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MEN'S STORIES
AN ANALYSIS OF MEN'S TALK OF SEPARATION

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ABSTRACT

This study, examining men's talk about separating from relationships, uses a hybrid model of discourse and structural analysis. The research identifies four dominant discourses: a legal system discourse, a discourse of morality, a discourse of masculinity and a discourse of journeying. The men construct their experiences as negative occurrences: destructive and painful; but also as positive events: necessary, timely and ultimately beneficial. Their use of the discourses serves two opposing purposes: to position them as relatively innocent and vulnerable in the breakdown of their relationships, and as resolute, determined and in control of their lives. The dialectical clash of these themes leads in most cases to a position where the men can act as moral agents with clear aims and goals.

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INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that divorce and separation are now so common as to be conceptualised in terms of family life cycle narratives (McGoldrick & Carter, 1989; Robinson, 1991), the intensity of the loss and abandonment of hopes experienced by both partners of a failed relationship are as real as ever they were. However, the material in New Zealand and other countries on this subject in both academic journals and the popular press has focused mainly on the greater negative impact of separation on women (Burkhauser, Duncan, Hauser & Bernsten, 1990; Duncan and Hoffman, 1985; Smock, 1994; Smock, Manning and Gupta, 1999). These accounts relate the difficulties and obstacles of women trying to protect themselves from abusive men, bringing up children on reduced incomes (Bianchi, Subaiya & Kahn, 1999), finding suitable housing and appropriate employment, providing emotional care and material sustenance for their children, and often battling their ex-husbands and partners for maintenance and child support (Amato, 2004; Smock, Manning and Gupta, 1999). Stories are told of the hardships of juggling work and childcare in an attempt to provide a loving household where children and mother can create a new life, free from the unhappy differences that beset the former relationship (Duncan and Brooks-Gunn, 1997; McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994).

What of men undergoing separation? How do they cope with their removal from the household, often into a life impoverished of material comforts, emotional support and the sudden absence of partner and children? There is a considerable body of work investigating these questions in countries other than New Zealand (in the USA, for example: McManus & Diprete, 2001; Baum, 2004; Staudacher, 1991; Litton & White, 1995) but there is little New Zealand research about the pain and distress of men undergoing the dissolution of their relationships. Men suffer from losing their partner and they suffer from being deprived of their children (Burgess, 1997). Importantly, Lynch and Kilmarton (1999) cite male socialisation as a significant factor in the ability to overcome grief. Because men lack the social networks that women often possess (Phillips, 1981), it is plausible to suggest that the grief of separation is greatly damaging, affecting men's outlook and health Taylor, 1998; Mannion, 1990; Stacey, 1990).

Most men experience significant difficulty coping with separation, yet they do not commonly seek support or advice. Often they hide behind a façade of stoic self-reliance and independence. Forster (1998) writes about such issues in her New Zealand case studies and Legat (2001) examines the issue of child custody following divorce and inspects the belief of some men that the courts are biased against fathers, while Hallett (2002) offers a distinctly one-sided vituperative attack on women and the Family Court. Phillips exposes many of the myths surrounding the New Zealand man (1996) and provides historical explanations for the New Zealand masculine identity. Others, like King, 1988; Daley & Montgomerie, 1999; and Law, Campbell and Dolan, 1999, though they say little on the subject of men experiencing separation, explore constructions of New Zealand masculinity.

A survey of relevant research relating to descriptions of situations of men after relationship breakdown reveals little critical discussion in New Zealand on the effects of separation on the male partner or on discussion of alternatives to the child support formula (Burgess, 1997). Mothers rather than fathers are assumed to be the ones best able to provide for the care of their young children, and so, in relationship breakdown, New Zealand courts have conventionally awarded custody to the mother, often discounting or minimising fathers' pleas for shared custody or guarantees of improved access (Pipe & Seymour, 1998).

On children, Fleming (cited in Baker, 2001) writes about detecting an implicitly punitive attitude towards non-custodial fathers, and Birks (1998) discusses how lobbyists such as Divorce Equity argue for an 'equity of outcome' principle in law reform with reference to income-generating capacity as matrimonial property. This seems to be an example of selecting evidence to show disadvantage for women while ignoring factors which discriminate against men. If men accept the responsibility of financially supporting their partners in a relationship and raising a family, then there is a clear benefit as well as sacrifice for the woman in this, but the man's sacrifice is not equally recognised. Instead, it is suggested that he continue to contribute to the ex-partner's well-being in addition to child support while losing the benefit of his partner's unpaid work or the pleasures of family life. In a later paper, Birks (2001) states that family law

negatively affects children and their fathers in New Zealand. Here, he argues for a move from the 'micro' process of family intervention toward the 'macro' implications of social policy. Tichbon (1995), a spokesman for FARE (Families Apart Require Equality), outlines the prejudiced nature and major flaws of the Child Support Act and its positioning of inequality between parents. Ludbrook (cited in Birks & Callister, 1999) urges concerned parents to shift the focus from terms such as 'guardianship', 'custody' and 'access' which perpetuate the notion of parental ownership and control of children' to shared parental responsibilities and duties. He observes that before 1970, court disputes concentrated on the 'culprit' in marriage breakdowns. The plight of children was not considered because women in almost every case got custody. This focus has shifted in subsequent years towards couples vying to be the most responsible parent.

When the Family Court was introduced in the early 1980s, it heard cases in private. Since July 1 2004, however, The Care of Children Act allows the media to enter the court. Proceedings usually cover access and custody, day-to-day care, holiday and travel arrangements and international 'tug-of-love' disputes. At each hearing there is one lawyer for the father, one for the mother and another representing the interests of the child. One reason for opening the court has been claims of gender bias. Doherty, Kouneski and Erickson (1998) have claimed that substantial barriers stand in the way of supportive fatherhood. These authors state that '[r]esearch demonstrates the particular vulnerability of fathering to contextual and institutional practices' (p. 287). Julian (1999) finds a common belief in New Zealand that the Family Court discriminates against fathers. Tapp and Taylor (2001) by contrast, argue that, as the mother is the primary caregiver in marriage, it is appropriate that she continue to be responsible for the major care of the children after a separation. In both Tapp and Taylor (2001) and Julian's writings, however, 'primary care' in the New Zealand system tends to become 'sole care'.

The issue of fathers and children is one often overlooked in the studies about separation. Lareau (2000) states that the father's presence is a significant factor in family life and expresses concerns about recent family studies, finding 'the

study of family life to be disproportionately skewed to selected, usually easily quantifiable, topics and to privilege the views of mothers' (p. 431). One effect of the mother having sole custody is the creation of a power advantage. Unduly influencing the children in her care can lead to parental alienation syndrome, as described by Burgess (1997). Amato (2004) argues for improved access and cooperative parenting, making a case for the necessity of authoritative parenting for positive child development. McLoughlin (1993, 2003) investigates the flaws in the 1991 Child Support Act and examines cases where people (mostly men) have been adversely affected by the Act's inflexibility. In a later article (2003) he criticises the provisions of the Act. In similar vein, Abernathy (1991) discusses the relationship between access and maintenance.

In addition to the custodial debate, on a wider level, a limitation of these earlier studies is that researchers have tended to ask the questions within a particular, often narrow, field of enquiry, rather than allow men to speak on what interests them. The frame of reference is therefore circumscribed by the researcher's focus and interpretation and not by what the men want to say. Consequently, the value and reliability of the conclusions is limited. Moreover, it is in the nature of such investigations that they occlude the social context of decision making and the larger discourses that influence what men speak about. There is discussion in previous studies on the effects of separation on men, particularly on parenting issues, but little on the context surrounding the issues, little on how men experience these effects, and less on their talk about these experiences. Research in this area has been largely of a descriptive nature, whereas this research, in contrast, investigates the consequences of separation for men through their own stories. Contemporary awareness of men's difficulties in articulating their concerns presents the challenge of formulating an investigation that foregrounds the liberatory potential of their stories. Identifying their positionings in dominating discourses and making visible alternative transforming subjectivities from their talk is a way forward. The men in this study do not accept descriptions which place them in positions where there are few resources to act in new ways. They define themselves as being in the process of devising new identities that are better explained by different stories, more

appropriate than the old ones and more empowering for their new lives. Their stories function to disrupt old practices and generate new ones.

Chapter 1

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Research Aims

The thesis began as a research topic examining what men had to say about paying child support to their ex-wives. It segued into a study investigating men's talk about separating from their wives or partners and children following relationship breakup, making the child support issue just one part of a larger story. Listening to work colleagues talking about their anger, frustrations and fears following separation, I wanted to learn about the world of separated fathers as this world is experienced by them, what their new lives were like and what changes and developments they had made that were meaningful, reasonable and productive.

It seemed to me that men's voices were marginalised. The literature on the subject, for instance, demonstrates a relative paucity in this area. And the men claimed a lack of support from friends or professional agencies. When I asked where they obtained help, they spoke of support mostly from women friends and colleagues, but from other men, silence rather than sharing, disdain rather than understanding, advice rather than listening. Listening to them, it became clear that the men wanted to tell their stories. And so the research became 'Men's Stories'.

My aim was to access the men's understandings of the impact separation had on them; how they make sense of the past and present and what agency they say they possess enabling them to create their futures in new contexts. How do they hold on to being the author and main actor in their own narratives about the past and the future, while simultaneously taking a supporting rôle in their children's and ex-partners' narratives? What resources do they draw upon and how do they use language to develop these stories? So the study investigates how men talk about their experiences, and this, in turn, focuses on the discourses the men draw upon to validate their experiences. The research compares and contrasts the language the men use to talk about their

circumstances and events surrounding relationship breakdown and the factors influencing the decisions they made, and it examines how language functions to construct and manage personal and social meanings and identities. The functions of the men's talk, including the formulation of identities, challenging the institution of marriage and the positioning of men in socially constructed gender roles, together with the constructive nature of the discourses and the ideological functions they serve, were also investigated.

I wanted the interviews to be empowering for the men because in the area of separation men's stories are rarely heard and often minimised. In their role of non-custodial parent, the men's major function seems to be to pay child support. But the men have, in a sense, erupted into non-compliance, loosening the grasp of conventional expectations and taking upon themselves the opportunity to build 'reality' anew. In their resistance to old labels, the personal and political dimensions of the men's situations are inseparable; disrupting the *status quo* by adopting those parts of society's discourses that offer empowerment makes it possible for them to puncture prevailing notions of marriage, divorce and child support and effect change at various levels.

Interviewer and interviewee were positioned as partners in a collaborative enterprise. I wanted the men to speak in their own voices, tell their own stories and elaborate meanings in accordance with their own interests and goals. The men's task was to tell their stories, my task was to listen carefully. However, rather than adopt a neutral position, I aligned with the participants, attempting to understand the world through their words. I tried to avoid making judgements of their stated behaviour, orienting rather towards understanding the functions of their constructions, attempting to enter their subjectivities and share their experiences and understanding as much as I was able without over-empathising. Entering the research in this way made the stories more meaningful. In the later analysis, ambiguities and contradictory statements obliged me to constantly question my interpretations, often providing fresh insights and more accurate descriptions. I found that the men were able to discuss their experiences with relative ease. Expressions of anger were

uncommon, perhaps because of the passage of time, and talk of emotions, like sadness and fear, was spontaneous, if sometimes painful.

