiscuity, she did not imply that this was a moral failing. Heather also utilised what Hollway terms the permissive discourse. Like the male sexual drive discourse, this also views sexuality as a natural and desirable drive located within the individual, but unlike the male sexual drive discourse, it makes no distinction between men and women. Therefore, women are also seen as possessing an active and desiring sexuality (Hollway, 1984a). Several of the younger group did occasionally make comments that appeared to draw on this discourse, but Heather in particular drew on this strongly.

*Heather: Well you can take it from a few different things. You can put it down as Shore Girl, sure can, as in Shore Girls can fuck good... Which I've heard the opinion of that one made. Or the fact that Shore Girls are easy to get...I think they can mean it in two different ways, just like I said. I think they can do it good, or basically that we're a bit easy. But...I mean, they always say it in such a good way... Yea, men always say it in such a good way, like you've got yourself a Shore Girl. And they're like oh yea! Shore Girl, sure can! Awesome,*

*you've got a Shore Girl. It's actually a high...we're highly regarded... It's not a negative, awful thing. No. It's actually something we should be highly regarded of. Because most of the men think oh! Shore Girl! You know? Men will go oh Shore Girl, mostly because they can't get one. It's because they're a catch! To get a Shore Girl is a catch. So, as well as that, they say Shore Girl, sure can, but they still say Shore Girls are hard to get... They might be a sure thing but they're hard to continue on with. I mean, to have an actual girlfriend from the Shore is quite highly regarded.*

Heather's resistance can be seen in the way that she shifted from the stereotype from "sure thing" to "sure can". In this way, she took up the position of neoliberal freedoms, constructing Shore Girls as active, agentic and autonomous. However, despite her neoliberal positioning of Shore Girls as demonstrating sexual experience and prowess as something to be proud of, Shore Girls are still subject to differing social and structural consequences of promiscuity for women and men. Even as she took up this position of autonomy and freedom of choice, Heather simultaneously positioned the "Shore Girls" once again as objects of male desire. In her account, despite constructing women as active and agentic sexual beings, "Shore Girls" were primarily described in terms of their value to men as sexual objects and status symbols. In her apparently more permissive and positive construction, they were presented as being good at providing sexual pleasure to men, they were easy for men to get but hard for them to keep, they were a status symbol for men to achieve - they were a "catch".

The older women's responses to questions about the "Shore Girl, sure thing" stereotype were much more varied, with only some having heard of the stereotype previously. Many of them described their understanding of the stereotype in terms of socioeconomic factors rather than promiscuity, and all asserted that it has changed since they were young. The older women's responses demonstrated the different constraints on sexuality at the time, compared to those in the younger group.

*Linda: No, I never heard it. It may have happened more after my time... I think in my day, everyone would've been...scared, you know?*

*Mary: That's actually a new thing, because when I was at High School, um, that wasn't the thing at all. Because North Shore girls, I think, North Shore girls*

*were actually somebody they wanted to date. In fact it was sort of, more that they were seen as, um, sexually unattainable. I think it was probably because we were over the Harbour Bridge and so we were very far away! (Laughs) But, no there wasn't that idea of promiscuity for Shore Girls when I was growing up...it was still a high socio-economic area but definitely we weren't considered, um, loose or promiscuous. We were considered sort of privileged... promiscuity wasn't part of our sort of persona at all...But no we weren't promiscuous.*

*Patricia: Not that I was aware of, no. Not as a child. I mean my parents might've thought that it was a bit risky going to the co-ed school at Rangi and that that was...they may have known more than I did. (Laughs) ... But um, no, because even the richer girls where we were, that we met, they still seemed to have been brought up the same way we were...no I didn't notice it on the Shore and I never heard anything.*

*Sandra: But kind of Shore Girls, I don't know. When I hear that I think that it probably means that Shore Girls are a lot of fun and maybe a bit sassy and um...out for a good time, and not pretentious, and maybe drink a bit much at times...and let their guard down a bit much. And maybe a bit...When I hear Shore Girls I think of Glenfield. I don't know why... If I think about my generation, Glenfield girls would have been the Shore Girls, kind of easy. Or Westlake girls, but I always think of Glenfield girls when I hear Shore Girls.*

*SG: Have you heard the phrase Shore Girl, sure thing?*

*Sandra: Oh yea, I think I have. Yea, so the same kind of thing. Well, not so much easy, but I think out for a good time and treat it as a good time, rather than being....yea.*

*SG: That stereotype seems to be one that's come around a lot more recently.*

*Sandra: Definitely. That's why I wonder if it's just something that's come from somewhere and grown.*

*SG: I was going to say, do you think the stereotype of girls from the Shore has changed now from when you were young?*

*Sandra: Um, I think it's more widespread now. Like Shore Girls people think of more places where it used to be just like Glenfield girls. So I think it's kind of grown to cover the whole Shore rather than just part of the Shore.*

In describing their knowledge of the stereotype, many of the older women also drew on the dominant male sexual drive discourse. For example, Sandra suggested that Shore Girls “maybe let their guard down a bit much.” Again, this implies the role of women as gatekeepers against the natural sexual urges of men. Susan also drew on this discourse, recalling that “even when I was a teenager... You had to be careful. Fend off one or two,” while Mary stated that “The boys were always trying it like boys do”. Inherent in the older women’s talk was an understanding of sex as a “risky” endeavour, with the potential to have negative consequences for women. As such, they must keep up their “guard” and “be careful”.

Unlike the younger group, much of the older group’s talk evidenced what Hollway (1984a) terms the have/hold discourse, with female sexuality being for the purpose of reproduction, marriage and family life. In this discourse, uncontrolled female sexuality is a threat to heterosexual normativity and the traditional nuclear family, and it must be controlled by men.

