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Negotiating women's sexual empowerment in the context of Tinder dating

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Abstract

The postfeminist mediated culture constructs a social world that has accomplished gender equality, where women are free to explore an empowered and liberated sexuality within modern dating spaces, such as online dating. The current study questioned gendered power relations in modern heterosexuality and sought to understand how sexual empowerment is negotiated in the Tinder dating context. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four women aged between 20-30 years-old and who had used Tinder to meet a man for a date in-person. A social constructionist postfeminist critique was employed through a Foucauldian discourse analysis to explore constructions of power that enable and constrain women's gendered positionings and sexual subjectivities in heterosexual Tinder relationships. Dominant discourses of 'dating evolving', 'Tinder's sexual marketplace', 'happy to be a whore', 'girls stand pretty' and 'spell it out' speak to how women navigate complex, contradictory and creative sexual empowerment within the transformative dating space of Tinder's sexual marketplace. Power shifts between Tinder's online and offline contexts to complicate gendered norms and reconfigure heterosexual intimacy, enabling women to take up positions of power and control within unscripted and 'unnatural' dating spaces. However, understandings of feminine power are complicated within postfeminist and neoliberal dating spaces that construct women's sexual freedom as an achievable, yet illusive, goal, and where women's 'empowerment' often comes from, or reproduces, their disempowered position within a dating culture that provides the conditions for coercion and violence. Disciplinary power continues to coerce and control women's agency, however women are challenging a culture that remains embedded in gender stereotypes and power relations and, in doing so, are constructing positions of creative feminine empowerment.

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Preface

My motivations in conducting this research stem from my personal journey with making sense of my own gender and sexuality in a society embedded in gendered power. As a teenager, expectations for how I was supposed to maintain an acceptable sexual identity were confused and contradictory. I was at one moment ‘frigid’ in my shyness to kiss a boy then the next I was a ‘slut’ upon being coerced into first sex. There were social expectations for me to be interested in sexual intimacy, yet my experience of sexual coercion denounced my social status and discredited my morality. Sex became connected to social shame, as romantic intimacy came to involve careful considerations for proving my modesty and earning the man’s respect. As a young adult, I entered the environment of the university ‘hook-up culture’, a site that popularised fun and carefree sexual exploration, but I was ‘good’, modest and careful to combat the slut-shaming that now permeated my sexual identity. I would abstain from casual sex and the ‘one-night-stand’, not only to protect my sexual status, but also to protect myself from another situation where a man may not listen if I said ‘no’. I came to question why my sexuality should be so constricted within concerns of morality and safety, whilst most men appeared unopposed in their sexual expression and freedom. My sexual experiences and identity were embedded within a sexual double standard that positioned my sexuality as subordinate and responsive to men’s.

I reflected upon my own experiences and social position imbued within heteronormativity and struggled to make sense of a world that would make women fragile and insecure in their own sexuality. My psychology studies provided an avenue in which to better understand my own and other women’s experiences of gendered violence. Gavey (1992) introduced me to the term ‘heterosexual coercion’ that conceptualised constructions of power and dominance within negotiations of heterosexual sex. I was able to better understand my experiences through Gavey’s explanation of the operation and effects of disciplinary

power that produce sexual compliance in the absence of physical force. The construction of subtle and often invisible forces that would maintain heterosexual practices led me to investigate subtle forms of sexual victimisation reproduced in online advice for heterosexual Tinder dating, as part of an Honours research project (Durstun, 2020). I found that men were consistently positioned to be active and in control of a dating relationship, whilst women were encouraged to maintain a passive and modest sexuality. I was troubled by findings that evidenced coercive and controlling constructions of heteronormativity in advice articles that sought to teach men and women how to do dating. I wondered to what effect the sexual double standard found in online discourse would be reproduced in lived experiences of modern dating and how I might engage with women's stories to influence intervention and education for safety and well-being in heterosexual dating.

In my current research, I explore the real life complexities of gendered interactions in the context of heterosexual relationships to examine how men and women negotiate heterosexual norms in contemporary dating relationships. I explore how women construct their gendered and sexual identities and negotiate the complex and contradictory tensions of traditional and postfeminist femininity, in the context of the mediated intimacy of Tinder dating, and the ways in which constructions of power and coercion produce the feminine body. By contextualising my research within mediated postfeminist culture and neoliberal ideology, I examine the ways in which the modern-day woman, who is active, independent and questioning in her social position, may influence awareness and education for diversity and equality in heterosexual relationships.

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Chapter One: Gender, heterosexuality and coercive power

Gender, as a complex cultural construct that is situational and contextual, constitutes a package of social expectations, or gender 'rules' that establish appropriate social, psychological and behavioural characteristics for men and women as they conduct their social life (Russo & Pirlott, 2006). Positions of power and privilege are reproduced within constructions of gender, as power operates through sexual scripts and gender norms that typically equates femininity with a social standing that is submissive to men's social dominance (Eaton & Matamala, 2014; Eckstein, 2019; Russo & Pirlott, 2006). Heterosexuality operates as a site for accomplishing gender, as men and women comply with and learn from gender-specific arrangements that reproduce social power relations and gendered ways of doing relationships (Hartmann, 1981; Horley & Clarke, 2016).

The recent history of women's sexuality tells a story of inequality and injustice, as women negotiate a social context that privileges men. Men and women's social worlds are complex, embedded in norms, practices and social power relations that produce and reinforce sexuality within hierarchical gendered power relations (Crawford et al., 1994; Gavey, 1992). Until the second half of the 20th century, women's sexual desire was mostly absent in understandings of intimate heterosexual relationships, as women's sexualities were produced as passive and responsive to men's sexual want and desire (Moran, 2017; Wouters, 1998). The sexual revolution, beginning in the 1960's, aimed to bring attention to gendered identities that constrain women within a subordinate sexual identity (Gavey, 2019). The revolt on women's sexual subjugation ensued in company with efforts to elicit changes to how we 'do' love and sex (Wouters, 1998). As women's sexual pleasure began to be acknowledged outside of contexts of love, understandings of women's sexualities as only existing for relationship satisfaction and men's sexual gratification were challenged (Burkett

& Hamilton, 2012; Garton, 2014; Wouters, 1998). The sexual revolution gave prominence to structurally embedded institutional inequities, in which women are perceived to have equal rights, yet are constrained within gender stereotypes and sexual scripts that reproduce double standards for men's dominance and women's passivity in heterosexuality (Gavey, 1992, 2019; Gill, 2007; Ridgeway, 2009; Wouters, 1998). The revolution sought the liberation and empowerment of women in the new vitality of a feminine sexuality, in which feminine desire and pleasure were produced as separate from male-dominated expectations for heterosex (Gavey, 2019).

Doing Gender

Within the 'doing gender' framework (Risman & Davis, 2013; West & Zimmerman, 1987), gender is understood, not as an individual trait, but as an ongoing activity, in which gendered persons reproduce, reinforce and police socially constructed ways of doing masculinity and femininity (West & Zimmerman, 1987). In gender constructions, masculinity is reproduced in displays of leadership and agency, whilst femininity is reproduced in acts of nurturance and empathy (Risman & Davis, 2013). In 'doing gender', we reinforce power dynamics and gender hierarchy, in which men are dominant and women are submissive (West & Zimmerman, 1987). As regulatory powers act on and produce the gendered subject, this subjection shapes and forms meanings of gender, producing gender as a regulatory operation of power that maintains a gendered subjectivity through embodied actions and social relationships that produce and maintain the subject in relation to other subjects (Butler, 2004). Gender norms are produced as social power, as conceptualisations of gender govern viable sexual exchanges through bodily practice and social rituals (Butler, 2004). Men and

women are constrained within social expectations of masculinity and femininity, as regulated power restricts gendered identities within successful gender performance.

Disciplinary power

Dominant discourses for sexuality are represented and reproduced in all aspects of social life, allowing power to operate through seemingly natural ways of thinking about and acting out sexuality (Gavey, 2019). Foucault (1981) theorises sexuality as a product of power, embedded within social relations, in which normative sexual practices act as forms of social control. In Foucault's disciplinary society, power operates through the constant visibility and surveillance of social subjects. Disciplinary power acts upon the body to construct 'docile bodies', as the constant feeling of being watched, even when no one may be there, produces coercive control that affects the minds and behaviours of individuals to create self-disciplining subjects (Foucault, 1981).

Although useful for conceptualising power acting on the body, Foucault's construction of 'docile bodies' neglects to construct women as under surveillance in a way that men are not. Taking up Foucault's theory of disciplinary power, Bartky (1998) engages a policy of coercion that permeates the feminine body and is maintained within micro-physics of power that act upon gendered persons, drawing upon Foucault's conception of 'docile bodies' to understand how women are produced as subject and obedient to the controls of constant surveillance (Bartky, 1998). Heterosexual scripts are internalised, as gendered subjects assume an intensive role of self-monitoring (Bartky, 1998; Gavey, 1992), and unconscious obedience to operations of power are reproduced through the constant strive to achieve gender conformity in everyday practices (Gavey, 2019).

Women's hyper-compliance with femininity provides an example of enhanced disciplinary power acting on the feminine body, as women participate in society with heightened concerns for being observed (Davis, 1991; Nicholls, 2020). The feminine body becomes an object of disciplinary power, as disciplinary practices within social norms attempt to control and regulate the body (Bartky, 1998). Non-compliance by women holds consequences for social punishment that may occur in the form of women's desexualisation, social alienation or self-punishment (Bartky, 1998). Women's self-surveillance is present in all aspects of feminine performance, such as maintenance of women's skin, hair, makeup, smile, dieting, exercising, posture, gestures and fashion (Bartky, 1998; Davis, 1991; Gavey, 2019). Feminine expectations act on the feminine body as a form of social control that reproduces social gendered power relations and patriarchy, as women are never good enough 'as is' (Bartky, 1998). Women become self-disciplined subjects, as they are expected to self-regulate and maintain expectations for the sexualised feminine body that ultimately reproduce women's oppression (Bartky, 1998; Davis, 1991).

Heterosexual relationships and heteronormativity

Dating relationships

Gendered standards of heterosexuality are embedded in social interaction and institutionalised in media representations, law and policy, and organisational practices (Ridgeway, 2009). In a system of hierarchical gender structures, heterosexuality becomes obligatory, as relationships between men and women reproduce heteronormative expectations for romance and dating (Edin et al., 2016). A 'heterosexual way of life' produces a social

system that regulates and controls how we do sexuality in intimacy, marriage and family life (Herz & Johansson, 2015, p. 1011). Dating norms expect men and women to fulfil gender positions and recreate a nuclear family lifestyle that consists of finding love, sharing a home together, getting married and having children (Herz & Johansson, 2015). Women are positioned to be especially obligated to attain romantic love from dating relationships, as Hollway's (1984) research suggests that women are subject to a have/hold discourse that reproduces the feminine sexual identity within ideals of monogamy, partnership and family life. Heteronormative beliefs about dating are reproduced in magazines and films that construct women's goals within a pursuit of love (Gresaker, 2017; Hefner & Kretz, 2021). The 'romance masterplot' is written and rewritten in media in narratives of 'happily ever after' love that reproduces romantic ideals of 'soul mates', 'love at first sight' and 'love overcomes all' (Hefner & Kretz, 2021; Portolan & McAlister, 2022). Women's social compliance is evident in gender differences for how men and women take meaning from a first date. In research, men have typically drawn on discourses of sex when constructing the first date, whereas women reproduce discourses of romance and relationships (Farvid & Braun, 2006; Morr Serewicz & Gale, 2008; Wouters, 1998). Women may subscribe to the 'romance master plot' as a way of successfully carrying out social life, as they comply with gendered expectations for a feminine pursuit of love and intimate partnerships (Hollway, 1984, 1989; Portolan & McAlister, 2022).

Gendered hierarchical structures maintain men's dominance, as heteronormativity produces what is 'normal' for sexuality, and those who do not conform are socially punished (Ridgeway, 2009; Toomey et al., 2012). Traditionally, courtship has been constructed within heterosexual norms that produce men as the dominant breadwinner and women as passive and responsive to men's courtship (Lamont, 2014; McRobbie, 2007). Men are reproduced as active and assertive in the dating context, as they are expected to be the initiators of all

aspects of dating, including attraction, dates, love, and sex (Eaton & Rose, 2012). Hegemonic masculinity is central to constructions of traditional dating relationships, as men enact dominance throughout heterosexual interactions (Connell & James, 2005; Moran, 2017). Men's dominance is often most evident in the early stages of courtship, as men are expected to schedule, plan and cover expenses for a date and are also the 'deciders' in progressing the status of a relationship (Eaton & Rose, 2012; Lamont, 2014; Morr Serewicz & Gale, 2008). Men are produced as confident and capable in the dating relationship, as they carry out heteronormative ways of doing sexuality and relationships, whilst women are produced as responsive and dependent. By falling back on dating norms, men and women use gendered courtship to navigate the uncertainties of dating and relationships (Eaton & Rose, 2011, 2012).

Sexual relationships

'Sex' takes on many meanings and is conceptualised within discourses of pleasure, love, relationships and identity, and provides the conditions for gendered abuse and violence (Attwood, 2006; Harvey et al., 2004). 'Sex' assumes many forms that play out in the initiation and development of heterosexual relationships (Harvey et al., 2004). Hollway (1984) identifies gendered positioning in heterosex to propose a 'male sex drive' discourse, which identifies biological influences in conflated meanings of heterosex that theorise men's aggressive pursuit of heterosex to be linked to a natural propensity for reproduction. Conflated meanings of sex and gender expect men to be active and in control of heterosex, whilst women are expected to comply and remain passive in their sexuality, as they subject themselves to men's sexual needs (Eaton & Matamala, 2014; Hollway, 1984, 1989; Murray, 2018). A sexual double standard is identified, when men's sexuality is uncontrollable, yet a

woman's sexuality is barely visible and often only produced within maternal expectations (Hollway, 1984, 1989). Women's sexualities are not only unseen, but suppressed, as the sexually active feminine subject is labelled a 'slut' or a 'whore' (Farvid et al., 2017; Tolman, 2005). The constraints upon feminine sexuality produce discourses of women as gatekeepers of heterosex, in which it becomes a feminine responsibility to control men's access to heterosex (Berkowitz et al. 2021; Thompson 2018). When positioned as the gatekeeper, women are inhibited from being fully active and autonomous in initiating and negotiating heterosex (Moran, 2017). A study conducted by Hamilton and Armstrong (2009) investigated the 'hook-up culture' through interviews with university students and found support for a sexual double standard, in which women's sexual behaviours and desires were constrained to romantic relationships, whereas men were allowed to participate in casual heterosex without judgement. Hamilton and Armstrong's (2009) study highlights gender norms that function to make women available to men's sexual desires by constructing a woman's goal to be attracting and keeping a man (McRobbie, 1978). Women are produced as the object of the 'male sex drive' and feminine sexuality is controlled and given meaning according to men's sexual urges (Hollway, 1984, 1989). Locating men's aggressive sexuality within the framework of women's sexual oppression, enables an engagement with how sexuality is deployed in ways that maintain power (Gavey, 1992; Kelly & Radford, 1990). Heteronormativity reinforces a power imbalance where women are subjected to restrictive and objectifying expectations for their sexuality, whilst men are culturally encouraged to maintain power and control in intimate relationships.

Rape culture and consent

Assumptions of gender as organised within male and female categories disregard constructs of gender as a complex cultural package that reproduces inequality and contexts of risk and violence (Gavey, 2019; Russo & Pirlott, 2006). As gender 'rules' are reproduced in heteronormative constructions of social life, women can be burdened by extreme social pressures to maintain their 'femininity', whilst being subject to social punishment (Russo & Pirlott, 2006). Gender shapes social and psychological life, positioning women with less power than men, and producing social conditions of possibility for gender-based violence (Gavey, 2019; Russo & Pirlott, 2006). Social conditions for gendered violence are reproduced, enabling a 'rape culture' where sexual violence against women is normalised and excused (Nicholls, 2020).

The culture of rape is gendered, as the social environment and embedded expectations for men and women are influenced by and contribute to relations of power (Brownmiller, 1975; Nicholls, 2020). Normative gender assumptions associated with masculinity and femininity reinforce understandings and practices that violate a woman's independence and sexual boundaries (Gavey, 2019), where the power and control of men is normalised and accepted within cultural values at every level of society (Nicholls, 2020). A rape culture is evident in institutionalised rape myths, which expose victim-blaming and 'slut-shaming' in legal and social contexts, demonstrating how sexual scripts and double standards are historically, socially and culturally embedded (Burt, 1980).

Problems of gender-based violence, as acts most likely to be perpetrated by someone known to the victim, are suppressed in characterisations of rape as a rare and violent attack by a stranger (Gavey, 1992, 2019), where myths about the 'ideal rape' support a policy of 'stranger danger' rape prevention, and assume a person's close relationships to be safe from sexual victimisation. A rape culture is maintained when women's experiences of sexual

violence are unrecognised by women or not believed by society (Gavey, 1992). Shotland and Goodstein (1983) found that people were more likely to blame a woman and suggest she desired heterosex if less force and slower resistance was involved, compared to the use of more force with earlier resistance, which was more likely to be deemed rape. In the 1980's, challenges to an androcentric interpretation of rape found that rape prevalence was far more common than previously estimated, but that many women did not identify experiences of pressure and coercion as rape (Koss, 1993; Russel, 1982). Women may not report their experiences of rape due to gendered norms that normalise women's sexuality within a traditional feminine duty to provide intimacy, which resists the possibility of sexual victimisation within intimate relationships and contributes to a cultural silencing of rape (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012).

It is important that we listen to women's stories and challenge the narrow and constricted views of rape when considering consent, as women's ability to communicate consent is complicated by a culture that normalises and excuses rape. A culture of victim-blaming is embedded in the historical legal context that stigmatises and discredits a woman's character before listening to and supporting her story. Legal thinking about rape throughout history reflects women's inequalities, in which women's status, clothing, emotional state and other individualised choices are heavily scrutinised in the legal system (Gilmore, 2017; Serisier, 2018). Furthermore, women's sexual victimisation may be dismissed through myths of women's provocation and underlying desire and subconscious fantasies for rape (Brownmiller, 1975; Gavey, 2019). Although the meaning of rape remains contested, feminist anti-rape politics were transformative in challenging romanticised constructions of rape to say that rape was not 'sexy', but humiliating, hurtful and degrading for women (Gavey, 2019). Evidence of internalised rape myths demonstrate coercive social pressures

that produce boundaries to negotiations of consent in heterosexual relationships (Gilmore, 2017; Shotland & Goodstein, 1983).

Definitions of sexual consent typically refer to: ‘one’s voluntary, sober, and conscious willingness to engage in a particular sexual behaviour with a particular person within a particular context’ (Willis & Jozkowski, 2019, p. 1723). Concerns emerge in definitional discourse of a ‘willingness’ to engage in heterosex, which pairs consent with ‘being prepared to’ engage in a sexual activity, which is not the same as sexual want and desire. Although sexual consent is often depicted as a yes/no choice in sexual education, recent research has begun to understand sexual decision-making as an interaction between sexual want and sexual consent (Darden et al., 2019). In current sexual education, sexual want is not considered a requirement of sexual consent, which normalises sexual compliance and submission in heterosexual relations. A woman may ‘give in to’ heterosex as a result of cultural expectations and disciplinary forms of power that encourage women’s passive compliance, yet these interactions are still deemed consensual sex. Cultural constructions that rationalise coercive sexuality demonstrate problems of a rape culture that reproduces Eurocentric and individualistic ways of thinking about sexual choices (Gavey, 2019).

Research has placed more importance on sexual consent in recent years with feminist movements and campaigns such as *#MeToo*, however ambiguity remains for what constitutes consent (Mark & Vowels, 2020). Sexual consent is often construed as an unspoken negotiation in sexual relationships, as men and women often do not verbalise their consent (Mark & Vowels, 2020; Newstrom et al., 2021; Willis & Jozkowski, 2019). Relying on non-verbal cues is problematic given we interpret those cues through sexual scripts that position men as dominant and women as submissive. Sexual consent becomes a gendered interaction, in which men and women give and perceive sexual cues influenced by sexual scripts that position men as the initiator and women as responsive (Newstrom et al., 2021; Pateman,

1980). As gender stereotypes construct women's sexual passivity and men's 'natural' sexual aggression, resistance to heterosex can be interpreted to be masking women's real sexual desire and casts doubt on women's expressions of consent (Gavey, 2019).

Although efforts have been made to challenge ambiguous consent by promoting sexual assertiveness, affirmative consent and a 'yes means yes' discourse (Curtis & Burnett, 2017; Darden et al., 2019), feminist researchers have argued that sexual consent is still limited within framings of individual choice (Gavey, 2019), rather than acknowledging the social inequity that influences the blurred lines of sexual consent (Gavey, 2019). Sexual consent can be understood more meaningfully as a negotiation of social expectations within gendered power relations that references one's own social position to be influential in how sexual communication is carried out (Beres, 2007).

In recent years, feminist scholars have been working towards a de-gendering of sexuality, which involves reconstructing concepts of consent (Gavey, 2019). The de-gendering of sexuality seeks to redefine the all-embracing concept of consent, by recognising problems in a term that implies the expression of choice, mutuality, and desire, yet in practice includes both wanted and unwanted sex (Gavey, 2019; Mackinnon, 2003). By acknowledging the socially constructed notion of sexual consent, the de-gendering of sexuality aims to rework discourses of feminine and masculine sexuality to emphasise equally valued and mutual sexual want and desire between men and women (Gavey, 2019). In a qualitative study which sought to explore women's narratives of joyous and happy sexual encounters, it was found that 'good sex' for women involved experiences that resisted traditional gendered sexual scripts of passivity and dominance, and instead encouraged reciprocity, equality and connection (Fahs & Plante, 2017). Research into feminine sexual desire demonstrates the transformative power of voice, as women are enabled to speak on and resist traditional expectations for women's passive or missing sexual desire to instead emphasise women's

sexual happiness as primarily derived from feelings of sexual power, control and agency (Fahs & Plante, 2017). Conceptualising consent and sexuality as embedded in social power relations and gendered arrangements is beneficial for understanding how a sexualised cultural scaffolding provides the context in which sexual choices are made (Gavey, 2019).

Coercion

The perspective of a rape culture enables an understanding of how modern power often does not involve conspicuous violence, but assumes more subtle forms (Lukes, 1974). The inclusion of women's stories in sexual violence research has introduced broader perceptions of victimisation, in which women's experiences that were not rape, but that were undesired all the same have revealed discrepancies for how we understand sexual victimisation (Gavey, 2019). Gavey (2019) builds on a broadening of sexual victimisation to identify a grey area of heterosex, which addresses situations where direct or indirect pressure is used to gain a person's compliance to unwanted sex. Heterosexual coercion exists within the grey area of heterosex and is contextualised within gendered norms that intersect with power relations to produce pressure and exploitation in heterosexual relationships (Gavey, 2019). Direct forms of coercion may involve threats to end a relationship, attempts to arouse through unwanted sexual touching, or the use of physical force (Jeffrey & Barata, 2017). Indirect forms of coercion may occur in sexual interactions where a person goes along with heterosex, because they do not feel they can say no (Gavey, 2019). Finkelhor and Yllo (1985) refer to social coercion as a subtle form of coercion embedded within social construction of gendered sexuality, as disciplinary power acts upon men and women's bodies in different ways (Bartky, 1998). The production of 'docile bodies' manifests a context of social coercion, as uninterrupted coercion governs bodily practices and controls the feminine body

in its movement, space and time (Bartky, 1998). For instance, Bartky (1998) describes an 'economy of touching' that is out of balance, where it is normal for men to touch women more often and on more parts of the body in comparison to women touching men. A sexual double standard is produced, as the feminine body is constructed to be more accessible to men than the masculine body is to women. Assumptions of heterosexuality and rape culture have positioned women's role within a duty to please their partner, avoid arguments and maintain their relationship with sexual submission (Basile, 1999; Conroy et al., 2015; Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Hollway, 1984, 1989; Impett & Peplau, 2002), where an unspoken agreement or 'social contract' between men and women in intimate relationships expects men to provide financial security and stability, whilst women provide sexual pleasure (Shotland & Goodstein, 1992). At the centre of this discussion of coercion is the absence of feminine sexual desire coupled with women's feelings of being unable to refuse heterosex (Moran, 2017), emphasising how societal pressures, whether direct or hidden, function in heterosexual relationships to negate sexual choice and consent.

Sexual coercion is a common occurrence in heterosexual relationships (Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2010). Research shows that many young people report experiences of coercion and/or unwanted sexual activity (Hird and Jackson, 2001; Jackson et al., 2000). Given a culture that silences and minimises women's experiences of rape, subtle forms of sexual victimisation are largely disregarded and trivialised in social processes that deem sexual coercion a 'normal' or 'minor' occurrence. Kelly and Radford (1990) effectively utilise a 'nothing really happened' discourse to depict a culture of violence, in which women are encouraged to rationalise and accept their experiences of sexual victimisation as normal. The study asserts that something 'did indeed happen' when women report experiences of everyday abuse by men, such as being persuaded to have sex with an intimate partner. A culture of rape is implicated in systematic processes that reduce subtle forms of sexual

victimisation to a 'nothing' event, restricting women's ability to identify and speak out about their experiences (Kelly & Radford, 1990). Mainstream ways of thinking about coercion influences women's perceptions of their own experiences, where women can identify feeling anxious and unsafe, yet do not disclose this due to cliches of women making a 'fuss over nothing' (Kelly & Radford, 1990, p. 25). Given that legal and social definitions have provided narrow understandings of sexual violence, women often do not have the language to name and define their experience as sexual harassment or abuse (Kelly & Radford, 1990). Women's experiences of sexual victimisation are invalidated and dismissed in a culture that constrains meanings of violence against women.

Chapter Two: Postfeminism and media culture

Contentions are reproduced in constructions of heterosexuality as women remain subject to men's dominant sexuality, however postfeminist culture introduces discourse for a new sexual permissiveness, which encourages women's sexual freedom and right to express feminine sexuality without restriction or expectation (Hollway, 1984, 1989).

A new understanding of postfeminism

Understanding of a culture that reproduces disciplinary power, gender inequality and coercive control in heterosexual scripts is meaningful for understanding how postfeminist culture may both reproduce and resist social power relations in gendered ways of doing heterosexuality. Ideas of postfeminism have been heavily contested in feminist debate as the emergence of more liberated understandings of sexuality produced complexities and contradictions in a movement that sought feminine empowerment, alongside the identification of a rape culture (Gavey, 2019). General assumptions of postfeminism are: gender equality has been achieved; second wave feminism is now no longer necessary; and women have progressed to live autonomous and free lives (McRobbie, 2009; Moran, 2017; Rutherford, 2018; Tasker & Negra, 2007). Discourses of individualism, choice and empowerment are central to postfeminist ideology, as neoliberal influences position women to be 'freely choosing' and in charge of their own participation in feminine social practices (Gill, 2007, 2008a; Moran, 2017; Stuart & Donaghue, 2012). As women are positioned as active and choosing in their social participation, gender differences are understood to be resulting from individual choice rather than social structure, inequality and coercion (McRobbie, 2009; Stuart & Donaghue, 2012). Heterosexuality becomes conceptualised

within ideologies of postfeminism and neoliberalism to repackage misogyny within the guise of freeing and empowering feminine choice (Moran, 2017).

Gill's (2007) recognition of the mutual relationship between feminism and media, and how transformations in one may influence transformations in the other, invites consideration of how postfeminism, as a sensibility, is reproduced within cultural products, such as films, television series, advertisements and other forms of media (Gill, 2007). The media is dominant in influencing and producing how we do gender and sexuality in its judgement and establishment of the 'rules of play' (McRobbie, 2004, p. 258), and Gill's (2007) postfeminist sensibility enables an interrogation of representations of gender in media to 'complicate' understandings of agency and choice within the sexualised culture.