Engaging in the interviews and interpreting the data was therefore personal and empathic, without, I believe, distorting the ideas the men expressed. The content of the men's stories was the primary source of investigation, while foregrounding the formal structures, properties and functions of their stories provided insights that reveal the fabricated nature of their talk. My strategy in investigating the men's stories was to combine a discourse analysis approach with the understandings of a 'narrative' framework, allowing me to investigate the assertions and oppositions the men expressed in ways that seemed facilitative and enlightening.

In listening to the talk of the separation process, I tried to suspend apportioning blame or taking sides. I am conscious that the research did not involve women's discussion of the experience or the children's views. I am conscious too, that the analysis presented here, drawn from problem-focused stories, may obscure broader relations of power and control lying beyond the domain of this study.

Participants

For the study, seven men – coded here as Ted, Fred, Ron, George, Jack, Henry and Sam - told their stories about their separations in an informal interview situation. Some researchers (for example, Laslett and Rapaport, 1975) maintain that an on-going relationship, developed over repeated interviews, develops a trust that yields richer material. Others, for example, Seidman (1991) and Brannen (1988) state that researchers can more easily broach sensitive topics with respondents if interviews are 'one-off' affairs, involving a transitory relationship, as against a more enduring association. The interviews in this study took this latter approach, on the view that lack of familiarity provides a space for anonymity and thus the greater likelihood of self-disclosure towards an interviewer uninvolved in respondents' lives. I felt the men would be more forthcoming and have less apprehension if they believed they would be unlikely to be involved with me, the interviewer, again. For these reasons and because of time and availability issues I chose this interview

approach with an open-ended, unstructured format. Focusing questions were asked at the beginning (for example, 'How old are you? What is your present occupation? etc) and then the men talked about those aspects of separation they were most interested in, with interjections being used largely to elaborate points of interest. I wanted the interviews to be nondirective and non-threatening, unhurried and supportive.

Recruiting and interviewing participants was conducted in two parts. Having gained approval from Massey University Ethics Committee, the first part involved placing a notice on staff noticeboards at my workplace to solicit interest. Men interested in taking part contacted me and informed me of others who might also be interested. Three in this latter group were contacted by their friends and agreed to be interviewed. I subsequently informed the first seven men of the nature and scope of the research and provided them with an information sheet which included mention of their rights, together with a consent form. I also arranged access to a registered psychologist after the interview for participants, should they require his services. None took up the offer.

An information sheet and consent form (Appendices B and C) were provided for the participants in the study. Respondents were informed of their rights and the purpose of the study, their right to decline or withdraw at any point and to refuse to answer any particular question. Consent was asked for the interviews to be recorded and for non-identifiable portions of direct speech to be used in the report of the study.

To ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants, the interview data were coded with pseudonyms and were made available only to my supervisors. Information such as addresses, type of work and names of children that might convey the identity of participants was excluded.

I had privileged access to the people in this study because of the availability of separated men at my place of work and because turning lunchtime conversations into a research programme seemed a natural progression of my

interest. Adding to my interest was the overlap between the respondents and me in areas such as age, social class and occupational experience.

The location of the discussions was a factor that was significant in helping respondents feel comfortable. Because the research dealt with sensitive and emotional issues, albeit viewed through the distance of time, it was important that interviews took place in private areas where respondents felt at ease. Accordingly, interviewees nominated the place and time that was most convenient to them. In this study, three interviews occurred at respondents' offices at their workplace, one at the respondent's home and three in a neutral hotel room in Wellington. I used a small but powerful digital recorder that was placed obliquely away from both interviewer and interviewee and I took the seat that respondents offered me.

The research was a complex undertaking, not least because of the one-off nature of the interviews. The stories are slices of behaviour located in specific social histories and reveal, no doubt, resolutions built on the rehearsed solutions of childhood. I tried to develop a sensitivity to emergent issues as well as to the elusiveness and silences that implied significant barriers to expression. Sometimes I thought that the facile parts of participants' experiences were being offered in order to avoid opening up deeper and more interesting awareness, only later discovering that significant and poignant features *were* being displayed, obscured but in the foreground. I tried to remind myself of these questions throughout the course of the interviews:

- Do I understand what the participant is saying?
- What impression is he trying to create of himself?
- What do I find surprising? contradictory?
- What does the participant find troubling? dismiss? ignore?
- What does the participant want to discuss? What does he consider important?

At the time of the interviews, the men ranged in age from 43 to 66 and were all staff in polytechnics in New Zealand. Three have re-married after their initial

separation, three are in new relationships and one has had no long-term partner since his divorce. All but one have children from their first relationship.

Participants came from four polytechnics in New Zealand and the interviews took place in the first half of 2005.

After explaining the aims of the research and inviting participants to read the outline and ask questions about it, we began the interview. Transcribing the interviews, I identified four themes: talk about legal constraints and the ramifications of separation, talk about morality, talk about old and new masculine roles and talk about journeying and the construction of new identities. These themes are interwoven and fit into and draw upon the discourses available to the men in their linguistic environment. That their talk is often similar seems to be due to the similarity of their life experiences, age and group membership. All participants enthusiastically endorsed the research and gave their full approval for publication in the interests of having their stories heard and helping men in similar circumstances. They encouraged me to believe that the benefit to prospective readers was greater than any sensitive issues that might be raised.

Transcription

Questions and responses play an important part in discourse analysis. I used a recorder to capture discussion, then, for the reasons of security and developing a close connection with the participants' talk, I transcribed the recordings. In the process, I arranged the utterances in vertical form, respondent and interviewer above the other in a single column to express an impression of equal status between participants.

Many analyses of talk are interpretive rather than strictly quantifying. Interpretation is required in order to capture discussion where it is meaningful in the context but where it may be too subtle to register by physical measure. The transcription notation is governed, of course, by the level and type of investigation being undertaken. This research did not require the detailed minutiae of enunciation, inflexion, pace or volume to make it amenable to analysis, but a clear, comprehensive and accurate transcription of all the

dialogue occurring in the interview was necessary in order to maintain the integrity of what was said. The transcription notation used in this study uses features from Jefferson's version (in Wood & Kroger, 2000). A list of the notation symbols is given in Appendix E.

Chapter 2

METHODOLOGY

Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis

In this section I elaborate the model for analysis used in this study: a hybrid mix of discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis and structural analysis.

Schegloff's (cited in Schiffrin, Tannen & Hamilton, 2004) two definitions of 'discourse' are primary for the study. The first, taxonomic, usage distinguishes between genres; for instance, this study finds the men draw upon, are constrained by and resist, a 'masculinity discourse' and a 'good provider discourse'. The other usage, the one particularly focused on in the research, refers to talk that is a contingent or a contrived product of conversation, rather than considering conversation as one sort of discourse. On this account, extended talk by one speaker in an interview situation is a transformation of what Schegloff (in Schiffrin, Tannen & Hamilton, 2004, p. 231) calls 'the foundational domain' of conversation, where units in conversation: the word, the clause, sentence, turn-taking, and so on – are all, in principle, interactional units, and that from this interaction, meaning is created.

Further subdivisions of conversation reveal four referential functions of communication. They are: 1) Extra-referentiality: referring to a material reality outside the discussion, whether 'real' or embellished; 2) Self-referentiality: referring internally to the content and structure created in the discussion; 3) Inter-referentiality: referring to the dialogic content of speaking persons and their intentions; and 4) Supra-referentiality: referring to a transcendent principle that guides the production of meaning. Discourse on this level acts to achieve what Austin (2005) refers to as possessing *illocutionary* (how speakers use words) and *perlocutionary* force (the effects of the words on a listener).

Discourse analysis is situated within the paradigm of social constructionist theory, in contrast to the favoured approach of much of the last century, where psychological research into social behaviour focused on investigating attitudes, beliefs, judgements and desires as causal factors affecting thought, speech and

subsequent physical behaviour. But emphasising internal feelings essentialises individual identity and dismisses or relegates to an inferior position the role of the social in producing this identity. Furthermore, hypothesising biological endowment as sufficient explanation for self-identity explains neither its origin nor its evolution. Proposing an autonomous, self-sufficient, independent Cartesian self is illogical because consciousness conceived in this way is utterly subjective and completely lacking in objectivity. The content of experience, on this view, is an entirely individual affair, ignoring its embeddedness in the social. Mead accused this view of carrying the implication of complete solipsism (Mead, 1934/1974). He maintained that the self is formed through communication and cannot be separated from it.

Individual consciousness required an objective corrective. Building on scientific discoveries (Copernicus's discovery of the solar system, Darwin's theory of evolution, Freud's discovery of the unconscious) that chipped away at the notion of the self-sufficient individual, social constructionism posited the idea of the decentred self (for example, Gergen, 2000; Burr, 2003), one not the autonomous master of its own destiny but rather an effect of the competing discourses that meet in and speak through the self. In this way social constructionism acted to remedy the positivist excesses of an earlier paradigm.

Discourse analysis (DA) shares the anti-essentialist view of social constructionism while it centres on questions of the construction of identity and subjectivity. The turn in the seventies away from quantitative design and towards language, social psychology and other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences used discourse analysis to affirm the social aspects of individuals' experiences; its primary concern, investigation into how people 'build defensible identities, how they present versions of themselves and events as factual and how they legitimate their actions' (Burr, 2003, p. 163).

These are central precepts of contemporary discourse theory, dating at least from Kant, and involving Mead's views, Lacan's concept of the Symbolic and the Real (cited in Feldstein, Fink & Jaanus, 1996), Butler's theorisation of performativity (1991), Bourdieu's cultural capital (cited in Richardson, 1986) and

Baudrillard's (1981/1994) notion of simulacra. With these theorists, social constructionists argue that the old view (of thought leading to speech leading to action) is not only inverting the more probable sequence of events, but also that being a self, constructing a self, involves existing in a social structure that modulates and modifies this self in relation to the events and objects with which it interacts. In this regard, the assumed permanence, even existence, of mental events like attitudes and beliefs is not validated by investigation. Assuming that the accounts people give of events indicate that 'attitudes are enduring entities which generate equivalent responses from occasion to occasion' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p.53) is therefore both implausible and subject to falsifying examination. The same person may offer varied accounts of the same event from one time to another, not necessarily because he wilfully distorts an account nor because the event is poorly remembered, but because memory is a formative process which is revised retroactively as required for the production and guidance of proximal action on the basis of current understandings. Notwithstanding these caveats, aporia, repetitions, subreptions, particular phrases and words, stresses and pauses are all valuable sources of data in speech acts because of what they are intended to achieve. Discourse analysis discovers that language is used functionally to attain certain goals.

Nevertheless, analysis of talk cannot be sure that whatever is expressed by a particular person at a specific time is an indication of underlying attitudes or what a person 'truly' believes. It can only determine what functions a speech act is aimed at achieving. Being a person means being a *social* person, and selves are formulated in response to different situations and different requirements. This means a host of different selves, formed in response to the requirements of the minute and of the future (Burr, 2003; Gergen, 2000). Discourse analysis is a strategy which facilitates enquiry into the reasons why (the so-called) 'attitude x rather than attitude y [is] espoused' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p. 35). These authors describe how discourse analysis examines the flexible and constructive ways in which language is used to generate accounts which function to vitalise a speaker's purposes. It can, for instance, be argued that talk is actioned purely to generate cooperation between people. That is, talk may interactively construct speaker and auditor as possessing a linked identity associated with

the characteristics of tolerance, goodwill and predictability. This might explain why there is such concern for a negotiated morality in the men's stories.