*Mary: So there was pairing up within that... I mean, I met my first husband at school...and a lot of people actually did end up getting married. I can think of one couple, they hooked up at 13, and they’re still married today, and they have 7 children, and... There were some, yeah, actually yeah. Um, and they tended to sort of float around from boy to boy to boy. Um, and they wouldn’t have...once again, it wasn’t...it just was...nobody thought anything of it, other than...there was that, that quite underlying, underlining sort of, almost...oh what would you call it? Not judgement, what’s the word that’s not that strong but... because good girls didn’t do that. I think that was more of a general social hang-up.*

*Patricia: I think we would’ve expected the boy to propose after a few years, or be talking about marriage by the time you were about nineteen... So you wanted to get married because once again, you had a life, and we didn’t perceive there was a life for you being single.*

*Susan: I got married and I had a bikini going on my honeymoon and mum said you can’t wear that now you’re married! It was 1971! (Laughs)... I did anyway!*

*But the expectations now you're married were you wear full....you don't wear a bikini anymore.*

Sexual discourses such as this cast men as protectors of the sexuality of women, and this can have repercussions for women beyond their sexual autonomy. Many of the older women described social norms that cast men as protectors of their sexuality as teenagers, but that also limited their freedom of movement and choice in other ways, such as Patricia who stated that:

*But um, there was also dances in the city but they were a little bit more dodgy... So the girls didn't go on their own into the city. But if you had a boyfriend you would go. And quite often you were with your boyfriend and his boyfriends, his friends and their girlfriends.... But there was never any girls on their own, you were always with a boyfriend... There was never any unattached girls but there'd be unattached boys somehow.*

Patricia went on to describe how this limitation of movement continued to operate even once women were married:

*...Very lonely because everyone was married... There was a lot of that getting pregnant so you had to get married. So you had this steady boyfriend and then if you got pregnant you were expected to, and then often those marriages didn't last...Even now, you can go out with your girlfriends for a meal, but then you didn't leave your husband at home and go out with your friend, and particularly if she was a single friend because she would be seen to be leading you astray. You must be out there meeting guys...*

Men being cast as the protectors of women's sexuality again draws on a discourse of sex being "risky" for women. The women's talk continually demonstrated an awareness of the risks they run by having sex, and reinforced the seriousness of the negative consequences they would face should their sexuality be inadequately controlled. For the most part, the risk described by the women was that of pregnancy, with dire social consequences. Interestingly, in their discussion of the risks of having sex, sexually transmitted diseases were never mentioned by the women. It may be that

they lacked sufficient education surrounding STIs to be aware of this risk, or simply that they viewed the social consequences of pregnancy as dire enough that the risk of STIs was a secondary concern.

*Patricia: But you see in those days we couldn't get the pill. You couldn't get the pill until you were engaged. Then you went to your doctor before your wedding and got the pill, so it was...um...there was always this real risk of pregnancy that was a real no-no for the shame...And it was such a scandal, so that kept most of us...um...on the straight and narrow, I think.*

*Susan: I think there was awareness that you could get a reputation. I think there were one or two who had reputations. Whether or not it was true.... I think they'd be worried about their parents. I think in those days most parents would be very wary if you got pregnant. You'd be pretty much an outcast I think. As I say I don't remember anyone getting pregnant...*

The way the two groups talked about sexuality in the context of the “Shore Girl” stereotype showed some obvious similarities and differences. There has been a shift over time away from the have/hold discourse, which very few of the younger group drew on. However, the younger group saw the emergence of a more permissive discourse, although this was very much a minor alternative discourse to the male sexual drive discourse which retained its dominance throughout both groups.

The way the women are positioned within these discourses is of interest. Regardless of which discourse they are positioned within, the women are consistently positioned as objects to be acted upon by males. In the male sexual drive, they are the objects of “natural” male sexual urges, whereas in the have/hold discourse their sexuality is a threat to heterosexual normativity and the morality of marriage, to be controlled and regulated by men. Even in the permissive discourse, which purports to be a discourse of equality between women and men with women as active sexual agents, they are still positioned in terms of their value as objects of men's desire. Thus, it becomes evident that even within the permissive discourse it is not possible for women to have sexual agency if assumptions about heteronormativity hold. Their value is in their skill in providing pleasure to their male sexual partners, their availability to male sexual partners, and their value as status symbols to male sexual partners.

Conspicuously absent from the talk of both groups was the discourse of desire (Davies, 1990; Fine, 1988). Western society embraces a binary arrangement of male-female, within which to be female is constructed as the absence of a penis. Maleness is spoken and is viewed as present, whereas femaleness is unspoken and is viewed as a lack. This male-female binary also holds for sexuality. Male sexuality is spoken and is present, whereas female sexuality is silent and unacknowledged. The absence of a discourse of feminine desire leaves only the dominant discourses that focus on an active male sexuality. This limits the positions available to the women who are usually cast as victims of male sexuality or in need of control and regulation by males. Even within a discourse that does not specifically cast women in these ways, such as the permissive discourse, the free choice that the women apparently exercise is in fact problematic as they are constrained by their patriarchal context. In such a society, where female sexuality is silent and its existence unacknowledged, a supposedly free choice does not provide women with sexual autonomy and agency. Their sexual desires remain absent, with their choices in fact all related to men's sexuality.

The younger women, for whom the permissive discourse was available when they were at high school, gave the appearance of being able to exercise greater personal choice regarding their sexuality. However, their choices cannot be viewed as free choices. In order to hold their privileged positions, they also take up the careful negotiations necessary to avoid being considered to be promiscuous. They engage in constant self-surveillance as they discipline their bodies to meet the expectations of socially acceptable femininity, in order to avoid the very real social and economic consequences of failing to meet these expectations (Bartky, 1988). As such, despite their supposedly free choices, they are constrained by their social and political context.

Currently, Western society is viewed as post-feminist, with the belief that feminism has been successful in its goals of correcting the power imbalance between men and women in society (Stuart & Donaghue, 2011). In this view, differences between men and women are seen as the result of the exercising of personal choice. However, while on the surface the younger women appear to enjoy greater freedoms and freedoms of choice, such as the ability to choose to have sexual activity outside of marriage, they are still required to maintain socially acceptable femininity, meaning that the choices they make are not in fact free. This supposedly post-feminist society has seen the rise of the neoliberal "Girl Power" discourse (Gill, 2008), which positions young women as empowered individuals with autonomy to make their own choices.

However, despite the ideals of empowerment espoused by this discourse, it functions to exercise disciplinary power over the bodies of these ‘empowered’ young women, simply constructing different but no less constraining requirements of femininity. The women are still regulated by this discourse, but less able to exercise resistance since this would appear to be resistance to their own empowerment.

As neoliberal subjects, the women are required to construct their own individual identities through the making of supposedly free choices. However this neoliberal ideology that values individual responsibility for the choices one makes functions to render invisible the myriad of potential social consequences and structural forces of oppression should they make choices other than those deemed acceptable under patriarchy. This is itself a means of control, less overt than that experienced by previous generations of women, but no less effective and much more invisible. This can be seen in the continuation of the sexual double standard, despite the supposed sexual equality enjoyed by women today.