The sexualised culture

A distinct theme for representations of femininity in contemporary culture is the association between femininity and the body. Expectations for women's bodies have varied over time and across cultures, and reflect histories of bodily obsession (Bartky, 1998). Contemporary focus on the feminine body is intensified, as postfeminist resistance to traditional gender norms narrows gender performance within the discipline of women's bodily activity (Attwood, 2006; Bartky, 1998; Stuart & Donaghue, 2012). Traditional beliefs that coupled femininity with the caring and nurturing role of motherhood have become displaced with expectations of a feminine identity that is primarily represented as the possession of a sexy body (Gill, 2007, 2008b). Although femininity paired with attention to the body is not a new concept, this relationship is augmented in contemporary culture with normative expectations for women to be white, young and slim, accompanied by expectations for women to appear hot and sexy with a curvaceous figure (Evans et al., 2010; Gill, 2009).

Women's bodies are constructed as spectacle in the media, as postmodern presentation of the body expects a visually-striking and captivating performance of feminine attractiveness (Bartky, 1998).

An intense media focus on the body constructs women's bodies as their source of power, yet simultaneously regulates women through expectations for constant monitoring and surveillance to meet unrealistic standards of feminine attractiveness (Gill, 2007). A New Zealand study conducted by Jackson and Vares (2015) analysed 71 pre-teen girls' narratives about sexualised popular culture and found that although women would critique unrealistic beauty standards or 'fake' beauty product, there still remained a level of compliance in the form of desire to achieve the 'perfect' body image displayed in media. A complex relationship between media images and girls' identity formation is highlighted, as women and girls are aware of restrictive feminine beauty, yet comply for the purpose of gender accomplishment (Gill, 2008a; Jackson & Vares, 2015).

Girl's and women's appearances are produced as a form of creativity and self-expression that holds influence for identity and social status (Currie, 1999). There is a cultural privilege offered in beauty practices that enables women to hold power and status as they compete with other women to do femininity more successfully than the other in the neoliberal marketplace (Stuart & Donoghue, 2012). Although women are perceived to hold independent choice in their participation with beauty standards, this choice is entangled with the social reward and social consequence of compliance and non-compliance (Black & Sharma, 2001; Davis, 1991; Gill, 2008a). Women become ideal neoliberal subjects within the postfeminist and neoliberal culture that reinforces a constant anxious attention towards successful feminine presentation in all aspects of a woman's life (Gill, 2007; Jackson & Vares, 2015). Feminine maintenance is not only constant and anxious, but is also expected to be executed as 'fun' and 'carefree', as media idealises an effortless femininity (Gill, 2007).

Accompanying this contemporary preoccupation with the body is a contemporary obsession with sex (Attwood, 2006; Gill, 2012). The ‘sexualisation of culture’ is a phenomenon that acknowledges modern society to be inundated with sexual representation, as discourses of sex and sexuality have become ‘mainstream’ (Gill, 2012). A ‘pornified’ popular media culture is produced, where an obsession with the sexualised body blurs the boundaries between porn and other media genres (Gill, 2007; Jackson & Vares, 2015). As ‘free choosing’ and desiring sexual subjects, women are encouraged to embrace a culture that normalises their subjectification and objectification (Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2004). Commercialised hyper-sexuality is evident in women’s desire to be pin-up girls for soft-porn magazines, attend lap-dancing clubs, and enjoy pole dancing as recreational activity (Attwood, 2006; Gill, 2012; McRobbie, 2004; Sonnet, 1999). Sexual agency is reproduced within sexualising activities, as women are encouraged to explore their ‘inner sex goddess’, or self-identity, through activities that sexualise the feminine body (Donaghue et al., 2011). A study by Sonnet (1999) found women’s sexual expression to be negotiated within consumerist notions of ‘self-determination’, as women attempt to reverse a gendered power-pleasure structure and seek to become the consumer rather than the object of the male gaze.

Despite discourses of neoliberal self-determination and choice, gender stereotyping and coercive power persists in constructions of men’s and women’s mediated sexual identities as men and women are constructed differently in the media (Gill, 2008b). Men’s sexuality in the media is typically associated with hegemonic characteristics of toughness and dominance, portrayed in muscular body images and a pleasure-seeking sexual assertiveness (Boni, 2002; Gill, 2007; Schooler & Ward, 2006). Contrastingly, women continue to be pictured in the submissive role, with expectations to constantly attend to and monitor their sexual presentation and relationships (Gill, 2007; Jackson & Vares, 2015). Research on media representations of sex have found that sexual coercion is accepted and normalised in

mediated constructions, as women's sexuality is produced as a working responsibility to take care of a man's sexuality and a way to maintain or gain a new monogamous relationship (Moran & Lee, 2011). Even when such representations are 'empowering', they continue to prioritise men's sexuality and construct women as 'needing' men (Farvid & Braun, 2006). Contradictory representations are evident in discourses that empower autonomous women, yet maintain women's vulnerability and dependence, ultimately reproducing contexts of coercion and power. Mediated gender differences between men and women are eroticised (Gill, 2007), and overlook or deny the gender inequalities that discipline women more intensely than men.

The postfeminist and neoliberal subject

The sexualisation of culture within postfeminist and neoliberal subjectivities intensifies a social obsession with the feminine body, as women are made to navigate complex and contradictory cultural standards of individualism and empowerment. The neoliberal feminine subject is commodified and commercialised, as economic discourses of success and competition produce a self-responsibility for achieving femininity (Davies et al., 2006; Moran, 2017; Stuart & Donaghue, 2012). Women are urged to become hyper-active in their femininity with neoliberal expectations for self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline materialising as practices in which women enact choice and power (Gill, 2009; Lamb & Peterson, 2012; McRobbie, 2007; Moran, 2017). When women's oppression is constructed as 'personal choice', freedom is possible to achieve, and yet an illusion, as women perform 'empowered' feminine practices that ultimately contribute to their disadvantage (Baker, 2010; McRobbie, 2007; Stuart & Donaghue, 2012; Taylor, 2011).

Sexual agency and empowerment

A competitive sexual marketplace is reproduced within postfeminist and neoliberal ideology, as economic contexts enable freedoms to choose one's own sexual identity, yet a person can only 'win' in the contemporary marketplace if they meet the demands of the market. New discourses of women as active and desiring subjects repackage women's sexuality within a 'liberated' sexual independence (Gill, 2007). The liberated sexual feminine subject can be empowered through multiple actions that are constructed as feminine power and independence, from purchasing lingerie to sharing in a gossip session (Gill, 2008b). The 'liberated' woman is 'fun', 'sexy' and 'freely chooses' sex, which contributes to an 'up for it' femininity that constructs the sexually knowledgeable, confident and agentic woman (Evans et al., 2010; Gill, 2012). An 'up for it' femininity is observed within advertising of the 'midriff', which is named after fashion advances that exposed this part of the body (Gill, 2008b). Constructions of the 'midriff' in advertisement speak to a modern reshaping of femininity within meanings of an assertive and desiring feminine sexuality, as a woman's body is constructed as a source of power (Gill, 2008b). However, feminine sexual agency is complicated within constructions of the 'midriff' that suggest a cultural shift from objectification to subjectification, as women now actively choose their position as sexualised subjects and do so within discourses of playfulness, freedom and choice (Gill, 2008b). The male gaze is internalised and acted out, as feminine empowerment is commodified within the consumer media culture through 'self-improvement', 'self-help' and 'self-transformation' that constructs successful femininity as independent work that is materialistic and profit-oriented (Gill, 2007, 2009; Magnusson & Marecek, 2017; Moran, 2017; Nicholls, 2020; Riley et al., 2019; Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008). A study conducted with adolescent girls found that talk about Victoria's Secret models who 'strut their stuff' or a celebrity who 'owns herself' reproduces an idealised form of empowerment manufactured in media (Lamb et al.,

2016, p. 534). Media representations of uncomplicated confident and ‘empowered’ celebrities and models construct ‘sexiness’ as a project of self-improvement, producing individual attitudes as the only obstacle to women’s empowerment (Gill, 2008b, 2016, 2017; Lamb et al., 2016; Rutherford, 2018). Despite the illusion of feminine ‘liberation’ and ‘choice’, and continued gender inequity, the neoliberal subject is expected to remain ‘positive’ and ‘happy’, as they continuously self-improve, whilst defiance to women’s subjectification is constructed as toxic and ugly by feminine standards (Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2007; Nicholls, 2020; Riley et al., 2019).

The subjectification of the male gaze opens up spaces for the normalisation and acceptance of casual sex for women (Farvid et al., 2017; Gavey, 2019). An ‘apocalypse’ on modern love has uprooted traditional dating scripts to produce new contexts for dating involving ‘hanging-out’ and ‘hooking-up’ (Eaton & Rose, 2012; Lee, 2019). The modern day ‘hook-up culture’ continues to be most commonly associated with dating on university campuses and online dating applications. Gender performance within these new contexts is proposed to be more egalitarian and less regulated by traditional gendered norms, as ‘casual dating’ produces less pressure of social consequence (Eaton & Rose, 2012). Despite a new social acceptance of women’s open and desiring sexuality, casual dating is produced in tension with sexual double standards that reproduce women’s oppression (Farvid et al., 2017). The ‘hook-up culture’ celebrates an acceptance of casual sex in communities of young adults, however, a study conducted with 258 heterosexual undergraduates (72.5% women) found that one third of women reported at least one experience of going along with undesired casual sex (Katz & Schneider, 2015). Research that explored women’s beliefs about casual sex also found discourses of the unacceptability of casual sex, concerns for a sexual reputation and the making of a slut (Farvid et al., 2017), with women’s coerced experiences of sex also working alongside processes of victim-blaming and policing other women

(Burkett & Hamilton, 2012). Findings suggest a social discomfort with women's active sexuality that reproduces the overtone of a rape culture, as women critique the sexual double standard on the surface, yet judge other women's sexual permissiveness in their own narratives (Farvid et al., 2017). Assumptions of neoliberal individual responsibility constraints reflection on the complexities of sexual autonomy within the sexualised culture, reproducing notions of postfeminist choice and independence to blame women for their failure to preserve their sexual integrity (Burkett & Hamilton, 2012). Despite beliefs about embracing feminine sexual freedom, hierarchical gendered power relations continue to dominate even in the absence of pressure for maintaining intimate relationships.

As feminine sexual desire, pleasure and subjectivity are produced within discourses of contentious empowerment, it brings into question when women's actions are empowered and when they are disempowered (Gavey, 2012; Lamb & Peterson, 2012). Feminist researchers, Lamb and Peterson (2012), propose a multidimensional approach to empowerment. A multidimensional approach perceives women's feelings of empowerment as an authentic form of empowerment, thus separating this level of subjective experience from wider social constraints impacting a woman's 'empowered' actions. The identification of constraints on women's choices is not to undermine or deny a women's feeling of empowerment, but rather to advance awareness of the social, cultural and political control that is moving against feminine sexuality (Gavey, 2012).

The sexual marketplace in online dating

An analysis of mediated intimacy can be used to better understand how postfeminist and neoliberal ideologies come together to produce gender and sexuality in heterosexual dating relationships. Mediated intimacy realises how different forms of intimate relationships

are constructed in different media sites (Gill, 2009). The emergence of a culture of sexuality has influenced new sexual experiences and identity formations that are made more accessible through developing technology in online communication (Attwood, 2006; Gill, 2012).

Modern technologies have enabled access to sex within 'public' spaces, as online communication creates opportunities for new experiences of sex in the form of sexual texts and cybersex (Attwood, 2006). Media sites, as platforms for where social life becomes visible (Shaw, 2016; Thompson, 2018), are a space for expression and sharing, where women can learn about, explore, play and experiment with their sexuality (Gill, 2009; Ringrose, 2013). Online media has become a key site for the initiation and negotiation of modern dating relationships.

Dating applications provide an online social network that functions as a way for people to create intimate connections online. Dating applications have become mainstream in the Westernised dating culture and have transformed the way that people do modern intimacy, diversifying the experience of dating for young people, providing easy communication and options for intimate interests. A range of dating applications have been developed to meet the interests of different sexualities and dating intentions, such as Grindr, Bumble, Hinge and Elite Singles, however, Tinder remains the most popular of these applications. Tinder was released in 2012 and is oriented towards dating for heterosexual young adults (Tomaszewska & Schuster, 2019). Reasons for using Tinder change between users, as research has found motivations typically consisted of love, casual sex, ease of communication, self-worth validation, thrill of excitement, and trendiness (Sumter et al., 2017). Although intentions for online dating vary, dating applications have been linked to the production of a culture of hook-ups, which has trivialised traditional institutions of marriage, monogamy and long-term partnerships (Portolan & McAlister, 2022). Indeed, Tinder has

gained a reputation as a hook-up or sex-app, in which users primarily seek casual sex (Christensen, 2021; Sumter et al., 2017).

Feminine empowerment is reproduced in the online dating context as women are encouraged to resist traditional male-dominated dating practices to become active and desiring participants within the online 'hook-up culture' (Sobieraj & Humphreys, 2021). Tinder capitalises on the newly popularised postfeminist agency by challenging traditional feminine passivity and modesty as a marketing strategy for its' dating application, positioning itself as a device that enables women's access to sexual freedom (Morris & Dobson, 2023). Women are encouraged to embrace Tinder's campaign for women 'dating the way they want to' within a context that markets intimacy as non-exclusive and temporary (Morris & Dobson, 2023, p. 8), and they are celebrated through constructions of the 'cool girl' who is confident, has a rebellious spirit and is freely seeking pleasure (Lee, 2019). However, Sobieraj and Humphreys (2021) argue that although there are some design features of online dating apps that enable women's empowerment and control, this empowerment is typically superficial or occurring by force and that despite attempts to manufacture empowerment, heteronormative ideals about traditional dating norms and sexual expectations are maintained.

It is argued that heteronormativity is still reproduced within online dating relationships, as men and women re-enact gender norms to produce known dating scripts within an unknown and uncertain dating structure (Berkowitz et al., 2021; Gillett, 2023; Saraiva et al., 2020). Women are both celebrated and punished in their use of the Tinder application. Christensen (2021) argues that Tinder augments heteronormative sexual scripts and dating norms by providing a new form of digital communication situated within a media culture that normalises sexual double standards and inequality, introducing a 'Tinderslut'/'Tinderella' dichotomy, in which the 'Tinderslut' is shamed for seeking casual

sex, whilst the 'Tinderella' is a 'dream girl' who provides 'happily ever after' by providing sex then disappearing (Christensen, 2021). Although social judgement persists in consequence to women's sexual agency, women are also emboldened in their sexual permissiveness, as long as it occurs within contexts that benefit men.

Thompson's (2018) study describes Tinder as an online sexual marketplace that functions as an online space for negotiating an economic exchange of supply and demand, with the exchanged 'goods' being heterosex. Tinder produces a game-like dating platform that enables control and validation in the form of social judgement and acceptance as men and women advertise themselves on Tinder's sexual marketplace (Berkowitz et al., 2021; Christensen, 2021; Garda & Karhulahti, 2021). As men and women 'play' Tinder, they are able to swipe right to like or accept a person or swipe left to reject a person (Berkowitz, 2021). The swiper is positioned in control of their own intimacy, as they become active in the pursuit of an intimate relationship (Berkowitz, 2021). Tinder users are sexualised, commodified and marketed, as individuals swipe through profiles to find the product that meets their needs (Attwood, 2006).

Tinder's sexual marketplace and commercialisation of exchanges of intimacy, is embedded within an environment of women's objectification, harassment and misogyny. Thompson (2018) analysed screen-grabbed messages from dating sites and found themes of the 'not hot enough' discourse, which suggested that a woman's 'worth' in the sexual marketplace is typically determined by her beauty and sexuality (Thompson, 2018). The positioning of women as subordinate to men in online dating is supported by discourse of the 'pseudo-reciprocal gift' of sexual exchange (Gilfoyle et al., 1992), in which women are positioned as passive objects who fulfil men's sexual needs by giving themselves and their body to the full control of men in heterosex for the returned 'gift' of sexual pleasure and orgasm (Gilfoyle et al., 1992). An online culture of misogyny also produces a context for

online harassment, as women report shared experiences of verbal abuse, unwanted graphic pictures ('nudes') and indecent sexual requests received from men online (Shaw, 2016; Thompson, 2018).

Dating applications contribute to a culture of violence, as women are subject to sexual harassment, slut-shaming, rape and murder (Berkowitz et al., 2021; Lee, 2019; Shaw, 2016). As such, 'safety work' - procedures in both online and offline dating contexts to respond to and cope with men's violence – have become routine procedure or 'hidden labour' in women's navigation of dating contexts that involves normalised and sometimes invisible processes of self-protection (Gillett, 2023). 'Safety work' includes 'work' such as carefully assessing men's Tinder profiles for 'red flags', dressing conservatively, using location-sharing services and arranging to meet men in public places (Gillett, 2023). Safety is gendered in Tinder dating, as women are not only navigating an uncertain dating culture, but also a potentially unsafe one.

Tinder holds a well-established reputation as a hook-up application, yet Tinder users often persist in their attempts to seek out a romantic narrative on the app (Portolan & McAlister, 2022). Although Tinder users may seek out love on the app, this connection is often unsure and insecure, as relationships are loosely connected within a dating context that is designed for immediately receiving and discarding a sexual experience within a consumer sensibility as Tinder users 'shop' for a person of interest within a vast collection of profiles with expectation for instantaneous gratification (Attwood, 2006; Berkowitz et al., 2021; Hall & Canterbury, 2011; Lee, 2019; Lundquist & Curington, 2019; Portolan & McAlister, 2022). Research has suggested that individuals may rely on gendered understandings of what is 'normal' in order to navigate what is 'not normal' about Tinder's transforming dating context, restructuring traditional gendered meanings within new technologies for dating and hook-ups that reproduce tradition in new cultural forms (Berkowitz et al., 2021).

The current research

The current research seeks to complicate understandings of agency and choice to explore women's sexual empowerment within the Tinder dating context. Constructions of sex, sexuality, gender and relationships are contradictory and complex in Tinder's modern dating culture, embedded within the neoliberal and postfeminist sensibility. Women are positioned as 'liberated' and 'free' in their sexuality, whilst disciplinary powers simultaneously act upon, coerce and control the feminine body. This project asks: How is feminine sexual empowerment negotiated within discourses of gender, heterosexuality and disciplinary power in women's experiences of Tinder? How do postfeminist and neoliberal subjectivities play out in the Tinder dating context, as it produces a transitional space between online and in-person constructions for sexual identities and gender performance? How are tensions of sexual victimisation and an environment of coercion reproduced and resisted within discourses of women's sexual agency in Tinder dating relationships? Through such questioning, this research aims to contribute to the de-gendering of sexuality and re-visioning of the feminine body, as it seeks to understand and challenge the cultural messages we inscribe upon our own bodies and sexualities daily.

The contradictions, ambiguities and complexities of how women can negotiate and navigate their sexuality within contemporary modern dating culture emphasises the need for methods of inquiry that can attend to the ways in which women make sense of their experiences, embedded in social, cultural and historical context and gendered power relations. As such, I have taken up social constructionism and a postfeminist critique to inform a Foucauldian discourse analysis of how women can speak of gender and sexuality in Tinder relationships, reflexively attending to the transformative power of voice through an analysis of meaning-making that seeks to explore women's experiences of sexual empowerment, as they reproduce and construct social life.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Method

Epistemological foundations

The current research takes up a Foucauldian discourse analysis of women's talk about Tinder dating informed by a feminist social constructionist position in order to explore constructions of social life and better understand subtle forms of power within gendered social relations. A feminist social constructionist epistemology provides an approach that is able to explore constructions of social life to better understand subtle forms of power within gendered social relations. Social constructionism advocates for an examination of systems of meaning-making through a 'turn to language', arguing that what is taken as 'fact' in our social communities is understood to be produced and maintained in our talk and text and that language is productive, as 'reality' is produced through social relationships and interactions embedded in social, cultural and historical contexts (Wilkinson, 2004). From a social constructionist perspective, differences in sexuality are socially constructed through language of men and women's socially and psychologically produced differences (Wilkinson, 2004). A feminist social constructionist perspective opens spaces to engage with gendered power relations, constructions of the feminine body and the material effects for women's identity and sexuality, with considerations of disciplinary power and 'the state of conscious and permanent visibility' that invades the feminine body (Bartky, 1998, p. 27). Through my analysis and critique of women's talk, I seek to better understand the production of modernised patriarchal power within new constructions of feminine empowerment, choice, rights to pleasure and the mediated consumer culture.

By engaging a postfeminist critique, I seek to better understand how women can make sense of their experiences of sexual empowerment on Tinder dates, as this sensibility

provides opportunity to explore the mutual relationship between transformations in feminism and media culture (Gill, 2007). I aim to explore the patterned, yet contradictory, postfeminist sensibility connected to dominant ideologies, such as individualism and neoliberalism, and how these are constructed in online dating relationships. The post-feminist sensibility is characterised by an entanglement of feminist and anti-feminist discourses, neoliberalism and social power relations and will thus provide a critique of the complex relationship between traditional and modern heterosexuality. A feminist approach also opens spaces to examine tensions, ambiguity, competing perspectives, and shifts of power within women's stories (Baxter, 2003; Gavey, 1989). By addressing complexities and contradictions in storytelling, I hope to explore how gender relations are negotiated within contexts of competing, yet connected, discourses to better understand how women construct their concept of self and their relationships.

A strength-based approach will be employed in order to focus on individuals' strengths and experiences of sexual empowerment on a Tinder date. A strength-based approach seeks to bring attention to women's positive experiences and encourage reflection for what has gone well in their Tinder dating. This approach is valuable for promoting individual wellbeing and for producing and disseminating knowledge of the potential for individual strengths and positive outcomes in heterosexual dating (Lopez & Magyar-Moe, 2006). Foucault's understanding of resistance as inherent within productions of power can be reflected upon in a strengths-based approach, as this research will open spaces to explore how women respond to and resist stereotyped subject positions, embedded in patriarchal power. Although my literature review did address concerns for sexual coercion, sexual violence and consent within contexts of heterosexual dating relationships, my focus in the current research was identifying systems of statements that construct consent and/or empowerment in the participant's stories. To maintain safety and wellbeing, my strengths-based approach did not

plan to directly discuss consent with the participants, but rather identify constructions of consent during analysis where appropriate. Given that my project involved a focus on language, I was also careful to story the women's experiences in a way that would give credit to their resistance. Care was taken to promote wellbeing whilst discussing the women's personal experiences of sexuality and relationships by inviting participants to bring a support person to meetings and also by providing details of support organisations if further support was required. An Information Sheet (see Appendix A/B) was provided to all participants, which outlined the research aims and processes, as well as ethical considerations for confidentiality, privacy, and participant autonomy. A new information sheet (Appendix B) was also produced detailing Covid-19 safety standards after the Omicron outbreak in New Zealand. By giving women a safe space to voice their experiences, I was given the opportunity to better understand similarities and differences in women's experiences of feminine sexuality and emphasise feminine empowerment in the context of online dating.

My social constructionist approach and post-feminist critique will position women's narratives within Bartky's (1998) disciplinary project of femininity to understand how women's lives and their subjectivities are structured and constructed within systematically duplicitous practices to challenge ideologies embedded in dating culture and invite possibilities for new insights and change to contribute to the de-gendering of sexuality and re-visioning of the feminine body.

Methodology: Foucauldian discourse analysis

A Foucauldian discourse analysis will be used to make sense of the tensions that arise within the complex and contradictory context of heterosexual relationships in postfeminist culture. Foucauldian discourse analysis provides an analysis of the broader systems of

meaning-making available in sociocultural and temporal context, where ‘discourse’ is defined as a system of statements that construct an object (Parker, 1990; Willig, 2013). Within these constructions, various subject positions are produced, and these discourses act to enable and/or constrain the ways in which we understand ourselves and the world around us and have particular material effects. In conducting a Foucauldian discourse analysis, I hope to identify and better understand discourses of gender, sexuality, disciplinary power and empowerment within contexts of Tinder’s heterosexual dating relationships. The identification of gender and sexuality discourses within contexts of mediated heterosexual power relations will enable better understandings of the gendered subject positions that are available to women, as women construct their gender and sexual identities in discourses of modern dating. An understanding of women’s gendered subjectivities will assist an analysis of power, which will draw upon Foucault’s understanding of power and knowledge as intimately linked and complex, where power is produced as a web of connections embedded within social institutions, meanings, relations and identities (Baxter, 2003; Parker, 1990). As I locate my research within contexts of gendered power relations, I will consider how historical discourses of women’s oppression and men’s dominance, identified in my literature review, may be reproduced and coarticulated within modern dating contexts. An investigation of material effects will seek to assess how discourses reproduce and regulate normative performances of gender and sexuality, with an ultimate goal of identifying resistance and challenges to gender stereotypes and hierarchy. Discourses that contradict and resist normative ways of doing social life will be key to unpacking a postfeminist heterosexuality, therefore I will be especially concerned with determining how new discourses of feminine agency and empowerment may contradict and resist dominant power structures in Tinder’s modern dating context. I hope that my analysis, bound within social, cultural, psychological and historical meaning-making, will make an important contribution to understandings of

how gender is constructed in heterosexuality in order to challenge patriarchal and social power relations in modern dating.

Method

Sampling and recruitment

The Tinder context. Given that my literature review identified complications in how men and women reproduce traditional gender norms within non-traditional dating spaces, I chose to explore Tinder dating to address convergences between online and offline dating spaces and analyse meanings of gender and sexuality in a transforming dating culture. Tinder is well-established as a ‘hook-up culture’ that puts Tinder users’ bodies ‘up for sale’ (Lee, 2019), and therefore enables an exploration of how women construct gender, sexuality, power, and coercion in an online sexual marketplace. I was especially concerned with experiences of a first Tinder date, as this context constructs the transfer phase between the online and physical world and my examination of the literature had indicated courtship practices to be most evident in the early stages of heterosexual dating (Eaton & Rose, 2012).

Participants. Participants were women who had used the Tinder application to meet a man for a date in-person. I chose to limit my study to women’s experiences of heterosexual dating as I was interested in disciplinary power that acts upon and disciplines women more intensely than men, as well as the postfeminist culture that encourages women’s sexual agency and freedom. I acknowledge that my research focus excludes those individuals whose sexualities do not conform with normative standards of dating, and whilst research into

LGBTQ relationships is meaningful and important, it is outside the scope of my current research project. I do however intend my discussion of men and/or women to be inclusive of those individuals who may be transgender and self-identify as a man or woman.

Participants needed to be between 20-30 years-old in order to recruit individuals with mature understandings of heterosexual dating who had grown up in the mediated society. My inclusion criteria for the age range of participants was expanded from 20-25 years-old in response to feedback from key informants who suggested a wider participant pool would be more inclusive for individuals who had expressed interest in the study, had used Tinder to meet a man in person, but were outside of the specified age range. I used convenience sampling and the snowball technique to recruit participants for my research. Intermediary contacts, who I knew and trusted, gave an Information Sheet (see Appendix A/B) detailing the study to women within their network who met the criteria. The Information Sheet included details of a \$20 grocery voucher that would be given to participants as a ‘thank you’ for their participation. Women who expressed interest in the study were offered the option of a phone call or a face-to-face initial meeting to discuss what would be involved in participating in the research to encourage Manākitanga and invited to a formal semi-structured interview.

Interviews

Formal interviews were conducted face-to-face at the women’s choice of location and at a time convenient to them. Interviews took place either at a local cafe or a Women’s centre. Efforts to uphold Manākitanga were emphasised in creating supportive and respectful relationships that encouraged a safe sharing space. In the local cafe I offered the women a choice of food and drink from the menu and in the Women’s centre I provided snacks and

drinks. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing space for the women to explore their own experiences and ideas, whilst still remaining focused on my research questions. An Interview Schedule (see Appendix C) was created containing open-ended questions to assist and prompt conversation relating to my research questions. The prepared interview questions were discussed in most of the interviews, with some of the questions being addressed by the participant prior to my asking. Concerns for wellbeing were attended to both before and after the interview to understand what may have an effect on the participant during the interview and to also debrief about the topics discussed. I utilised skills acquired in my time as a volunteer phone counsellor to listen, support and empathise with the women as they shared their stories.