Allied closely to discourse analysis is critical discourse analysis (CDA) which in this study offers a way of examining some of the ideological processes which promote privileged representations of fatherhood and marriage-type relationships and the ways in which 'people themselves use descriptive categories (Gough and McFadden, cited in Tuffin, 2005, p.144). CDA investigates the broader attributes of language practice in their sociocultural contexts (Fairclough, 1995) and is especially concerned with examining how language is socially constitutive of identity, relationships and beliefs, either reproducing and sustaining them through existing conventions, or challenging and resisting and changing them from dissenting positions of alternative orientations (Fairclough, 1995). Language, on this account, is used to effect positioning; that is, language is a social practice that reveals how positions of dominance, subordination and inequality are enacted and reproduced in social and political contexts (van Dijk, cited in Schiffrin, Tannen & Hamilton, 2004). CDA acknowledges that people use language to further particular ends and argues that language is used, sometimes unwittingly, in ways that place people into predictable patterns of behaviour. There is an economic or political advantage to be had in having one's discourse accepted, because the identities and relationships constituted by that discourse represent and reproduce a society's systems of belief and power and also because the discourse bestows privilege and develops structures of benefit. Discourses always privilege some ideological positions and subordinate others, protect and support some values and institutions while discriminating against other, less popular institutions (Parker, 1992). CDA examines who stands to benefit and who stands to lose from the dominating discourse(s). If, for instance, it is accepted that New Zealand society places a premium on maternal care and that mothers are more competent to make decisions about the care of children than are fathers, then, in a relationship breakup, mothers' discourses will dominate the debate in matters regarding custody of children.

On this view, language and the social practices it helps form are prominent in constituting identity. So in exploring enactments of identity in this study, a key part of the discursive construction of relationship and parenthood is underpinned by the complicitous nature of language and material advantage in defining what is approved and what grants group membership, and what is not and does not. People's orientations to these aspects of domestic life foster and reproduce identifications with the ideological reality that warrants their own arrangements.

Discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis then, are distinguished by their commitment to a social constructionist view of the world and of how people make meaning. This strategy firmly positions discourse as embedded in its social context. DA and CDA use specific texts – talk, written accounts, semiotic systems, etc, to investigate larger discourses, ultimately signifiers of ideological power that construct and constrain individual performances in those domains. There is much overlap among the various versions of discourse analysis and this study offered the opportunity of blending Potter and Wetherell's (1987) discourse analysis with critical discourse analysis to harvest the potential advantages of both in an approach that connects the interpersonal to the larger social world. The analysis of DA and CDA are usefully combined approaches to investigate people's linguistic practices in order to understand the resources they draw upon and the effects they achieve.

However, a problem with the social constructionism model is that it swings too far to the opposite extreme of Cartesian independence, allowing little or no subjectivity. Social constructionism, DA and CDA claim that our knowledge of the world is derived from interaction between people. It rejects the idea that there are hidden structures or metanarratives underlying and providing causal explanation for the way things appear, claiming that 'all knowledge is historically and culturally specific' (Burr, 2003, p. 13). The paradox is that social constructionism insidiously asserts/inserts itself as a metanarrative, as a permanent structure undergirding and attempting to account for all areas of human interaction. Individuals may be considered as little more than the locus from which the system speaks. A synthesis, built between the two opposites, is

needed to maintain the realm of the personal so that individuals are not to become automatons and so that human personalities can be given an external reality within which to ground themselves.

Structural Analysis

One synthesis is offered by the hybrid model outlined here. There is a disjunction between culture and nature, between consciousness and 'reality', for if there were no gap between a thing and its representation, they would be identical and there would be no space for subjectivity. There would be no space for culture. The gap is the human sense of self, constituted by and through language (Mead, 1934/1974; Burr, 2003). Partially outside nature because of this facility, humans have expelled the very ground from which they are formed: a move necessary for the formation of subjectivity but one which places them forever in the position where recognition and confirmation of individuality requires an outside perspective. This is the 'window' of reality, where language is the paradoxically reflecting surface and the externalising process is the middle ground between the extremes of Cartesian subjectivity and positivist objectivity. In this system, the structuralist Greimas avers (1987) that the rules of language provide a structure which binds our thoughts, behaviours and interlocutions in a feedback loop from which there is logical development, a conviction of personal agency and social coherence. These epistemological rules marginalise the historicity of 'hard' social constructionism because there is no contemporarily conceivable alternative. Language, or our use of it, must radically change for there to be so.

Greimas is a structural theorist, analysing the deep structure of all narrativity. Following Propp's (1958) exploration of the structure of folk stories, he claims that the fundamental concepts of meaning originate in the linguistic oppositions in which people are trained to perceive and structure the world. Adopting the Saussurean (*q.v.* Culler, 1976) notion of binary opposition as the basic human conceptual framework, Greimas (cited in Hawkes, 1978) states that stories embody this mode by using actors or abstract notions whose relationship is either oppositional or negational; and that this relationship generates further fundamental actions of disjunction and conjunction, struggle and reconciliation.

At an elementary level, the model describes the logical relationships between oppositions. Contradictories (the diagonals in the diagram) lack real existence because here the 'opposition' is between something and its lack, whereas real opposition is located in the relationship between two contrary poles (the horizontal lines) that are figures of positive content. Figure 1 below illustrates the 'semiotic square' in which A is opposed to B as -A is opposed to -B:

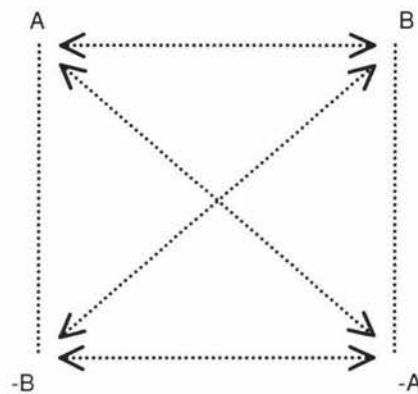


Fig 1. Greimas's semiotic square.

The figure shows that there exist four aspects of any entity or event: itself, its opposite and their negations. As in the traditional square of opposition, the two contraries cannot both be true although they may both be false, while the two subcontraries cannot both be false, although they may both be true. The contradictories cannot both be true and they cannot both be false.

The relationships diagrammed by the semiotic square provide a logical structure for validating certain inferences in language, and the nature and strength of these fundamental structures are so pervasive, Greimas argues (in Hawkes, 1978) that they shape the elements of language, its syntax and even the orderings of experience in people's accounts. Greimas claims this on the constructionist view that all language is arbitrary, that there is no connection other than custom linking language to its referents. Because of this, his theory claims to explicate the forms and manifestations of signification. Anything that people articulate in language, since it bears little connection to so-called reality,

must derive meaning through its adherence to structural rules. As long as 'it takes on form, the world appears in its various articulations as potential meaning' (Greimas, 1987 p. 17).

For Greimas, the semiotic square is the elementary structure of meaning, marking off the oppositional logic that lies at the heart of narrative sense and semantic, thematic and symbolic content. Any given *seme* (the smallest unit of semantic sense) entails its contrary; for example, 'married' is understood only in relation to its opposite, 'single'. In this study, one opposition is: A, Married and B, Single. There is more than just this simple binary, however. Greimas (in Hawkes, 1978) suggests that an oppositional structure like marriage and singlehood implies a subcontrary level of 'not-singlehood' and 'not-marriage'. These subcontraries are the negatives of the two dominant terms but imply more than is suggested by either. 'Not-marriage' implies more than being single and 'not-singlehood' implies more than marriage. In the men's stories, four dominant terms which generate opposition and negation are identified: the contemporary socio-legal system; masculine roles, ethical behaviour, and journeying and identity. A metanarrative binary outside all of these is the affirmation of experience as positive, necessary and timely; its opposite of experience is negative and contingent and untimely. Connected to this is another important binary: innocence, vulnerability, vacillation and aimlessness versus guilt, strength, determination and purpose.

Together with the insights of discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis, this adaptation of Greimas's model provides an authorless hermeneutics for exploring the men's stories. What is said about marriage is always spoken with reference to singlehood and always by inference to the other elements in the scheme. Thus, 'married' implies 'not-single' and 'single' implies 'not-married' and these four positions convey connotations unforegrounded in simple polarities. Moreover, the two contraries (which the men fluctuate between) can be regarded as the dominating discourses in society which the men must accept or oppose. The governing contrary is the conventionalised discourse that fails the men, and the less dominant discourse, also positive, is the discourse that is available to the men as a resistant and empowering one.

The entire mechanism works as a heuristic device to generate other dominant binary oppositions in the men's stories, including figures that offer a (supposed) resolution to the oppositions. The union of the dominant binary, the connection of the two discourses, is sought for as a utopic solution for the staged and articulated diegesis, illustrated by the men's desire to reconstruct their pre-separation lifestyles by undertaking a new relationship and being single. If the discourse, and state, of marriage partakes of some of the elements of singlehood, then the discourse and state of singlehood includes some of the features of marriage. The resolution of the subordinate contraries (for example, non-single and non-married), likewise, is taken up by the solution for some of the men of entering into relationships other than marriage.

The point is that the actors – the men – create, and are progressively created by sequential significations and their oppositions and negations throughout the length of their stories. Greimas argues that there is a structural relationship between agents like these men and the themes or discursive structures of their tales. For Greimas, '[a]n actor is ... a meeting point and locus of conjunction for narrative structures and discursive structures, for the grammatical and the semantic components' (Greimas, 1987, p. 120). A theoretically limitless, but practically constrained set of oppositions is opened up by this model, because agents operate in an episteme which is the product of their limited choices in the society within which they are inscribed. The men can make only a limited number of choices.

Integrating the Methodologies

Discourses of contemporary Western society envelop time and social space, presenting their order as permanent, ethical and necessary; their supporting liberal ideologies are conceived as legal, moral and economic imperatives, spontaneous and without rational alternative (Althusser, 2001). Persuasion, regulation and coercion act to manage compliance just as the opposite movement of legal enforcement and moral sanction acts to approve the discourse's legitimacy. When the links between the dominating discourses and the practical applications of their theories fail to coordinate, the structure's dynamic attempts to manage the conflict back to an equilibrium of social

consensus. The effect is to determine the ethical, social and juridical language and behaviour of its citizens as a universal set of values incommensurable with local variations developed under changing social conditions. Disciplinary control limits practice and language (Foucault, 1990) and social acceptance or exclusion becomes realised in the reactivated words and actions of its subjects.

But at the same time as a discourse's logic attempts to unite all elements in the social order, it opens up a contrary context of resistance. Contrary discourses, marginalised as opposite and threatening, indicate the structural logic of the prevailing discourses, often invisible but always working to integrate subjects within their ambit or declare them deviant. These contrary discourses, figured here as on the upper right-hand side of the Greimasian square, offer the opportunity to define the domain of social determinations and participations through alternative lingual representations. Defining discourses in Greimasian fashion discloses the combinatory depth of their cohesion and consistency, configured as dynamic and somewhat flexible structures, articulated in 3-dimensional depth and it also offers an alternative set of contesting discourses within the same parameters and using the same elements (of sociality, legality and so forth).

The men's stories draw upon these opposing discourses not only to describe their social worlds but also to order them. In the process, certain ways of being a man, a father and a husband are constructed; that is, the ideological formulations 'outside' the men's personal lives are systematically dominating and regulative, in producing these effects. This means that the 'rules' of the men's accounts conform to those internal to the dominating discourse, but, at times, they also conflict with them. At these times the men must acquiesce to being labelled deviant or adopt a contrary discourse.