## **The Sexual Double Standard**

The sexual double standard remains as a dominant discourse in Western society, despite dramatic social change and improvement in women’s rights over the past decades resulting in attitudes towards sex becoming more egalitarian. Women are still regulated through sexual reputation and negative labels for female sexuality (Jackson & Cram, 2003). While previously the sexual double standard was more overt, it has now been replaced by a more complex, subtle and therefore insidious double standard whereby there are multiple variables to consider whether or not a woman’s sexual behaviour is acceptable (Crawford & Popp, 2003).

The women interviewed in this study are not exempt from this regulation through the sexual double standard, although there are differences between the experiences of the older group and the younger group, consistent with social change over this period of time. Many of the younger women expressed an awareness of the sexual double standard, or identified an overt double standard in the “Shore Girl, sure thing” stereotype, in that there was no comparable stereotype for young men from the North Shore. This is unsurprising given that the function of the sexual double standard is the regulation of women’s bodies, while men’s bodies are exempt from this particular form of regulation, with masculinity being subject to differing social expectations.

The younger group's talk about the double standards for men and women in the meaning-making context of their interviews drew on the same discourses as their talk about sexuality and the "Shore Girl" stereotype. This male sexual drive discourse directly encourages a sexual double standard in that men are expected to desire sex whenever possible, while women are expected to restrict access to sex. In addition, neoliberal discourse holds that women bear individual responsibility for their own decisions and outcomes, effectively positioning them as responsible for men's sexual behaviour. Therefore, it constructs a simple dichotomy in which men having sex equates to socially acceptable, while women having sex equates to unacceptable. There were many instances where the women utilised the male sexual drive discourse in reference to the sexual double standard.

*Jessica: It was never that boys were easy... It's not fair! Well guys are easy by nature aren't they?*

*Nicole: Obviously you don't want someone...you wouldn't expect a girl...to just go around sleeping with guys and not having relationships with them. Like...one night stands. That's kind of fine for a guy, but...if you're to do that as a girl, it seems to be too slutty and...you shouldn't give yourself away that freely sort of thing.*

*Nicole: No, it was always aimed at girls. It doesn't matter if a guy...sleeps around. I mean, they get sort of a pat on the back and it's cool, you know. (Laughs) They'd almost brag about it, you know? Girls um...if they have too many sexual partners it was seen as a bad thing.*

Again, there were some instances when the women drew on the permissive discourse as an alternative discourse, providing a space in which to resist the dominant male sexual drive discourse. For example, Jessica described engaging in sexual activity to actively and knowingly challenge the sexual double standard. For her, positioning herself within the permissive discourse enabled her to act from a position of sexual equality, in an attempt to resist the oppressive patriarchal power operating within dominant discourse. She drew on "Girl Power" discourse to position herself as empowered with regards to her own sexuality, and able to do whatever men can do.

*...I think...maybe when we were teenagers we were going through – Like, you listen to the music, like that Christina Aguilera song that goes on about why men can have loads of women and not be called a hoe, but then if a lady sleeps with lots of guys, she’s a hoe. It was fighting I guess to erase the double standards and we were all like well we can do it ‘cos guys can do it. Whatever!*

While this positioning does go some way towards resistance, Jessica is however unable to remove herself from her social context. This post-feminist Girl Power discourse allows the impression of agency and free choice, however she is still located within a social context in which the dominant discourse positions her in ways that limit the choices she can make without facing consequences that would not be considerations for men. Jessica’s social context means that there are still strings attached to her choices, meaning that these are not as ‘free’ as they may appear. It is simplistic to think that Jessica can choose to position herself singly within an alternative discourse. Women must negotiate multiple positions within multiple discourses. Despite her resistance through drawing on an alternative discourse, Jessica is also positioned within the dominant male sexual drive discourse, which imposes social consequences for her choices. This multiplicity of positioning can be seen in the way she also drew on the dominant discourse and her awareness of the social consequences of resistance.

*It was negative...to the females! (Laughs) Clearly to the males it was positive...*

Jennifer also resisted the sexual double standard. As a gay woman, she was able to position herself as outside of the bounds of the dominant (hetero)sexual discourse. The male sexual drive discourse is a heteronormative one, and there is no place within it for homosexuality. She constructed the notion of promiscuity as specific to the heterosexual community and therefore inapplicable to herself. Heteronormative assumptions position men as dominant over women, with labelling of promiscuity as a tool in the maintenance of this dominance. In a relationship that does not involve a man, this tool becomes unnecessary. However, despite the absence of a need to label as promiscuous, Jennifer still located the girl as the object.

*Um, and I’m certainly not easy because I’m gay!...It’s a straight girl thing...*

Jennifer went further than the other younger women in her challenge to the sexual double standard, giving voice to what Fine (1988) described as the missing discourse of desire. Davies (1990) attributes the absence of a discourse of women's desire to the male-female binary that constructs the female as a lack in relation to male substance. However, in a lesbian context this does not hold as there is no male for the female to be a lack in relation to. Therefore, the woman is not silenced by the presence of the man, allowing a space within which voice may be given to women's desire.

Most dominant discourses emphasise male sexuality, with women as objects upon which this male sexuality is enacted. As a gay woman, such a male-dominated discourse is inadequate for talking about sexuality. As a result, Jennifer utilised a discourse that sees women's sexuality as active and desiring. She also applied this to heterosexual women when discussing the sexual double standard to which she sees them as subjected, postulating that this female desire is a threat to patriarchal power and control.

*Well, it's is it that they're having sex for pleasure? Enjoyment for self-satisfaction, you know, rather than reproduction. Basically they're just stepping outside of their role of...you know...what we're supposed to be doing under patriarchy...yea.*

The older group were much less explicit in their awareness of the sexual double standard. However, they described situations in which this can be seen to be at work. For example, many of them referred to the danger for women of gaining a "reputation". When asked about the repercussions of sexual activity, the women all responded in terms of negative effects for young women, such as a reputation, being labelled as loose, or pregnancy. As previously discussed, STIs were not mentioned as a potential repercussion of sexual activity, and none of the women mentioned any consequences for young men. Again, they drew on the male sexual drive discourse in their talk and this discourse can be seen to be fuelling the sexual double standard. For example, when Mary voiced her thoughts on whether young women were promiscuous when she was young, there was a clear implication that it is natural for men to try to have sex with women who can be tricked into allowing this:

*...and when all these immigrant boys came here in the 70s, the New Zealand girls were known as easy, just over the whole country. (Laughs)... Apparently we all had that reputation so...I think actually we weren't really easy, but we were naïve and if a guy, you'd fall in love and think the guy really loved you...you thought the guys were serious and they weren't, you know. They'd go back to Austria or wherever they were from, you know.*

Within the male sexual drive discourse, a male who is having sex is simply enacting natural urges. Since this is the dominant societal discourse on sexuality, to be having sex is to be in line with societal expectations for a man, and therefore he is correctly performing his masculinity. However, within this discourse, the female role is that of a sexual gatekeeper. Society expects that she will guard against engaging in sexual activity outside of the confines of certain acceptable situations, such as marriage and later, monogamous and committed heterosexual relationships. For a woman, to be engaging in sexual activity outside of the conditions acceptable within her societal context is to be failing to perform her femininity appropriately. In this way, the sexual double standard is reinforced and perpetuated, so that sexual activity for a male is a positive, at least in terms of his masculinity, in almost all situations, while for a female sexual activity is a negative in terms of her femininity in any situation other than those explicitly socially acceptable.