The interview aims and processes were described in detail before beginning the formal interview. We also discussed the conversational style of the interview, emphasising that my interview schedule was only a guideline and that I was mostly interested in hearing their stories. I made it clear that the women were in control of the interview and were able to stop the recording at any time. Additionally, I restated their rights to confidentiality and privacy. After confirming that the participants understood their rights for participation in the research, a Participant Consent Form (see Appendix D) was provided for them to read and sign. The interviews were digitally recorded, which was discussed and agreed upon prior to meeting and reconfirmed prior to beginning the recording. The women were gifted a \$20 grocery voucher as a ‘thank you’ for their participation in the research.

The interviews were between 45 and 100 minutes long and generated rich and detailed accounts of Tinder dating. As the global COVID-19 pandemic inflicted a fraught situation and raised concerns for safety and accessibility for interviews, I made the ethical decision to not recruit more participants after completing four interviews, as after reflexively engaging with the transcripts, I decided I had reached data-saturation through the rich and in-

depth descriptions these interviews had provided and to continue recruiting in a global pandemic would pose an unnecessary risk to my participants and myself. The context of the global pandemic also further enriched my data, as the women's stories were produced at a time where Tinder dating was transforming, moving more online due to social restrictions.

All of the women appeared confident and happy to share their stories. Some of the women responded carefully to my interview questions and other women went very in depth into their own experiences and beliefs, but all of the women contributed interesting and thoughtful conversations about Tinder dating. Two of the women recalled experiences of sexual violence and expressed that this was something they wanted to talk about and found helpful to share. I was careful to be supportive and empathetic of the women's disclosures and made sure to check in with them again at the conclusion of the interview to offer support and suggest counselling services available in the area. The women assured me that these services were not needed and that they were feeling okay about the conversation. The day after the formal interview, I also contacted the participants to check in on their wellbeing and ascertain whether support networks may need to be contacted. All participants reported feeling well and safe the day after the interview and thus I determined that no follow-up check-ins were necessary.

The interviews were all carefully transcribed through persistent and repeated listens of the women's stories for accurate transcriptions, with attention to include speech errors, pauses, emphasis, laughter and physical actions in order to retain a sense of the conversation that occurred within the transcript. In my write-up, '*laughs*' exhibits laughter, '...' indicates removed transcript and '-' represents interrupted speech. Confidentiality was upheld with the use of pseudonyms and changing identifying features, such as the names of dating partners and places. A review of the transcript was offered to the participants in which they were able to read through and make edits to their transcript before it was finalised. None of the

participants accepted the offer to review their transcript and so a Release of Transcript Form (see Appendix E) was signed after the interview concluded. Audio recordings were deleted from the recording device, my computer and my hard drive upon completion of transcription and analysis. Transcripts were stored on my personal password-protected device and backed up on iCloud.

Ethical considerations

Ethics consent

Ethical concerns were carefully taken into consideration for this project. The research was peer-reviewed and approved by The Massey University Human Ethics Committee (SOA 21/33).

Cultural considerations

Cultural concerns for the Treaty of Waitangi and the principles of partnership, participation and protection have been carefully considered in this project. Pihama (2019) presents *mana wahine* as support for Māori women's ideas and stories, and resistance to colonisation, which challenges dominant colonial patriarchal systems. Although my research did not explore participants' cultural identities, I remained mindful of the imposition of colonisation and the necessity to decolonise language, as Pihama suggests, as well as the impacts of Eurocentrism on the production of knowledge through mainstream psychology. I take up this reflexive approach and the recognition of marginalisation and the imposition of

gender stereotypes and heteronormativity, so that my research can make a contribution to mana wahine. A cultural advisor was consulted for how to include Māori cultural practices and sensitivity in research practices, given our location in Aotearoa. Manaaki ki te tangata was considered through offering kai and refreshments during the face-to-face meetings, which promoted a collaborative approach where the participant was understood as co-researcher and a 'thank you' gift was given as appreciation for participation. Kōrero, titiro, and whakarongo were also considered by listening and talking with participants to establish a respectful relationship and a safe sharing space for Māori women to voice their stories.

Reflexivity

An important aspect of Foucauldian discourse analysis is the way in which reflexivity is encouraged throughout the research process (Parker, 1990). My reflexive approach enabled me to maintain considerations for ethical concerns throughout my research process as I would diary and reflect upon ethics, safety and wellbeing over the course of my research. I also sought to reflect upon and understand how my own subjectivity was influential to my study and how my own life experiences, perspectives and beliefs would affect my research. I reflected upon my position as a New Zealand European Māori heterosexual cis-gendered woman who has also used the Tinder application and was careful to consider how my own experiences would naturally influence how I conducted my analysis. I also maintained conversations with my family, friends and supervisors about my ideas for researching women's experiences of Tinder dating and reflected upon these discussions as I developed my research questions and aims. Whilst carrying out my research, I noticed that some of the women's stories affected me emotionally in my analysis process. As transcription required

deep engagement with the discourse, in which I would fully immerse myself in the women's stories, there were moments in which it became difficult for me to be listening to or re-reading the women's experiences of coercion and abuse that were similar to my own. I practised self-care around my analysis process by incorporating additional breaks into my transcription process when the data concerned discourses of abuse. I also exercised other strategies of self-care, including journaling, exercising and talking with my family, friends and supervisors about the feelings my analysis was evoking for me. Throughout my research I also reflected upon the current state of the world, with the research itself becoming a form of self-care, in which I was able to identify, resist and challenge systems of oppression and celebrate women's wisdom and understandings in ways that encouraged me to think differently about feminine sexuality and empowerment. As I conducted my research in a global pandemic I was required to change and adapt my study to new challenges and restrictions, as the country was put into lockdown and government restrictions were put in place to limit the social contact we had with others. I used this experience to be reflexive in my research and consider the importance of online dating relationships in a world where we were required to go online to form and maintain our social relationships.

Analysis

My analysis began with the transcription of the interviews, in which I made notes about and recorded my reaction to ideas that I found to be interesting or salient within the discourse.

Identifying key discourses

Upon finalising the transcriptions, I began reading and re-reading the transcripts, looking for key discourses pertaining to gender and sexuality in modern dating experiences. As I noticed similarities between how women would construct gender and sexuality in their dating experiences, I would make comments that would code for shared meanings across the texts and organise these into ‘themes’ that I used as a tool to enable my coding process. For example, I noticed that women who discussed safety and wellbeing on a Tinder date would often produce meanings for feminine responsibility, thus I identified ‘responsibility’ as a theme, which I then proceeded to code for in my analysis process as I grouped my initial ideas. As I came to understand discourses of power and control as broader constructions working throughout the text, I was able to organise and categorise codes of meaning, including codes such as coercion, empowerment, trust, sexual expectation and boundaries. The organisation of codes was not fixed, but a flexible and ongoing process, as I worked to understand my data and how different discourses would fit together within the bigger picture of how we make sense of feminine sexuality and empowerment in the context of Tinder dating.

I initially identified several potential discourses within the text, including ‘femininity and the body’, ‘coercion and risk’, ‘masculine dominance’, ‘the sexual marketplace’, ‘responsible independence’ and ‘online and offline spaces’. This stage of my analysis involved working with colour-codes and tables in Word documents, as I organised the text into quotes within dominant discourses. In order to organise my quotes, I looked for ways in which the quotes were working together to construct a particular object. For example, I identified the quote ‘I was happy I was a whore’ as meaningfully constructing the object: femininity and the body. As I attempted to make sense of the interconnecting meanings in the discourses, I came to realise that by using the women’s own language, I was able to better

identify and organise patterns in the transcripts. For example, ‘coercion and risk’ and ‘responsible independence’ merged and became ‘spell it out’, a quote which was directly lifted from the text. Discourses were reconsidered and revised a number of times, with visual aids, such as lists, colour-coding and brainstorming, to assist this process. I identified distinct and dominant discourses when the quotes were all working to construct an object that was different from (but co-articulating with) other objects produced.

Considering subject positions

As I searched for key discourses, it was important that I focused on how language was used and would produce objects and/or subject positions, rather than assessing the individual’s own thoughts and feelings about Tinder dating. I was especially interested in the ways that women negotiated postfeminist and neoliberal subjectivities in the Tinder dating context (Gill, 2007; Nicholls, 2020), as well as their feminine position within traditional gender norms. A focus on subject positions in the discourse enabled me to better explore constructs of power as it operates and acts upon the individual (Bartky, 1998; Foucault, 1981).

Assessing material effects

I worked within a framework of disciplinary power to develop my analysis of what discourses would enable and constrain within women’s experiences of Tinder dating. As gender acts upon and disciplines women more so than men (Bartky, 1998), I carefully considered ways in which women were both enabled and constrained within gendered power relations that produce femininity within meanings of passivity and submission, embedded in

a context of postfeminist sensibility. In my assessment of material effects, I was careful to pay attention to contradictions between neoliberal values of individualism and postfeminist ideals of empowerment, as I considered how these subjectivities may act on social practices.

Locating discourses in wider contexts

I located the discourses I was identifying within historical, social and cultural contexts to consider how gender and sexuality may be understood within the context of gendered power, the postfeminist media culture and Tinder's 'hook-up culture'. Furthermore, I remained mindful of the context of the COVID-19 global pandemic, as I considered how relationships may move and shift in performance and meanings, as lockdowns and government restrictions changed the way individuals were able to access intimate relationships.

Looking for coarticulation

As my engagement with the transcripts moved into deeper analysis, I began to look for patterns of coarticulation in the women's talk. Discourses did not 'speak' in isolation, but instead co-articulated with other discourses and reflected upon themselves to produce new meanings and effects. For example, the discourses of 'dating evolving' and 'happy to be a whore' spoke together to produce meaningful contradictions, as the women's talk reproduced idealised expectations of romance alongside constructions of women's enthusiastic participation in Tinder's sexual marketplace. Coarticulating discourses were interesting and important for capturing complex understandings of women's sexual empowerment.

Evaluating contradictions and tensions

I was able to identify discourses, what they enabled and constrained and their material effects by evaluating complexities, contradictions and tensions within the text. An example of the text producing contradictions that assisted my identification of dominant discourses was evident in the women's talk that reproduced desires for the 'hang-out' aspect of dating within Tinder encounters intended for casual sex. Negotiations of intimacy that worked to construct both 'sex' and 'dating' together in a new and unique way was an important contradiction in my analysis that alerted me to complexity and divergence in systems of meaning-making. The tensions and contradictions I identified in my analysis spoke to an interconnectedness of meaning-making, as different discourses would enhance and give meaning to each other in ways that accentuated and exceeded the work of dominant discourses.

Write-up

After a long process of analysis, I identified five dominant discourses: 'dating evolving'; 'Tinder's sexual marketplace'; 'happy to be a whore'; 'girls stand pretty'; and 'spell it out'. 'Dating evolving' speaks to the transformation of modern dating and the convergence of the online space and traditional dating. 'Tinder's sexual marketplace' constructs the Tinder space as a fast-paced economic exchange of heterosex that produces pressure and expectations within intimacy negotiations. 'Happy to be a whore' locates Tinder dating within the postfeminist neoliberal media culture, as it constructs women's sexual empowerment. 'Girls stand pretty' produces subject positions for successful femininity in the Tinder context. 'Spell it out' constructs power, coercion, control and consent within Tinder's culture of risk. Together, these discourses enable an engagement with constructions of

gender, heterosexuality and disciplinary power to better understand women's experiences of sexual empowerment in Tinder dating.

Chapter Four: Analysis and discussion: The Tinder space

Dating evolving

The 'dating evolving' discourse constructs Tinder dating as a transforming space that is complex and contradictory in reproduction of, and resistance to, traditional gender norms in heterosexual dating. Convergence between online and offline spaces, as well as traditional and non-traditional dating standards constructs Tinder's dating space as complex and uncertain. The online space establishes new connections within 'unnatural' spaces, creating a complicated first encounter as men and women negotiate tensions for displaced gender rules and new online practice within Tinder's 'sex not love' culture.

Not a 'date' date

The Tinder date is produced as 'not a 'date' date' in the women's talk, as constructions displace and resist the very concept of 'dating'. In this sense, the Tinder date can be understood in the women's stories through what it is not, as the women's talk constructed the Tinder date as lacking or unconventional in relation to traditional understandings of 'dating'.

Rachel: Honestly it wasn't like a 'date' date... he picked me up... I was just going round to his house for some drinks...I think [he] just wanted some girl round to like- they were having drinks at the house and he just wanted a girl round 'cause some of the other boys were getting girls round too.

The Tinder 'date' is instead constructed as a meeting or an encounter, intentionally designed for a particular purpose, which often involves expectations to provide and receive heterosex.

The sense of intentional purpose of the Tinder date was produced as different from the traditional date in its construction of 'unnaturally' produced connections that occur initially online, as opposed to 'organically developing' connections that can be formed in offline spaces.

Julie: [When it's been a date] with someone that I've met on Tinder specifically there's sort of been, I guess that hope or expectation that things are gonna eventuate into something more, whereas when it's been a date with someone that I've met face-to-face or someone that I've met more organically... I guess that looming, 'I'm on Tinder to try and find this'... thought isn't in the back of your head, you have sort of more room to focus and engage in the conversation and engage in trying to make a connection with that person.... rather than, necessarily, seeking someone out for the sole purpose of... a potential relationship or sexual connection... I think going into a date where there's a sexual expectation from the beginning is challenging in and of itself because you are, essentially from the beginning... trying to continue that connection, whereas if it's something that happens organically... rather than just happening through a conversation on a screen... it just feels more natural.

Julie speaks of a 'looming' influence occurring within Tinder interactions that changes conversation, engagement and connection in the dating relationship. Here, Tinder dating is constructed as an 'unnaturally' occurring dating space that produces purpose and

intentions for dating relationships that are not typically present in face-to-face meetings. Statements construct the talking phase prior to an in-person meeting as constitutive of expectation and pressure, as women are faced with the ‘challenge’ of producing a genuine connection from the ‘unnatural’ circumstances of the online meeting. Sexual expectation originating within a Tinder online connection is emphasised as a ‘challenge’ in modern dating intimacy, as attempts are made to recreate online sexual chemistry within a physical connection.

Purpose and intention within the Tinder dating context is reinforced, as digital communications are used to declare and query intimate intentions prior to meeting in-person.

***Holly:** I think it was different because with most other people... generally we've talked about... like 'aw what brings you to Tinder?', like we've talked about that before meeting.*

***Sally:** [My Tinder bios were] 'I have a kid I don't need another one'... 'if you're looking for love, swipe left' yeah, just stupid... things that I thought were funny.*

When women use the Tinder dating application, they are positioned within a space of declared intentions, as their use of Tinder alone communicates their position as an active and seeking woman. By creating a Tinder profile, a woman explicitly enters the dating market in a way that is distinctive from the ‘organic’ or ‘real life’ meeting, therefore the women’s talk constructs practices by which women mitigate Tinder’s ‘looming’ assumptions by clearly stating their intended purpose for Tinder. Tinder’s online space that assumes all members are looking for ‘something’ on the app complicates heterosexual relations, as these ‘looming’ expectations produce purposeful and predetermined dating interactions.

Sex, not love

'Looming' assumptions of sexual expectation are produced in the women's stories, as meanings of love and romance become scarce within Tinder's sexualised dating culture. A distinction is made between 'sex' and 'love', in the Tinder context which draws on differences between two constructs that are traditionally paired as mutually dependent to construct a dichotomy, as discourses of love subside within Tinder's expectation for the easy hook-up. The women's talk constructed Tinder as a different way of doing dating that has evolved and adapted with the dynamic dating culture to reconstruct expectations for how a dating relationship is carried out. The emergence of the 'sex not love' culture is produced in the women's talk of the 'hook-up culture' becoming a 'thing' in modern dating.

Julie: When I was first using it... I think the sort of Tinder 'hook-up culture' of swipe right and sleep with random people, hadn't really begun to be as much of a thing yet back then... it was a lot more people looking for long term, or looking for dating, type relationships, whereas, in recent years it became more of people looking for hook-ups and more focused on, 'hook-up culture' rather than dating... as Tinder itself evolved into being more of a hook-up app I used it more for that purpose.

The expectation to 'swipe right and sleep with random people' has become the norm for Tinder users, as Julie's talk constructs Tinder as something that originally mimicked or adhered to the 'traditional' date narrative, but has over time evolved into a way to procure sex and primarily sex only. Tinder is constructed as reshaping women's sexual self-concept, as women's sexualities take meaning from Tinder's 'evolution' as a hook-up app that moves away from 'natural' connections to produce a goal-oriented focus on 'hooking-up'. Women mould their sexuality and dating practices in accordance with Tinder's standards of dating,

demonstrating Gill's (2007) understandings of heterosexuality moving and 'evolving' with the sexualised media culture.

The modern dating context that focuses upon securing a hook-up from the Tinder interaction is reproduced in Rachel's talk that emphasises Tinder's sexual expectations that resist 'proper dating'.

***Rachel:** I think it would be a lot easier if you are just looking to just go have sex with someone (laughs) like great, it would work fine (laughs), but yeah... if you're looking for... proper dating and stuff then... yeah, maybe it's not the best.*

The modernised Tinder context is oriented towards providing encounters for heterosexual, as Rachel's talk constructs the 'easier' approach to Tinder dating, as complying with Tinder's 'go have sex with someone' expectations. Tinder is produced as not 'working' for those who desire the 'proper' or traditional dating experience, therefore women on Tinder are required to either embrace the 'hook-up culture' and actively pursue casual sex or attempt to date within a culture that is inherently expecting of a sexual encounter.

The women's talk reproduced expectations deeply embedded in patriarchy and constructions of the sexualised feminine body, as men were positioned as expecting sex and only sex in the Tinder encounter.

***Julie:** I guess the expectations for women for a Tinder date is that they're going to show up and that they're gonna look pretty and they're gonna have sex with you and they're gonna leave (laughs) and then they're gonna never contact you again, is what I think a lot of guys are expecting... a lot of the time when someone was seeing you it was just sex and just sex only, they want you straight to their house.*

Rachel: I don't know, I was like 'maybe this was all just so that he could have sex and then nothing'.

Sally: With Tinder... you'd get the people that were just interested in just sex, like Netflix and chill.

Women's talk about Tinder dating produces a process by which men use Tinder to procure heterosex from women, positioning women as receptive to a masculine dating culture that shifts and moves to cater for sexual expectations. Women are expected to assume a working responsibility to fulfil men's sexual expectation, which involves a package deal by which a woman is expected to maintain her sexual presentation, meet a man's sexual needs and then cease all contact. As Julie's talk suggests, the expectation of sex alone is not enough, as women are expected to also maintain feminine beauty for the full satisfaction of the Tinder man. The Tinder date becomes systematic and methodical within the women's statements, as the conditions of Tinder's 'sex and then nothing' expectation firmly excludes notions of dating and romance from the Tinder encounter. Additionally, the euphemism, 'Netflix and chill', in Sally's statement produces normalised and accepted sexual standards in Tinder practices, as 'Netflix and chill' constructs a transparent request for an intimate encounter that is 'just sex'. The construction of Tinder dating as 'sex not love' transforms understanding of dating in the context of Tinder away from traditional meanings of courtship to produce a 'hook-up culture', where Tinder normalises, accepts and encourages casual sexual encounters. Women's choices to engage in the contemporary 'hook-up culture' are encouraged by constructions of the 'liberated' woman (Gill, 2007), as women are obligated to

indulge in a sexually free and fulfilling dating life, yet remain subjected to a culture embedded in patriarchy and social power relations that maintain men's position of power.

The women's talk troubles men's expectations for 'just sex and just sex only', resisting the dominant understanding of Tinder dating as 'just sex' through appeals to the 'wrongness' or the 'problem' of this construction.

***Sally:** You're on here if you're for sex, which is, so wrong.*

***Julie:** They just want to go straight to the sex (laughs), which is the problem... I've had, other Tinder dates where I've noticed, looking back, that it was very obvious that that was the angle they were going to from the get-go and I just haven't picked up on it.*

Tinder's 'straight to the sex' expectation, that explicitly excludes dating and courtship during a Tinder encounter is challenged as 'a problem' and 'so wrong', and rather than holding men responsible for the 'wrongness', Julie talks of her own responsibility for not 'picking up on' this expectation in earlier dating experiences. Indeed, Rachel's talk explicitly positions herself as responsible for being 'naïve' and 'ending up in a situation' that expects heterosex.

***Rachel:** Back then I think I was... a bit naïve to think that... I was going to go on all these dates with all these guys... and not end up in that situation... like they wouldn't be expecting [sex] (laughs) 'cause now I'd be like 'no that's... all they want'.*

A woman unknowingly entering into a situation that is expecting casual sex is constructed as a weakness of wisdom and knowledge on the woman's part, rather than identifying responsibility within men's 'just sex only' expectation. There is an assumption that the awareness and/or unawareness of Tinder's sexual expectation makes women accountable for a situation that pressures heterosex. The text prioritises masculine want and desire and reflects upon and critiques women's responsible judgement, holding women accountable for unknowingly involving themselves in Tinder's 'hook-up culture', which may provide the conditions for coercion where women are constrained in their ability to safely explore their sexual freedom and 'go on all these dates', without being expected to engage in heterosex.

As the Tinder date is produced as an intentional and purposeful encounter, expectations for 'just sex only' are reproduced in the women's talk that constructs men's explicit requests for a sexual encounter.

Julie: *A lot of the people when you are first matching up with them.... they're wanting to meet very quickly, that's very obvious that they're wanting to meet for one reason and one reason only and they... make it very clear or [they] straight up start the message with 'wanna hook-up?' or... 'do you want to have sex?'*

Holly: *A lot of yeah just really dodgy guys just wanting... one night stands and stuff, or they message and just be like, '... I'm here overnight. Do you want to come to my hotel and hook-up?'*

Rachel: *I suppose 'cause like every second message is just like 'hey, come round' (laughs) yeah, but I feel like it's just become that (laughs).*

The women's statements produce men's unequivocal and forthright demand for heterosex, as intentions are made 'obvious' and 'clear' in the women's talk. There is a clear confrontation in men's demands for heterosex, which speaks to gendered sexual power relations as men assert masculine sexual want and are unapologetically forthright in asserting power and dominance when attempting to claim sex as an expectation of the Tinder interaction.

The expectation for 'just sex only' can also be 'unspoken', which can provide conditions for coercion, as the Tinder encounter as a one-time exchange of heterosex is assumed to be known and accepted by both parties.

Julie: We... had a date, we ended up sleeping together and I ended up messaging him a couple of days later... and they were like 'aw I didn't expect to hear from you again' and I was like 'oh, I, enjoyed our date, I thought you did too, it didn't seem like you didn't'... but they were just expecting me to come and hang-out with them for an evening and sleep with them and not get back to them ever again (laughs).

Julie's talk speaks to women's confusion in attempting to navigate Tinder relationships in the context of an implicit unspoken agreement that can produce conflicting interpretations for the meaning of a Tinder encounter. In the women's talk, some men assume that promptly ending all communication upon receiving heterosex is an acceptable method for terminating a Tinder relationship, given that the purpose of the Tinder date is to facilitate an encounter for heterosex, which conflicts with some women's expectations for continued connection and/or openly communicating the end of a relationship. As the receipt of sex determines some men's termination of a Tinder relationship, a sexual standard is produced

that exploits women through normalised unspoken intentions that reproduce a coercive dating context, as women consent to sex without knowledge of the encounter being a one-time exchange. Easy and accessible heterosex is prioritised over open communication for intimacy intentions.

Tinder's 'just sex only' culture also constructs the Tinder match as holding connotations that may produce embarrassment or 'shame' in one's involvement in Tinder dating.

***Rachel:** Yeah like it was a little bit weird 'cause I was thinking aw are they just thinking 'who's this Tinder girl that he's just brought over?'... I've always felt like it's – I don't know, it's not a cool way to meet someone... there's nothing... nice or heart-warming about hearing that... we used to joke about like... 'we need to come up with a story of how we met like let's just make it up and just say that', 'cause we got sick of... people just giving [us] shit when you say you met on Tinder.*

The 'Tinder girl' and the Tinder relationship are positioned within meanings of 'shame' due to Tinder's reputation as a virtual hunt for casual sex, combined with assumptions of women's complicity in this 'hunt'. Tinder facilitates the reproduction of a generated meeting place that implies a sexual purpose and thus compromises potential for a natural or 'heart-warming' 'how we met' love story. The online Tinder meeting disrupts traditional romance stories and constructs an embarrassing beginning to a relationship, as Rachel's talk suggests a 'made-up' courtship story may be preferred to the teasing that occurs from the Tinder-initiated relationship.

Uncertainty and risk

Dominant Tinder discourses that emerge from the women's accounts reproduce intention and purpose for procuring heterosex, however Tinder courtship itself is constructed as complicated and uncertain, as men and women attempt to navigate a courtship structure that transforms 'dating' by moving between online and offline spaces. The Tinder encounter enables online connections between strangers that occur prior to meeting in 'real-life', producing challenges for understanding who a person is behind the screen, and constructing the Tinder encounter as imbued with suspicion and risk.

***Rachel:** Holding all these conversations... and trying to... be engaging over just messages as well [is] quite hard especially when you can't tell... people's tone and... you can't joke and stuff as much over messages until you've sussed out... what they're kind of like or when you talk to them in person it's like aw okay I get it now.*

As women and men navigate the online and physical spaces of Tinder dating, their social identities are constructed as taking on different meanings within these different spaces. Rachel's story communicates a deficiency for social cues within the online space that would typically speak to inter-relational practices for how men and women may understand a person's character and tone. Humour, mood, talking style and other aspects of a person's identity are difficult to communicate in the online space, thus constructions of the Tinder encounter produce an unveiling space, in which people's preconceived ideas of a person come to be assessed in the face-to-face context.

***Rachel:** Someone can be one way online and talk to you one way and then... they can be completely different in real life, yeah, just, scary I suppose (laughs).*

Holly: *Ooh I think I've had one person that was quite different in person or maybe two, that were quite different in person to online, not necessarily bad, but just different... quite often I find the people like that are actually quite strange (laughs), and you just don't realise it online (laughs).*

As men and women meet 'in real life', the disconnection and falseness produced online is stripped away, creating a space for 'real' social interaction. Whether producing romantic, sexual or friendship connections, the physical space is constructed as more 'authentic', producing meanings for a person's physical identity as their 'real' self. The in-person date produces more meaningful connections, as men and women are able to find out who a person 'actually' is. As Rachel states, differences between these spaces are 'scary' as a person's character and the relationship becomes defined and redefined, as they move between two different spaces that position women in different contexts of 'knowing' that influences women's power and control.

The 'scariness' and uncertainty of the Tinder date as women step into the 'real life' context can reproduce social pressures for gender performance in addition to the risk of meeting a stranger.

Rachel: *[The biggest challenge of meeting a person face-to-face is] probably just... keeping the conversation going, like... it not being awkward, getting ready for it... getting over your nerves and... anxiety about 'are they going to like me? Do I look-'... then also... yeah just the scary part of meeting up with a stranger as well.*

Holly: Well it's always disappointing [when people are different online to their actual in person selves], 'cause you have your hopes up, and you... think they're going to be a certain way and they're not.

Julie: I think he... was expecting something different, or maybe I just wasn't the right type of person.

The women's talk constructs the first offline Tinder meeting as anxiety producing, as they step into an unveiling space that is direct and confronting in its assessment of their value and worth. Questions of 'are they going to like me?' and a cut-off 'do I look- ?' produces the first Tinder date as an evaluation process that occurs after the initial selection process on the Tinder application where the woman's presentation for her appearance and communication is assessed and judged. The Tinder meeting is produced as the 'real' test, as a woman's 'real life' self is presented for men's critique, risking rejection.