The rules of the dominant discourses coalesce and sometimes clash with other discourses under implicit rules of combination, so that, for instance, a discourse of 'men's roles' combines with a discourse of 'masculinity'. The rules delimit what can be said, and as the systemic nature of a discourse includes its practices of production, what is said authorises and is confirmed by the specific

discourse drawn upon. Where there is a conflict between certain elements of a discrete discourse, there is likely to be an uncoupling of hitherto supportive discourses, offering a dangerous disarticulation of correlates which previously entailed one another. Thus a clash of elements in the legal discourse calls into question the viability and validity of the masculine discourse and the moral discourse. For the men in this study, a serious obstruction in any one discourse leads to a potential derailment of them all. Massive reconstruction is then required to get on track.

The men use particular parts of the prevailing discourses, both structurally and contentually, to support accounts of their actions. Their accounts shape the telling as these parts of the discourse's validations become powerful confirmations of their subjectivities and motivators for future action. Parts of their stories, however, offer 'thin' descriptions of actions and identities (Geertz, 1973), shrinking the space for alternative articulations of meanings and producing constricted, personal, conclusions which render the socially constructed complexities of their lives opaque or invisible. Often the dominant discourses' powers of definition define the men as inadequate and powerless. But language is creative and the men's accounts recruit explanations from within these and other discourses to sanction the expression of knowledges, abilities and competencies where they come up against imperfect coincidence and as they resist disempowering positionings and develop new understandings.

In the process of telling their stories, the men use particular devices of language, often 'organised around specific metaphors and figures of speech' (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 149). This does not imply a reductionist grammatical analysis, but rather proposes the existence of a set of logical lingual coherences both within the particular discourse and beyond, requiring articulation with other discourses. Discourses limit what can be said, but at the same time associated and alternative metaphors and analogies from other discourses provide the language, and therefore the motivation, to explore contradictions within the dominant discourse and to contest oppressive conceptions of society (Parker, 2002). So in this study's hybrid model, the

relationships between different discourses are foregrounded in ways that connect the diachronicity of locating participants in a certain place at a certain time with the synchronicity of the structuralist approach.

External validation of subjectivity within a discourse does not just rely upon a totalising hegemony, however. Validation also relates to the work done by participants in the discourse. In the classic communication model of addresser – message - listener, validation of the discourse's subjectifying power is received not just from the listener but also from the speaker (Lotman, 2000). This notion of a person transmitting a message to himself seems tautological; nevertheless, speech acts qualitatively change the spoken information, leading to a restructuring of the 'self' where the speaker reconstructs his 'personality' (personality here defined as the intersection of socially significant discourses). At the level of personal exchange, this describes what is happening as the men submit to and resist, through language, society's positionings of them.

Lotman's scheme can be seen at play in the men's stories. The men are telling stories to a listener but also to themselves and the extra-narrative truth of events becomes secondary to the function of the stories in delineating coherent identities and nuanced courses of action. Their use of sophisticated rhetorical devices functions to persuade themselves and their listener of emotional consistency by adopting ways of speaking that work to achieve social and personal acceptance of worthiness and resilience. If the dominant discourses represent the curtailment of possibility and the lack of fulfilment that they describe, then at the same time, other positions in the discourse, other discourses, other ways of describing events, offer the men alternative potentialities of meaning with which to interpret experience and more authentic ways of living.

The hybrid model investigates the notion that 'truth' is held in place by the power of language, and that discourses maintain 'truth'. Operating on all registers of the social order, discourses not only order the territory and rule the society but also create the very world they inhabit. In this study, the identified discourses and the men's subjugation by, and appropriation of them are worked

into a discursive/ structuralist model to provide theoretically greater explanatory power for their accounts than any one approach might achieve. DA, CDA and the adaptation of Greimas's scheme bring into focus the 3-dimensional aspect of the interrelationships between the men as 'objects' of discourse, their texts, the discourses themselves and the institutions they serve. As the men show in their talk, discourses and their contents can be rewritten, resisted and re-acted.

Chapter 3

ANALYSIS

I think that by talking, what's happening inside my head is that I'm rationalising things, I'm getting things into little compartments and that's by speaking.

George

The analysis of the men's stories involved reading the interview transcripts and categorising talk about particular areas under specific headings. In this manner, repeated themes became the basis of deeper analysis, resulting in the identification of four dominant discourses which the men use and sometimes challenged, to construct talk about decisions regarding their courses of action following relationship breakup. The purpose of this section is to present these discourses, examine the functions they serve and compare and contrast the discursive practices between the men's experiences, the way they made sense of them, the conflicts they experience and the challenges they mount within the parameters of customary practice.

Everyday exchange of information in any communication event is generally concerned with the content of the message. Where the transfer and reception of the message is identical to that which the sender of the message intends, then the communication is said to be working well (Lotman, 2002). This idealisation assumes that addresser and addressee have wholly identical memories and experiences where, in fact, the coincidence of message between transmitter and receiver is very slight. That the same message can be heard differently by different listeners attests to the many ways listening and interpretation function. Instead of a precise, symmetrical correspondence there is one of many possible interpretations. Within the message, the listener is required to make a choice about what he considers to be significant. Other topics of interest than the ones the sender intends may be discerned. The asymmetrical relationship and the constant requirement for choosing meaning make interpretation an act of generating new knowledge and exemplify the creative function of language.

Particularly significant is the situation where the text of an interview is examined under a theoretical framework such as discourse analysis. First, a verbal recording is transcribed into a written code. Then, the analyst must decide what themes – ie what overlapping patterns can be meaningfully detected in the space of the language and style and conventions of the existing cultural codes. Nevertheless, 'meaning' is an invariant remainder which is preserved under all kinds of transformations, as well as what is altered, so it can be claimed that there is an enlargement of meaning in the process while the core remains constant.

Under the operation of ordinary communication and generation of meaning, language is inseparable from the content it expresses (Lotman, 2002). What occurs under discourse analysis, however, does not simply focus on the messages in a stretch of language, but also examines the messages *about* language, in which interest is shifted on to the language event. Invariably, there are aspects of communication which are common to both addresser and addressee/interpreter in this act, and even what appears to the auditor as new must derive from some tradition or convention (Fairclough's (1995) 'background knowledge') which can be understood. Also, inevitable accompaniments to speakers' accounts are metalanguage elements, such as self-reflexive constituents, as the text of the message fluctuates between contextual content and a creative function. In the interviews analysed in this study, for instance, there are poetic turns of rhetoric, moral propagandising, self advertisements, clichéd sayings and expressions of emotion, all geared to establishing and emphasising certain meanings.

Marginalising the explicit informational content as the point of reference in the men's stories has important consequences for analysis. It means that the conative, constative, phatic and referential aspects of the message are backgrounded in favour of emotive and poetic ones (Hawkes, 1978) and that the creative component of the men's stories takes precedence. This means that the men sometimes favoured metaphoric aspects of their accounts over diachronic metonymic progress. Why? Metaphor designates a resemblance in qualities whereas metonymy identifies a part in place of the whole, and the

interchangeability of these tropes in the men's accounts, where they exchange one lingual device for another, one way of talking for an alternative, builds up a rich texture of associations in which creativity does not so much supplement the account as effect a total re-evaluation of the unfolding message. The men use language, in short, to create new descriptions, events and identities in the 'voyage of discovery' that they typically adopted as vehicle for their stories.

The Legal System Discourse

Discourse recruits people by 'interpellating' them (Althusser, 2001) into positions where the discourse provides 'obvious' meaning. In the process, patterns of relationship and their connection with the structures of the larger society are obscured as people are abstracted from social contexts. The interpellation provides meaning and identity, where individual identity is co-created as an active accomplishment in combination with group and institutional identities (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). These accomplishments become reified as people make sense of their worlds. The wider structures of power limit what can be said in discourse and therefore limit constructions of identity as discourse bring phenomena into categorisation.

The men in this study once belonged to the readily identifiable group of 'father and partner'. The set of statements that constructs a person as belonging to a group, Sack's 'membership categorisation devices' ('MCDs', Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 128) requires definition. Potter & Wetherell's (1987) account stipulates first the requirement of consistency, which states that 'if one category from a MCD has been used it may well be appropriate to use another from that MCD' (p. 128). Then they go on to say that there is conventional knowledge about the behaviour of members in the category, which provides powerful resources for understanding people's actions. Thus, a man who is identified and who identifies as father and partner is interpellated as a member of that group and adheres to the set of statements of that MCD – statements like being a good provider, caring for wife and family, being faithful, and being a 'subject under law'. Under this nomination, the discourse of the law defines the man and constrains his behaviour in conformity to prescribed practices. One such

practice is the legal requirement to pay for support of children following relationship dissolution.

The legal system discourse in New Zealand operates upon an adversarial model which insists upon a winner and a loser in any situation. So in this study, the losers, the men, talked about child-care costs and the situation in which they perceived themselves as being held responsible for relationship breakup and accordingly being made to pay punitive maintenance for their children's welfare. A degree of bitterness was expressed around these issues, with many men indicating their dissatisfaction over a system that allowed ex-partners to divert this money away from the children and towards themselves.

Their concern draws upon a legal system discourse in which a set of lingual practices defines disputing parties as malefactor and victim. One is positioned as guilty and the other as innocent. But in the men's accounts, another discourse is drawn upon to resist this labelling. In Greimas's scheme, the legal code can be contrasted to the social code as contrary discourses, both with positive features and both with features inherent in, though subordinate to, the other. The men, jolted from their membership of the privileged legal category which had previously conferred many benefits, began speaking about the contrary claims of the social. A tension arises here because of the difficulty of coordinating the two discourses. This is because of the conflicting expectations of conforming to the law's demand for child support, of sustaining a position in society that maintained the privileges and status of their former lives and of adopting a more social role, caring for their children and being concerned (initially) for their ex-partners, where the latter two had been a relatively minor part of the men's previous positioning. The men's membership of the privileged legal code had been dismantled and they were obliged to seek validating messages of new identities in the social discourse which had once been just a small part of their previous status. They had been breadwinners and heads of houses. Now they were not.

Where there is conflict, there is likely to be an initial attempt to re-establish a synthesis, and Ted, who kept his children in the family house, found that he

wholly supported them while his separated wife paid nothing. He found the legalities of separation difficult:

Ted: Getting a separation agreement was quite traumatic because it meant that I had to split everything, years of planning in terms of superannuation, years of planning in terms of insurances had to be sold up and split.

Ted uses the device of *anaphora*, repeating the word 'years' at the beginning of successive phrases in conjunction with a dramatic clausal parallelism and a skilled construction of building to a partial climax. This is the language of legality, couched in persuasive idiom and designed to convey a sense of frustration at having his elaborately devised and painstakingly assembled marriage dismantled. His merging of substance with style compels a vivid sense of the legal code conflicting with the sociality of marriage. There is an overlap between the two discourses but the fit is always incomplete. The exasperated quality in his account expresses the tension between the requirements of legal separation and the expectations of social justice; the discourse of the legal code signifies to him that the social code should operate under similar prescriptions of justice and fair play, but Ted's language indicates it has not. What occurs in this part of his talk is his attempt to transfer the language of the binding legal code into the arena of the voluntary social code in order to control his situation.