An extreme, but unfortunately prevalent, consequence of the sexual double standard within the male sexual drive discourse is a culture of victim blaming in situations of sexual coercion or violence. In this discourse, responsibility for the regulation of sexual behaviour is placed solely on women, since men are expected to engage in sexual activity at any opportunity and women are the gatekeepers. Because of this, there is no position available in which the woman is not responsible for the man's actions. Therefore, if a woman who is sexually victimised draws on this dominant discourse in the construction of her own identity and sexuality, she is often unable to avoid self-blame for failing in her role of gatekeeper, due to the lack of subject positions in which the man is responsible for his actions. Sandra's account of sexual activity with young men who were stationed on a military base near the North Shore provides an illustration of this victim blaming.

*...they were really bad boys. They were really bad... I was just thinking about it today because there was something in the paper about a guy who was getting charged with rape because he'd been with a woman – a girl – and she was really drunk, and though – I think this is right – she didn't say no. He had sex with her but... Whereas back then, there was nothing. We were always getting drunk, didn't know what we were doing and would have sex. (Laughs)*

She began her account by constructing the young men as perpetrators of sexual coercion, engaging in sexual activity with women who were unable to consent and talking about how times have changed so that now that would be seen as rape. However, this did not fit the dominant discourse within which she viewed her own sexuality, wherein she is responsible for controlling men's sexual behaviour. Even in this context, she quickly shifted to position herself as having responsibility for the sexual activity. She had to negotiate the contradiction and repositioned herself as knowingly putting herself in a position where this could happen and therefore responsible for the consequences:

*And you know, it was like, oh we were drunk so that was our problem, and but we wouldn't be with people that we didn't kind of want to be with anyway... so we were getting drunk and we would've done it anyway! (Laughs) Yea, we were probably gonna have sex with them anyway, so getting drunk...wasn't kind of the problem. Like, it was like, oh you know, they're just... We weren't putting ourselves in danger.*

Evidence of the sexual double standard was also present in the older women's talk within the have/hold discourse. Within this, women's sexuality is seen as threatening to social order, and as something that must be controlled by men. This discourse can be seen at work not only in the women's talk about sex, but also in their talk about their everyday lives. Several of the women described social situations in which this desire to control women's sexuality was demonstrated.

*Mary: So the girls didn't go on their own into the city. But if you had a boyfriend you would go. And quite often you were with your boyfriend and his boyfriends, his friends and their girlfriends...So a bit of a crowd. But there was*

*never any girls on their own, you were always with a boyfriend... There was never any unattached girls. But there'd be unattached boys somehow.*

*Patricia: There was a lot of that getting pregnant so you had to get married. So you had this steady boyfriend and then if you got pregnant you were expected to...*

*Patricia: Even now, you can go out with your girlfriends for a meal, but then you didn't leave your husband at home and go out with your friend, and particularly if she was a single friend because she would be seen to be leading you astray. You must be out there meeting guys...*

The sexual double standard has obvious relevance in the lives of both groups of women interviewed and is an important consideration and constraint in their ability to exercise agency and freedom of choice both in their sexual behaviour and in other aspects of their everyday lives. It is a significant and powerful means of regulation and control to which they and other women are subject and it is a primary focus of the "Shore Girl" stereotype. The "Shore Girl" stereotype can be seen as a concise demonstration of the sexual double standard at work. Its primary critiques of women from the North Shore relate to their perceived failure as gatekeepers against natural male sexual urges as their positioning within the dominant discourse of sexuality requires, or as a threat to the social order by neglecting to defer to the control of males and rather exercising unbridled and dangerous female sexuality, as constructed within the have/hold discourse. These discourses are weapons of patriarchal power, wielded in the oppression and regulation of women, and they are deployed in the "Shore Girl" stereotype for the same purpose.

For both groups, female sexuality is something to be tightly controlled. There are complex rules for when it was socially acceptable to have sex without falling foul of the sexual double standard, and these rules are often contradictory or not clearly defined. The repercussions of failing to comply with these rules include negative labelling and even social ostracising. The conditions under which sex was acceptable for the older group were not as clear cut as simply being confined to marriage. As Mary explained, there was an expectation that a girl would be sexually active as an older teenager, but not as a young teenager:

*...nobody wanted to be thought to be a virgin. There was always something shameful about that. Um, but most of them, I think by the time they got to 17, 18 they were sexual, but in the early teens definitely not. There were the ones that were, were the odd ones out.*

A common rule that many of the older women's interviews were in agreement on was the requirement that sex happen within a committed long-term relationship. To have sex in the context of a casual or purely sexual relationship was unacceptable, and grounds for negative labelling.

*Mary: ...we did have within the school the known sluts...if you like. There were some, yeah, actually yeah. Um, and they tended to sort of float around from boy to boy to boy.*

*Patricia: When I think back, some that had really steady boyfriends probably were sleeping with them.*

An even more common condition that appeared in the older women's talk was that a sexual relationship must not result in pregnancy outside of marriage. The women did not mention material consequences of this, but rather they talked about the shame that this would bring both them and their families.

*Mary: ...the rumour had it growing up that all the girls there, there was a high rate of, um, teenage pregnancies at Carmel College, hence the name Carnal Knowledge.*

*Patricia: ... You couldn't get the pill until you were engaged. Then you went to your doctor before your wedding and got the pill, so it was...um...there was always this real risk of pregnancy that was a real no-no for the shame... that was what kept me from sleeping with boys, because...I just knew it would upset my parents so much. And it was such a scandal, so that kept most of us...um...on the straight and narrow, I think.*

*Susan: And abortions weren't available so it was all sort of backstreet in those days. ... they'd be worried about their parents. I think in those days most parents would be very wary if you got pregnant. You'd be pretty much an outcast I think.*

The conditions under which the younger group could engage in sexual activity without falling foul of the sexual double standard were very different to those of the older group. On the surface, they appeared to enjoy much more sexual freedom, yet they too described situations in which sex was unacceptable and would be seen as promiscuous. In particular, the younger women describe the requirement that a woman should only have sex within a committed relationship. There are many ways in which she may breach this requirement, such as by cheating on a boyfriend. Even if she does not cheat and only has sex with her boyfriend, there are complex and unstated rules regarding the length and number of relationships which must be heeded to avoid labelling.