Constructions of disappointment as one's online identity is compared with their 'real life' identity are produced in talk of face-to-face conversation during the first Tinder date. As men and women step into the 'unveiling space', they carry with them preconceived ideas about their Tinder match that are a product of an online connection and personal expectations, which may not materialise within the physical space. Holly's talk explores the disappointment of unfulfilled expectations on a Tinder date, as dating experiences shift from a 'normal' online conversation to an 'awkward' in-person encounter.

Holly: We'd been talking online for a while... and having really good conversations and then... in person I just expected it to be the same, but they were quite awkward and quite... yeah I guess just socially awkward and didn't really know how to talk to

someone (laughs)... I kind of felt like I was talking to myself a lot of the time... it was just really different... he was really normal online and I thought we got along really well, and then in person, it was just quite different... so maybe he just kinda... hides behind a screen, because he knows he's a bit awkward?... a lot of [the dates] are pretty boring, a lot of them are just... you meet up, hang-out for a few hours, and then not a lot happens.

The physical space produces encounters that are 'socially awkward', 'boring' and 'different', as in-person social interactions fail to reproduce the online relationship. Men and women are expected to create intimacy and connections within the physical space, complicated by an online context that normalises 'unnatural' and disconnection connections.

The 'awkward' and 'boring' Tinder date may be produced through Tinder's 'unnatural' connections, as men and women are given constant access to their Tinder match that enables daily conversation and an 'all day' 'every day' 'routine' of getting to know a person.

Holly: *We were talking like all day and night and like every day and night... it's just hard 'cause we had... as stupid as it sounds... a routine of... when we talked and stuff and it was literally constantly.*

Tinder user's constant access to romantic connections and intimate conversations produces a routine of dating that is constant and immediate in ways distinct from the 'organic' dating relationship. Holly's statement suggests that the accessibility of the online space may alter dating communication as 'talking all day and night' with a Tinder match enables an indulgence of social connection and intimacy, due to the constant availability of

one's device that is not replicated in the 'real world', which requires time and energy to meet a person. Rather than setting aside a night to be together and get to know each other, online communication enables constant talk that may inhibit motivation and effort to create an intimate first date.

Holly's talk demonstrates that the intensive and accessible pseudo connection constructed within the online space may not always translate to a 'genuine' offline connection.

Holly: I was kind of like 'cool so... were you keen to meet up at some point?'... we'd been talking for... probably two months and then the day before [the date] he didn't reply...and I was like 'what the hell?'... then like three weeks later he messaged me and was like 'hey, so sorry, ended up getting really sick... sorry I didn't text you back'... 'I didn't believe him, like it takes 2 seconds... just text me and be like 'hey something's come up' and just be like 'I can't, I'll be in touch', but na nothing just... snobbed.

Movement from an online connection to a face-to-face encounter is complicated by the artificial online connection, which may lead women to understand reluctance and avoidance to move a connection offline as dishonest. Holly's talk constructs Tinder's online space as inconsequential and uncomplicated, as men actively engage with conversation throughout the online dating period, yet withdraw at the suggestion of meeting in 'real life'. Women claim neoliberal independence and feminine empowerment as they confidently seek an intimate connection on Tinder, yet men maintain dominance by 'snubbing' a woman before the date can occur. The reassertion of masculine power is constructed with a lack of regard for women, as Holly's talk states 'like it takes 2 seconds... just text me', yet some

men are unwilling to give women this time to respectfully communicate the end of a Tinder relationship.

Whilst the ability to 'just leave' online connections can cause women's discomfort and a sense of lack of control, so can the inability to 'just leave' when the date moves from online to offline spaces.

Sally: I've had one date, and I didn't like it... I was very ashamed of being [ethnicity] for so long and this guy that I went on a date with was white, in a restaurant... I was dressed up but, he was dressed up nicer, well not nicer, but he just looked nicer... there [were] only white people in the fucking thing... and I was like... fuck okay, well there's white people, he's white... I don't feel comfortable in this setting and that's when I didn't feel like I was in control... and I was like... okay I don't actually like it here and that's when I was like, I can't just leave, he's just booked us... I can't... I have to stay and eat and it didn't work out 'cause I wasn't like myself.

Sally's story draws attention to the inextricable intersections of gender and race and social power relations, as women negotiate the shift from the online space to the in-person Tinder date. There are social pressures surrounding the formal date, as the setting, standard of dress and general social etiquette that is expected of a woman on a 'real' date is constructed and intersects with racial power relations. A Westernised dating context is produced, as a woman of colour is positioned below the social standing of a 'white' man. He was not 'dressed up nicer', but he looked 'nicer', as he 'belongs' in this date space in a way that women of colour do not. The face-to-face meeting reproduces negotiations of power, as dating discourses restrict women of colour's sense of control and ability for self-expression within the physical space. The Tinder date, as a construction that resists traditional standards

of dating, may produce a meaningful shift away from heteronormative scripts of dating, as the impacts of multiple marginalisation and social power relations as embedded in discourse on a date suggest benefits to moving away from dating practices that reinforce gendered and racial power imbalances. Tinder's online space gives women the ability to be in control and to not be trapped within a space that may constrain their independence and individuality, however this access to control is provisional and problematised when the Tinder hook-up app is not designed to maintain and nurture online connections. As online compatibility shifts into real life spaces, social power relations suddenly become explicitly present, creating potentially unsafe spaces for women.

Reproductions of traditional dating scripts

Although Tinder is complicated by sexual expectations and 'unnatural' online connections that resist traditional dating scripts, the women's stories reproduce desires for and reconstructions of traditional courtship within face-to-face Tinder meetings. Assumptions of 'just sex only' in the Tinder encounter are complicated as traditional experiences of dating are constructed as preferable by some women. The traditional date is produced as a consequence of being respected and being seen as more than a sexual object, but as a human being that deserves respect, care and interest.

Julie: *When someone is wanting to sort of get to know you a bit better... they're... more willing to maybe go do something, go out for a drink, go have dinner... he was one of the few who actually tried to have a conversation and sort of get to know me, as a person rather than just... as a sex object... [they are] basically, just not seeing you as, a human being, as a whole person, and just seeing you as what you can do for*

them so... as an object of sexual desire, that's the purpose that you have to them, rather than thinking of, not just the fact that you're someone that they can sleep with, but also somebody that... maybe they can actually have a good conversation with, have a friendship with... it just, it doesn't feel very good and it feels like it doesn't matter what, other interests you have, or what other opinions or experiences you have, they only care about getting their own pleasure out of the situation.

Rachel: *Other ones... you actually got talking to and then it would yeah I don't know it felt more like they might be more looking for dating 'cause they were... asking you... more questions about yourself and having a bit more of a conversation and then... I had a few guys ask me to... hang-out, but... during the day and stuff.*

Meaningful conversations are produced as an exception to the construction of the Tinder date as 'sex not love', as women associate genuine conversations on Tinder as speaking to genuine interest in dating and relationships. The anomaly of 'getting to know' a Tinder match reinforces constructions of Tinder's disconnection from romantic intimacy, as courtship is avoided in order to maintain a 'sex not love' dating culture. Julie's statement constructs a cry for equality, as women are produced as less than human in the sexual relationship and reduced to objects for sexual desire and pleasure on the Tinder date. The women's stories acknowledge how women are often reduced to their bodies and challenge women's social positioning in the male-dominated society. The women resist objectification through talk that acknowledges men's acts that move beyond objectification to valuing women as more than what their bodies provide for a man, and who have 'opinions' and 'experiences' that are valuable and meaningful. There are constraints to 'knowing' a person

within Tinder's 'hook-up culture', yet 'good conversation', even in the casual context, can promote 'comfort' and 'fun' that can create a more positive Tinder experience.

The women's talk challenged constructions of the Tinder date as 'not a 'date' date' and reproduced traditional dating and courtship scripts, bringing to attention how traditional discourses of dating co-articulate and complicate how women can make sense of their experiences of Tinder dating.

Sally: I never had a 'date' aww... I've had one date... I went on a date... in a restaurant... I was dressed up... he's dressed nice, he likes me, I like him.

The 'date' date in the Tinder context is produced with surprise at it having actually occurred, as, although Sally had shared many experiences of meeting men in-person from Tinder at this stage of the interview, she at first claims to have never been on a 'date', suggesting that more traditional 'dating' is uncommon through the Tinder app. Sally's talk reproduces traditional constructions of a 'date' as courtship: going out for dinner, dressing nice and making an effort in a way that presents an interest in each other, in contrast to the 'not date' dates that are more typical of Tinder 'dating'. The 'real' date is positioned as different to Tinder's typical construction as a 'hook-up' app, or a form of dating that involves an encounter designed for heterosexual only.

Although uncommon, the reproduction of traditional dating scripts within the Tinder context is constructed as 'nice' and 'fun' in contrast to the hook-up.

Rachel: I think like a big part of it though was just that it was new and... something I hadn't done before, that was probably why... if I'd been on a few more, I feel like that probably wouldn't have been such an amazing (laughs) one, but at the time I was like

'this is so nice, we're going out to... a lookout together' ...we went to McDonald's and had chips and stuff (laughs) yeah so I think... my bar was set quite low (laughs).

Julie: *We parked up somewhere, just watched the stars and chatted and it was... a lot of fun.*

Traditional dominant dating scripts are reproduced in Rachel's and Julie's talk that construct an enjoyment and excitement for the Tinder 'date', that whilst not a 'proper' 'date' date, transfers some constructions of courtship and romance, as acts of having a meal together, spending time together and 'chatting' are reproduced with a casual, but pleasant, execution. Although the Tinder date produces a 'low bar' standards for dating, this is not necessarily inhibiting possibilities for modern love in the Tinder date context, as some women find enjoyment from the Tinder 'date'.

Although the Tinder 'date' is constructed differently to the traditional date, Julie's talk reproduces expectations for a Tinder meeting that maintains traditional courtship, as dating etiquette for dressing nicely and acting courteous and chivalrous remains an expectation for some women in the Tinder encounter.

Julie: *I expect them to be friendly, to, show up properly dressed... looking date ready... and just be courteous, and... things like, holding the door open for you... that sort of stuff, to make it feel like a real date rather than just a Tinder date I guess.*

The dichotomy produced between the 'real' date and the 'Tinder' date speaks to a different standard of dating expectations within the Tinder context, as components of traditional dating, such as being 'properly dressed', 'courteous' and chivalrous are not

representative of the typical Tinder date. Julie's talk suggests that what makes a date 'real' are its components of courtship and romance, and thus expectations for a 'real' and traditional date are still present within Tinder's context, despite it resisting such expectations.

Rachel's statement speaks to the negotiation between traditional dating scripts and the 'not a 'date' date' Tinder context, suggesting that the Tinder date is either for dating or for casual sex, but not both.

Rachel: I guess it depends what they're... looking for... whether it's someone that they just want to get 'round... for just a quick one night stand, or whether it's someone... that they're actually looking to date... I feel like there's two halves of Tinder that I don't know if there could be... one ideal person that fits both.

Romance and dating exists within the Tinder context and is given meaning through its rarity. A contrast of the 'two halves' of Tinder is produced through the distinction made between the 'one night stand' and 'actually' going on a 'date'. The 'date' date produces meanings of a romantic purpose that is not reducible to only a sexual encounter. The 'date' date becomes about 'getting to know' someone in a way that is avoided in the casual hook-up. Implications of the 'two halves' of Tinder reproduce complicated and contradictory understandings for women's Tinder use, as attempts are made to navigate tensions within the Tinder context.

Constructions of the Tinder date as 'sex' or 'love', but not both, are challenged in women's stories that seek courtship and connection in contexts of the 'casual' Tinder relationship.

Julie: I was also seeking sort of a casual thing... I think not just necessarily casual sex, but also... I guess the hanging-out aspect around that... maybe spending time with someone, go grab a drink, see a movie or something.

Sally: That was around the time that I was like aw maybe I could find love, but... I didn't want 'love' love I just wanted someone cute to look at...but not just sex, so my mindset had changed from sex to someone I could hang-out with.

There is tension in the way that the women construct their sexual identity, as dating scripts coarticulate with 'sex, not love' constructions to position women within both romantic and sexual constructions in their Tinder dating. Julie and Sally's talk complicates understanding of modern intimacy through negotiations that work to reproduce both 'sex' and 'dating' together in new and unique ways. Women's negotiations that comply with Tinder's casual sex standards, yet also pursue the 'hanging-out aspect' of dating, construct assertive and creative ways of doing sexuality and dating within the hook-up context. Tinder's hook-up script distances Tinder matches from anything more than a physical connection, thus the women's talk challenges Tinder's status quo to pursue elements of the 'date' date within the modern dating scripts that resist it. Women are enabled to 'establish' sexual empowerment by embracing a sexual freedom that is inclusive of feminine values for 'good sex', as women seek to 'hang-out' and form a connection with a Tinder match intended for casual sex (Fahs & Plante, 2017). By asserting an active and independent sexuality in a women-focused approach to casual sex, the male-dominated Tinder context for meaningless sexual connections is challenged.

Similar to women's desire to incorporate a 'hang-out' stage in Tinder's culture of casual sex, Holly's talk constructs an interest in 'getting to know' a person before a first kiss.

Holly: He tried to kiss me and I didn't let him (laughs)... he meant well it was just, I thought it was kind of weird for a first date when we hadn't been talking... for that long.

There is a reproduction of traditional dating expectations in Holly's statement, as the 'first kiss' is considered 'weird' for a first date. Assumptions about courtship and intimacy in Tinder dating are reproduced, as women want the first kiss to happen at the right time, which implies a reconstruction of mediated scripts that produce the first kiss as a deeply meaningful and romantic moment in courtship (Morollon Diaz-Faes, 2022). The first kiss in romance films and fairy-tales typically represents two people coming together as an official couple, which may hold influence for Holly's talk that constructs the importance of knowing a person before a first kiss. The reproduction of traditional dating standards introduces contradictory meanings pertaining to 'dating' in the Tinder context, as women attempt to enable courtship, but also resist sexual assumptions. Where heterosex is a common occurrence for the first Tinder meeting, women may negotiate the complex and conflicting dating context by delaying the first kiss in order to maintain 'date' date standards.

Complicated negotiations of the first Tinder encounter are also constructed in Holly's story that produces romantic chemistry as something that becomes known from a 'feeling' on a first meeting, yet negotiated within contradictory requirements that expect an appropriate period of courtship before making something 'official'.

***Holly:** He wasn't quite what I was looking for just yeah didn't have that spark... I don't know if there's something people can do or not do you just kind of feel it or you don't (laughs)... [another man] was basically like... 'do you want to... come to my 21st and... make it official?' after one date, ahhh (laughs) 'no'... we've been on one date... if it was a longer period I think... it could have been really... good, he was normal and really lovely, but he was just so fast and I was like I'm not committing to a relationship after one date.*

The traditional 'love at first sight' trope is both reproduced and resisted in the modern dating context, as a romantic 'spark' or chemistry is constructed as an immediate experience, yet men's early attachment is negatively constructed in the women's talk. A 'spark' speaks to romantic intensity, passion and excitement that draws upon a fairy-tale narrative, in which men and women would swiftly fall into a relationship upon first meeting (Tanner et al., 2003). However, reproductions of the fairy-tale romance are complicated by women's resistance to a man's readiness for a serious relationship, which is constructed as misguided eagerness to 'make it official'. Although some women are positioned as desiring romance and intimacy from the Tinder date, men's attempts to deliver on gender courtship can be poorly received when 'love' is overdone without the appropriate courtship rituals. Unsuccessful courtship attempts in Tinder's dating context speak to a coarticulation with the transforming modern dating context, as how we 'do romance' is complicated within Tinder's context that sets up immediate sexual connection.

Complex courtship rituals as the process of 'making it official' are also reproduced through labels of 'exclusivity' that construct Tinder's modernised way of doing dating and relationships.

Holly: *We had said that we were going to be exclusive... and kinda nearly in a relationship... we were... basically together just without the label, I just said that I didn't want to be official for a little bit longer, because we hadn't been talking... that long.*

Rachel: *He never asked me or anything but... eventually he just told people that I was his girlfriend ... but without it ever kind of, being... discussed it just kind of happened... I think he asked me like 'do you still have Tinder?' and I was like 'na I don't I got rid of it a couple of-' I got rid of it like a week ago (laughs) - and he was like 'aw okay'... and I think he said like 'yeah I got rid of it too' and then that was kind of like 'oh okay' so... never made it fully official, but that was kind of official enough at the time (laughs).*

Construction of an 'exclusive' label in a Tinder relationship produces negotiations for a serious relationship taking place, which speaks to reproduced dating scripts of courtship that operate despite the move to a 'sex only' understanding of Tinder. Tinder users find new ways to negotiate courtship, as Rachel's talk constructs the deletion of the Tinder application as a marker of exclusivity, in which the act of removing oneself from the hook-up app implies a relationship moving towards an exclusive romantic connection. The statement, 'never... fully official, but... official enough' speaks to women's acceptance for informal courtship in modern dating that reinforces an 'apocalypse' on modern romance (Eaton & Rose, 2012; Lee, 2019), as the traditional grand romantic gesture for proposing 'going steady' is replaced with an implicit movement towards a committed relationship. Relationship status as an unspoken agreement problematizes how consent is negotiated in

modern relationships, as relationship intentions are implied and assumed, rather than talked about with consideration for individual wants, desires and consent.

The women's talk also produced moments of successful operations of traditional courtship, as men would sometimes reproduce standards of the chivalrous and courteous 'gentleman' on the Tinder 'date'.

***Rachel:** He's so nice... super... friendly and real, what's the word when someone opens the door for you and is like a gentleman kind of? ... he came over and opened the door for me and everything was... real... nice like that, so he gave... good vibes.*

***Julie:** He drove me home, and he walked me upstairs, made sure I... got home safely and gave me a hug goodnight.*

Women's talk of 'gentlemen' who would 'open the door for you' and ensure their date 'got home safely' reproduces traditional practices of courtship produced on the Tinder date. Women get 'good vibes' from Tinder dates that follow traditional dating scripts, suggesting that Tinder's complex and unpredictable dating context is most easily navigated when men and women assume gender positions that provide a known and accepted social script for 'how to do' dating. The women's talk produces courtship on the 'date' date as a gendered phenomenon, as the man performs a strong and assertive gender identity and the woman assumes a position that depends upon men's protection and care.

Traditional gender scripts of men's dominance and women's submission and passivity are reproduced and romanticised in the 'date' date through a desire for men's 'romantic' gestures. However, when women encounter situations in which a man does not perform courtship and chivalry, this enables opportunities for women's empowerment.

Holly: *I was... waiting for him to ask if I wanted to be picked up... and he didn't, so I was like 'huh guess I'm driving myself then'.*

Holly's talk constructs women's assumptions of courtship, in which it is expected that a man 'picks up' his date and provides transportation to the date venue. When expectations for courtship are not met, gender scripts are disrupted, opening spaces for women to act independently and assert their capability outside of a passive dependence on men. The failings of the expected 'date' date may work to encourage women's resistance and empowerment, as the disruption to gender norms leaves a gap for women to assume an unconventional, assertive femininity.

As power relations become more transparent in the modern dating context, heterosexual scripts become more complex to negotiate, as women seek romance, yet resist gendered power relations that are embedded within dominant discourses that frame normative ways of obtaining romance.

Sally: *He asked me if I wanted to get something to eat and then when I said 'no' [he] goes are you sure? and I was like 'I'm sure... I don't want to eat!'... and he's like 'are you sure? I can pay for it, it's alright I can pay for it for you, I know... you've got a kid' I was like 'whaaat?'... now I'm thinking back, I'm like you did that to show me that you could look after me, that you can care for me... I was like 'yeah I just want a frozen coke'... just to shut him up.*

Rachel: *He got us on this... three course dinner cruise thing... to have this person be like here I've bought you this whole thing... it was like 'woah', now I'm like red flag...*

it was just extravagant, over-the-top... tryna... flash around his money and... put on this big show... he actually said to me... 'I remember the first time we met and I was... laughing so much, but I was actually just faking it'... he'd... definitely try to turn up the charisma and... try laugh at things and stuff 'cause he was more worried about... you thinking that you were having a good time with him and that you liked him and stuff, but then he just kind of threw that back in my face... now looking back... I thought we were getting on really well and stuff, but I think... it was a bit put on... I think he's... super self-conscious and... yeah I don't know... obviously to... make [the date] go better.

Holly: *He'd quite often exaggerate stuff to make himself sound better even if it wasn't true.*

The women's talk resists traditional gender positions by identifying men to be 'faking it', 'exaggerating stuff' and 'turning up the charisma' to construct a gendered performance that is used to 'sell' the product of the 'ideal' man in order to make a date go 'better'. Constructions of men's insistent need to provide for a woman, over-the-top courtship, falsified confidence and exaggerated success, speak to reproductions of dominant masculinity, as well as reconstructions of women's assumed passivity and dependence, that the women identified and resisted. Men's performances of traditional courtship are constructed not as attractive or romantic, but rather an indication of men's inhibited need to appeal to women through traditional positionings of the confident breadwinner. Women are empowered as they manage gender inequity in unique ways by recognising men's displays of 'dominance' as masculine insecurity, but negotiate this in ways that avoid confrontation or awkwardness, as to continue a pleasant intimate encounter. Resistance may sometimes be

displayed in actions that take the form of compliance, as women's knowledge of gender inequality can be used to 'choose their battles', but remain aware and resistant to gendered positioning.

Resistance to gendered power structures is also produced in Holly's talk that constructs active resistance to men's attempts to dominate and impress a woman on a Tinder date, as gender scripts are renegotiated to position a woman within traditionally masculine positionings of the breadwinner.

Holly: He was like... 'I'm just going to call the bank... I've run out of money' ... I was like 'I'll pay... it's fine' and he was like 'aw I just feel really awkward, I've always wanted to be the one who... provides in a relationship' ...and I'm like 'I don't care... it's fine, I'll pay'.

A woman's insistence to pay for a date produces feminine power and control that can disrupt traditional gendered power relations, as Holly's talk challenges gender stereotypes by constructing an assertive woman providing for a dependent man. As a woman is positioned as the 'provider' within the heterosexual relationship, she obstructs a man's capacity to 'do' traditional courtship on the Tinder 'date', producing an 'awkward' encounter that goes against gender dating scripts that assume masculine dominance and control. As such, the man is made to experience the passive and dependent position that is customarily experienced by the woman on the heterosexual date.

Complex negotiations of intimacy and courtship in the Tinder context are also produced in Sally's talk that constructs 'love' within 'red flag' dating conditions.

Sally: He was... all cuddly and... holding me and I thought that was just him, but apparently not, apparently he's not that cuddly... and I was like 'Aw he must like me' (laughs)...my friend noticed and goes 'what's his problem?' and I was like 'aw I don't know, it might just be because there's guys around... he's a bit... jealous' and then they're like 'aw cute'... but then really, not 'cute'... I didn't take that as a red flag I was like 'aw, jealous, cutie, you're so in love with me.'

A man's uncharacteristic 'cuddly' behaviour was at first produced as 'cute' and suggestive of 'love' in Sally's talk, but as the discourse reflects upon itself, constructions of men's jealousy and 'red flag' behaviours are produced through masculine displays of ownership and 'marking territory'. The woman is positioned as 'belonging' to this man, as ownership is performed in particular ways that reproduce possessive control in response to the challenge of other men, which may be positively construed as valiant and romantic. When masculine displays of power are constructed as 'romantic' within the Tinder date, women's bodies are produced as objects of desire to be possessed. The text reflects upon itself as constructions of what 'love' looks like in the Tinder date co-articulate with and are contradicted by reproductions of gendered power relations and men's coercive control, which in turn give space to women's resistance, as labels for 'red flags' in heterosexual dating constructs alternative language that enables women to identify and challenge men's gendered practices that seek to coerce and control women.

Complexities for negotiating romance and love within Tinder's 'just sex only' culture are reproduced in Sally's talk that positions those who seek something 'genuine' as 'stuck' within the Tinder app that resists and constrains romantic intimacy.

***Sally:** No genuine person anymore is on Tinder... I mean there might be... I don't know, but they're stuck being a swipe lefter probably just 'cause they're genuinely looking for something and they're like no.*

Sally's statement constructs the 'real' and authentic person as someone who is most likely seeking a more meaningful relationship that resists Tinder's expectations for heterosex. As the 'genuine person' is positioned with romantic interests, Tinder's 'hook-up culture' is constructed as challenging men and women's 'genuine' intentions for dating, by creating a disingenuous dating space designed for artificial intimacy. Men and women are positioned as 'stuck' within Tinder's dating space, as a 'genuine' connection is produced as limited and indistinct within Tinder's 'not a 'date' date' culture.

Rather than being constructed as 'stuck' within Tinder's culture that resists dating, women may instead be positioned as assertive and challenging of the limiting dating context, as they position themselves firmly within their own wants and desires and refuse to participate in Tinder's 'sex only' culture.

***Holly:** I could have been on so many more dates but the guys are like 'aw yeah I'm just like here to have fun and... hook-up with people and stuff', so if that's what I wanted it would be like 'cool let's go' (laughs), but that's not what I want, so then I'm like 'aw okay, well that's not actually what I'm looking for, so I don't know if there's any point in talking' type thing.*

Holly's talk highlights the competing constructions of 'love' and 'sex' on Tinder, as meetings for the purpose of sexual intent are much more available to women on Tinder than the romantic date. Discourses of empowerment construct women's ability to set barriers and

make clear dating intentions that do not submit to men's sexual expectations. Women are enabled to act on an affirming sexual identity, as they refuse men's wants in favour of their romantic pursuit, yet in doing so, reproduce gender stereotypes of feminine submission (Hollway, 1984).

As online dating inhibits 'genuine' dating connections, women attempt to understand a dating culture that functions in resistance to the 'date' date.

Holly: I just never have much luck with guys (laughs)... my friends whenever I tell them about someone... and it doesn't work out, they're like 'what the hell... you literally have the worst luck'.

A question of 'luck' embellishes the problem of modern dating and puts it out of the control of the Tinder user. Holly's talk constructs Tinder's challenge to dating as a common occurrence to the extent that a woman may begin to feel particularly ill-fated in her pursuit of romance in the modern dating culture. If one is 'unlucky in love', non-successes in dating are constructed as a product of chance and not a product of a patriarchal dating culture directed towards the sexual exploitation of women. Constructions of unlucky love are produced in contrast to constructions of Tinder's intentionality and purposefulness, to produce an illusive dating context.

Although Holly's talk constructs unsuccessful dating experiences within meanings of 'luck', the women's stories also produce an awareness of Tinder's dating context to be working against romance and courtship.

Holly: I think based on my experiences, I'd say the app's pretty dumb, but... I kind of knew what I was getting into when I downloaded it 'cause I kind of had that preconceived idea.

Sally: I know I'm not the only female that thinks this, that men on Tinder ain't shit (laughs)... I just don't think there's much to this generation... it's not saying that I don't like all men... just- this generation, or this town... no standards... this isn't for everyone definitely 'cause... there are the people that are genuinely in it for, I don't know, for something, but then there's those people that are just worse than how I was... this is just a whole bunch of kids, like boys, where the men at?

Tinder's culture of 'boys' speaks to a bigger picture understanding of Tinder as an enabler to masculine power, as women's exploitation is much more 'acceptable' in Tinder's 'evolving' dating context. Women's awareness of this 'preconceived idea' suggests that patriarchy is not hidden in Tinder's dating context, but rather transparent in producing a 'no standards' dating culture that is disrespectful and immature in its treatment of women. The reproduction of patriarchy co-articulating with the 'intentionality' and 'purposefulness' of Tinder interactions, works to position women, who continue to engage in Tinder dating, as responsible and to blame for their exploited positioning. Through women's talk that questions and problematises both the Tinder context and the generation of men (boys) who use Tinder, strength and empowerment is possible through acknowledging and speaking back to the positioning of women as experiencing disadvantages not experienced by men.