Fred's account uses many anacoluthons and parentheses, omitting conjunctions and voicing expletives to emphasise particular words, giving an effect of energy and passion, and functioning to position him as having been unfairly treated and guiltless. He claims to have been particularly hard done by:

Fred: And, but as I, but if you go through these review papers [with the IRD] that they give you to fill out and it's also wrong that I've got to declare stark naked, my total financial situation that's given to my ex for her to analyse, um knowing damn well that I've got as much chance of getting any relief than farting in the wind so I've got to keep every financial thing about myself, assemble it, give it to the IRD. They give it to my ex-wife and her partner who sit there and laugh their bloody tits off in front of the fire. I'm sure of it that they're screwing me 'cause that's what they're doing. I find that offensive, and as a male knowing damn well that you've got no redress whatsoever.

The Dickensian image constructed is one of an affluent and callously indifferent wife and new partner obscenely gloating over a huddled supplicant. The image

of the two confederates laughing 'in front of the fire' paints a picture of material comfort in contrast to his impecunious position. Again, the discourse of legality has overshadowed the compassion of the social contract.

Fred: ... so if I look at this letter [to IRD] I wish to apply for my child support format to be reviewed, and you gotta go through and cite three by memory ... so my contention in this letter is that I am entitled to enjoy a reasonable standard of living reasonable in all the circumstances and I don't think I'm enjoying that, arrgh, high access costs and they come up with a fancy formula in that bloody, you've seen the thing? Ok, well if you apply the formula in my case it doesn't work so there's something wrong with their bloody thing and just and equitable um ...

I: So do you think you're actually paying more or were paying more than you should have?

Fred: Well I think so. In terms of access I was, yeah it's [*sic*] costs a fortune to go ... to ... bloody []. ... But the approach, the window of opportunity to approach the IRD from a men's [*sic*] perspective does not exist. It doesn't exist, it's just a great wall. The only way you can talk to them is if you fill out one of those assessment forms, declare all your income to your ex. It's just totally not approachable. ... It's wrong, it's morally wrong.

Here the picture is one of a 'special case', one who is wrongly condemned and who is unable to make his tormentors understand his situation, let alone escape ('it's just a great wall') the unjustness of the treatment. A man in Fred's position must deferentially and defencelessly 'approach' the authorities and 'declare' all his income in a charade of justice. Fred must pay punitive child support while his ex-wife and her new partner enjoy a large income: the legal requirement of paying for the support of his children becomes a barrier to Fred's re-integration into society and a temptation to cheat - a transgression of both the legal and the social codes.

More than his maintenance payments, another legal impediment became an issue for Fred. In this passage Fred employs *apophasis* - a rhetorical device which functions to mention a subject by *not* mentioning it. The disavowal creates a kind of hole in the discourse which traces the contours of what it is permissible to speak, and simultaneously foregrounds the topic through its very invisibility. What Fred says or rather, does *not* say, condemns his ex-wife (as a corollary, the device soundlessly lauds his own irreproachable behaviour) but by declaiming in this fashion he alleviates the self-reproach which clings to the gratification of accusation. The apophasis confers blame on his wife without

actually mentioning her and the implication is that Fred's ex-wife has the capacity and will to indict him for molesting his children. In contrast, Fred's drawing upon a social familial discourse – one of the protecting and caring father - positions him as outraged by the advice. He cannot be a loving father as he once was:

Fred: So I was having a beer one night with [lawyer] and he said Fred, how's the kids going? and I said [lawyer's name], they're bloody marvellous. I've just taken them back home. I've had them all weekend. I said I'm lying in bed, next minute sound asleep, I've got three kids, bouncing kids all over me, and [name] said Fred, those kids are not to come into your bed any more. He said, I've just put an innocent man in jail for nine years because they've come back and put a sexual molestation case on their father, something happened in their life, didn't pay the university fees or something and that guy's in the clink. He said, you are now a single male in a house by yourself and your children no longer come into your bedroom and this is the situation and this is, it blew me out of the water that I cannot even be a father to my children.

The legal terms in this passage: 'innocent man in jail' and 'in the clink' combine with a war metaphor: 'blew me out of the water', to portray Fred as a powerless victim up against the big guns of the legal apparatus. In addition to this appeal to sympathy, Fred's account draws upon the legal discourse of separated men as potential pædophilic predators of their own children, as a whirlpool of insinuations swirls around the node of separated men as sexual marauders. One such implicit accusation goes like this: 'Divorced or separated men cannot be trusted with their children because the men have lost normal outlets for their sexual drive'. Another, from legal discourse, hints: 'Ex-wives (and children) are liable to falsely accuse men of sexual misconduct'.

In this passage, the legal discourse has entirely swamped the social discourse by stating, in the words of Fred's lawyer, that children can 'no longer come into [his] bedroom'. Fred 'cannot even be a father to [his] children'. There is no connection to be made, no synthesis to be achieved, no movement to be had between the legal and social discourses. The cold objective discourse of the law allows no space for the generosity of social sympathy, trapping Fred in a place of immobility though an interpellation he is powerless to resist.

Fred's repetition of the first person singular and his use of a mix of present and perfect tenses give an effect of unpremeditated multiplicity and extemporaneous immediacy rather than a laboured account of considered construction. This functions to position him as innocent of the scurrilous suggestions, but the counter-positioning legal discourse, *one which he accepts as unchangeable*, interpellates him as already 'involved in the rituals of ideological recognition' (Althusser, 2001, p.117). For Fred, there is currently no access to stories of resistance, no contrary discourse from which he can draw.

Ron indicates his concern over the breach of rules which he had tried to maintain. He couches his concerns in the form of a conditional (*if – then*) statement which carries the weight of the juridical manner in which he states the transgressions in his failed relationship. The passage uses an extended 'game' metaphor ('play by the rules', 'I never ... tried to cheat', 'fair deal', 'it is very unfair'):

Ron: and I do think the system, if you play by the rules which I did and I never ever, you know, ever tried to cheat, and pay my fair deal, in fact I always tried to do a bit better, um, it is very unfair. You know, it is ridiculous that you can end up having to pay, for instance, that you are living in crap.

... and all of a sudden I was living on my own, in a squat basically. That's the other thing, completely broke. I mean there is no acknowledgement that when you start paying that family support it leaves you with no money.

Modifying adverbs, repetitions and emphasis convey the effect of strong feeling and his leaving statements unfinished gives the impression of intense emotion. Argument is more recognisable when it is articulate and explicit, but Ron's enthymemes are unnoticed because the presence of developed argument is not the point of this articulation.

Conveying emotion is the point, and the inference is that Ron, like Fred, had obeyed the law and found that the social code doesn't operate by the same rules. The rule of law is effective when it becomes procedure and here, the discourse of law has established itself procedurally as the choice between social participation or refusal, obedience or banishment. Both Ron and Fred assume principles of sociality within the legal discourse of marriage and are

dismayed to discover, after separating, that principles of legality do not similarly imbue the social contract. There is no recognition of men's suffering in the legal discourse and there is no acknowledgement of fairness and justice in the social discourse. There is, however, in the men's talk, a switching to and fro from making coherent, consistent statements under the discourse of law towards the more compelling, competing discourse of sociality, and an indication, too, that notions of legality that subject men to harsh and unfair treatment are not necessarily givens. As Ron continues to elaborate his story, he disconnects from the law's discourse when he examines how that discourse affects his life under separation.

Jack's experience of the legal system is different. He talks about being subjected to the scrutiny of the law which inspected his sexual behaviour during the period of separation:

Jack: and I married when my divorce came through and that was a Supreme Court sort of type divorce in those days that first one and that was traumatic getting up in front of a bloke in a big wig in the Supreme Court and saying no, I hadn't had relations with my partner for the past year or two or whatever and um, having a friend get up in the witness box and say, yes, that's right.

Like Fred, the image Jack presents is one of a person subjected to the word of the law, beaten down by the authority of the legal process, undergoing the humiliating experience of demonstrating that he had not engaged in conjugal connection. The episodic flow of description gives a sense of an uncontrived recollection of events that refers as much to a self-referential reconstruction of events as to the extra-referential facts. In his story, Jack is re-telling the story for himself, positioning himself as subjectified by the controlling legal discourse into a space where there is little room to move. There is little room for a social account. Later, as he adopts a social discourse, he will transform this and other instances of legal conformity into a subtle story of tolerance and acceptance of others' subjectivities and wishes.

Stories like these three men's attempt to resolve the oppositions of the given binary. The conflict between legal and social discourses finds the authors' narratives attempting to reconcile these contraries by scripting stories that unite

the polarities into a kind of synthesis. In their stories, the men are seen to develop their sense of social awareness at the same time as they admit some degree of legal responsibility. Three of the seven men are in new relationships where the convention of marriage is not formalised, affording the advantage at one and the same time of maintaining and breaching legal and social conventions. In Ron's words:

Ron: Um, and I mean, I just don't see the point. I've done that. But marriage to me was an unfortunate thing, and it's a silly thing, we could get married. People say it's a mark of respect and I say well, you know if I'm not showing respect unless I do that then you shouldn't be in the relationship and we have a really good relationship. I don't give a stuff about getting married. I just, also, I'm very loath to do things that are almost clichéd, you know. You go out with someone for almost ten years, I don't know, you may have done this so don't be offended, but it's like, you know, so now we're going to have this big ceremony for all of our friends to show that we're actually getting married, to show that means we're really committed to each other but for me I just think that's just a load of crap, you know.

Ron uses modifying adverbs ('really' good, 'actually' getting, 'really' committed) and the expletive 'you know', to stress prior words and he exploits *aporia* to express doubt about some of his ideas, to suggest alternatives without making a commitment to any. As Ron uses the tactic, the effect is to parlay himself into a position portrayed as reasonable, fair and balanced. This and his anticipating objections and answering them permits his account to move forward while refuting potentially opposing ideas interrupting either his argument or its final conclusions. The larger point is that Ron has rejected the constraints of the legal discourse by dismissing the conventions of marriage ('I just don't see the point', "... marriage to me was a very unfortunate thing", 'I'm very loath to do things that are almost clichéd ...', 'I think that's just a load of crap ...') and by moving towards the discourse of the social code ('we have a really good relationship'). Elements of the legal discourse are embedded in the new relationship ('... we're really committed to each other') but Ron's talk indicates that his behaviour is consonant with a different, social paradigm. A new story is emerging. In a small way, his talk acts to maximise a plurality of possibilities and minimise the modality of singular convention.

Three men have entered a state similar to marriage. They have managed a synthesis of sorts of being married and being single. Three others, who married their subsequent partners, have different oppositions in their stories; a major one being dealing with the conflicts of reconstituted families. A different story is Fred's who has been unable to reconcile or integrate any of the oppositions in his tale. He has not adopted the other, social, discourse and he has not repeated the experience of commitment to a new relationship in order to gain mastery or provide 'edges' to his story. Much more than the other men, his recounting of events uses a panoply of negative metaphors: 'traumatic', 'unnerving', 'erode', 'excessive drinker', 'drinking too much', 'devastating', 'shame', 'vindictiveness', 'stupid', 'knocks your self-esteem', 'can't get an erection anymore', 'bravado', 'screwing me', 'doubly screwed', 'declare stark naked', 'just crap', 'I'm getting shafted', 'done my penance', 'bloody old now', 'aching like shit', 'getting old and worn out', 'I've got no money', 'a huge bloody mortgage', 'running late', 'lost in space'. The language articulates victimhood, placing Fred in a static position in a realm of identification with a chosen fragment of the world wherein he seems complete, full and defined. This foreshortens his perception of possibilities in which movement cannot be generated.