*Jennifer: ... I mean there might have been the odd one that slept around. There were people that you assumed or for whatever reason had an understanding that they were sexually active, but a lot of them had boyfriends. It wasn't a different guy every night. It was actually they'd had the same boyfriend since form two... Or, you know, they'd been together a long time. So it wasn't about multiple partners. It was generally the same person.*

*Jessica: And this is gonna sound really bad, but a lot of girls from Westlake and Carmel College and stuff had really bad – oh I mean they're all girls' schools – but had really bad names for being...a bit...slutty and trampy and stuff. And I mean...my friend cheated on almost every guy she dated so there must be some...back-up to it.*

*Jessica: And it...probably won't be a long-lasting thing because...I guess you didn't stick around. It was just a one-hit wonder, or if you liked someone you might start dating but then after a few months you'd get bored and move on, or they'd get bored or...someone would cheat or something like that...to that effect, yea.*

*Melissa: ...they were the group of females that always had boyfriends and different boyfriends and that. I wouldn't have said that they randomly slept with anyone, but I would've said...*

The differences between the women in the older and younger groups' construction of promiscuity point to a change in the way that discourses that regulate women's sexuality are deployed. However, they also highlight the continuity of control over women's sexuality and femininity. Despite the apparent empowerment of women in a supposedly post-feminist society, the regulation and policing of women's sexuality continues, simply taking another more insidious form, with the apparatuses of power simply becoming more hidden. While women appear to be less restricted than previously, disciplinary power now works to transform the minds of individual women so that they take over the disciplining and policing of themselves (Bartky, 1988). The supposed sexual agency that women now enjoy simply requires women to once again mould their femininity to suit current expectations in which they must not only perform the existing requirements of femininity such as being beautiful and attractive to men, but must also be sexually sophisticated within specific boundaries (Gill, 2008). The "Shore Girl" stereotype can be seen as an embodiment of this control and the continued relevance of the sexual double standard in the lives of young women.

## **Response and Resistance to the Stereotype**

Examination of the "Shore Girl" stereotype demonstrates the disciplinary power that continues to be enacted through dominant discourses. However, in order for a discourse to exert power, there must be resistance (Allen, 2003). Thus, in order to examine the way in which these discourses do indeed exert power, it is necessary to examine the ways in which the women engaged in resistance to that power. The women's resistance was constrained by the dominant discourses that exert power in their social and economic context. The women had only the positions that were available to them within these discourses to choose from, and this influenced the resistant subject positions they were able to take up. Since there are multiple discourses at work in the "Shore Girl" stereotype, they had to negotiate multiple, often

contradictory positions, resulting in the women being able to both accept and resist dominant discourses.

When talking about their personal reactions to the Shore Girl stereotype, or to comments of “Shore Girl, sure thing”, the young women drew on various discourses including the permissive discourse and the have-hold discourse. While resistance took on many forms, all of the women engaged in some form of resistance to the derogatory stereotype, and none endorsed feeling affected by it.

Responses to the stereotype can be seen in several categories that are not mutually exclusive. The first category involved resistance to the stereotype by refusing to accept its accuracy.

*Jennifer: It's just, you just sort of shake it off as a myth.*

*Jennifer: It's not fact. It's just perception that I'm quite happy to challenge...*

*SG: So you didn't see it as something that was particularly a reflection of reality or anything like that?*

*Amanda: Not with the people that I hung around with.*

*SG: Yea.*

*Amanda: And I don't remember hearing any gossip at my school about girls that anyone knew.*

*SG: Fair enough. Did you have the idea that there might be people on the Shore that it applied to that you just didn't know, or?*

*Amanda: Yeah. Right, yeah. I don't know, I guess I sort of thought it's weird that they specify the Shore. I was pretty sure that all over New Zealand there were people that were...like that, but...yea.*

*Melissa: I don't know if it's true now. It's just a clever phrase, and I guess it's just a description for a group of females that club a lot...I don't know.*

*Melissa: It was, you know, an urban myth that this group of girls exist...*

Despite rejecting the stereotype, these women did not challenge the discourse itself. Often, the women were at pains to stress that they did not believe that even the

people who were using the stereotype believed it. In this way, by stressing the humorous nature of the comment and the lack of meaning or intent behind its use, the women were able to negotiate having multiple experiences of being confronted by the stereotype without their belief in its inaccuracy being challenged. They are able to negotiate social situations where it is used without being offended.

*Amanda: ...it's just something that people say, you know, I'm trying to think of another example but like a trigger. "I'm from the Shore" "Oh Shore Girl huh?"*

*Melissa: Um, it's never been applied to me except when I laughed about it and said I was from the North Shore, you know, Shore Girl, sure thing. And that was said with a hefty dose of sarcasm!*

*Melissa: I don't know if it came from the Council logo and someone came up with it and thought it was clever...I thought it was clever when I first heard it. I wouldn't be surprised if other people just thought it was a funny thing to say rather than a serious concept.*

The multiple positioning of the women in their resistance can be seen in the contradictions in their response to the stereotype. Many of these women went on to distance themselves from the stereotype, drawing boundaries between themselves and others in order to construct the stereotype as belonging to someone else, despite having professed that they did not believe that it had a basis in reality.

*Jennifer: ...we didn't belong to that stereotype.*

*Jennifer: It doesn't bother me because I.... Yea! I really don't feel like it fits at all, so I'm like, yea I've heard of that a million times before, whatever!*

*Amanda: I guess, if the promiscuity thing isn't just a stereotype, I'm glad that I don't associate with that, I guess.*

Other women did not resist the existence of the stereotype as an accurate reflection of reality, although they responded to this in different ways.

*Jessica: Yeah, and I think the stereotypes are there for a reason. As per usual, the stereotypes exist for a reason.*

*Heather: I think it is pretty accurate.*

*SG: Do you think the stereotype exists because of there being girls on the Shore who behave in that way?*

*Nicole: Yea, absolutely.*

These women who accepted that the stereotype was accurate fell into two groups in terms of their responses. Some of the women also distanced themselves from the stereotype, stressing that while they did believe that it was accurate, it was not accurate for them. This enabled them to negotiate their identities as being women from the North Shore who were not promiscuous, despite their belief in a stereotype of the promiscuity of women from the North Shore that they found to be derogatory.