Men's disrespect as a 'Tinder thing' is reflected upon and challenged in Holly's talk to suggest that the disrespect of women is a generalised masculine construction and that men are 'dicks' across all dating contexts.

Holly: They both ended up lying about a bunch of stuff... At first I kind of... rolled my eyes, and was like this is why I was hesitant to jump on Tinder (laughs), but then actually... I don't think that's a Tinder thing, I think that's just guys being dicks (laughs).

Holly's statement resists distinctions between the online and physical space to suggest that gender is embedded in all dating discourses and that deception within Tinder relationships is a product of masculine performance, rather than something enabled solely by the Tinder space. As disingenuous dating is identified as a cultural problem, we are encouraged to look at gender inequality as an issue deeply embedded in dating standards that we assume to be traditional and normal. Tinder is suggested as merely an enabler to patriarchy that is immersed in social power relations, and which constrains and minimises women's position as subordinate in gendered interactions.

Upon identifying constructions of 'dating evolving', I was able to reflect upon a transforming dating environment that both holds onto and resists what dating used to be. The Tinder culture is inherently sexual in its meanings and purpose, yet the women's stories construct desires for the reproduction of gendered norms and heterosexual scripts in modern dating. Tinder courtship is 'unnatural', uncertain and low-effort, yet produces a space in which social power relations are made more visible and challenged, as the women's stories demonstrate awareness and resistance to masculine dominance in heterosexual dating. The Tinder dating space can be used to benefit women's empowerment, as new and unique ways of negotiating intimacy can be used to identify and disrupt gendered power.

Tinder's sexual marketplace

Embedded in constructions of the Tinder date as an intentional connection that expects heterosex, constrains romance and courtship, and reproduces positions of gendered power, Tinder itself is constructed as a sexual marketplace, where heterosex is commodified, advertised and exchanged in the Tinder context. The sexual marketplace positions women as both commodity and consumer, within a 'dating' context that works to negotiate an economic exchange for giving and receiving heterosex. Strategy and tactics for acquiring heterosex are exploitative and fraudulent, as users 'false-advertise' to secure a sexual encounter. Assumptions and pressures materialise as Tinder's sexual marketplace produces expectations for procuring a sexual outcome.

Shopping for hook-ups

Tinder as a sexual marketplace is reproduced within the women's talk that constructs Tinder's purpose as providing a fast-paced, easy and accessible exchange of heterosex.

Julie: *More people [are] sort of using it having a short-term thing, saying 'oh look I... found this person on Tinder and we... slept together once or twice and then boom I can go find someone else straight away' and then because they've been told... 'it's this easy'... that culture has continued.*

Rachel: *He had lots of other girls that he was kind of seeing and even after I'd been round that first time... he was having other girls come round after that... in the first few weeks.*

Constructions of the fast-paced Tinder ‘hook-up culture’ produce a revolving door standard for Tinder-initiated casual sex, as access is constructed as ‘easy’ and quick in its systematic process for receiving and discarding a sexual relationship. Thompson’s (2018) concept of Tinder as a fast-moving online sexual marketplace is constructed within the ‘culture’ of ‘easy’ sex, which enables masculine sexual desire and constrains potential for long-term connections. Gendered sexual power relations are reproduced in women’s acceptance of Tinder’s non-exclusive dating, as the Tinder contexts favours masculine standards for sexual expectation and resists stereotyped feminine desire for romantic connections (Gresaker, 2017; Hefner & Kretz, 2021). Tinder’s fast-paced hook-up enables immediate and constant accessibility to multiple exchanges of heterosexual, as Tinder’s excess of potential matches floods the dating pool.

Tinder is constructed as a sexual marketplace through the women’s talk of a rigorous ‘swiping’ process of fast-paced judgements and decisions to determine the potential of a Tinder match.

***Holly:** On Tinder I can swipe left on like 30 people before I find one that I’m like ‘oh yeah they look alright, and... sound alright’.*

Here, Tinder users are constructed as consumers, as they sift through a seemingly limitless supply of potential dating candidates until they find one person who ‘looks alright’. The ability to access a seemingly endless supply of potential ‘matches’ speaks with the ‘dating evolving’ discourse, as the accessibility of physical connections caters to masculine sexual desire and diminishes the demand for meaningful, romantic connections. ‘Swiping’ on the Tinder application produces meanings consistent with shopping for the best bargain, consistent with Thompson’s (2018) concept of the virtual hunt for uncommitted casual sex. A

neoliberal discourse is produced in the commodification of the Tinder user, as women and men online are constructed as a product, advertised and sold through the Tinder application. The effect of an economic exchange of casual heterosex is a constructed understanding of options and accessibility, where women can be positioned both as the product and as the buyer within the sexual marketplace.

Julie's talk establishes Tinder's sexual marketplace as involving fast-paced transactions for both men and women.

Julie: I think because of the ease of finding people, because you can theoretically just sit there and swipe right on everyone and just talk to the ones who match you, people are... swiping on everyone and finding the ones... who will agree to hook-up with them and then moving onto the next one who will.

A process of 'swiping', 'agree to hook-up', then 'onto the next one', constructs the sexual marketplace within a business-like exchange of heterosex. Although men and women are positioned as both the products and the buyers within Tinder's sexual marketplace, differences in gendered approaches to 'swiping' on Tinder are produced through Rachel's talk of men's Tinder approach of 'swiping right on every single girl'.

Rachel: I think it's good that you can just sit there and just do it from home and swipe through, you've got all the options and... especially 'cause... guys seem to just swipe... right to like every single girl so you end up getting... sooo many options and you just sit there 'yes, no, yes, no'... I think if that's what you're after it's perfect, so convenient.

Tinder dating is again constructed within an economic and gendered discourse as men maximise potential access to heterosex by swiping ‘yes’ to everyone. The awareness of the online space as a mass dating site can contribute to inauthentic interactions, as Tinder users understand that traditional romance discourses of ‘boy meets girl’ have been replaced with Tinder’s standard of ‘boy matches with 100 girls’. Masculine sexual urges are reproduced in Tinder’s fast-paced sexual marketplace, reinforcing the ‘male sex drive’, yet also opening spaces for women’s power and control over a ‘convenient’ dating process. Men’s avidity for swiping right enables women to be the ‘deciders’ of a Tinder connection, as they are able to comfortably swipe with excess options and the power to determine the outcome of a match.

Women’s empowerment and control in Tinder’s sexual marketplace is also reproduced within women’s positioning of an assertive femininity that quickly judges and discards men who present as potentially incompatible or not serious about dating.

***Holly:** If the person’s not talking much, then I’m kind of just like ‘seeya’... I’m either going to remove them or not reply.*

***Rachel:** It used to be kind of hard... keeping up with all the different... conversations that you’re having... I’d have quite a few on the go and then you’re like trying to suss out each one... And then... it’s so quick, anything that they say that you’re like ‘aw that was a bit weird’, so quick to just be like ‘you’re done... next one’ (laughs).*

Women are positioned as assertive and forthright in the disconnected dating culture, in which they act quickly to ‘suss out’ and ‘remove’ the ‘time waster’ or any man who is ‘a bit weird’. Tinder communication is constructed as a fast-paced elimination process of ‘you’re done... next one’ that further devalues conversation and connection in the online

space, yet enables feminine power. Tinder's online communication is distinctive from 'real world' meetings, as women are positioned in control of their own choices and able to 'remove' men without consequence.

Tinder's disingenuous culture as a mass dating market is also reproduced in strategies of communication, as messages are distributed to multiple 'consumers' for efficient and effective sexual transactions.

Holly: Most of the time it's like 'this is so cringe... do they just copy and paste this [opening message] to everyone?'

Holly's talk constructs some men's Tinder messages as recycled content, in which the same opening message is sent to 'everyone' a man matches with. A 'copy and paste' approach to dating conversation produces inauthentic dating interactions that devalue connections made on Tinder, as men's dating tactics establish an efficient and time saving marketing-like strategy for procuring heterosex. By delivering the same message to all women, Tinder dating constructs a widespread and maximised approach to dating, in which men prioritise the quantity of women over the quality of conversation.

Communication online is also disorganised in Tinder's sexual marketplace, as Holly's talk produces Tinder as enabling an online disengagement from genuine connections and meaningful conversation.

Holly: A lot of people on Tinder just waste time or you'll be in the middle of a conversation, like a decent conversation and then out of nowhere they just... remove you or delete their account or something... my friend was talking to a guy recently and she's had the same... thing happen, where you've been in the middle of a

conversation and they just don't reply... so at least I'm not the only one in that aspect.

Disconnected online conversation, in which men 'waste time' or 'don't reply' on Tinder, constructs an experience of 'window shopping' in the dating market. 'Window shopping' on Tinder positions men as 'shopping' for options for intimacy, without intention to 'buy' or commit to a connection. Women on Tinder are positioned as a form of accessible entertainment (an object to possibly purchase), to be easily picked up and discarded without concern for connections formed. Women are obstructed in their dating intentions, as they attempt to embrace Tinder's intimacy market, yet are confronted with barriers to communication and a normalised nonchalant approach to Tinder courtship. In this construction, women have attempted to establish an assertive and free sexuality by seeking an intimate connection, however their endeavours are hindered by men's swift withdrawal from the potential exchange. The 'ghosting' culture, in which individuals swiftly discard their Tinder match without communication, is negotiated through constructions of reassurance, as comfort is sought from other women's similar experiences. There is a construction of 'solidarity through shared experience' that is suggested within Holly's talk that speaks to not being the only woman that is treated this way on Tinder.

Tinder's sexual marketplace creates superficial connections that devalue dating and intimacy in the online space. The women's talk responds to Tinder's construction as a trivial shopping market through reproductions of Tinder as a game, in which women also 'play' with the Tinder application as a source of entertainment.

Rachel: *We'll be drinking... get up Tinder and just... take turns messaging random guys off it just... sending funny stuff and... 'playing with it' (laughs)... sometimes*

we've... tried to get a guy round for my friends on it but other times it's just like send funny messages and see what they send back (laughs).

Holly: *We were... having dinner one night and we downloaded it there and then we matched with the same guy... and messaged him the same thing (laughs), like the same response, until he caught on and it was quite funny (laughs).*

Women engage with Tinder for amusement and fun, constructing a shared social activity where women empower other women and make 'fun' from the precarious Tinder conversations. As the online dating space produces a spectacle for friendship hang-outs, Tinder connections are understood to be superficial and carefree, as 'funny messages' disconnect a conversation from a serious relationship. Constructions of Tinder as a game suggests a built-in tolerance to Tinder's sexual marketplace, as women 'play' into a dating context that dissociates from genuine intimacy. Women are positioned not to be passive and dependent within the Tinder context, but active, playful and in control, as empowerment is produced from 'playing' Tinder with friends.

The pressure of expectation

The material effects of constructing Tinder as a sexual marketplace produce sexual connotations within 'real world' intimate interactions, as the 'purchase' of a Tinder encounter produces expectations for heterosex. Women may also be troubled by Tinder meetings that do not result in men procuring heterosex, given that 'purchasing' the Tinder experience assumes an outcome of sex.

Julie: If... there's very obviously been a... sexual connotation to the conversation from the beginning I expect them to, be more, I guess flirty and a bit more trying to make that happen from the beginning... It's little things like... putting an arm around your shoulder or... grabbing your hand randomly, stuff like that, where... they just want physical contact. I noticed that... when it's something where sex is the expectation... there is, more physical contact early on, even little things like a hug.

Julie's talk speaks to the influence that the online space has within the physical meeting space as 'sexual connotations' in online conversation hold meaning for how intimacy is performed and interpreted in the 'real life' context. The Tinder encounter is produced as structured and purposeful, as sexual expectation is communicated 'from the beginning' of the Tinder date. An escalation from sexual meaning in the online space to flirtation in-person, constructs sexual intent that is 'trying to make [sex] happen' throughout all stages of the Tinder encounter. Men's methods of using physical intimacy to encourage a sexual interaction are produced in 'even little things', such as a hug or holding hands, as traditionally romantic forms of physical intimacy are now produced as indicators of the successful purchase of a sexual encounter. Subtle physical contact no longer holds the same meaning of intimacy, as we are discouraged from understanding the Tinder meeting as a 'date'. In effect, constructions of subtle physical contact speak to forms of pressure and subtle coercion when Tinder is constructed as a sexual marketplace, as physical contact communicates unspoken sexual expectations and intentions.

As the Tinder context manufactures sexual expectation and purpose, women's dating experiences become complicated and pressured by social power relations that prioritise masculine sexual want within the sexual marketplace. Physical intimacy on a Tinder date is deeply embedded in meanings of sexual intention to the extent that 'super touchy' encounters

can reveal a dating purpose that contradict what a person has previously divulged about their intentions.

***Holly:** He said that he wanted a relationship and he was... keen for that, but he was very very touchy... and I just knew that he didn't want a relationship (laughs)... I kind of just got the vibe that he was saying one thing, but... wanting something else... all he wanted to do was... hold hands and... hug me... and just be super touchy.*

A disingenuous dating context of 'false advertising' is produced when men employ strategy and tactics to procure heterosex, such as claiming romantic intentions, yet attempting to make physical advances that communicate solely sexual expectations. The 'super touchy' date is not romanticised as physical affection, instead, the women's talk resists the man's dishonesty of falsely advertising a romantic connection and identifies a 'vibe' of deceitful sexual intentions. The 'false-advertising' of romance provides the conditions for sexual coercion, as men intentionally mislead women through drawing on constructions of dating, courtship and romance to persuade a sexual encounter.

As a date is located within Tinder's sexual marketplace, as well as a wider societal preoccupation with sex, men and women are positioned within a pressured and coercive context that assumes the eventuality of heterosex on a first Tinder date.

***Rachel:** He seemed, alright, but I was a little bit worried like 'aw I wonder if he thinks like... I've wasted this whole night'... I had that in my mind, like... 'I hope... he hasn't done all of this just 'cause he was expecting [sex] and now he's going to be like 'what the fuck''*

The pressures of Tinder's sexual expectation are materialised in the Tinder date, as women 'worry' about not supplying heterosex after spending a 'whole night' with a man. The Tinder date as an economic exchange is reproduced, as a man supplies an intimate date and women assume he expects heterosex in return. In the instance that heterosex does not occur, statements construct the date as a potential 'waste' and 'loss', given that a service has not been provided in exchange for the man's time and effort paid.

As a Tinder date without sex is established as a potential 'waste', the non-occurrence of heterosex on a Tinder date may lead the self-sufficient neoliberal subject to question their own 'fault' in an event that goes against standards of Tinder dating.

***Rachel:** We'd met up a couple of times afterwards before we had sex and I remember him saying... that made him feel like 'what's wrong with me?' (laughs) whereas... to me it was... not really a big deal... he's like, 'what's wrong with me? Why doesn't she like me?... This is really weird'... so for him it was probably a way bigger deal than what I realised... but that really kind of knocked his confidence back.*

***Julie:** It seemed from the get-go that he had sex as a focus, or as I guess at the forefront of his mind... there was that sexual expectation there and it didn't happen... it was confusing... I mean it didn't happen, it didn't happen... and... because he never said anything, it just had me sort of sitting here like 'is there something I've done? Is there something I've said?'*

Tinder's reputation for 'easy' and accessible heterosex is understood within constructions of the unsuccessful hook-up as 'weird' and 'confusing'. As sex is expected and normalised in the Tinder context, the denial of these sexual expectations can produce

insecurity and self-doubt, as questions of ‘what’s wrong with me?’ speak to double standards and expectations that act upon the neoliberal subject. When sexual expectations are not met, and gendered positions of power are not fulfilled, men and women’s self-worth may be negatively impacted. Questions of self-worth in the event of an unsuccessful hook-up may be especially confronting for the ‘liberated’ woman, as postfeminist empowered sexual independence becomes obstructed by sexual rejection within a context where sex is produced as easily obtained (Gill, 2007). Sexual acceptance and rejection are meaningful for how men and women construct self-confidence and social status in the sexualised dating culture.

The pressures of Tinder’s ‘sex, not love’ expectation produce implications for a woman’s own self-concept, as the women’s talk constructs the internalised objectification of the feminine body and casts doubt on women’s value within Tinder’s ‘hook-up culture’.

Rachel: It is awkward... just the whole... yeah expectations I suppose like ‘what were they actually wanting out of this and do they even like me enough to... stay around (laughs) without doing anything else?’

Rachel’s story communicates the understanding of a woman’s self-worth as a product of their sexualised body. Heterosex is constructed as a bargaining chip for emotional intimacy, in which the prospects for staying overnight with a Tinder date are largely determined by the provision of heterosex. In this sexual marketplace, meaningful connections beyond intentions for acquiring heterosex are atypical of the Tinder relationship. Tinder enables reproductions of fast-paced access to heterosex and thus the additional ‘labour’ of dating and courtship may be perceived as futile within the culture of hook-ups. In this discourse, to be ‘liked enough’ by a man is merely to be seen as more than just a body, producing low standards for dating and romance.

The women's talk sometimes resisted Tinder as a sexual marketplace, complicating this construction through discussions of an expressive feminine sexuality that opens spaces for both sex and love to co-exist.

Julie: It was a really great way to get to know him, because it was just the two of us there was no pressure... and there was no expectation there that the night was gonna end with something sexual happening, there was... the potential for it definitely, but... there was no expectation of it, which I think made it a lot more enjoyable... we did end up sleeping together (laughs) but... it wasn't necessarily the sole purpose of the evening... I felt like I could... explore and express myself, not just sexually, but as a human as well, more than I could have when I was going out with someone with... the sole expectation of the night ending sexually.

An expressive feminine sexuality is constructed in Julie's talk that gives meaning to a woman's new agency in her ability to feel 'human' in Tinder's sexual marketplace. Sexual 'potential' in place of sexual 'expectation' reproduces empowerment and choice, as a woman is able to 'enjoy' and 'explore' the date and her understanding of self in new ways. Women's sexual liberties are restricted in the 'sex not love' culture, yet Julie's talk challenges assumptions of sex as the 'sole purpose' of a Tinder encounter to instead construct an 'enjoyable' sexual experience that was not subverted by the expectation of its occurrence.

In contrast to constructions of Tinder as a sexual marketplace, a site to procure 'sex, not love', the national lockdown, as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic, opened spaces for transformation of how women made sense of online intentions and behaviour when using the Tinder app. The women spoke about how, when the physical space was no longer accessible, conversation deepened and became more meaningful with Tinder matches.

Holly: I found that a lot more people were online over lockdown and I think everyone was just kinda bored and wanting to talk to people (laughs) and kinda get through it, it's not exactly like you could go on dates during lockdown (laughs)... I would say that I received a whole lot more messages than I usually would as well, just kinda people wanting to yarn and kill time...I guess though in some ways it was less... pick-up lines and people being creepy and more actual conversation... maybe because they knew that they couldn't actually... meet up with you.

Holly's talk about Tinder dating in the COVID-19 pandemic constructs understandings of the dating culture going underground and online as men and women took to Tinder to 'kill time' and seek out social connections. As the physical meeting space became inaccessible, and the sexual marketplace was no longer sustainable, the social benefits of the 'hook-up culture' were altered and online relationships were intensified. The inability to access the face-to-face meeting meant that the 'hook-up culture' was no longer tied up in meanings of status, validation and sexual gratification, ultimately shifting demand from sex to connection during isolation.

'Tinder's sexual marketplace' produces the modern dating context as prioritising an economy for sexual exchange that constructs the body as something to be advertised and sold through a sexual transaction that manufactures fast and efficient customer satisfaction catering to the 'male sex drive'. The Tinder context that prioritises 'sales' of heterosex can produce a coercive and controlling dating context, as 'false-advertising', intimacy tactics and implicit pressures, work to gain a sexual outcome from a woman. Empowerment is negotiated by women within the sexual marketplace, as perceptions of postfeminism are

reproduced through neoliberal discourse to assert feminine power and control within women's assumed responsibility as the ultimate 'deciders' of the sexual exchange.

Chapter Five: Analysis and discussion: Navigating Tinder's sexual marketplace

Happy to be a whore

The 'happy to be a whore' discourse identified in the transcripts gives meaning to the postfeminist liberated sexuality, as women act out sexual independence and assertiveness by embodying the 'sex not love' culture. The 'sexually liberated' woman is produced within a postfeminist sensibility, as she takes on a feminine identity that is sexually free and desiring. Women's enthusiastic alignment with a 'happy to be a whore' discourse complies with masculine standards of feminine sexuality, as women embrace a dating context fixed in patriarchy and social power relations. Sexual freedom has become a postfeminist construction for feminine power and control, however women's sexual pursuits are reproduced within heteronormative standards of gender, as the male sexual fantasy is internalised by women. Women are empowered to claim their sexual freedom and take ownership of a 'happy whore' identity as they enjoy Tinder's culture of casual sex, but the ways in which they can make sense of that enjoyment also position them as subordinate and complicit subjects to men's sexual wants and desires.

Curious feminine sexuality

The women talked about how Tinder markets itself as an 'experience' for potential users, as the use of the dating application becomes about more than just 'finding someone', but appeals to postfeminist constructions for a newly liberated feminine sexuality. As the modern dating culture augments a societal obsession with sex, women negotiate the new 'sex,

not love' culture and sexual marketplace through a 'curious' exploration of women's 'sexual freedom'.

***Julie:** There was a lot of... talk on social media and the news and everything about this new... dating app... it was still fairly new and sort of exciting, as a concept, and I was basically just curious... why not? I've got nothing to lose, I may as well give it a go and see if I can find someone.*

***Holly:** Heaps of people I know had just gotten into relationships on it and thought that it was... good to experience... meeting people, I don't want to say in real life, but we'll say in real life (laughs), wasn't really going anywhere... so, in this day and age where do you look? (laughs) So I thought I'd give it a try and see what was out there.*

Tinder modernises dating and opens up a space for women to explore their sexual identity in 'new' and 'exciting' ways. As 'real life' dating experiences of a more 'natural' or 'organic' intimacy become ineffective and unsatisfying, women opt to 'give Tinder dating a try', as they act on postfeminist and neoliberal standards for women's self-regulating independence in modern dating. The Tinder context enables women to explore their sexuality in a way that does not wait on 'real life' romances, but instead designs and manufactures accessible intimate connections.

Women endeavour to be active and desiring in Tinder's sexual dating market, as they are given new freedoms and control to explore their sexuality.

***Rachel:** I was like 'I'm just going to go talk with heaps of guys and then meet up with heaps of guys'... that was the plan.*

There is an excitement and enthusiasm constructed in the women's interviews to take on a 'liberated' sexual identity and embrace the 'experience' of Tinder's casual dating culture. Intentions to talk with and meet up with 'heaps of guys' reflects a shift away from the 'date' date, for women to instead exploit the dating market that promotes access and options.

The relationship between men and women in the dating context is reshaped in Tinder dating, as women are enabled to 'control' and 'plan' a sexual encounter.

Sally: Actually probably why I like sex so much 'cause... now that I'm older I can control it... that's where Tinder helped me a lot 'cause... I was in control, if I wanted to have sex I could have sex, if I slept with someone from Tinder I could plan that.

Sally's talk constructs feminine sexual control and enjoyment, where feelings of autonomy in sex are as, or even more, significant than the physical sexual act itself. This aligns with Fahs' and Plante's (2017) study, which found sexual happiness for women to be related to equality, comfort, and self-determined experiences of heterosexual. Traditional gender scripts for women's passivity in heterosexual sex are resisted in Sally's talk, as women's sexual 'want' is constructed within an active and empowered position that asserts feminine 'control' in Tinder-initiated sex.

A 'liberated' and curious feminine sexuality is also produced in women's talk and gossip that opens spaces for a shared excitement for exploring women's sexual freedom.

Holly: Some friends that are keen to just go and hook-up with guys they're like 'oh what does he look like', like 'oh my gosh he's hot' like 'go home with him' type thing.

Sally: I lived with my best mate at the time... she's like 'you've [beat] me now like you've slept with more people than me now' and I was like 'fuck I have oh my gosh'... and she's like 'let's have a competition, first to 10'... I hit 11... I got... hundreds of [unsolicited] dick pics... 'cause [my friends and I would] go through... like 'I know that diddle' and she's like 'I know that diddle' 'that person?'... 'yes'.

Sex, which was once constructed as a private event shared between two people (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004; Gavey, 2019), has become something that is commonly discussed between friends. Empowered sexual women in contemporary culture can talk freely about their sexuality, compare 'dick pics' they have received from men and playfully compete with friends to see who can get the most hook-ups. As women talk about their Tinder experiences, resistance is produced through women's shared experience of Tinder, as what may be a difficult experience alone, for example sexual abuse in the form of unsolicited 'dick pics', is challenged through women's unity. Women also renegotiate gender scripts as they navigate Tinder's sexual marketplace and compete with female friends in their pursuit of multiple sexual partners, demonstrating a high sex drive that challenges expectations for women's passive sexuality.

As contemporary culture produces new opportunities for women to be open and candid about their sexual experiences, women were also enabled to explore their sexuality within new realms of sexual possibilities, as sexual diversity has become more acceptable in modern dating contexts.

Sally: If I like someone like have an attachment with someone it doesn't matter what's down or up, down there, like it just doesn't matter... I could like someone with a nub (laughs) just nothing, yeah, it was just, I like people?

Sally's talk of sexual diversity constructs a feminine sexuality not overshadowed by heteronormative sexual scripts. Here, feminine sexual desire is not dominated by male sexual fantasy and instead enables opportunities to explore one's sexual identity within Tinder dating. A feminine sexuality that does not exclusively cater to men's wants may produce a more genuine sexual freedom, as the ability to simply 'like people' provides the conditions for women's independence and sexual agency.

Julie's talk constructs the fast-paced sexual marketplace as providing the conditions for sexual exploration and experience, where the ability to gain diverse sexual experiences is understood as a 'good thing': a liberating experience that contributes to 'happier', more fulfilling intimate connections due to gaining the knowledge of how to fulfil their own sexual desires and needs (what they do and do not want from an intimate connection).

Julie: [Exploring my sexuality in casual hook-up relationships is] not necessarily something that I regret, I think it was a good thing that I did, I think... testing out different types- being with different types of people is something that has led me to be... much happier in my current relationship... knowing the sort of things that I definitely don't want from having gone on casual things or [having] casual hook-up type situations.

Although there is talk of the casual hook-up as a 'good thing', the text reflects upon itself to recognise that sexual activity may be something other people 'regret', which speaks

to underlying understandings of shame in association with liberated feminine sexuality. Here, constructions of sexual shame co-articulate with women's liberation to recognise how sexual empowerment is in tension with a restrictive traditional feminine sexuality.

Whoring around

Whilst the women's stories constructed a curious exploration of new sexual freedoms and liberation in the Tinder context, an in-depth exploration of Sally's story in particular is interesting due to how it constructs an explicitly confident and empowered feminine sexuality that is assertive and desiring in the seeking of casual sex.

Sally: I was just like boom boom boom boom boom... it was just like, yes finally getting so much sex, all the sex (laughs), all the sex come to me... I was happy I was a whore.

The expectation of a fast-paced 'hook-up culture' catering to men's wants and desires for easy and accessible heterosex is claimed to women's advantage in talk of women capitalising on Tinder's sexual marketplace. A 'happy whore' identity produces women's active and enthusiastic engagement with Tinder's 'hook-up culture', as Sally's talk positions women as 'happy' and desiring of 'all the sex'. Discourses of sexual empowerment are reproduced not only in women's enabled access to casual sex, but also in the ability to celebrate and enjoy this access.

Feminine sexual desire is confidently claimed and emphasised in Sally's talk, producing women's unapologetic sexual freedom.

Sally: I went hard I'm going to be honest... you can put that on there, I went hard... after I slept with the first person and the second person and a third person then a fourth and it was just... all in the space of like one month.