The Morality Discourse

The two discourses or polarities here are those of morality and transgression and they each speak a different set of statements, allowing different permissions of behaviour. The morality discourse is one the men adopt as they position themselves as victims, and the transgression discourse is one in which they place their ex-wives and partners. Here, the women are described as transgressing sexually and in neglecting their wifely and mothering duties.

If, on a 3-dimensional view, the 'morality' semiotic square is laid over the 'legal' square, it can be seen how the men's stories attempt to reconcile conflicts of subjectivity in the legal discourse with the patterns of talk from the morality discourse. This is the significant insight from Greimas. Once the contradictions and negations inherent in any discursive system erupt, the interconnections

between that discourse and other associated discourses are susceptible to corruption and collapse – as well as review and reconstruction. The ‘legal code’ of society is connected to the men’s talk of morality insofar as both are fungible structural impositions of rules and laws, but conflict arises where tension occurs between received interpretations of culture and practical experience.

The conflict inheres in society’s discourses that demand compliance to the ‘rules’ of relationship behaviour and legal edict but decline to ground these rules in a code of moral conduct. This confusion is seen clearly in the men’s accounts of the contradictions between the ideologies of institutions (of contracts, of the ‘rules’ governing conduct within marriage) and the practices of relationships in everyday life. Many of the men’s views expressed here are deliberate and fixed. But the perceptions had not been available until the men lived the experiences, in actual relationships, and then these views were not linked to social convention until they had been articulated in speech. Practical understanding is sometimes different from structured societal discourse and the men’s talk indicates an unease, a distress, a displacement - and a potential for different stories.

The morality discourse in society is replete with prohibitions and prescriptions of appropriate behaviour. The men are subsumed by this discourse and the strong moral dimension in their ordinary stories of relationship breakdown, sometimes implicit but often openly expressed, recount how events took them by surprise and how they attempted to maintain their relationships against impending dissolution. The recounting places the men as blameless and vulnerable victims, innocent of responsibility for the breakup, in opposition to the women who are positioned as moral transgressors and perpetrators of the separation. Morality implies the subalternation of non-transgression and the contradictory of non-morality; consequently, when the men’s stories place themselves as moral actors, then logically, in the event of separation, their partners must be positioned as not-moral. So their talk confirms.

The effort to unify binaries is seen in the tensions of the men’s talk.

Transgression is deplored when the women do not conform to (the men’s versions of) society’s expectations, yet the men, by their own moral yardstick,

often enact similar contraventions. In their case, however, the transgressions are described as non-moral or amoral occurrences, and the effect is to erect an association between contraries and nullify contradictories. The morality discourse, as the men use it, thus achieves two purposes: to construct what is right procedure and to depict the men as following that right path. The men's talk serves both aims.

There is a passivity associated with the men's declarations of innocence which contrasts with their talk of the women's playing an active role in the failure of the relationships, where the men's talk neatly functions to contrast these oppositions in terms of a kind of balance. Innocence is conflated with ignorance and with lack of action, which in turn, implies a potentially catastrophic diminution of the masculine role. Thus, the men were taken by surprise at the women's decision to leave the relationship, implying that they, the men, were innocent of responsibility for the event. Even where the women were 'slovenly' around the house, this was portrayed as a willed, immoral transgression rather than an attenuation of activity. By contrast, the men are relatively inactive and relatively moral.

This standpoint draws upon a religious ethical position that stipulates energy as dubiously ethical. It employs an understanding of ethical behaviour dating back at least to Hobbes' (1668/1982) notion that morality inheres in observing the social contract, a notion that relies on abstract rules of justice, contractual obligations, rights and duties, rather than on an alternative moral discourse of relationship, care and need. The men's talk here draws upon the importance of hegemonic 'family values', which have been transgressed in one way or another. Families in the West are still commonly regarded as small communities that exhibit relationships of selfless care and reciprocity and are ideologically represented as mainstays of peace and protectiveness, quiet and order, havens of rest and restoration. This private space contrasts with the public sphere where men are obliged to adopt artificial personæ and exist inauthentically. When the domestic abode of safety and repose is abruptly transformed, therefore, men's former articulation of themselves as responsible, morally accountable individuals is questioned.

This division of private and public spheres of influence is consistent with the gender roles the men adopt. Accordingly, their stories relate insistent positions of masculine moral rectitude and contrasting feminine immorality. For instance, Ted relates how he came home one day:

to find half the bedroom missing, but Ted, being slow, realised that this had been going on over a period of about three weeks and I didn't notice it happening. ... She'd make comments to me, well I've had my turn, now it's your turn; you know, in other words I've had my turn looking after the kids and now it's your turn. I thought it was a ridiculous statement. I, it had no balance, you may well have had your turn and she never worked for a long time because it was my idea that she stayed home, looked after the kids and I was very happy with that while I worked. I was that sort of male who wanted their woman at home looking after and raising his children.

Ted moves from past tense, third person description to present tense, first person, in a metaphor of passivity ('Ted being slow'; 'I didn't notice it happening'). This later changes into figures of greater activity as his tale continues and as he constructs himself as ignorant of causal factors leading to his partner's actions and therefore innocent in the events. The repetition of a key word, 'turn' indicates a heightened awareness of a sense of justice, as does the word 'balance'. Ted implicitly states that (his understanding of) balance has been achieved by his working in the public sphere, that is, the sphere of masculine law and lore. Not only does his story make a plea for moral balance and logical sense, but the structure of his arguments (including mentioning opposing facts to prevent accusations of his argument being one-sided) merges the form to the content.

Later he recounts his formally conducting 'some research in this time and asking myself the question, why do women leave?', further positioning himself as bewildered by, and therefore innocent of the course of events leading to the disintegration of the relationship. As he positions himself innocently going about his duties, his partner actively bears the burden of guilt as she doubly schemes - plotting to abandon the marriage and contriving to remove the best of the shared belongings. Ted's partner had transgressed the accepted social contract of wifely responsibilities and childminding obligations and Ted construed this as

morally unfair ('it had no balance') because he had maintained his part of the contract, working to support his wife and children. ('I was that sort of male ...').

Ron, eliminating responsibility through using the passive voice and using a vague anaphoric reference ('it'), skips over his part in his marriage breakdown ('... probably for ten of those thirteen years of marriage, it was pretty miserable'). Drawing upon a hegemonic discourse of irresistible social change, he offers several reasons for the breakdown, positioning himself as powerless against the tides of change:

I think that I was one of those people that, um, we were brought up knowing what we had to do and then found out that wasn't what was expected ...

But there was a revolution going on and, you know, there was a lot of pressure put on women at that time that were doing what my partner was doing, which was, my partner, you know, staying at home with kids, et cetera, she was under a lot of pressure to not be subjugated, and, you know, everything else ...

No person speaks quite the same language as his forebears, and no generation understands events in quite the same way as the previous one. This difference can be seen especially in changing institutions and discourses, but what is interesting about Ron's talk is his interpretation of the quality of his experience and the relationship between this understanding and the social and economic relationships of the time. Social conventions, community custom, a society that gets its values by conforming to what others find appropriate, all mean that relationships are not private matters but, as Ron articulates it, inexorably chained to tradition. Like many men of his generation and class, he claims to possess traditional values. His background is masculine working class, and he clearly articulates its expectations: he expected to become a tradesman and work in a factory, get married early, buy a house, settle down and have children. Raised in accordance with these set of values, Ron had become subjected to this discourse; having been brought up to work hard, '...I knew my role in life was to be a provider, get married, everything else ...', and social transformation had left him unable to adapt.

The methodological consequences of Ron's talk are his stating that the collapse of his relationship was caused by the changed social and economic

expectations of a different society and his blaming the ideology of this discourse. These changes find that Ron draws upon a larger social explanation as meaning for his experience, providing meanings and values that are actively lived, felt and justified by society, in contrast to the other men's adoption of a personal justification discourse. In an obvious way, Ron has structured his marriage in terms of its fit with the structure of a past era to provide good reason its failure. The marriage didn't fit and adjustments had to be made.

Ron frequently employs *antagonogoe* (placing a strong point next to a criticism) in order to reduce the impact of the criticism and thereby to inoculate his talk from bias. So he states 'there was a lot of pressure put on women at that time ...', as he partially exculpates his partner from blame, though a sense of his exasperation and bewilderment as to what his partner *did* want can be read in the transcript. He uses the expletive 'of course' to enforce his acceptance of his wife's working, although she too seemed unable to withstand the changing expectations of gender roles within marriage:

So she was very dissatisfied on one level, um, and made it pretty clear and of course I was quite happy for her to go to work, it didn't worry me at all, she didn't want to go to work, but I felt that it was my fault.

There are two things going on in Ted's and Ron's talking. Ron positions himself as a victim in two ways: the first because of societal changes which affected his working class values and outlook; the second because his wife, like Ted's, did not meet her contractual obligations. Both accounts position the men as conforming to the conventional moral order through their taking seriously their responsibilities as fathers and husbands, and thereby being morally innocent victims of circumstance, while, on the other hand, their partners have actively undermined the moral and social order to meet their own selfish needs.

New discourses (of feminism, poststructuralism) produce new subjectivities in the family as much as they do in other institutions. Ron's picaresque rationalisation elaborates further tales of his partner as suffering from depression, selfishness, laziness and violence. Here, the onset of these features is described as unconventional, transgressive and willed:

With my son, my partner got postnatal depression, not too bad, but it was quite longlasting and then we had this miscarriage and then we had another daughter and she [partner] was very very bad after that. I mean terribly depressed after that and that was very difficult ...

I worked every hour but at the same time there was a lot of stuff like, you know, I was expected to do half the washing, half the dishes and everything else and I got really resentful about it.

... and she's also a violent person so we'd have an argument and she'd get stuck into me and because I am from that era you couldn't get stuck in back ...

... basically she's a very selfish person, she is, she still is even now she still thinks of herself first.

In the first passage, Ron cites the onset of his wife's postnatal depression as a visitation of illness, as something she 'got' and her miscarriage as something 'we' suffered. This shift of person conveys his willingness to identify with the suffering of a physical illness at the same time as it removes his connection to, or responsibility for his wife's 'mental' infirmity. The connotations position Ron as empathic towards an inevitable illness and distanced from an illness constructed as almost a willed affliction. He goes on to use several figures in rhetorical flourish to elaborate his standpoint: repetition of the same words: 'half the washing, half the dishes', 'she is, she still is...'; *antithesis*: 'half the dishes and everything else'; and *polysyndeton* (the use of conjunctions): ' ... And she's also a violent person so we'd have an argument and she'd get stuck into me and because I am from that era ... '.

These are extremely emphatic devices and have the effect of stressing concepts. There is a self-inoculation against accusations of being overly critical where Ron does not directly blame his wife for her illness, although he does comment on her depression that 'it was very difficult' – with the implication being that he, rather than his wife, was the one who found it difficult. His wife's behaviour is further undercut by the contrasting position of Ron as a model husband: 'I was working twelve hours a day ... I would do at least half the childcare ...'. 'I remember my ex said to someone else, Ron's a great provider, we never have to worry about money or anything, you know, he's always doing this, and our house was like that, first people to get a microwave, first people to get a dishwasher, first to ... and my wife loved that stuff, you know.'