*Nicole: I think that would only affect me if I...felt that way personally. If I felt like I was a slut that would be insulting to me. But I don't feel I've ever...been like that as a teenager.*

*Nicole: I knew there were certain groups I would consider at our school sort of thing, but I wouldn't say my close circle of friends were.*

*Nicole: Well I know I'm not one... I was a good girl. I suppose that does bother me if people assume that about me.*

*SG: And is that something you'd see as quite undesirable to be associated with?*

*Nicole: Yea, of course. I'm not a sure thing! You've got to impress me. (Laughs)*

*SG: So when you hear that stereotype, you're able to laugh it off because it doesn't apply to you?*

*Nicole: Yea, it's not me.*

Two of these women, Jessica and Heather, engaged in a very different form of resistance to the stereotype, taking up subject positions within an alternative discourse.

While they professed the stereotype to be accurate, they drew on the permissive discourse to position themselves not as subjects of a negative stereotype, but as agentic and powerful, firmly allying themselves with the promiscuous identity of Shore Girls, but co-opting this as a positive tool under their own control.

*Jessica: The thing was, you didn't stand there and go "oh we're not like that. We're not all like that." I mean, there were even bumper stickers with it on.*

*Jessica: They went, you know what, yea I can do that if I want to. Repercussion free. I mean, yes I was a skank at school...meh! Got it out of my system. It wasn't more for adhering to a stereotype. It was more for I was having fun and I was young and rebelling and doing... Yea, doing what I wanted to do. Some people go and smoke and get addicted to drugs and...boys were much more fun and cheaper and easier to access and you don't get locked up for it! So...(laughs) I just, it's easier, it's more fun, it's cheap, it's clean, provided you're safe you don't end up with massive health implications so...*

*Heather: Which I would just laugh about and go yea, yea, you're right. We're pretty hot! (Laughs) You know, whatever! But...yea, that's pretty much it, because I've always reacted to it in a good way. Because we should really think of it as a good way. (Laughing) Sure can, I mean, of course we can! We're hot...and we're really not that big of a city, compared to the rest of Auckland. We're actually a really small city to have a rep...a little bit of a rep about our girls. Have a bit of pride in what they're saying, you know! But, it's still – and I think it's on the fact that we should be a little bit flattered that they actually have something like that over us. It's not like they've got like "West Auckland girls are hot". No, no! (Laughs)*

*Heather: It's not a negative, awful thing. No. It's actually something we should be highly regarded of.*

However, despite this clear positioning within the permissive discourse, the women's talk was often contradictory, belying their multiple positioning within a range of discourses, as well as their constraint by the subject positions available to them

within the dominant discourses at work in their lives. At other times during their interviews, Jessica and Heather also distanced themselves from the stereotype.

*Jessica: The connotations associated, the negative connotations associated with it, like the skankiness, the richness, the kind of sense of entitlement, I don't feel like any of that... belongs to me.*

A common feature across the younger women's responses was a focus on the intention of what is said about the stereotype. The women reported consciously considering the intent of those making comments about "Shore Girls" when making decisions on how to position themselves in a specific context. While the intention was not made explicit to them, they made judgements based on the situation and way in which the comments were made. Common judgements were that the person speaking was not intending it to refer to them, that there was no meaning behind the comment, or that it was intended to be humorous. Whichever of these the woman selected allowed her to avoid taking offense or experiencing negative emotional impact, avoiding being positioned negatively within the stereotype.

*Jennifer: But more, kind of, jokingly.*

*Amanda: It's just something that people say, you know... They don't necessarily think this girl is promiscuous, it's just something annoying as you would say.*

*Melissa: Oh they just laughed. I don't think they had any perception that since I was from the North Shore I was a sure thing!*

*Melissa: I never thought it was derogatory or anything. Probably because it was never applied to me or my friends or anything.*

*Melissa: I wouldn't be surprised if other people just thought it was a funny thing to say rather than a serious concept.*

*Heather: I think they can mean it in two different ways, just like I said. I think they can do it good, or basically that we're a bit easy. But...I mean, they always say it in such a good way.*

*Nicole: Well in that particular situation, we were all out at a concert to have fun. Just dancing and enjoying ourselves. It's not like it was an insult or anything. Not like someone was trying to...you know.*

*Nicole: It probably would be offensive if...they were saying it in a bullying way but...*

*SG: Yea.*

*Nicole: It's never been said to me directly, so...*

*SG: Yea. And when you've heard it has it been more of a good-natured thing?*

*Nicole: Yea. Just more of a joke.*

*Nicole: ...Um...I suppose it just depends on their idea of what that means. If they're saying it in a negative...really I mean, it depends how they come across.*

Some of the women endorsed that if the intention was different, they would be offended or respond differently. However, as they were making the decisions regarding the intentions of the speaker, this was not put to the test. In this way, they positioned themselves as responsible for the interaction. It was their decision whether offence is taken.

*Nicole: It probably would be offensive if...they were saying it in a bullying way but...*

*SG: If you felt someone was saying that about you, how would that make you feel?*

*Nicole: That would be offensive, yea. I'd feel the need to defend my honour.*

*(Laughs)*

An interesting feature of all the women's talk was the fact that they all took on the responsibility for how the stereotype affected them. Responsibility was taken away from those who were applying the stereotype to them, and instead the women took on

the duty for deciding the intentions of those people and therefore how they were affected. This can be seen as an example of neoliberal and post-feminist discourse in action. As we have seen, the neoliberal subject places emphasis on individual responsibility, autonomy and accountability, and does not recognise the influence or constraint exercised through social or structural power. The neoliberal ideology means that the women framed their experiences in terms of choice and personal responsibility, without examining the social discourses and structural power that constrain these choices. They believed their choices to be free and personal, without awareness of the social strings attached to the choices. Rather than view society as having a constraining power over them, they must somehow take personal responsibility for what happens to them in society, turning it into something over which they have personal control. In this way, the women continue to be oppressed and their agency undermined, while maintaining the belief that they have equal agency and power with a supposedly post-feminist society.

The same apparatus that perpetuates victim-blaming through the sexual double-standard can be seen to be at work in the women's responses to the "Shore Girl" stereotype. Despite that the stereotype is being deployed by others against them, within the dominant discourses through which they construct their identities there is no position available in which they are not responsible for the stereotype. Therefore, they reconstruct their understanding of the stereotype in such a way that it is something that they are responsible for.