Sally's talk is interesting in the way it produces tension between the traditional and postfeminist ideals that act upon a woman's sexuality. Sally's permission to include her sexual disclosures in this project speaks to a complex relationship between a history that has constrained women's sexuality with expectations for women to remain private and reserved about their sexual experiences (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004; Gavey, 2019), in contrast with a modern-day feminine empowerment that enables women to be active and desiring in their sexuality. Sally actively resists traditional constraints, by not only speaking openly and confidently about her sexual experiences, but explicitly allowing her experiences to be written and shared with others as well.

Women's confidence in sharing and celebrating experiences of 'whoring around' is embedded within processes of social validation, as Tinder-initiated sex is produced as a site for 'attention'.

Sally: I loved it... I was the shit... I knew I was the shit... at that time Tinder was not meant to be for love in my eyes... it was for attention and that one slay (laughs).

Tinder's sexual marketplace enables women to 'love' sex in new, self-confident and liberated ways, as Sally's talk speaks to a sexual self-confidence reproduced within women's liberated sexual endeavours. Women are motivated to embrace their sexual freedom, as they are validated by the 'attention' they receive from men that affirms their position as 'fun', 'free' and 'desiring' sexual subjects. However, when Tinder is constructed as a sexual

marketplace, 'validation' can reproduce the objectification of women, where women's worth is defined as their sexual attractiveness and ability to appease men's sexual desires. Sally's use of the word 'slay' is interesting, and she did speak more of the notion of 'slaying' in the interview.

Sally: My best friend was like 'use Tinder', I was like 'ooh, what's Tinder?'... she explained it to me, said 'you get some... slays' (laughs). This was 2018, so... 'slays' was a word... it sounds so yuck now thinking... the word 'slay', but, 2018.

The word 'slay' has historically held the meaning of a 'violent killing'. As women 'get some slays', women's sexual empowerment is reproduced through predatory language that constructs the performance of masculinity in the context of the neoliberal subject. Here, women resist the position as passive gatherers in heterosexual relations to instead take on a masculine position of the woman hunter, who actively pursues 'slays' on Tinder (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004; Hartmann, 2021; Sweeney, 2014). As heterosex is constructed as a 'slay', Tinder-initiated sex is produced as a physical act that resists feminine constructions of sex as intimate and romantic. Sally's discomfort around the word 'slay' may be indicative of a resistance against the gendered power dynamic that reproduces the 'male sex drive' discourse of the aggressive pursuit of heterosex (Hollway, 1989), alongside expectations for women to engage with heterosex as intimate and romantic.

As the sexually confident woman is validated and celebrated in the sexualised culture, women can pursue 'sexual agency' within Tinder's 'sexually liberating' 'hook-up culture' in a way that actively resists traditional feminine standards and identity.

Sally: I'm not a sweetheart... I'm not, the pretty girl that you, have on your arm, I'm the one that you go take I don't know, take for a run and go in the bush (laughs).

Here, to take up a 'happy whore' identity, Sally rejects traditional feminine performances of the 'sweetheart' or the 'pretty girl', but can be argued to be reproducing the Madonna-whore complex, which is described as polarised perceptions of women that construct either the 'good' and pure Madonna or the 'bad' and seductive whore (Bareket et al., 2018; Farvid et al., 2017; Ussher, 1989). In order to take up a position of the 'happy whore', one must reject the 'Madonna' position associated with traditional femininity, and yet both positions remain embedded in gendered power relations that prioritise the objectifying male gaze, as theorized by Ussher (1989).

A liberated sexuality is produced as carefree and indifferent to traditional standards of dating in Sally's talk that constructs the casual and untroubled experience of Tinder's 'sex, not love' encounter.

Sally: Those were just... hook-ups, I think I did that three times, those were genuine... just one night stands for each other... and then I had another person on Tinder, he came and... drunk with us... I don't even remember if we slept together (laughs).

An indifference towards casual heterosex is produced through Sally's laughter, as the inability to remember whether or not heterosex had occurred on a Tinder date is humorous, suggesting Tinder-initiated sex can be meaningless and forgettable to women. The carefree tone that accompanies talk of casual sex speaks of a pleasure-seeking woman unconcerned with traditional notions of love and romance. This constructing of feminine sexual empowerment is embedded within traditionally masculine ways of acting, as women's high

sex drive and excited engagement in meaningless casual sex, reproduces masculine standards to always be ready and wanting of heterosex (Hollway, 1984; Murray, 2018), and is also emotionally detached, distanced from traditional feminine traits of nurturance, service and empathy (Hollway, 1984; Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008). Complex and contradictory constructions of women's active and desiring sexuality disrupt traditional gender scripts and assert feminine power in fun and casual experiences of heterosex.

Through Sally's talk of 'whoring around' and embracing sexual freedom with confidence and empowerment, feminine desire can be located within a pornified sexual culture.

Sally: He liked sex, like... he called himself 'daddy' and stuff and I was [like] 'oh okay maybe you're real good'... he was good, it was great, awesome sex life, great... awesome sex relationship... [In a different Tinder encounter I] slept with a German, it was like a porno It was like 'woah! The fuck?'

Women's sexuality and feminine desire are constructed within gendered and pornified stereotypes, as men's label as 'daddy' in the sexual relationship (a label which also speaks to discourses of power, where women are not only subjected to, but desiring of men's dominance in sex), and talk of sexual activity as 'like a porno', reproduce the language of a pornified media culture as a desirable sexual experience. Sally's praise of heterosex 'like a porno' brings attention to a sexualised modern dating culture, as pornography is produced as the sexual standard for heterosexual relations. Women's sexual desire has become 'pornified' and guided by mediated representations of unrealistic sex acts, which are embedded with constructions for men's dominance and power in the sexual relationship (Gill, 2007, 2012).

A new liberated feminine sexuality that is ‘pornified’ may produce material consequences of a desire for ‘rough’ sex (which is ‘sexy’ as opposed to love and romance).

Sally: Whenever he used to sleep with me it was like he was making love and I was like ‘this is not the shit I signed up for, you showed me people that you were sleeping with and you, you didn’t care about them, you were treating them like rubbish you go and fucking make love to me? How dare you?’, na (laughs), ‘how dare you?’ (laughs), the first time was great that’s what I thought like, it was good... it was rough and then the second time was... smooth and loving ... I was just like ‘aw na (laughs)... this isn’t like what I wanted’.

Sally’s rejection of ‘making love’ in favour of being treated like ‘rubbish’ in a sexual encounter, suggests an influence of porn as a guide for ‘good sex’, and what makes casual sex ‘good’ is ‘not caring’ about the other person. When sex is ‘just sex’, intimacy and emotions can disrupt the ‘purpose’ of the encounter in the Tinder sexual marketplace, and may constrain women’s ability to practise, with control, their liberated feminine sexuality.

Women’s position as sexualised and objectified subjects within the pornified media culture can be understood as influencing a reclaiming of sexual power in the text, which attempts to subject men to the same objectification and sexualisation that is experienced by women.

Sally: When he first came at me he was just a whore, just like ‘yeah you’re just dick awesome, great’.

Sally's talk is interesting here, as it reflects repeated use of the term 'whore' as a means of using degrading sexual language to assert feminine power, except in this instance, the term is used to objectify men. By constructing men as objects for sexual conquest and as 'whores', women can assert their sexuality by assuming a masculine position of dominance and power within the gendered sexual relationship. As women attempt to flip the power dynamic through constructions of women objectifying men, empowerment is attempted through a challenging and restructuring of gendered power relations in ways that reverse the traditional dominant/subordinate relationship between men and women.

Sally's talk also opens spaces to engage with understandings of men's resistance to women's sexual freedom, the disruption of gendered power relations, and assertive feminine control and power in the Tinder hook-up.

Sally: After [sex] ... he kept messaging me and... wanting to hang-out still... and then he... slept with one of my good mates and I was like 'oh... I knew you were a fucking dog' and he's like 'I only did it 'cause she was wearing your jacket' ... he brought that up and goes, 'I only slept with her because she was wearing your denim jacket and she's your mate' ... And then he... hid my denim jacket, so I had to go pick it up... he genuinely did it to get at me.

Sally's story talks of a man's attempt to reassert masculine control in response to rejection from the sexually 'liberated' woman. As the feminine subject dismisses a man after a casual sexual encounter, attempts are made by the man to repossess power through sexual revenge. As women are happily 'whoring around', men's position as the sexually dominant identity in the heterosexual relationship is challenged. The traditional gendered relationship

becomes confused and disarranged in modern dating providing the conditions for gendered power struggles that result from feminine challenges to masculine power.

Despite the joyful production of a ‘happy whore’ identity in Sally’s talk of liberated feminine sexuality, traditional dating scripts were still reproduced in particular contexts, specifically in contexts where intimacy and romance were desired (rather than casual hook-ups). Here, the ‘happy to be whore’ discourse is positioned in opposition, and as a threat, to a Tinder meeting that has the potential to become something more meaningful.

Sally: I stayed with him, told him I didn’t want to have sex... he respected me at first, ‘cause he was like ‘I understand, I respect that’ and he’s like ‘you don’t know me that well’, ‘oh it’s not that... I’m whoring around, I don’t care, but I just think you’re cool, I’ll see how it goes, I don’t want to just sleep with you’.

Sally’s talk constructs care-free sex as something that is not compatible with a genuine romantic connection. Sex is withheld in this situation because sex is ‘just sex’ and Sally’s talk seeks to separate ‘just sex’ from a potentially meaningful connection with a ‘cool’ person. Women navigate the complex and contradictory relationship between the ‘date’ date and the Tinder date by taking control of their bodies and withholding sex under circumstances where there is potential for a more important relationship. Feminine power is produced in the way that women are able to give or withhold sex in ways that implement their own wants and desires as the ‘gatekeepers’ of the heterosexual relationship (Berkowitz et al. 2021; Thompson 2018).

Although ‘Tinder’s sexual marketplace’ enables women to be ‘happy whores’ and position themselves as liberated sexual subjects, gendered sexual standards and traditional dating scripts continue to threaten the ‘respect’ of women.

Sally: Then obviously... overtime, I was like, 'huh, I kind of do want to be in love'... after a year I was like, 'this is dumb'... it was just I got like this weird yuck feeling in my stomach and I was like 'ew what am I doing?' and... 'cause I wasn't drunk enough to have no self-respect.

Sally's story contradicts constructions for a 'liberated' sexual identity to instead communicate participation in the Tinder 'hook-up culture' as 'weird', 'yuck', 'dumb' and requiring 'no self-respect'. The Tinder hook-up is produced as requiring a certain level of disassociation from the actualities of the encounter, as alcohol is used to endure casual sex. If a woman is given the space to think about her experiences of casual sex, she may be confronted with traditional scripts that criticise a woman's morality and worth in how she engages with sexual activity (Nicholls, 2020). Sexual scripts are internalised in the women's sexual self-concepts, as previous research has suggested that the active and desiring woman is constructed as someone unworthy of respect (Gavey, 1992; Gill 2007, 2009). Women are constrained in their attempts to genuinely pursue an 'autonomous' and 'free' sexuality in the modernised dating culture, as they consequently position themselves within an 'up for it' femininity that reproduces male-dominated sexual standards within the mirage of feminine empowerment (Evans et al., 2010; Gill, 2012).

The 'happy to be a whore' discourse reproduces sexual empowerment as complicated and contradictory, as sexual freedom is negotiated within a dating culture that continues to be dominated by male sexual fantasy. The Tinder application attempts to sell sexual empowerment to women, yet remains deeply embedded in patriarchy and social power relations. Although constrained by a male-dominated culture that limits feminine sexual liberties, women have found ways to reproduce sexual confidence and enjoyment, as an

awareness of power that acts on the feminine body is used to reclaim sexual control and power in Tinder's modern dating context.

Girls stand pretty

The discourse of 'girls stand pretty' reproduces feminine competition, as women compete against traditional standards of beauty, other women and their own self to achieve successful femininity in Tinder's sexual marketplace. The competition for feminine presentation awards gender accomplishment and status, as constructions of feminine beauty are entangled within neoliberal ideals that encourage individualistic achievement and self-transformation (Gill, 2009; Magnusson & Marecek, 2017; Moran, 2017; Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008). Women attempt to do femininity better than the other, as they negotiate Tinder's modern dating context and perform femininity in new ways that both reproduce and resist traditional standards for feminine attractiveness, demonstrating contemporary forms of disciplinary power (Bartky, 1998).

Constructing feminine bodies

Women's bodies are produced and marketed as different to men's bodies in the Tinder sexual marketplace, as the feminine body is subjected to a societal and internalised sexualisation that constructs how women's bodies are positioned and presented.

Sally: I hate diddles. I think they look disgusting, there's nothing sexy about a penis... that is just disgusting, I don't know what they thought they were doing... I like girl's,

bodies... I think... appearance wise, a female body compared to [a] males body, definitely female... I'm... picturing... a naked standing male with a little beer gut, awkwardly standing clenching his bum in front of me... but girls... they stand pretty... it's just, girls are more attractive.

There are gendered rules and expectations reproduced in the text, which outline conditions for the competition of feminine presentation. Sally's story positions feminine beauty as prized above that of masculine attractiveness in a way that is discernibly natural or obvious. As Sally pictures the male and female body, her talk produces a contrast between the sexualised and non-sexualised body that constrains women to the position of the sexualised feminine subject. There is 'nothing sexy about a penis', yet women are deeply sexualised down to the way that they stand. Men are not subject to the same self-disciplining bodily practices as what women are (Bartky, 1998), as they are not held to the same intense scrutiny that expects women to constantly self-monitor, maintain and compete against feminine standards of attractiveness. Sally's talk of men's 'disgusting diddles', 'little beer guts' and 'clenching bums' challenges normative gender dynamics by subjecting men to the same scrutiny that women's bodies are constantly subject to (Bartky, 1998), however in this resistance, ideals of feminine beauty are reproduced in talk that constructs the feminine body as something to be looked at and admired. The complex and contradictory constructions of the masculine and feminine body produces tension that speaks to Foucault's argument that power is present in all relationships, as power is constructed to be a permeating force in shaping bodily practices and discourses in heterosexuality (Bartky, 1998).

Sally's preference for the feminine sexual body may be an effect of the 'flooding' of masculine aggressive sexuality within the Tinder sexual marketplace.

Sally: I got sent one titty pic, oh my gosh, saying things out loud doesn't sound right, I got sent one titty pic... not old enough to say breast pic, but one titty pic and I was like '[this is] way better'... I was happy, I was like 'oh my gosh I got a titty pic', I was so proud, hundreds of dick pics that were like, 'ew'.

Here, there is a value attached to the feminine body that is not present for men in the same way, as the receiving of a 'titty pic' is celebrated, whilst the receiving of a 'dick pic' is responded to with disgust. Interestingly, the term 'titty pic' is stated with discomfort, as this slang term for 'breast' enables an easier sexualisation of the female body. The bio-medical term for 'breast' is formal and 'unsexy', thus Sally's rejection of the term 'breast' produces a subject position of a sexually active young woman who is not desexualised by age and maturity.

As the sexualised feminine body is reproduced as constrained and controlled in a way that the masculine body is not subject to, power operates in negotiations of heterosex that sexualise and objectify women.

Julie: [People make it quite clear they are wanting a sexual relationship through] things like just immediately... like 'you're so hot' rather than trying to actually have a conversation and get to know someone.

'Girls stand pretty' and 'Tinder's sexual marketplace' co-articulate in the women's Tinder dating stories, as the societal fixation on the feminine body is deeply embedded in sex seeking practices. In order to communicate sexual intentions, women are reduced to their physical appearance, in which a desired woman is 'so hot', but no effort is made to actually 'get to know' her. When contrasting the term 'hot' with meanings of the 'pretty' or

‘beautiful’ woman, sexual desirability is directed at the feminine body, and a woman’s physical appearance is all that needs to be known about a woman in order for some men to want a sexual relationship.

Women are not only reduced to their potential as a ‘hot’ woman, but are also explicitly reduced to their body in language that crudely constructs women as objects of men’s sexual gratification.

Sally: They always use the word pussy! (laughs) like ‘pussy, pussy, pussy, pussy’, what?... ‘your pussy’s so good, your pussy-’, who the fuck says pussy?... ‘it’s the best I’ve ever had...’, and I was just like ‘you don’t fucking know shit’... he’d... message me, like ‘you’ve got the best pussy’ and I was like ‘ooh you say that when you’re in me not...over message’... not when I can screenshot it and send it to my friends (laughs).

Men’s preoccupation with the feminine body is resisted in this statement, as men’s objectifying gaze is challenged in talk that problematizes a masculine obsession with the ‘pussy’ (vagina). Women are reduced to their female anatomy in the text, as the sexual experience focuses on expectations of penis-in-vagina intercourse (Braun et al., 2003), and women are reduced to an object for men’s sexual pleasure. In Sally’s talk, she suggests ‘screenshotting’ and sharing men’s sexualising comments with friends, as a means of exposing and shaming men’s sexual indiscretion, however, the problem with a man’s comments that objectify women was not necessarily the objectification itself, but rather that these comments were made outside the privacy of the sex act. Talk that sexualises women is suggested to be acceptable in the bedroom, aligning with a pornified feminine sexuality, but inappropriate in other social contexts.

A societal preoccupation with the sexualised feminine body reproduces women's appearance as something to be ogled at and 'obsessed' over as an object that satisfies men's infatuation with feminine beauty.

Holly: The whole time he just... kind of... stared at me, and I was doing all the talking, and he was just... obsessed with me and I said to him at one point like 'why are you staring at me?... Look away', and he was like 'oh you're just so beautiful' and I'm like 'oh this is really awkward'.

Resistance to men's preoccupation with the feminine appearance is produced in Holly's talk, as performances of infatuation with feminine beauty, which may have been romanticised in traditional texts, are constructed as 'awkward' and 'obsessed' in modern dating. Here, women can assert self-value to demand equitable contribution on the Tinder date (rather than her 'doing all the talking') beyond merely pleasing the male gaze.

Looks-based Tinder

As the feminine body is produced as the object of men's sexual desire, the Tinder sexual marketplace, which specialises in an economic exchange of heterosex, can be understood to exacerbate the societal preoccupation and sexualisation of women's bodies as attractiveness is marketed over personality. At the time this research was written, a person 'swiping' through Tinder would see a display photo accompanied by a person's name, age and occasionally a personalised 'about me' section or a short list of interests. Tinder's design creates connections that are primarily formed on the basis of a quick-judgement physical attraction rather than a personality-match.

Julie: *Tinder is more looks-based rather than people looking for somebody who necessarily matches them personality-wise... you tend to learn very little about them apart from really what they look like and that's only photos so that may even be inaccurate... I think the biggest challenge is a lack of information about the people you are swiping on... it's really hard to get a feel for whether the conversation is actually gonna go well when all you've got is three pictures of the person's face and 'I like dogs'... which, is a challenge in and of itself, because if you don't know what someone is like, how are you going to start a conversation?*

As a looks-based platform, Tinder is designed to connect people who are physically attracted to each other, however upon matching, this physical attraction is located within a non-physical space, which can produce a 'challenge' as men and women attempt to deepen an online relationship that originates from a sexual association, rather than an emotional connection. Tinder creates a space for two people who are attracted to each other to connect, but does not provide the information or tools to make meaningful conversation, producing a dating context focused on 'looks'.

As procuring a date becomes conditional upon being found attractive, men and women may falsify their appearance in their online profile to create opportunities for connections that may be otherwise unavailable to a person.

Holly: *His photos on Tinder... he was so hot and I was like 'surely this can't be real' ... I was like 'na, send a selfie' and eventually he did and he was not the same person as the photos on his page (laughs)... I called him out on it, and he was like 'what do you mean? That is me' and it's like clearly it is not (laughs) so then I*

blocked him... [a different man] had only put selfies on his Tinder profile as well so in real life he looked quite different, but he... mentioned... that he is trying to lose weight and he has... confidence issues around that and stuff so I'm guessing that's why.

Rachel: *It's kind of tricky 'cause, (laughs) I think... if I had met him just randomly in the bar or whatever, he was quite short and (laughs) this is really mean, but... he was quite short and he didn't have the best teeth... I think... I would've been like 'aw yeah nice personality', but... not, straight away... I probably would have looked at someone else... in his photos he looked real nice and then I've already talked to him for a while and we were... getting on and then I only saw him... when I met up with him that time...and then... I was already there, it's too late.*

The looks-based online sexual marketplace constructs distrust prior even to the first message being sent, as false online appearances and personas reproduce 'false-advertising' to lure a match. This process of 'catfishing'¹ produces an environment of falseness and scepticism, as the high value commodity of physical attractiveness is used as an attempt to deceive in order to obtain an intimate encounter. In Holly's first example of her experience with 'false-advertising', women's empowered resistance is reproduced through a 'call him out' attitude, which seeks to hold men accountable for their falseness by utilising the online space to control the encounter and swiftly 'block' a man when needed. However, both Holly and Rachel's talk produce leniency within the 'real life' context, as emotional connections formed in the online space can produce exceptions for standards of attraction. The Tinder

¹ 'The deceptive online practice of creating a fake identity in order to lure someone into trusting the perpetrator.' (Oxford University Press, 2020)

date puts two people in a space together, enabling intimate connections in contexts where a person would have otherwise ‘looked at someone else’ and therefore challenges the value we assign to physical appearance and attraction.

The women also reflected on the authenticity of their own performance of feminine attractiveness on Tinder, as they attempt to present their best selves on Tinder, yet also question how genuine a ‘glammed up’ feminine presentation is.

***Rachel:** He had... kind of catfishy photos (laughs) but... I was ready to brush that off ‘cause... I felt like I kind of did too, but not really... only ‘cause... all my photos of me, were... fully glammed up, nice hair and everything... still looks like me obviously, but yea... they’re obviously my best shots.*

Rachel’s story constructs women’s efforts to appeal to conventional standards of beauty within their online persona. ‘Catfishy’ photos are constructed as potential deception, as women’s ‘best shots’ present a ‘glammed up’ version of themselves that may not speak true to their real life presentation. Here, the ‘fully glammed up’ photos are not constructed as ‘false-advertising’, but, much like advertisements in a magazine, are the ‘best shots’ of a product. Tinder’s sexual marketplace is highly competitive and requires women to present the best version of themselves, as they are constructed as products for sale in the intimacy market. Women put in effort to be beautiful and desirable on their Tinder profile, as they are positioned as products for sale and masculine consumption in Tinder’s sexual marketplace.

How to be appealing

Contextualised within Tinder's sexual marketplace designed to promote physical attractiveness over personality, the women's stories reproduced standards for feminine attractiveness that enable women to be 'appealing' on a Tinder date.

Julie: Particularly if it's a situation where... there is an expectation of sex at the end, ... I need to think in my head, okay so I need to be more appealing, because they want this to happen ... so things like choosing a nice pair of underwear... nice bra, stuff like that, making sure that... my hair's looking nice and smooth.

Julie's talk speaks of women's 'need' to 'be more appealing' when sex is the expected outcome of a Tinder meeting. The focus on feminine beauty in the context of a planned sexual encounter constructs women's appearance and bodies as presenting for men's sexual wants. By emphasising careful feminine presentation to appeal to men's sexual expectations, the understanding produced is that women's sexualised femininities and objectified bodies are for the satisfaction of men.

Standards of feminine beauty co-articulate with discourses of the fast-paced exchange of heterosex in the Tinder sexual marketplace to produce a nervous compliance and sense of competition to 'be appealing' on the Tinder date.

Rachel: I would've been nervous and... would've spent... ages trying to pick out... what to wear... it was like 'okay so I don't want to be too dressy and I don't want to go too casual' ... yeah I was real nervous on what to... wear, like 'what do you wear? What would other girls wear if they were going?' (laughs), and I was thinking... 'cause... this is my first date off Tinder, I don't know what people usually do and

what's expected... but he might have been on Tinder for ages and... had heaps of girls round.

The Tinder date produces new ways to date that are not consistent with what is known and traditional of a 'date' date, therefore rules governing women's appearance may not be as scripted and clear within Tinder's modernised dating context. Feminine attractiveness is reproduced through constructions of 'nervous' competition, as preparation for a Tinder date considers both traditional and modernised cultural expectations for how women should 'do' femininity. The question of 'what do you wear?' establishes standards for feminine presentation, suggesting that women's appearances on a date is a consideration for what they should wear and how this may contend with the attractiveness of other women. Tinder's realm of endless swiping, where men have access to a revolving door of 'heaps of girls' positions women in contest with one another, producing competitive feminine beauty and sexual attractiveness in the new, uncertain and unique context of the Tinder sexual marketplace.

As women compete within Tinder's 'revolving door' dating context, women are also required to be careful in their sexual presentation, as they are expected to 'be appealing', but not too 'suggestive' in their feminine presentation if they do not want to be objectified by men.

***Holly:** I get that guys make the odd comment about stuff like... guys will be guys, but there's a difference between... flirting and the odd comment versus being like 'oh my gosh, you're in bed send me nudes' ... I mean I'm happy to show you my profile, there is nothing... suggestive, on it... I mean, I don't think [my photos] are suggestive at all (laughs).*

Holly's story produces an awareness of women's position as the object and men's position as the objectifier in Tinder dating narratives. The objectification of women was not subtle and unknowing, but rather was constructed as something men do, as 'guys will be guys' and as something women may invite if their Tinder profile is 'suggestive'. Resistance to women's objectification is complicated, as men are held responsible for objectifying women, yet the suggestive woman is also held responsible for inviting her objectification. By denying responsibility for objectification through appeals that her own profile was not suggestive, Holly's talk reproduces the distinction between women who are responsible for their objectification and those who are more reserved in their sexuality and thus positioned beyond 'warranted' objectification. In this context of 'competitive femininity', this distinction reproduces neoliberal assumptions of the responsible individual and ignores shared social gendered power relations and men's responsibility for their objectification of women.

If women are indeed successful in their compliance to 'be appealing', they are rewarded with self-confidence, social status, attention and validation.

***Sally:** I didn't really need Tinder, it was just attention (laughs)... and getting complimented on Tinder, yeah that was good.*

***Julie:** I think it's a mixture of appearance and thoughts, but I think for me, wearing something that I know that I look good in, helps me feel more confident when I am meeting up with a Tinder date.*

Holly: *[I received messages that were very focused on my body]... at times it's like cool, like good... confidence boost.*

Feminine attractiveness becomes a source of confidence and validation in the women's Tinder dating stories. As women comply with standards of successful feminine presentation, 'compliments' and 'looking good' provide a 'confidence boost' for the feminine subject. Men's recognition of feminine attractiveness is constructed as rewarding even when directly sexualising the feminine body, reproducing gendered social power relations to procure the benefits of social compliance. In a culture that coerces and controls the feminine body (Bartky, 1998), women attempt to make sense of their own bodies as sexualised objects by taking pride in how well they perform as an object for the male gaze. Postfeminist empowerment becomes twisted and conflicted within discourses that reproduce the objectification of women through a desire to achieve such objectification as an accomplishment of feminine power.

When attractiveness is prioritised over personality in the Tinder sexual marketplace, and compliments on one's appearance are acts of acceptance and validation, unexplained rejection after a Tinder date presumes unattractiveness and has negative effects for a woman's self-confidence.

Julie: *I think that because of that lack of communication it had me feeling quite used and conflicted, and, potentially feeling... a bit blah... feeling a bit unattractive... because he hadn't made his thoughts and feelings clear.*

Julie's statement constructs feminine beauty as holding significant meaning for women's self-concept and self-value. As attractiveness constitutes a successful feminine

identity within the appearance-focused context of Tinder, then any rejection can be explained by a defect of a woman's appearance, producing expectations to always maintain a high standard of beauty in order to be positioned as worthy of men's continued attention.

No-effort femininity

As women compete with and against the high standards for feminine beauty in the Tinder sexual marketplace, resistance manifests in women's talk of self-presentation that goes against demands for women's meticulous maintenance of feminine attractiveness. In the 'no effort femininity', women defy patriarchal standards in favour of creating a version of themselves that is empowered and confident in their identity, embedded within a context where procuring men's interest is not a difficult task.