Resolve and fixed expectations are expressed in Ron's narrative of duty where his justificatory language implicates his partner in moral transgression and breaches of familial obligation. Ron emphatically indicates he has done his duty by his partner: worked hard, been faithful, given her children; it was appropriate that she complete the transaction by fulfilling her part: doing the housework, working part-time and staying well.

Fred similarly casts himself as conforming to the moral code where he describes himself at the time of his separation as a good provider, possessing '... a brand new boat. My last year working at [] I banked \$50 000'. One day, out of nowhere, came a crushing blow:

... so we had this big party ... and so there was lots of people present, it was an occasion of one of my birthdays and half way through the proceedings my wife got up in front of everyone and told them including myself 'cause I was not aware of this, that we were getting divorced. So it was quite traumatic ...

The use of the word 'so' invites an interpretation of logical coherence, and Fred's poignant account of being a good provider is illustrated by his 'split[ting] the house in half and [loaning] her another fifty grand and ... [giving her] everything inside it'. As evidence of his right conduct, he contrasts his emotional, financial and physical disintegration with that of his ex-partner's and her new husband's wealth, as his narrative positions him in a discourse of legal and moral oppression.

Fred has not incorporated his wife's transgression as part of his moral responsibility. But in Western culture, in stories of moral suffering, redemption follows. One cannot be an innocent victim and morally right unless one suffers, and Fred, like the other men, undertakes this construction, but in his case, closure remains incomplete. There is no attempted resolution of binaries or their negatives and his talk leaves him in a limbo of indecision. He maintains a sense of aggrieved innocence where the other men allow some transgression of the moral code for themselves as they move towards constructing new identities. But if Fred's stasis suggests the possibility of non-success in keeping his position, it guarantees the prospect of non-failure as well.

Thrice-partnered Jack says little about the events surrounding the breakdown of his relationship with his first wife and focuses on his second relationship. Like Ron, Jack conveys that his partner was inattentive to his needs, tacitly suggesting, by contrast, that *he* was considerate, thereby indicating his contrasting moral rectitude. He outlines the reason for his relationship breakdown:

One day, um, our marriage hadn't been going very well and she was never a good communicator and nor was I um, you know, within our relationship, you know, we didn't, um, get down to the intimate feeling stuff at all and um, after thirteen years of relationship she sat me down one night and said that she was a lesbian, she thought she had been since she was a teenager ...

A lot of expletives ('you know') many hesitations ('um') indicate more the effort of recall than the art of dissimulation. The marriage is described as a vehicle ('our marriage hadn't been going very well') suggesting an end goal, and the disclosure of infidelity is prepared for by the foreshadowing of 'we didn't, um, get down to the intimate feeling stuff at all'. Jack's understatement: ([she] 'said she was a lesbian, she thought she had been since she was a teenager ... '), deliberately minimises the event as less important than it actually was. Understatement like this effects ironic emphasis, tact and sympathy, as this way of speaking generates a listener's imaginative capacity to supply vivid descriptions. The tactic readily endears a speaker to a listener because the work required to fill in details forms a connection between both persons and because modesty is considered a desirable attribute. Here, understatement is functional in conveying Jack's version of events.

Jack's partner is positioned as withdrawn, uncommunicative and distant. Condemning herself, she confesses to having a lesbian affair while she and Jack were married. Despite this declaration, Jack expresses a degree of principle in the form of a moral forgiveness that is formal, abstract, bleak and ultimately condemnatory. There is no escape from forgiveness. But Jack is no wittol. His story gives a judgement that maintains his moral integrity, indeed his liberal tolerance and works to excuse him of any collusion in the breakdown:

... in my heart of hearts being the liberal person I am, I couldn't begrudge her her sexual choice.

Nevertheless, he offers a description and explanation of his partner's inadequacy which, like Ron's, incriminates his partner in acts of volitional wrongdoing while it portrays him as innocent of responsibility:

I didn't know at the time after [] ... was born that she was suffering from post-natal depression which I assume she was now. But she didn't change his nappies when he'd filled his pants and that kind of stuff. ... [Ex-wife] was always a very slovenly person around the home ...

Jack offers a sophisticated argument that seems convincing but is illogical:

Premiss: Wife didn't change baby's nappies.
Support: Wife was slovenly about the house.
Missing Premiss: Women who don't change nappies and who are slovenly suffer from post-natal depression.
Conclusion: Wife was suffering from post-natal depression.

These events are reason enough for Jack to hold the moral high ground and to maintain that his wife broke the moral rules. The blame is hers and he uses the moral discourse of 'fidelity', 'good provider', 'father' 'heterosexual partner' and 'liberal' to position himself as explicitly blameless. But he goes on to speak of his new relationship in terms of much greater tolerance of his own transgressions in that previous marriage.

George talks about his split-up more objectively, but he too, positions his partner as wilfully immoral. That 'one of her friends rang [him] up' to reveal her wrongdoing and that he 'was really perplexed' have the implication in his story of constructing George as innocent of any moral breach:

... there was a third party involved and it was with my, with [], and accidentally one of her friends rang me up and told me. Which was, I don't think it was accidentally at all. I think it was on purpose. ... I was really perplexed when I found out.

George leaves many statements unfinished. This intends artlessness through a suggestion of extempore speech and communicates a sense of guilelessness and honesty. He continues telling the story: 'lots of tears though, and lots of tears with the kids as well', as he and his partner conveyed the news of their

impending separation, though the 'real' reason for their split was, honourably, never mentioned. Later in his story, however, and like all the men, George uttered disparaging comments about his partner, picturing her as possessing little desire to examine their issues. The implication is that the person unwilling to investigate problems is, *ipso facto*, of questionable moral status:

Now [ex-partner] to me, was a very shallow person, she didn't like burrowing down and getting her hands dirty and trying to find out you know what is the problem here, what is the real problem, and what are the possible solutions in that.

Repetitions reinforce those elements George wants to emphasise, and moral correctness is achieved by his attempt at reconciliation and the figures he uses in his talk vividly convey an image of preparatory hard work in order to unearth treasure. In contrast to other men's talk, George's partner is here positioned as inactive and therefore morally inert.

Henry relates a prosaic tale of drifting apart and losing interest. His relationship declined in part because he and his partner grew in different directions and because his partner was not working or meeting anybody, indicating a lack of resourceful initiative. He too, adopts a moral stance in his wanting to discuss issues:

It wasn't out of the blue because I'd been telling her for a good six months I can't carry on like this, you know, I'm going to leave. Um, it was just a matter of when and I don't think she actually believed me to be honest, so when I said, look, this is it, I'm actually walking out the door now, it hit her pretty hard and I don't think she really believed it was going to happen until it did happen.

Henry employs many *sententia* and clichéd sayings ('It wasn't out of the blue', 'I can't carry on', 'it was just a matter of when', 'it hit her pretty hard') that have the effect of making his descriptions appear less than assured. But he adopts a moral stance in giving his wife plenty of notice about his intentions. When he dispensed with the contract, he gave plenty of warning. His wife cannot have been surprised when he 'walk[ed] out the door'.

After separating from their wives and partners, and continuing their stories of moral integrity, all the men except Jack stated that they had initially provided

more financial assistance to their ex-partners than was required. In line with the moral discourse that the men expressed, this line of talk draws upon a 'good provider' discourse which expects men to fulfil the role of providing for their partners and families. Ted and his partner divided the assets equally but subsequently he allowed her to claim anything else she asked for:

I just let her come and take what she wanted.

Though he was the one who kept the children, he didn't expect his ex-partner to pay child support:

The agreement was she was to pay for some school fees but invariably she had no money, she was busy drinking and socialising too much and she just didn't have the money.

The adverb 'invariably' and the strong terms 'busy' and 'too much' place Ted's wife as occupied with herself. The enthymemic character of the utterance with its missing conclusion is to be filled in by the listener. In contrast to his socialising wife (where 'socialising' is a pejorative term), Ted was aware of the need for a solid economic base to help his children develop. Often he reported on the importance of providing this, making it as binding as a 'religious' obligation, repeating the word 'every' and depreciating his own economic needs:

... the income I earned was very important for the progression of my children I religiously sent my daughter, every payday, a certain amount of money was paid into her account so that she'd have spending money and I paid for every single school item there was going and anything else that was asked for because at that stage I was in the highest earning bracket in my life ever and there was only me.

Ron was even more generous. He acted on the advice he received from some 'strong feminist women' whom he admired:

[They] basically sat me down and said, look, you know you can do this and it's basically 50/50 but you've got to think of her earning power and your earning power so in the long run I did a 1/3 2/3 deal with my ex, um, which I've regretted ... What I said was, I've gone, here's the house, it's almost mortgage-free, um, you give me a third of that, and I get to keep my superann, um, and literally I had a rubbish bag and my clothes, you know, and she kept everything else ... it was a fair argument and I never regretted it in those first years because she was working in some shitty job and she

had three kids at home. The DPB's laughable, I was paying, in fact she didn't get it, she got whatever you get, as well I was paying family support plus a bit on top to try and keep her reasonably ok.

Ron's account anticipates counterargument and presents a seemingly fair and balanced report which accents his version as the normative one. The account positions him as providing financial support in excess of his obligations despite being separated, where the discourses taken up position him as conforming to morality, legality and the traditional masculine role.

Fred states he gave his partner half the value of the house, a \$50 000 loan 'to help her out' and all their combined assets. At the start of the separation, he and his wife had agreed on a sum for the support of their three children but she had determined she could gain more through an approach to Inland Revenue and accordingly presented him with a legal compliance order. Fred felt betrayed by this turn of events:

... we obviously had a working relationship where I, in good will, I'd given her extra money and so forth and so fifth, but once all these agencies get into play it seems to erode the good will that did exist ...

Fred ended up paying some \$400 a week for child support, while he states that his ex-partner's new husband paid much less for *his* children. Fred also maintained that he had difficulty in gaining access to his children because his ex-wife had relocated some distance away.

Jack maintained that he spent a lot more on his children than did his ex-partner:

... we were forever getting new clothes and um, but we were the wage earners so ...

George kept the family house and chattels, explaining this by elaborating:

I would buy [the house] from her, and, as far as chattels go, I mean you can go to an auction and pick up as many chattels as you like so it wasn't a big issue with those ...

He and his ex-partner agreed to keep the children week and week about, while George paid more in child support because of his greater income.

Henry stated he gave over the entire house ('four bedrooms, swimming pool') furnishings, whiteware and contents as well as \$200 a week to his partner when he and his wife agreed to separate. His use of *hypophora* (raising questions in order to answer them) here is intended to balance what a listener might regard as excessive care and has the function of thwarting criticism:

I thought it was important that the kids had a nice house and a secure house to live in, you know, without the worries, or with the mother having to worry, how am I going to feed them, how am I going to buy them shoes, etc, etc, etc. I was conscious that it was a real big shock for her and she would have difficulty coping, because she'd never had to before. So I made sure that she had a good start, you know, all she had to do really, she didn't have a mortgage, all she had to do was work to feed herself and the kids basically.

Sam provided a house, gardener and cleaner to assist his ex-wife and children. He 'did what I believed what was the right thing ... Some of the properties that we owned jointly, I volunteered ... out of the kindness of my heart I gave her a lot more just to make sure she lived well and so did the children':

... that's probably the reason why I gave so much money to make sure that, you know, [the children] are comfortable at least.

Drawing upon a prevailing discourse of well-defined rules and roles, the men's talk conveys a sense of a breach of a moral contract. Transgression, on their account, means breaking the implicitly agreed code of relationship, and in all cases, the women are perceived to have offended, not least in emotional care for their men. In this way, permission is granted for the men to act in ways that further invalidate the relational code.