The meanings that the women construct for the "Shore Girl" stereotype and the way in which they respond to it are inextricably bound to their construction of their place-based identities. This is demonstrated through the way in which they are unable to isolate the stereotype from its social and geopolitical context in their talk. The meaning of the stereotype is produced through relationships and shared understandings which are formed through the construction of boundaries that mark the complex and shifting web of inclusions and exclusions that texture the lives of the women. These boundaries, both geographical and social, are used by the women to create place-based identities for themselves and others. The "Shore Girl" stereotype has implications for the identities of the women, and as a result, it too becomes a boundary, functioning to locate the women in particular ways in terms of space and place.

## CHAPTER SIX – Discussion

This research process began with a curiosity and discomfort about negative sexual stereotyping of women, born of my own personal experiences as a young woman growing up on Auckland’s North Shore. I was aware of the sexual stereotype associated with women from the area as articulated through the common catch-phrase “Shore Girl, sure thing,” and this had been an intermittent topic of conversation among my peers. I was aware of uncomfortable contradictions in my own response to the stereotype, as well as that of the other “Shore Girls” with whom I discussed it. I wanted to use these contradictions to access the discourses that underlie the construction and maintenance of this kind of negative sexual stereotyping, in order to explore the ways in which women can create spaces in which to resist and challenge the traditional gender and sexual discourses that function to oppress and regulate them.

I constructed research questions to focus on two primary areas of investigation. Firstly, I aimed to explore the dominant discourses involved in the construction, maintenance and change of the “Shore Girl” stereotype over time, and the way in which the women I interviewed negotiated their positionings within these. However, rather than simply giving voice to the women’s experiences, this research aimed to challenge existing patriarchal discourse and power. Therefore, I aimed to explore the power structures within the discourses involved in the “Shore Girl” stereotype, how they functioned to constrain and oppress the women, and the ways in which the women exercised resistance to these discourses.

As I went about interviewing the women, I was surprised to find that they spent very little time discussing the “Shore Girl” stereotype and it became increasingly apparent that sexual discourses were not the primary discourses drawn on by the women. Rather, it emerged that before they were able to construct their understanding of the discursive object that is the “Shore Girl”, the women first constructed place-based identities in order to establish the relational landscape within which the meaning of the stereotype was produced and could be understood. These place-based identities were formed through the co-construction of person and place as the women undertook the construction of multiple geographical and social boundaries, which they used to locate themselves and others. In this way, the women were able to position themselves within the discourses that they would utilise in making sense of the stereotype. These

discourses were sometimes sexual, but neoliberal discourse and discourses relating to ethnicity, privilege, invasion, difference, colonisation, post-feminism and empowerment were integral to the women's meaning-making, before the meaning of the stereotype began to emerge in their talk. Therefore, the analysis necessitated attention to the complex interplay of the intersections and relationships of place-based identities.

The purpose of this research was not simply to preserve and reproduce the women's current experiences, thus perpetuating the status quo of patriarchal oppression. Rather, the purpose was to challenge existing forms of subjectivity and explore the spaces within which women are able to exercise resistance to the patriarchal power constituted through dominant discourses. A feminist poststructural approach was chosen as it enabled the questioning of existing power structures and the homogeneity of dominant discourses. A feminist post-structural approach emphasises experience and understanding is never being independent from language, which is viewed as a constructive process. Therefore, by examining the language the women employed, I was able to access and explore the subject positions available and taken up within the discourses that informed their experiences and understandings. This provided me with the means to examine the relationship between power and knowledge in order to challenge and disrupt oppressive patriarchal discourses.

Taking up a feminist post-structural approach also allowed me to examine the importance of the women's social, political, economic and geographical positionings in the construction of their own identities and how these multiple relationships were implicated in the construction of the discursive object of the "Shore Girl". What emerged was a complex intertwining of person and place, whereby the women's geopolitical and relational landscape was integral to their construction of their own identities, while their own identities were also integral to the construction of their environment and simultaneously produced geopolitical meanings. The women utilised the construction of boundaries to impose meaning on the landscape of the North Shore, and within which to locate themselves and others. These boundaries resulted in a complex map of inclusions and exclusions through which meaning could be made of the "Shore Girl" stereotype. Without establishing this relational context, the stereotype was rendered meaningless, as seen in the way the women were unable to discuss it without this contextualisation.

In the initial stages of planning this research, I questioned the ‘worthiness’ of the topic, wondering what purpose it could fulfil given the more visible oppression of many other groups of women. However, I came to an understanding that these questions were themselves symptoms of social control in action, suppressing and silencing voices that would question a form of oppression so pervasive as to be invisible and silent. Like rape culture, the culture of “sure thing” has its own normativity, rendering it difficult to see and therefore resist or challenge. The forms of subjectification it offers are so normative as to be unattended to, resulting in a lack of cultural reflexivity. Our cultural context is one that is constructed through the normalisation of multiple dominant discourses, including sexual discourses that position women as objects upon which men’s sexuality is enacted, rendering women’s sexuality invisible other than in relation to men’s sexuality, that reproduce and reinforces the sexual double standard, and that exclude women from enjoying sexual agency and desire in their own right. The same process of normalisation is active in our culture in other ways, such as through the normalisation of whiteness that functions to exclude indigeneity. The forms of subjectivity offered by the culture of “sure thing” are so much a part of our social and cultural context that to examine or question them in our daily lives is an uncomfortable practice and one that is discouraged by the dominant discourses at work in their construction. Such reflexivity is uncomfortable because it challenges normative discourse. The discomfort I experienced at the thought of asking these questions demonstrated to me that they needed to be asked. This research has served to begin to open up spaces from which we can reflexively attend to the processes of subjectification within normative discourses in our society. Only when we are aware of these processes of subjectification can we hope to effect social transformation.

Despite my initial concern over the significance of space and place in the women’s talk, an important contribution that this research has made to psychological knowledge is to further demonstrate the importance and utility of analysing space and place when exploring the stereotyping of groups of people. This research has highlighted not only the complexity of identities that a person may construct, but also the way in which these identities are formed through the co-construction of person and place. In this way, stereotypes and identities are viewed not as static or as being intrinsic to individuals or groups, but as ongoing and changeable processes of identity construction, and unable to be understood when divorced from their context in terms of

both space and place. This can be seen in the multiplicity of discourses that intersect within the “Shore Girl” stereotype, including neoliberal and post-feminist discourse, as well as discourses of ethnicity, affluence, privilege, colonisation and invasion, despite being an ostensibly sexual stereotype. It is only by attending to the multiple positionings available to women within the wide range of discourses active in the stereotype that we are able to make visible the complex power structures that exert constraint and oppression over them. For example, the privilege that is associated with young women from the North Shore, such as that relating to socioeconomic status and educational opportunities, inscribes women’s bodies sexually. In this way, dominant sexual discourses function to constrain women and to reassert the dominant positioning of men in Western society. While the form may have changed so that the stereotype appears on the surface to be sexual, it is an attempt to reduce women who may otherwise hold positions of power through other discourses to an oppressed and controlled position of powerlessness in relation to patriarchal power within heteronormative discourse. Despite apparently being discourses about a range of things, all of the discourses active in this stereotype function to return to the positioning of women as sexual objects, and the organisation and categorisation of women in terms of their sexuality.