Julie: I tend to dress pretty casually most of the time, so clothing wise I don't tend to think about that too much, I usually just pick something, comfortable and appropriate for what we're doing and then... I don't do make-up, so I don't bother with that.

Sally: I didn't care. I don't care about what I was wearing, I didn't care if I had makeup on, I didn't care if my hair was even brushed... I was always showered, okay, shaved, showered, my hair was brushed sometimes... and that's just for myself 'cause I don't like being paru², other than that, no, no effort.

² Māori term, translated as: '(stative) be dirty, muddy, soiled' (Māori Dictionary, n.d.).

Julie and Sally's talk actively resists standards of feminine attraction that prioritise the male gaze. In this resistance, a confident and assertive woman is one who is 'comfortable' and 'casual' in her femininity. The independent and assertive feminine agent resists the positioning as an object for men's consumption, and does not 'bother' with or 'care' about gendered expectations for feminine attractiveness, producing a 'no effort' approach to Tinder dating that maintains appearance only for the woman's own self. Resistance to conventional standards of feminine attraction aligns with expectations consistent with neoliberal ideals for self-help and self-transformation, as women strive to improve themselves and perform a femininity that builds on confidence and self-esteem.

As women resist the censorship of the male gaze to construct a 'no effort' feminine performance, they remain in competition with other women, as they strive to 'do' femininity better than the other.

Sally: With men I wasn't shy... because they're easy to please, they're so easy, men are so, they're just easy... you don't have to dress up nicely for them to want to get it in. With girls... there's a standard to meet... when you first meet a girl you want it to be perfect... you want to look perfect, you want to be perfect, you want to be the best, just knowing 'cause they're a girl and they're going to do the same, you don't want to be outshined (laughs)... if I were to ever go on a date with another girl I'd have to up my game, she'd have to up her game... it's just nerve-wracking, but with a guy, dressing gown (laughs)... 'cause [with] men... any holes a goal.

In constructing the 'no effort' feminine identity, a comparison is made between how women dress for other women compared to men. This comparison reproduces a shift from the male gaze to a female gaze, as women now self-discipline and 'perfect' their appearance for

validation from other women. Women's bodies are reproduced within standards of attractiveness that are different from men's, as women are subjected to constant surveillance, by other women and by themselves, that expects perfected standards of feminine beauty. Sally's story is produced through constructs of competition, as acquiring sex from a man is constructed as an 'easy' achievement, whilst the standards for appearance set by women produce a challenge for which women must 'up their game' as to not be 'outshone'. The reduction of women's worth to a sexual object by men can become 'liberating' for women by producing a 'no effort femininity' that embodies individualism and independence. Sally's statement disrupts traditional expectations for women's sexual identity to revolve around pleasuring men, as men's primary interest in 'holes', reproduces a 'no effort' femininity, as women do not need to put in effort to meet men's goal of a 'hole'. Contrastingly, women are produced as interested in more than 'just sex', they are interested in a standard of 'perfection'. Here, women want the date to be perfect, they want to look perfect and they want to be perfect themselves.

A societal preoccupation with the sexualised feminine body is reproduced in women's talk that positions women's bodies as subject to patriarchal control and protection, even where there is resistance to the policing of women's bodies through appeals to a 'no effort' or comfortable femininity.

Sally: First day he meets me... we went for a drive... I was wearing... my bike shorts and... he goes 'want to put some pants on?'... I thought he thought... I was cold or something... and I was like 'aw na I'm alright'... and he was like 'aw, 'cause we might go somewhere' and I was like '... I'm fine, like I'm warm, it's fine' and... he dropped it ... the second time I [saw] him... he had pants in his car and they had the tag on

them, it was... my size... and he goes 'aw, I found some pants'... I thought it was funny, I was like 'yay free pants'.

Here, women's appearances are produced through discourses of men's possessive control, as the feminine body is claimed and controlled in expectations for a woman to cover her body in public. The feminine body is positioned as an object a man assumes authority and control over, policing how much of this body others are allowed to see. Postfeminist discourses for a 'no effort' femininity challenge patriarchal power relations, as a 'comfortable' and 'casual' feminine presentation is valued above the opinions of men, and men's expectations for acceptable feminine public appearance are disregarded as 'funny'.

The 'girls stand pretty' discourse is complex in the way that it reproduces power that both constrains and enables a woman's individuality and sexual freedoms. Women are positioned as objects to men's sexual desire embedded within neoliberal ideals that expect an always improving, perfect femininity, however these expectations are challenged in women's stories that exploit Tinder's fast-paced sexual marketplace. Feminine attractiveness is constructed with contradiction, as it is produced as important to appeal, a competition to be won, yet also a standard to be confidently disregarded.

Spell it out

The 'spell it out' discourse constructs how women make sense of and negotiate safety within the context of masculine control, risk, coercion and violence in the Tinder space. Here, men's social dominance within the Tinder relationship is challenged through negotiations of a postfeminist sensibility that enables a sense of feminine assertiveness and independence within Tinder dating. As women 'spell it out' they give voice to consent and boundaries, in

which women, as neoliberal subjects, are expected to be clear and assertive in order to ensure their own safety and communicate their wants and intentions within a Tinder-initiated sexual relationship. The ‘spell it out’ discourse enables women’s resistance, and empowered response, to masculine power that attempts to restrict and constrain women’s sexual freedom.

Men are in charge

Constructions of ‘men are in charge’ set the scene of women’s need to ‘spell it out’ within the Tinder space, as women are positioned within coercive and controlling contexts that assume women’s passive compliance to what men want.

Julie: For years men were seen as... stronger or the dominant sex, a lot of men still internalise those feelings and feel like ‘I’m the man you have to listen to me’... particularly when you are trying to have a conversation with [them] and trying to be an equal partner, sexually or in a relationship, they sort of, want it to be, ‘no my say goes, because I’m the man and... men are in charge’.

Julie’s talk speaks to men’s position as the ‘stronger’ and ‘dominant’ gendered subject in the heterosexual relationship, holding the authority to make all decisions, be ‘in charge’, and expecting women to obey. Interestingly, men’s dominance in the text is produced as an object of history, only reproduced in contemporary culture through some men’s ‘internalised feelings’ about hegemonic masculinity. Masculine dominance as a historical phenomenon speaks to postfeminist discourses that assume gender equality has been achieved in the contemporary context. Constructions of masculine dominance as a

'thing of the past' enables, but also complicates, how women are able to make sense of men's domineering and oppressive social practices in the present. Julie's story demonstrates this complexity through attempts to 'be an equal partner', contrasted with men's resistance against those attempts through masculine domination and control.

The women further complicated the construction of masculine dominance and control as a 'thing of the past', and the achievement of gender equality in the contemporary context, through talk of the risk associated with Tinder dating and relationships.

***Sally:** He walked around my house at night once and messaged me saying 'where are you? I'm at your house, there's no windows open, are you alright? Your cars here'... I was just like 'what the fuck'... but they weren't that bad... I think if I'd carried it on for longer it could have gotten really bad and like really obsessive, it usually died down after a month, like with [another man] it died- it still went on for a very long time but it wasn't every day.*

***Julie:** Say I have a date with someone and it goes poorly, I block them, but they remember well she worked here and they go show up outside my work and that is something I find really challenging.*

As women assert feminine independence and sexual freedom by inviting a Tinder date into their home or into their lives, men may take advantage of women's sexual openness through acts of 'really bad' or 'obsessive' behaviour. Talk of a man walking around a woman's house at night and concerns for a man stalking one's workplace reproduce men's control and women's vulnerability, as a man's invasive pursuit of a woman is constructed as problematic and 'challenging' in the women's talk, yet also dismissed as 'not that bad'.

Statements that it 'could have gotten really bad' speak to a high tolerance to risk in heterosexual dating relationships, suggesting men's dominating control is still somewhat present and tolerated in the contemporary context.

As masculine dominance continues to operate in contemporary culture, despite being understood as a thing of the past, this provides the conditions for minimising, normalising and tolerating sexual coercion.

Sally: He wasn't like how I've been treated before... he was just... caressing me and... cuddling me, pulling me close, tryna... push up on me, you know how the guys do the whole-? yeah... he was trying to do that, and I was like 'na... not tonight'.

Julie: He just basically ignored what I was saying and kept trying to touch me... these things happen... it was a weird situation and I sort of didn't realise just how potentially dangerous it... could have ended up being.

In Sally and Julie's talk, men's unwanted attempts to 'caress', 'cuddle' and 'push up on' a woman are normalised as something 'guys do', rather than identified as acts of sexual coercion, and minimised in comparison to more 'dangerous' situations. Statements claiming that 'these things happen' construct an internalised normalization of sexual violence, as women minimize their own experiences of sexual violence as a 'weird situation' that could have become 'potentially dangerous', but did not, and therefore women are constrained in their ability to understand such experiences as sexual coercion and/or assault. Julie and Sally's talk speaks to how women's consent is not sought, or is 'ignored' by some men, challenging postfeminist understandings of women's contemporary freedom to be an equal

consenting partner in sexual relationships, as gendered positions continue to reproduce women as passive subjects to men's sexual desire.

Constructions of women's participation in the 'potentially dangerous' Tinder sexual marketplace can also reproduce assumptions of women's responsibility for men's sexual coercion and violence.

Sally: He was talking to me like he knew me and asking me... how my life's been lately and I was like 'aw... it is the person'... the lights were off when he came to mine, it wasn't the person, it was not the person (laughs)... Not until... a beam of light from a car came in and I [saw him, I was] like 'okay get off, get off, you're not, who the fuck are you? I thought you were – oh my gosh what the fuck'... I called my mate and I was crying and was just like 'oh my fucking god I just slept with a full on stranger'... I don't know why I didn't [look up] I think it's just I didn't want to be embarrassed... the fear that went through my heart I was like 'oh my gosh this could be a murderer'... I slept with [another man]... Bad move. Bad move. Bad call... I was drunk drunk and I slept with him... I don't even remember what happened that night, I just remember I slept with him that night 'cause he talked about it a lot afterwards.

Sally's stories construct negative sexual experiences that imply non-consensual sex due to deception and intoxication. Descriptions of these sexual experiences as a 'bad move' and a 'bad call', in addition to questioning one's own part in a negative sexual outcome, locate women within neoliberal constructions of personal blame and responsibility. A rape culture is reproduced as neoliberal responsibilities enable processes of victim-blaming that fail to hold men to account for the sexual violence they perpetrate (Gavey, 1992).

Careful and conscious safety

Women's responsibility for the risk of the 'really bad' occurring on a Tinder date is taken up in talk of safety protocols, where expectations of men's sexual dominance and women's passivity influences practices identified by Gillett (2023) as 'safety work': women's negotiation of the risks for gendered violence with 'careful and conscious safety'.

Holly: *You hear of people being raped and... all of that type of stuff... I'm just really, I guess, careful and conscious of where I am when I do meet people I don't know... I guess I just don't trust people that easily, some people do and have... people over for first dates and stuff, but what if they're weird and creepy and... how do you get rid of them? what if they don't leave? ... I dunno, bit scary... I make sure that I'm safe and I'm not going to be in a position where something could happen, if it did, yeah, go badly (laughs).*

Interviewer: *What would 'badly' be?*

Holly: *Aw, so many options! (laughs)... but... things like how Grace Millane got... kidnapped and killed.*

Sally: *You can have a lot of creeps on there... I never went to their house... just 'cause what if it's not their house?... what if I get put in... a hole or something?... I think that's the main thing, just be safe, don't be dumb.*

Despite postfeminist ideals for the fun and flirty sexually empowering experience of online dating, Tinder dating is constructed as a 'scary' activity in the women's talk. Statements of rape and murder as genuine concerns for a Tinder date reproduce gendered violence as deeply embedded in the heterosexual relationship, normalised to the extent that

the ‘many options’ for a date ending ‘badly’, or violently, are considered, and even sometimes laughed about. Holly’s laughter in response to the ‘many options’ of unsafe dating experiences she could experience, speaks to a normalised awareness, and minimisation, of the threat of gender violence on the Tinder date. Through constructions of a neoliberal feminine subject that assumes control of their own safety via ‘careful’ and ‘conscious’ choices, women locate responsibility for victimisation with other women who are ‘dumb’ and do not practise ‘safety work’. Safety as a self-responsibility may discourage help-seeking if anything does ‘go badly’, as an inability to keep oneself safe may be attached to shame and failure, and work to ignore the heterosexual scripts and gendered power relations that makes dating potentially unsafe for women.

When safety becomes an individualised practice, women’s ‘safety work’ can provide a false sense of security for women on Tinder dates, as it is believed that they only need to not be ‘dumb’ to remain safe within potentially unsafe spaces.

***Holly:** I have my iPhone location shared with two of my best friends... then I have one or two friends I always say ‘hey I’m going on a date, this is where I’m going- if I don’t text [you] in like two hours, I’m dead (laughs).’*

***Sally:** I made sure my phone was always charged... police on speed dial, always... took a photo of where we are... location on, on Snapchat.*

***Julie:** I started making sure that a friend or a family member knew where I was going and who I was with if I got in someone’s car I would take down the rego and text that to... one of my friends or family members... and have location sharing on with one of my friends or family members.*

Rachel: *I can't believe how game I was just... being driven to someone's... now if I was to do that I would drive myself there... I wouldn't get picked up and... be relying on that... just so that you've got... an exit plan.*

As the 'liberated' woman sets out on her Tinder date, she is preparing for the possibility that this date will have a violent outcome. Her location is shared with friends, an exit plan is put in place and the police are put on speed dial in an attempt to feel comfort and control in a context where masculine power supersedes a woman's self-sufficiency. Although constructions of safety through talk of safety plans and procedures in dating are constitutive of postfeminist independence and responsibility, the underlying foundations and implications that make such constructions possible are that women are ultimately disempowered and vulnerable to gender-based violence in the heterosexual dating relationship.

The women's talk of 'careful and conscious' safety is complicated by historical meanings of 'stranger danger' online, as women are now encouraged and empowered to talk to 'strangers' in the Tinder sexual marketplace.

Holly: *I know times have changed and what not, but... growing up, my parents were really good at making sure me and my siblings were safe online and what that meant... you always grow up getting told 'don't talk to strangers online' like 'don't talk to strangers in real life unless you've got an adult with you', stuff like that, so some of that still kind of stuck... and going on a first date as well, I'm always kind of a bit like, nervous...for that, just cause you're going against what you've kind of grown up being told.*

Holly's talk of how 'times have changed' demonstrates the tensions Tinder introduces to historical 'stranger danger' assumptions (Gavey, 1992, 2019), as women resist the 'don't talk to strangers' discourse of their childhood and enter into a space of known risk in Tinder's modern dating culture where they seek out, contact and often engage in sex with people met online. Understandings of 'stranger danger' as a rape myth (Gavey, 1992, 2019), further complicate perceptions of Tinder's potential for risk, as the many 'strangers' met online become people known to a Tinder user, statistically enhancing risk, as violence is understood to be most likely perpetrated by someone we know. As women are engaging in Tinder's online space that enables endless and often superficial connections where women are often not 'getting to know' the people they match with, potential danger is constructed as a genuine concern.

In the sexual marketplace that encourages intimate connections with potentially dangerous 'strangers', the women's talk constructed the 'ideal man' to meet, as someone who is 'safe'.

Rachel: [The ideal guy on a Tinder date is] just someone who's... friendly and seems, I don't know, just... safe... I'd want someone that's... nice, so [I would] feel comfortable... to say... 'aw I might actually go home now.'

In women's constructions of their 'ideal man' on a Tinder date, they are not necessarily drawing on traditional ideas of masculine attractiveness, such as strength, independence and assertiveness, but rather characteristics of 'comfort' and 'safety'. The importance of feelings of safety and comfort in Rachel's talk speaks to an awareness of gendered conditions that enable masculine violence against women, which women respond to

through reproductions of Hollway's (1984) have/hold discourse that constructs a feminine dependence upon men's potential as a protector.

Spelling out consent

When the Tinder sexual marketplace is constructed as a 'potentially dangerous' space, there is a need for women to pursue dating conditions that make them feel safe and comfortable, especially under conditions where sex is an 'unspoken agreement' and therefore consent can be implied and/or absent (Mark & Vowels, 2020; Newstrom et al., 2021; Willis & Jozkowski, 2019). Here, the women's talk suggests conversations of consent do not always occur within negotiations of heterosex as consent may be indirectly expressed, therefore women are required to 'spell out' consent as they negotiate heterosexual power relations that may assume or disregard women's sexual consent.

Julie: We were chatting a bit, I'd gotten a little bit tired, I... rested my head on his shoulder and then he sort of lent up against me and we... cuddled up like that a bit for a while and then eventually... one thing led to another and we ended up in the back of his car (laughs).

As discussed in the literature review, discourses of consent are obscure in traditional romantic narratives (Baumeister & Vohs 2004; Gavey, 2019). Julie's statement that 'one thing led to another' reproduces this obscuration, as sex is implied in the text rather than explicitly detailed. Constructing sex as a natural progression of physical intimacy constrains opportunities for conversations of consent and does not attend to women's sexual want and desire within the heterosexual relationship.

In comparison to obscured consent in offline spaces, Tinder was produced in women's talk as an online space that normalises conversation around dating intentions, enabling women to negotiate explicit sexual consent within new contexts of feminine control.

***Rachel:** I'll be way more likely to just send a message that's like 'I'm not doing anything tonight by the way'... or like 'I won't stay', but... in person, when you're... face-to-face and... you're already anxious about other stuff, I'd be... quite nervous to... bring that up too, I'd be like 'is it going to be awkward?' but yeah... would way prefer to do it over message.*

Online communication changes the 'natural' progression of a relationship, as men and women are given a space to talk about sex and relationships in a way that is not typical of the 'organic' first time encounter. Women are able to ask questions and make statements about sex that may otherwise not be considered comfortable or appropriate in a face-to-face setting, opening spaces for women to clearly communicate their sexual intentions and boundaries in a way that enables women's safety and control.

When conversations about intentions and boundaries are possible in the Tinder space, women are enabled to assert control through talk of consent as an ultimatum.

***Julie:** There was some things that they wanted to do to me sexually... and they kept trying to convince me and I said to them 'if we sleep together, that is not happening, there is no way that you are doing that to me, if you try and do that to me I will get up and leave, do you understand?' they said, 'yes, okay, I get it I will stop asking now' and they did stop asking after that, but I had to... basically [say] to them, 'it's this isn't happening, or, it's not happening at all'.*

Holly: *[If they are expecting 'nudes' and I do not want to send them] then [I] just say no... I'm pretty blunt (laughs)... and if they kind of keep saying it, it's like 'I mean we can not do that and keep talking or I'm just going to... block you (laughs)... your choice'.*

In Julie and Holly's talk, protection from coercive attempts to 'convince' women to engage in a sexual activity are met with 'blunt' and uncompromising demands, as they 'spell out' their terms of consent in the dating relationship. As women use the withholding of sexual relations as an ultimatum, discourses of women as gatekeepers are reproduced (Berkowitz et al. 2021; Thompson 2018), where power is constructed in women's ability to give and withhold heterosex. In this sense, women are able to take advantage of discourses of sexual 'gatekeeping' to explicitly negotiate consent by threatening to withdraw men's access to sex.

The women's talk also produced an understanding that respected consent was obtainable in offline spaces as well. Julie's and Sally's talk construct successful negotiations of respected consent when they 'spelled out' what they were and were not wanting sexually in the context of the Tinder dating relationship.

Julie: *I throughout the date realised that actually I don't want to sleep with this person... at the end of the evening they were sort of like 'did you wanna come back to my place and hang-out?', I very clearly said to them, 'I'm sorry I've had a really fun time with you, but I don't think this is... gonna go any further' and they listened to me and... it feels empowering to actually be listened to and for them to understand... to have someone listen to me, listen to what my needs and wants are from the get-go,*

made me feel a lot better about the situation and made me feel like my choices were being listened to.

Sally: *I was like 'yeah, come over' and then... we went about five seconds into [sex] and I was like 'na I'm done... it doesn't feel right... I don't like it' and he stopped.*

In Julie and Sally's stories, the clarity that the 'spell it out' discourse seeks to achieve is noticed and 'listened to' in a way that is respectful and empowering for women. Consent is not only heard in these statements, but also recognised as an ongoing communication that can be given and taken away even during a sexual interaction.

When Tinder is constructed as a space where explicit discussion of intentions, boundaries and consent are enabled, women can be held responsible for their safety and men's violence if they fail to establish such conversations prior to the Tinder date.

Julie: *[An experience of coerced sex on a Tinder date] made me realise... I need to be more on the ball, I need to be more focused on my safety, which is possibly something I should have done before that, but at the same time you don't expect that to happen... basically I just taught myself to make it much more clear 'this is what I do not want to happen, this is what I'm okay with happening'... basically very clearly spell it out to people, 'this isn't happening or this is', rather than... maybe being vague, making sure that the words that I'm choosing to use are very clear about what my intentions are.*

Holly: *I think... putting your intentions out first... avoids other stuff happening.*

***Rachel:** It feels like [sex is] all that people are on [Tinder] for like unless it's specified, unless you kind of specify... something else, it's just... quick hook-ups... if [men]... invite me over or something... I'd be like 'yeah I might come over, but... I just wanna hang-out' or 'I won't stay'... I guess I... try set expectations like, 'nothing's going to happen', cause I don't want it to happen and then some would just kind of drop off and then you're like 'okay good, weed them out'.*

Here, women assume responsibility for ensuring consent is clearly articulated. Statements for making consent 'much more clear' and less 'vague' reproduce discourses of victim-blaming (Gavey, 1992), in which the occurrence of non-consensual sexual activity would become the women's fault for not making consent clear and agreed upon. When the Tinder date is constructed as 'sex, not love', women must 'spell it out' to 'specify' expectations that deviate from the 'hook-up culture,' where 'I might come over' should be qualified by 'but I just wanna hang-out' in order to maintain boundaries and deter blame if sexual assault were to occur. Julie's statement that being 'more focused' on her safety was something that 'should have been done' before experiencing sexual assault is unsettling, as it constructs expectations for women's assertive independence as a preventative measure for non-consensual heterosexual, without attributing responsibility to men's position as the aggressor and constructs negative experiences of coercion and violence as opportunities for learning. As women adopt postfeminist self-help approaches to consent, they make meaning from an empowered femininity that constructs a sense of control through 'spelling it out' to men and 'weeding out' those men who do not respect consent.

When women are held responsible for explicitly negotiating consent, it also positions them in places of risk and threat if their attempts to ensure consent are met with masculine resistance.

Julie: I feel like I need to fight more for what I want to happen if what I want to happen is not necessarily what the man in the situation is wanting to happen... I have noticed that a lot of guys on Tinder don't like that (laughs) - don't like when you are clear and assertive with them.

Here, women are constrained within gendered power relations to be 'clear and assertive' when 'fighting' for their boundaries to be respected. As women adopt masculine characteristics for communicating 'clear and assertive' consent, they are met with resistance as men 'do not like' when women reverse gender positions of power in the dating relationship. The sexual desires and wants of a man are prioritised over women's, as a woman's expression of sexual want is constructed in resistance to what men want.

Women are forced to take responsibility to reduce risk in the dating environment, where neoliberal ideals of the responsible individual and self-help discourse encourage women to seek consent through individualised avenues, rather than directly challenging the wider social problems of masculine dominance in sexual negotiations.

Julie: [I fight for what I want to happen] basically just by being more clear on what it is that I want, what it is that I need... why it is that I want and need these things, basically just explaining very clearly... 'this isn't something that I'm going to budge on, I need you to be on board with this'.

In Julie's talk, women assume responsibility to be 'more clear' in their sexual consent, rather than questioning why men do not hear their consent. Women are not only required to 'specify' their boundaries, but are also expected to explain 'why' they 'want' and

‘need’ these boundaries in a sexual relationship. Although the women’s talk evokes an empowered femininity in women’s clear and firm boundary setting, women’s consent is produced in resistance and challenge to a gendered power that expects women’s submission. Sexual consent should be unquestioned in its expression and not something that needs to be ‘very clearly’ explained and justified.

Why can’t they understand?

Although the women’s talk reproduces strategy and education around ‘clear’ and ‘specific’ negotiation of consent, coercion and control is still present in the women’s talk of sexual experiences on Tinder dates. Women’s ability to give and withhold men’s sexual access is questioned in talk of coercion, as ‘spelling it out’ is challenged when men do not hear women’s ‘firm’ consent.

Rachel: I remember feeling a little bit like... ‘I wonder if he thinks... I was firm on that’ like I was not going to do anything on the first night, like sex, I think he still... fingered me and stuff but... yeah I was pretty firm on that like ‘I’m not going to do anything’.

Rachel’s talk produces contradictions in relation to consent, where a ‘firm’ assurance to not ‘do anything’ with a man is accompanied by statements confirming a sexual interaction did occur. In the postfeminist sexual marketplace, women are enabled to take up a strong, ‘firm’ and assertive sexual identity, whilst still subjected to sexual interactions that are expressly not wanted. Here, constructions of ‘respected’ consent are produced in relation to whether or not sexual intercourse occurred, but disregard non-intercourse sex acts and men’s

coercive attempts to pursue a sexual interaction. Women can accept success in men's partial respect of sexual boundaries, ignoring women's submissive position in heterosexual relationships to instead reproduce postfeminist ideals for a sexually liberated femininity.

In contrast to the construction of 'respected consent' in the presence of sexual coercion in Rachel's talk, Julie was able to explicitly define her unwanted sexual experience as coercion because sexual intercourse occurred. Here, the boundary between coercion and consent is produced through understandings of heterosexual intercourse.

Julie: We ended up back at his place, and...I didn't go into it with the intention of things ending sexually and I thought I'd made that clear to him from the beginning like, 'just so you know I'm really... not in the mood for that tonight, that's probably not going to happen' ... he sort of started hinting to me that he wanted me to go to the bedroom and I... made it cl- tried to make it clear that that wasn't something that was happening and, he ended up, essentially coercing me into sleeping with him... Yeah, these things happen... it was a while ago now and I thankfully have not seen him again since.

Despite Julie's defining her experience as sexual coercion, her statement 'I thought I made it clear to him from the beginning' speaks to uncertainty and doubt in the articulation of consent. Additionally, the statement 'I made it clear' is interrupted and replaced with the statement 'I tried to make it clear'. In this correction, constructions of women's responsibility and culpability are reproduced, as one's own assurance in expressed consent is questioned under the conditions of masculine coercion. Consent in heterosexual relationships is not a clear channel of communication, but requires strenuous efforts for women to be heard. The

statement ‘yeah, these things happen’ as a response to sexual violence, reproduces masculine power that is deeply embedded and normalised in heterosexual relationships.

Coercion was also produced in the text through talk of men’s continued attempts to ‘convince’ and ‘touch’ women despite women’s clear statements refusing the sexual interaction.

***Rachel:** When we were watching the movie, he was... trying it on a bit, and we were... kissing and stuff... but I remember saying... like, ‘no, I’m not doing anything’ and he was kind of like ‘aw’, I think he was a little bit like ‘okay?’ but... was fine with it... like he was like ‘that’s fine’ and then maybe... a bit later [he] kind of tried again... not too hard out, but... just wandering hands and stuff... but yeah I just kept like ‘na I’m not, not tonight’*

***Julie:** I’ve had other instances... when I’ve initially said I don’t want... to sleep with [them] where they’ve continued to try convince me, which... is frustrating and upsetting.*

***Sally:** I stayed with him, told him I didn’t want to have sex, he respected me, but... throughout the night he still tried to... touch me, that’s when I was like ‘[suspicious]’.*

The statement ‘just wandering hands and stuff’ speaks to normalised coercion within the heterosexual dating relationship, prioritising men’s sexual gratification over women’s expressed consent. Not only is coercion normalised here, but it is also constructed as respect, as women’s refusal of sex is valued as ‘heard’, despite men’s continued attempts to pursue a sexual interaction. Despite the normalisation of coercion in the text, the women do resist

through an identification of men's disappointment, disregard and violation of expressed consent, problematising a dating context that is meant to enable their sexual freedom within a postfeminist culture, yet leaves them constrained within 'frustrating' and 'upsetting' contexts of men's dominance and coercive power.

Julie's talk further problematizes disrespected boundaries as a gendered problem, as differences in men and women's power are produced as inhibiting the treatment of women as equal partners and as human beings.

Julie: It frustrates me, because... if they didn't want something to happen to them they would be very clear that they didn't want that thing to happen to them and they would expect that thing not to happen to them, so why is it so hard for them... to understand that this is a thing I don't want to happen to me... if they can clearly express their own boundaries, which a lot of them can, why can't they understand the boundaries that I am presenting to them also?

Interviewer: Why do you think that they can't understand it?

Julie: Because men. (laughs) Because men. (laughs)... it's hard to put into words, but I noticed a lot of men are very good at not listening to women, they are good at invalidating or minimising how we feel, or our importance as equal partners, or as human beings.

Julie's statement 'Because men' produces men's resistance to women's expressed consent as a gendered issue and as something inherent in masculinity. Masculinity is constructed as a repressive force for women's expression of boundaries and consent, as men control heterosexual negotiations by 'invalidating' or 'minimising' women's position in the sexual relationship. Julie challenges this position of inequality and oppression of women's

status as ‘human beings’ through questioning men’s disregard for what women want or do not want from a sexual relationship and attempting to invoke men’s empathy in order to establish reciprocation of respected boundaries and consent.

The ‘spell it out’ discourse constructs women’s attempts to be not only heard, but ‘understood’ by men within a modern dating context that reproduces the historical silencing of women’s wants and needs. Gendered power relations are present in talk of events of sexual violence and coercion in the Tinder encounter, however the women’s talk also offers a challenge and resistance to masculine power through awareness, education and actively fighting for sexual consent in the Tinder relationship. Sexual consent is difficult and distorted in the heterosexual dating context that continues to prioritise a man’s sexuality, however empowerment is enabled through women speaking up for and ‘spelling out’ their sexual wants and desires in Tinder’s gendered dating context.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

My research questioned how constructions of gender, heterosexuality and disciplinary power were reproduced within women's stories of sexual empowerment in Tinder's online and offline contexts. A Foucauldian discourse analysis opened up spaces for complicating understanding of feminine agency and control, examining how dominant discourses act to enable and constrain the way we make sense of the social world that disciplines women more intensely than men. As I sought to answer my research questions within the dominant discourses of 'dating evolving', 'Tinder's sexual marketplace', 'happy to be a whore', 'girls stand pretty' and 'spell it out', I came to realise that understandings of women's sexual empowerment primarily take meaning from the contradictions that emerge from what it means to be a woman in postfeminist culture. As women navigate the transforming dating landscape of Tinder's sexual marketplace, empowerment becomes complex, contradictory and creative. Women's empowerment is realised in Tinder's spaces that open up opportunities for unscripted dating choices, sexual exploration and assertive control, but is complicated by Tinder as a transformative space, a sexual marketplace and a neoliberal and postfeminist institution that reproduces gender double standards, disciplinary power and a culture of coercion and violence that constrain women's empowerment.

Transformative spaces

Empowerment was reproduced within the women's stories that spoke to a transforming dating culture identified in the literature (Berkowitz et al., 2021; Gill, 2007), enabling women to negotiate an evolving and unscripted dating context in ways that would resist and/or reproduce traditional dating scripts to align with independent wants and desires. Differences between the women's talk of desired Tinder experiences reproduced autonomy

and choice within Tinder's 'new' and 'exciting' dating spaces. The women's stories complicated understandings of modern intimacy, as they found love within Tinder's spaces that defy it, sought emotional intimacy from casual contexts that are 'just sex' and explored empowered sexual experiences within the male-dominated context. Sexual empowerment was contradictory, yet materialised within Tinder's transforming dating context, as the women embraced uprooted gender norms as a pathway to resistance.

Women's resistance to gender norms in the context of both traditional dating and Tinder 'dating' was aware and resilient, as the women's stories negotiated and managed gender inequity in unique ways that understood gender performance as a social condition and exploited this knowledge in ways that would advance the women's own agendas. The women talked of accepting, complying with and sometimes even encouraging men's masculine courtship rituals, despite an awareness of the gendered power relations they reproduced, as a means of obtaining the intimate experience they desired from the Tinder meeting. Similarly, a permissive sexuality (Hollway, 1984), or 'happy whore' identity, embodied and embellished Tinder's 'sex, not love' culture in the women's stories, constructing the Tinder hook-up culture, known to be embedded in patriarchy and power relations, as a 'fun' sexual project. The women's talk not only reproduced gendered power relations to their advantage, but went further with attempts to rearrange gender hierarchies, as the women assumed a traditionally masculine aggressive sexuality (Hollway, 1984), constructing a high 'fe-male sexual drive' in women's active pursuit of heterosex in Tinder's sexual marketplace.

Women were enabled to explore new experiences of intimacy and renegotiate their sexual identity, as Tinder transformed women's access to autonomy and control within heterosexual relations. Tinder's digital communications facilitated the women's resistance to constructions of consent as an obscure or absent negotiation, through a context that provided the conditions for safe and controlled talk about sex. Additionally, women's agency was

enabled through Tinder's online space that qualified women's easy exit from a 'weird' or 'creepy' Tinder man, positioning women outside of traditional gendered norms that may expect women's passivity and compliance within uncomfortable and/or unsafe dating contexts. The women positioned themselves as the 'deciders' of the Tinder space, as they negotiated online feminine control to navigate the outcome of a Tinder connection. However, women's talk of this negotiation of autonomous control was sometimes contextualised within stories of men's harassment and abuse in response. As the Tinder context enables women's perceptions of power online, Thompson's (2018) research of abusive Tinder messages sent to women by men, may be understood to be reinstating masculine power, as masculine aggressiveness online may indicate power moving between Tinder's online and offline contexts.

Tinder as a transforming space that shifts power between the online and face-to-face contexts complicated women's experiences of empowerment, as women were subjected to different intimacy contexts that would define and redefine their empowered and/or disempowered positions. The online space reconfigured ways of doing intimacy, as the women were enabled to disrupt traditional gendered scripts and take up feminine power and control within heterosexual negotiations that were secure and disconnected from heteronormative standards. As the Tinder connection moves to 'real life', the shift from an online connection into face-to-face spaces can be confronting and revealing, as the complexities of social life, embedded in gendered power relations, are suddenly established and discrepancies between online and offline personas are realised. The 'unveiling space' is further complicated by 'looming' assumptions of the online relationship that carry personal expectations and Tinder-made sexual connotations into a predetermined in-person encounter. 'Real life' spaces were produced as patriarchal and creating potentially unsafe contexts for

women's dating experiences, in contrast with the online spaces that enabled women's autonomous control.

The context of the COVID-19 global pandemic reinforced Tinder's dating space as transformative and meaningful in resisting gendered power relations, as lockdowns that prevented a face-to-face encounter facilitated more genuine intimacy relationships online. When Tinder was no longer able to serve its purpose as a fast-paced sexual marketplace, sexual double standards and gender hierarchies became obsolete, as online relationships were simplified with intentions that sought emotional connections within the unpredictable and sometimes isolating context of the COVID-19 pandemic. As Tinder's 'revolving door' system for swiftly obtaining and discarding a sexual partner became inaccessible, a slowed-down online dating culture enabled more egalitarian dating experiences, as men and women came to understand and negotiate their sexual relationships and identities in more meaningful and connected ways.

The postfeminist sexual marketplace

Tinder as a sexual marketplace reproduced a dating culture embedded in patriarchy and gendered power relations, inducing conflicting sexual empowerment, as women embraced a 'liberated' sexual freedom within Tinder's context designed to satisfy a masculine sexual drive. The Tinder market was constructed as systematic and game-like in manufacturing an economic exchange of heterosex that was easy, accessible and fast-paced in its service. The 'Tinder girl/woman' carried assumptions of an active and seeking sexual identity in the sexual marketplace that was complicated by shame of taking up an identity that went against traditional modest femininity, and yet was empowered by a postfeminist culture that promoted women's sexual openness as an act of freedom. An intimacy market built on

double standards became apparent, as women's sexual agency was constructed as contradictory and indistinct.

Women's sexual empowerment was further complicated within Tinder's sexual marketplace that was mediated and catering to men's pursuit of penetrative sex, as the women's sexual values that prioritised autonomy and control were contradicted within reproductions of pornified sexual desire that favoured masculine dominance in heterosex. Empowerment was convoluted within the women's talk that constructed pride and validation from women's objectification and compliance to men's sexual want. The reduction of women's worth to a sexual object did, however, produce unique forms of liberation for women who identified the ease of obtaining heterosex from men and responded with a non-compliant 'no-effort' presentation that embodied an individualistic approach to femininity. Interestingly, women also challenged their own objectified position by inverting gendered power scripts to subject men's bodies to the same scrutiny and objectification that women's bodies are constantly subjected to. The women's talk produced an awareness to a culture that prioritises men's sexual gratification and challenged this by reshuffling gendered power relations to subvert men's dominant position.

The disciplinary project of femininity

In their resistance, the women's talk supported Bartky's (1998) understanding of women as subjected to permeating forces that act upon and discipline the feminine body in ways unlike the positioning of the masculine body. Whilst some women resisted the male gaze through a 'no-effort' femininity, other women resisted men's sexual fantasy by instead dressing for women and for themselves. Disciplinary self-monitoring practices were constructed in women's aspirations to uphold standards of an always improving feminine 'perfection', not to please the male gaze, but to instead succeed within competitive neoliberal

contexts that prize and reward successful femininity. Power was reproduced as imbued within all aspects of bodily activity, as even when resisting the male gaze, the feminine body was policed and constrained through productions of disciplinary power (Bartky, 1998).

Perceptions of women's agency may be understood as a result of double standards and expectations placed on the neoliberal subject, as empowerment is suggested to be obtained through women's compliance to gender stereotypes (Baker, 2010; McRobbie, 2007; Stuart & Donaghue, 2012; Taylor, 2011).

Tinder's sexual marketplace also complicates women's sexual empowerment through its contradictory postfeminist and neoliberal context. In the women's stories, empowerment was attainable through embracing a postfeminist sexual freedom, yet also achieved by taking control of one's own safety. The postfeminist subject is encouraged to explore their sexual liberty, but is also positioned within a neoliberal responsibility for managing men's violence. As the women's talk constructed meticulous practices for asserting control and keeping themselves safe from the many potential dangers of the Tinder space in order to action their 'empowered' sexuality, underlying gendered social power relations that enable contexts of coercion and violence were minimised and normalised. Neoliberal ideals within Tinder's sexual marketplace constructed false perceptions of safety, as victimisation was assumed to be an independent responsibility, avoided through Gillett's (2023) careful and conscious 'safety work'.

The women's sexual empowerment was constrained within a culture of coercion and violence, as a contemporary continuation of masculine dominance and control was reproduced in the women's stories that communicated concerns of murder, kidnapping, stalking, rape and coerced sex when meeting a man in-person for a Tinder date. A disempowering dating context was realised in the women's talk, as they assumed accountability for managing situations of risk, despite disciplinary power that moves against

women's agency to constrain feminine sexual freedoms within responsibilities for satisfying men's 'natural and uncontrollable' sexuality (Gavey, 2012; Hollway, 1984). Women's need to 'fight' for their right to equal and respectful intimate relationships reproduces gender inequity and a culture that tolerates and normalises coercive and controlling dating experiences for women. Negotiations of women's sexual empowerment are confused and contradictory in Tinder dating contexts as women are expected to display feminine empowerment within a disempowered social position. Women are 'empowered' to explore their sexual agency on Tinder, though they must assume responsibility for any experience of violence that may befall them. The 'empowered' woman can take control within the online Tinder space, yet she must be prepared to accept men's aggressive repossession of power. The social world is not delivering the freedoms and liberties promised by the postfeminist movement; 'empowerment' itself is gendered and neoliberal, as postfeminist culture sells ideas of empowerment within repackaged gendered constructs that expect women to transform themselves to do femininity better within a society that remains embedded in patriarchal goals. The disciplinary project of femininity is reproduced in women's experiences of Tinder dating, as coercive power governs and controls femininity, however, as described by Foucault (1981), these productions of power are accompanied by constructions of resistance. Sexual empowerment was not realised within meanings of accomplished freedoms in the Tinder dating discourse, but instead produced within the women's resistance to a society that remains embedded in gender stereotypes and social power relations. Women are aware of and responding to a culture that falsely claims accomplishments of gender equality and in doing so, construct positions of creative feminine empowerment.

Limitations and future research

In conducting this research, it was important to remain reflexive and consider potential limitations of this study. Although my Foucauldian discourse analysis was useful for considering constructions of gender, heterosexuality, empowerment and disciplinary power in Tinder dating, a more phenomenological approach to research in the future would allow for the feelings and experiences of the participants to be considered and heard. Such a project could consider the lived experiences of intersections of culture, social-class and sexual orientation and how they are experienced and understood by women as they negotiate feminine sexual empowerment. Complexities between the online and offline contexts of dating also made a meaningful contribution to this research, which in turn identified constructions of women's diverse sexuality as important for contrasting and comparing gender stereotypes. Future research opportunities may explore the complexities of online and offline dating contexts to investigate LGBTQ dating experiences and question how the presence and/or absence of gendered scripts implicate online dating relationships. Despite these limitations, my research process was effective for the purposes of my current study, as I sought to understand socially constructed ways that women negotiate sexual empowerment in modern dating contexts. By challenging constructions of gender, sexuality, disciplinary power and empowerment within the Tinder dating context, I hope this research can contribute to the existing body of literature that seeks to de-gender and re-vision a more egalitarian position for women in heterosexual relationships.

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Appendix A



COLLEGE OF
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TE KURA PŪKENGĀ TANGATA

Women's experiences of sexual empowerment on a Tinder date

INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher(s) Introduction

Tēnā koe. My name is Brittany Durston. I am conducting this research for the fulfilment of the requirements for a Master of Arts degree, under the supervision of Dr Stephanie Denne and Dr Ann Rogerson from the School of Psychology, Massey University, Palmerston North. I am currently a full-time student and have been studying Psychology for over five years.

If you have any queries about the research, please feel free to contact either myself, Stephanie or Ann by phone or email. Our details are on the last page.

Project Description and Invitation

Experiences of dating are a common topic of conversation in a woman's daily life, often present in gossip between friends, family get-togethers, magazine advertisements, 'rom-coms', and social media. Finding love, satisfying sex and attractiveness are topics that occur consistently in dating talk. There are certain social expectations for how women should act, think and feel about dating men. This research aims to better understand how you as a woman experience feelings of sexual empowerment on a first date after meeting through the dating application, Tinder. This will be achieved through non-judgemental and confidential interviews with me, which will provide a space for sharing stories, thoughts and feelings about your experiences of Tinder dating in the contemporary Western context. Interviews will then be analysed to better understand constructions of gender and sexuality in the dating narratives of young women in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Participant Identification and Recruitment

To participate you need to:

- Identify as a woman;
- Be aged between 20 and 25-years-old;

- Have made and used a personal account on the Tinder dating application to meet a man for a date in-person;
- Currently be living in the Manawatū Region; and
- Feel comfortable speaking English.

An intermediary contact has provided this information sheet to you because they think you may be interested in participating; they do not need to know if you intend to contact me and I will not tell them if you do contact me. Before deciding whether you wish to be involved in the research, please read this letter carefully to ensure you fully understand the nature of the research project and your rights should you choose to participate.

What this study will involve:

Should you decide to participate in this study, you will first be invited to an initial meeting with me, Brittany, to discuss the research process. This meeting will take approximately 30 minutes and will address any needs you may have, including support, cultural considerations and child care. If you are interested in continuing with the research, an interview time and date will be scheduled. Interviews will be conducted privately in a place that is convenient for you. If you decide to take part in an interview you can discuss your needs for privacy with me. The formal interview will first involve going over the interview schedule and addressing any concerns you may have. If you are comfortable to continue, a consent form will be provided for you to sign. The interview will be semi-structured and will take approximately an hour to 90 minutes to complete. There will also be an opportunity to extend the time if you would like to continue the interview. Refreshments will be provided during the interview and you will receive a \$20 grocery voucher as appreciation for your participation.

Talking about experiences of sexuality and dating may raise thoughts or feelings that can be uncomfortable, so we will set aside time at the end of the interview to debrief and check in with how you are feeling. You are also welcome to bring a support person or persons with you to all of our meetings together. The support person or persons will also be asked to sign a form which outlines confidentiality and expectations of being a support person. If you decide you would like further support following this interview, please feel free to discuss options with me. Potential support agencies in the area are listed on the last page of this information sheet; however cost will likely be required for access to some of the counselling facilities. If you decide to use their services, any costs would be your responsibility. I cannot contact the support agencies for you. However, I can support you to contact an agency by being present during the phone call or providing a device for you to make the call.

Project Procedures

If you are interested in participating, an initial meeting will be available to clearly outline the research aims and processes to ensure an informed understanding of study. Participation in this research is confidential and your privacy will be protected. I will ask for you to sign a consent form at the beginning of the interview. If you consent, the interview will be digitally audio recorded and stored in a password protected file on a password protected device and then deleted after transcription. If you do not want the interview to be audio recorded, I will ask for your consent to take notes during

the interview. Digital notes will be kept in a password protected format until my thesis has been graded then the notes will be destroyed. I will transcribe the interview myself into a written digital format and I will remove all identifying material at this stage. You will be offered the opportunity to read and make edits to the transcripts, which will take approximately 30 minutes. With your final approval of the transcript, I will ask for you to sign a Transcript Release Form. The choice to participate is voluntary and you can withdraw at any point up until the transcript has been released for analysis.

My supervisor will keep consent forms and transcriptions secure for five years and then they will be destroyed. Only myself and my supervisors will have access to the consent forms, transcripts, and notes. Once the research is completed, if you have expressed interest in the outcome of the study, I will contact you to discuss the outcome of the research and to request feedback.

Limitations of Confidentiality

The information obtained in this study will be treated confidentially. However, if there is a situation in which I have serious concerns for your or someone else's wellbeing, my supervisors, your support person, or a support agency may need to be contacted. I would stay with you until your safety had been established.

Participant's Rights

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

- decline to answer any particular question;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
- withdraw from the study at any point up until you have signed the release of transcript form;
- 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.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. Participating in this research is voluntary and confidential. If you decide you would like to discuss the research further with me in person, please contact me either via email, phone or text and we can arrange an initial meeting to talk about the research process.

Ngā mihi nui

Brittany Durston

Project Contacts

Brittany Durston, [REDACTED], [REDACTED]
Ann Rogerson, (06) 356 9099, ext. 85052, A.L.Rogerson@massey.ac.nz
Stephanie Denne, (06) 356 9099, ext. 85082, S.Denne@massey.ac.nz

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, Application 21/33. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Negar Partow, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, telephone 04 801 5799 x 63363, email humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz.

Support Organizations

Mental Health Foundation

This charity provides individuals with resources for accessing support with aims to build and sustain wellbeing. More information can be found at: <https://mentalhealth.org.nz/>

Te Hā o Hine-ahu-one Palmerston North Women's Health Collective

This organization has a focus on women's health, providing free services and empowerment, with a vision for every woman/wahine to understand and heal her body, mind, spirit, whanau, community and natural environment. More information can be found at: <http://www.pnwomenshealth.org.nz>
Ph: (06) 357 0314

Youthline

This organization provides face-to-face counselling in Palmerston North for people who are aged 12 to 24-years-old. The initial meeting is free of charge, and all following sessions are \$60.00; however, support is offered to access funding when eligible. More information can be found at: <https://www.youthline.co.nz/face-to-face-palmerston-north.html> Ph: 0800 376 633

Te Manawa Family Services

This organization works with individual and families to develop skills and understandings they need for a safe and healthy family life. A weekly contribution is required for all programs with the amount based on what you can afford. More information can be found at: <http://www.temanawa.org.nz/home>
Ph: (06) 323 8330

Abuse and Rape Crisis Support Manawatu

This organization provides services to women, children and men who are survivors of sexual violence and also to their families. All cultural groups and age groups are welcome, and all services are free of charge. More information can be found at: <http://arcsmanawatu.org.nz/> Ph: (06) 356 5868

Appendix B



COLLEGE OF
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TE KURA PŪKENGĀ TANGATA

Women's experiences of sexual empowerment on a Tinder date

INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher(s) Introduction

Tēnā koe. My name is Brittany Durston. I am conducting this research for the fulfilment of the requirements for a Master of Arts degree, under the supervision of Dr Stephanie Denne and Dr Ann Rogerson from the School of Psychology, Massey University, Palmerston North. I am currently a full-time student and have been studying Psychology for over five years.

If you have any queries about the research, please feel free to contact either myself, Stephanie or Ann by phone or email. Our details are on the last page.

Project Description and Invitation

Experiences of dating are a common topic of conversation in a woman's daily life, often present in gossip between friends, family get-togethers, magazine advertisements, 'rom-coms', and social media. Finding love, satisfying sex and attractiveness are topics that occur consistently in dating talk. There are certain social expectations for how women should act, think and feel about dating men. This research aims to better understand how you as a woman experience feelings of sexual empowerment on a first date after meeting through the dating application, Tinder. This will be achieved through non-judgemental and confidential interviews with me, which will provide a space for sharing stories, thoughts and feelings about your experiences of Tinder dating in the contemporary Western context. Interviews will then be analysed to better understand constructions of gender and sexuality in the dating narratives of young women in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Participant Identification and Recruitment

To participate you need to:

- Identify as a woman;
- Be aged between 20 and 30-years-old;
- Have made and used a personal account on the Tinder dating application to meet a man for a date in-person;
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An intermediary contact has provided this information sheet to you because they think you may be interested in participating; they do not need to know if you intend to contact me and I will not tell

them if you do contact me. Before deciding whether you wish to be involved in the research, please read this letter carefully to ensure you fully understand the nature of the research project and your rights should you choose to participate.

What this study will involve:

Should you decide to participate in this study, you will first be invited to discuss the research process with me, Brittany, and to address any needs you may have, including support, cultural considerations, COVID-19 safety standards and child care. This initial discussion can take place over the phone or in person, and will take no longer than 30 minutes. If you are interested in continuing with the research, an interview time and date will be scheduled. Interviews will be conducted in a private meeting room. The formal interview will first involve going over the interview schedule and addressing any concerns you may have. If you are comfortable to continue, a consent form will be provided for you to sign. The interview will be semi-structured and will take approximately an hour to 90 minutes to complete. There will also be an opportunity to extend the time if you would like to continue the interview. Refreshments will be provided during the interview and you will receive a \$20 grocery voucher as appreciation for your participation.

Talking about experiences of sexuality and dating may raise thoughts or feelings that can be uncomfortable, so we will set aside time at the end of the interview to debrief and check in with how you are feeling. You are also welcome to bring a support person or persons with you to all of our meetings together. The support person or persons will also be asked to sign a form which outlines confidentiality and expectations of being a support person. If you decide you would like further support following this interview, please feel free to discuss options with me. Potential support agencies in the area are listed on the last page of this information sheet; however cost will likely be required for access to some of the counselling facilities. If you decide to use their services, any costs would be your responsibility. I cannot contact the support agencies for you. However, I can support you to contact an agency by being present during the phone call or providing a device for you to make the call.

COVID-19 Safety Standards

This research project complies with Government guidance for science and research during the COVID-19 pandemic and meets all national requirements to manage public health measures and existing WorkSafe practices. COVID-19 safety standards have been outlined by Massey University and will be carried out for all face-to-face meetings:

- Contact tracing will be available at the meeting location.
- The meeting location will allow 1m physical distancing indoors.
- I will be wearing a mask at all times, and a mask can be provided for you.
- The workspace will be sterilized, and hand sanitizer will be available to you.
- People at high risk of severe illness or anyone caring for/living with those people will not be included in this research.

Project Procedures

If you are interested in participating, a time will be arranged prior to the formal interview to clearly outline the research aims and processes to ensure an informed understanding of the study.

Participation in this research is confidential and your privacy will be protected. I will ask for you to sign a consent form at the beginning of the interview. If you consent, the interview will be digitally audio recorded and stored in a password protected file on a password protected device and then deleted after transcription. If you do not want the interview to be audio recorded, I will ask for your consent to take notes during the interview. Digital notes will be kept in a password protected format until my thesis has been graded then the notes will be destroyed. I will transcribe the interview myself into a written digital format and I will remove all identifying material at this stage. You will be offered the opportunity to read and make edits to the transcripts, which will take approximately 30 minutes. With your final approval of the transcript, I will ask for you to sign a Transcript Release Form. The choice to participate is voluntary and you can withdraw at any point up until the transcript has been released for analysis.

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- 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;
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Ngā mihi nui

Brittany Durston

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Abuse and Rape Crisis Support Manawatu

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Appendix C

Interview Schedule

*The interviews will be semi-structured. I will use an introduction and opening questions to begin the conversation and develop rapport; however, I hope that the participants' stories and perspectives will lead the interview. If required, further open-ended questions will be used to deepen and/or refocus the conversation. The questions in **bold** will be asked (if time allows). The questions are in italics are ideas to prompt discussion.*

Introduction

“Tēnā koe. Thank you for taking part in my research and for giving your valuable time to be interviewed today. It is greatly appreciated. To begin the conversation, I will ask you some open-ended questions about your experience of Tinder dating. I hope you feel comfortable sharing your thoughts, stories, feelings, and perspectives with me. There are no wrong answers! The central objective of the interview is to allow you to tell your story. My job is to listen. Please feel free to ask any questions or take a break at any time. Before we begin, do you have any questions?”

1. To start, can you tell me a bit about how you came to use Tinder for dating?

Why did you choose Tinder? What are your intentions for Tinder dates? Did your previous experiences of dating influence your decision to join Tinder?

2. Can you tell me a bit about an experience of a first date you've had with a Tinder match?

How did you get ready for the date? What was the first meeting like? How did you feel before/during/after the Tinder date? Did the pandemic affect your dating experiences at all?

3. Can you tell me about something that happened on a first Tinder date that you really enjoyed? *How would you describe the ideal man/woman on a Tinder date? Do you recall a time where you felt confident/good about yourself?*

4. Can you tell me about a Tinder date that didn't go so well?

5. Can you recall a time where you felt sexually empowered on a Tinder date?

Was there anything that happened that made you feel really good about yourself? What would you do to feel more confident on a date?

6. Can you recall a time where you may have felt confused or conflicted by the intentions of your Tinder date?

Have you and a Tinder date ever had different intentions? If so, how did this affect the date?

7. Can you recall any advice or input you may have received from other people or sources that may have influenced your expectations for Tinder dating?

Did you ask friends or family for advice before your Tinder date? How were you influenced by Tinder as a media platform? Do you remember reading any dating advice articles? What advice would you give to others? Would you recommend Tinder to others? If so, who? If no recollection of advice, why?

8. What do you think are the biggest challenges when meeting a Tinder date?

9. How, if at all, do you think meeting on Tinder might have influenced your experience of the first date? *How would you compare your dating life now to your Tinder dating?*

10. If you could change how we do Tinder dating, how would you change it for woman's experiences?

Conclusion

"It's almost the end of our time together and we have had some really good discussions, I just wanted to check if there were any more stories or thoughts you would like to share today? Thank you for your time"

Appendix D



COLLEGE OF
HUMANITIES AND
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TE KURA PŪKENGA TANGATA

Women's experiences of sexual empowerment on a Tinder date

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read, or have had read to me in my first language, and I understand the Information Sheet attached as Appendix I. I have had the details of the study explained to me, any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study and I understand participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

1. I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.
2. I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Declaration by Participant:

I _____ [print full name] hereby consent to take part in this study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E



Women's experiences of sexual empowerment on a Tinder date

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

Signature: **Date:**

Full Name - printed