The limitations of this research are entwined with the epistemological assumptions underlying the methodology employed. A feminist poststructural conception of knowledge holds that meaning and knowledge are socially constructed through the use of language, and that gendered meanings and knowledges are multiple, changeable and contextual. In addition, because patriarchal power is dominant in Western society, feminist poststructuralism recognises its influence on dominant ideas of knowledge, such as those drawn on by mainstream psychology in its examination of stereotyping, to produce a homogenous rendering of women and women’s sexuality. Drawing on this feminist poststructural epistemology has enabled this research to question and challenge dominant knowledges and destabilise the gendered power that objectifies women’s sexuality to produce multiple contextual positionings. However, it is also because of this feminist poststructural epistemology that this research cannot assert to present an absolute truth that is generalisable to any other context. Yet it is not the goal of this research to claim an absolute, unchanging truth. Rather, this research presents an analysis of the meanings produced through the interactions between myself and the women in the particular context of the interviews. It does not assert that this

would be true for other women, nor claim that it would be true for the same women in another context. However, it does present a set of meanings that could be made, and opens up spaces for discussion and resistance to dominant discourses.

While this research was ostensibly about a sexual stereotype, the analysis ended up focusing on multiple areas, these being issues relating to space and place-based identities, colonisation and the impact of dominant sexual discourses in the lives of young women. As a result of this intersectionality, it opens space for future research involving all of these areas. Further research could be conducted into the ways in which women's privilege is represented as sexualised in other places, even when that privilege is unrelated to sexuality.

Future research may also invite further analysis of colonisation and history, and the role of this in the co-construction of person and place (place-based identities). This research demonstrated the way in which whiteness is constructed as normative in an ongoing process of colonisation. Just as reflexively attending to the processes of subjectification within normative sexual discourses in our society can work to destabilise their normativity, so too is the recognition of whiteness important to decolonisation. Questioning and problematizing the normalisation of whiteness could open up spaces within which to resist this process of colonisation, and begin to address and redress the oppressive power present within this dominant discourse. The recognition of whiteness could open a space for engaging with Māori to decolonise the claims that exclude indigeneity.

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## Appendix A – Information Sheet



**MASSEY UNIVERSITY**  
**TE KUNENGA KI PUREHUROA**  
**UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND**

*“Shore Girl, Sure Thing”*

### INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Susanna Gatland, and I am a student at Massey University enrolled in a Master of Arts in Psychology. As part of this qualification, I am undertaking a qualitative research project, which will result in a thesis. The project will be conducted through a discourse analysis, looking at stereotypes about women from Auckland’s North Shore through the eyes of women from the North Shore.

The purpose of this research is to examine cultural rules and values about femininity and sexuality, and the way they are talked about in our society, that lead to the creation of stereotypes about women. It will look at how these stereotypes are maintained, their function, how they have changed over time and also on women’s experiences of these stereotypes, and their reactions to them. It is hoped that the results of this study will have benefits for psychology and women, helping women create ways of resisting traditional discourses of gender and sexuality.

I would like to invite you to participate in my research to explore your experiences as a woman who attended high school on the North Shore. Your contribution would be greatly appreciated. We will simply be discussing stereotypes about women from the North Shore, whether you are familiar with them, and your thoughts about them.

As part of the research process, I will be interviewing a total of 12 to 16 women aged between 25 to 35 and 55 to 65 who attended high school on the North Shore. The number of participants has been chosen to capture a range of experiences and provide sufficient data for analysis. It is not anticipated that you will experience any discomfort or risk by participating in this research, and participation is entirely voluntary.

Participation will involve taking part in a single conversational-style interview with the researcher. It is expected that the interview will take up to one hour, but it can be extended if you find you have more that you would like to share. The interview will be arranged to take place at a time and location that is convenient to you.

The interview will be digitally audio recorded and I will personally transcribe these in order to protect your confidentiality. I will provide you with a copy of the interview transcript and give you the opportunity to review this before giving your approval. I will follow-up with you to discuss any thoughts you have about the transcript, and any additions or changes you would like to make before I begin analysis. This follow-up can be done by whichever method is most convenient for you, such as by phone, email, or a further face-to-face meeting. Once this process is complete, the original digital recordings will be destroyed. Finally, a summary of the research findings will be provided to you once the analysis has been completed.

All of your information and interview data will be kept confidential, stored securely and password protected. Your identity will be safeguarded, and your details will not be discussed with any unauthorised individual. If you disclose information during the interview could be used to identify you it will not be disclosed, and a pseudonym will be allocated to you in the writing process to maintain confidentiality. Your participation in this research will not be disclosed to anyone other than my research supervisor.

Once the interviews and analysis have been completed, I will write about the results and submit this to Massey University for evaluation and marking, and will be published as the final requirement for completion of my Master of Arts degree in Psychology. This will not contain any identifying information about participants. A copy of this thesis will be placed and held in the Massey University Library catalogue and I will provide you with a summary of my findings.

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;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
- withdraw from the study at any time prior to the analysis being conducted;
- 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.

Should you have any queries related to this research project, I can be contacted at any time by telephone: 021 069 5359, or by email: [s\\_gatland@hotmail.com](mailto:s_gatland@hotmail.com) or alternatively my supervisor, Dr Leigh Coombes, can be contacted by telephone: 06 356 9099 ext. 85075 or by email: [l.coombes@massey.ac.nz](mailto:l.coombes@massey.ac.nz)

*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 researcher(s) 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 researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 350 5249, email [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz)*

## Appendix B – Participant Consent Form - Individual



### *Shore Girl, Sure Thing*

#### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

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/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

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

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

**Signature:**

**Date:**

.....

**Full Name - printed**

.....

## Appendix C – Authority For the Release of Transcripts



### *Shore Girl, Sure Thing*

#### AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

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

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

**Signature:**

**Date:**

.....

**Full Name - printed**

.....