However, a component of this kind of normative morality is the imperative to adhere to the code. Accordingly, the men often stated how well they had provided for their wives after separation and related stories of their partners' culpability for the issues surrounding their relationship failures. '[Y]ou don't desert your partner', said Ron, and all the men were at pains to construct themselves as 'playing by the rules', adopting a masculine deontological stance at variance with their partners' behaviour. Ron articulates this clearly when he refers to the stereotype of the good provider role being found unacceptable:

... I've discussed it with many blokes my age, it was like we knew what our role was but when we got here people didn't admire it, they didn't respect it, they didn't. It was made very difficult ...

and when he hypostatizes the family court system as favouring women:

I do believe that there will be a helluva lot of men who've been deeply damaged, and I do think the system, if you play by the rules which I did and I never ever, you know, ever tried to cheat, and pay my fair deal, in fact, I always tried to do a bit better, um, it is very unfair.

George tells a story of quite rigid hierarchy which his ex-partner neither understood nor conformed to:

... my standard thing when I went there was how I saw or perceived [ex-partner's] structuring the family. And the structure always was her three kids at the top, and then her, and then me, and then the goats, and then my children, and it was a very vertical arrangement. And I used to say to the relationship counsellor that, how I wanted it to be. I wanted her and I at the top, and I wanted all the kids on the next level, but I wanted a strong line between her and her kids and a weaker line between me and her kids and then a strong line between me and my kids and a weaker line between her and my kids, but parallel. I wanted all the kids on the same level and then the goats and any other animals that we had. And I really perceived that that's how the family dynamics worked, for example um, job sharing, we had a roster for jobs. Um, okay, these are the jobs that needed to be done this week by the kids, both working parents, but six children, and we can't do the lot, there's a lot of mess happening. And she would always be defending her children into having the easier tasks and we'd also have a cooking roster, her kids would always get the easier meals, my kids would have the more complex meals that needed to be cooked, a lot more cutting and washing up and that.

This conflict about roles becomes the reason for George's separation from his second partner – a prioritising consideration of his children:

... it was almost like the body language I could read it, they [George's children] weren't happy with this other family group moving into their territory, yeah. And that actually manifested itself quite, um, what's the word, um not antagonism, it was, yeah the bond between my kids and [second partner] never truly developed and I think it was because, Who's this other woman and her kids coming into our house? and moved (?). ... Eventually things between myself and [second partner] became that stretched that love was completely lost because I didn't like the way she treated my kids, my kids didn't like her and eventually the relationship just, it fizzled as well.

Where their new partners had had previous relationships, two men positioned these previous partners as immoral, uncaring or just plain bad.

Ron: He [ex-partner's previous partner] told [her] kids they were reasonably young, you know, if it wasn't for him [Ron] mum would've come back, all the rest of it. I'm a nasty bastard, and um, so the kids ... had a few problems, anyway, um, hates me, never having met me. So [new partner] couldn't live with me, we had to wait until her kids were a bit older so that she could basically, you know, say, right, you've left home, why should I live on my own?

Jack: ... only [new partner's previous partner] ever used the children as a weapon and [new partner] and I were very particular about never bad-mouthing the other parent in front of the kids ... [New partner] wasn't so fortunate with her partner. I think she got screwed a bit by the lawyer ... their father was never there for them and [his new partner's children] ended up sort of arriving at our place after school and hanging around a bit and you know. That was okay 'cause they're neat kids but yeah.

The women fail to live up to the moral code. George describes a code of behaviour which he believes is natural and fair, one his partner has been unable to sustain. He positions himself as reluctant to take the step of disengagement, but equality must prevail. In addition to the device of hypophora, metaphors of 'bonding' occur throughout his descriptions to undergird his statements: 'strong line', 'weaker line', 'bond', 'things became that stretched'.

The 'rules of (dis)engagement' also mean men aren't allowed to use violence against women, however provoked. Nevertheless:

Ted: I will admit to flicking her once with a wet towel and kicking her bum once but never beating her up. I tell you I was close to doing so when I heard those stories ...

Ron: ... but there was many a time that I would have loved to've punched her lights out, to be honest.

Jack: I found myself getting quite angry in a middle-class way and sometimes slamming the door when I came home and was in a shit and tired ...

Connected to their stories of being disadvantaged because of their more honourable behaviour, the men told tales of personal hardship in the aftermath of separation:

Ted: I lost a lot of weight ... the um, stress of separation. ... [I was] devastated at the time. Absolutely devastated. ... Self-esteem was very low but it came back quickly. I mean I got into, getting into relationships quickly is not the answer. I was into a relationship within six months. I got a helluva fright when she was keen to marry. I said no, I ran away.

Ron: ... And I was, there was often times that I didn't have enough money to

feed me and the kids when they came to stay so I would have to do without. I mean, I bought second-hand shoes at that time...And um, by the time you pay your own rent and everything you're just living in a pit, and honestly I couldn't afford bloody heating, couldn't afford anything ... I was drinking and I was bloody, you know, going out all night and wandering the streets, I couldn't sleep for a long time, all classic depression and everything.

Fred: I remember going to the doctor ... and saying, hey [] I can't get an erection anymore ...I'm getting bloody old now, actually. I'm fifty bloody four, like last night I got home, there was something wrong with my bloody hand, it was aching like shit up here. Don't know what's wrong with my arm. Yeah, I'm getting old and worn out. I've got no money and a huge bloody mortgage, riding a push bike 'cause my car's broken. I brought it in today even though it's got no warrant or registration which is naughty 'cause I was running late, um I don't know and I'm not in the, lost, basically drinking too much. () Lost in Space.

Jack: I found that [the separation] really difficult to deal with. I actually got drunk a lot over the next six months.

Henry: I got extremely ill, in fact, it almost killed me. I attempted suicide once, ah, I was put on medication, you know, the psychiatric drugs, you know, Prozac. Which, I was one of the one in a million people that it didn't actually suit and it was actually that that made me extremely ill. I lost my memory. I didn't know where I lived. I didn't know I had kids.

The work being done in this talk positions the men as suffering intensely in the immediate aftermath of separation. Lots of modifying adverbs ('extremely', 'really', 'basically'), expletive adjectives ('bloody') short clauses and sentences with simple structure (the subject at the beginning and the object at the end) function to express heightened emotional states by suggesting rapidity and the veridical nature of factual recall.

The prescribed moral code prohibits the men 'badmouthing' their former partners over their mothering and in their former roles as their partners. In their restraint, the men valorise their own efforts and at the same time, using apophasis and 'faint praise', manage to censure the women as lacking appropriate parental control:

Ted: My older daughter, I've had to counsel her several times to remember that she is her mother and that she's the only one she's got. ... I've always encouraged [the children] to have a relationship with their mother. ... I had a good wife, she was really good.

Ron: You know we tried pretty hard [at the marriage], again, I, she tried hard too ...

Jack: ... he [son] used to shout at his mother a lot and I used to reprimand him for that.

Positing their morality provides an opportunity for the men to express regret about being unable to play a larger part in their children's development:

Ron: But I absolutely adored my children [...] it was in the weekends, it was me and the kids and we used to bugger off, you see, and leave her at home and I would ask her sometimes, you know, aw, let's do so and so, and we'd do a few picnics and things. But I would be off to the park, take them for a bike ride and all that and I loved it, you know, I really loved it and that was the biggest pain about breaking up. ...I was living in this relationship where you know we were well off, we had comfort, the kids were well off, I used to, um. My little one was five and I'd always, you know, we had certain rituals for bedtime and stuff like that you know ...

I: so the loss of your kids affected you very deeply?

Henry: Mmm mmm, still does. It's not something that goes away, um, and the youngest daughter at the time [daughter's name] I used to bring her [here] every year, 'cause [another daughter] was over here by then. She was only a youngster but in some ways that was self-torture, because you'd be looking forward so much during the year to this child coming over and this person would get off the plane and you'd think, who's that? You know. They grow quick at that age. So this new person comes off the plane and you'd see them from four to six weeks, get used to them, get to know them, then they'd be off again, and you'd never see that person again and another person would arrive the following year, if you know what I mean. So it's, that was hard to take.

The initial period of goodwill and concern began to evaporate when the men examined their ex-partners' perceived lack of care for their children and began regarding them as inadequate. This is connected to the chagrin the men feel about the lack of recognition given to them for what they consider to be their genuinely honourable efforts. The turn of description shows a deepening disparagement of their partners for their perceived misdeeds, sometimes fashioned by observations that the men's children were being neglected, particularly financially, under the new regime. In this manner, a concomitant amelioration of the men's complicity in the breakdown of their relationships is effected:

Ted: ... she'd make promises to this girl, I'm coming to get you Friday night. Come Sunday morning, pick her up. On one occasion she wasn't there. Of course this kid was beside herself. ... She'd say, pick her up on Friday and she'd arrive any time and then she'd deliver her home Sunday morning about ten 'cause she had things to do on her own. ... On one occasion she left this ten year old girl at home on her own, on her own for three hours before I turned up, because I had no idea she was there.

...Their mother got into a relationship pretty quick so as adults they've [the children] made the connection that she was fooling around before she left or setting it up before she left...

Ron: ... I don't have much time for her at all, she's a selfish bloody ... mainly because she's just so selfish with the kids particularly. I mean now she's got lots of money she doesn't help them out. I just find it very difficult, she's tight as. And of course I was paying, um, family support till April this year with my youngest which was, you know, I get good money so I was, it was like \$180 a week or whatever it was, a bloody shit-load of money. And um, it was always bitter you know. I wrote her a letter a couple of years ago saying you're in this relationship and you're well off. Instead of me giving you that money for [] why don't we give it to [], who was at university at the time, you know, spread it around that way. She was furious, showed the letter to her friends and said what a bastard, he's still a bastard and all this.

I: Why?

Ron: As far as she's concerned, it's her money. ... she would ring me and say, you know ... [] she needs new shoes, or even when the kids were smaller, I'd pick them up and she'd say, you know, he needs some books or she needs some shoes and I'd say that's what the bloody family support is for.... And yeah, she always had good gear and everything and the kids sometimes didn't, so I'd be expected to buy the shoes and she'd have new ones on, you know? She was a very self-centred person.

Fred: I rang [ex-partner's] home and [daughter] was at home sick all by herself. So I said to the cop - this is a true story - [Daughter's] at home by herself sick and no one's guarding her. Shall we go down there and bust their door down and take her into my custody? He said, if you want, we can. He said, that's the law. I said this is just crap, you know, and it was 'cause I wouldn't hurt my children.

Jack: there was some resentment too, I mean, ah, you know [new partner] used to grind her teeth, not around the kids, but with me, you know ...sometimes caused tension between us because that, here was [ex-partner] with plenty of time but without the skills or the etcetera to um, really, um ... I mean [new partner] laid it on to me at times, you know, she said, this is really abuse of children, you know, neglecting them, you know, the way she did.

George: what I was annoyed about was what I perceived her using the money for. And I, I saw the money going there, the kids not seemed to be deriving much from it, and me still buying them shoes and paying for things for them even though I was paying money as well. And I saw [previous partner] going away on lots of overseas holidays and buying a house and paying a mortgage, um, so I perceived, and lots of the times I think my standard comment back to the mother, or to the children when they said, Can you buy me this dad? Can you buy me this dad? was, What does your mother buy you? I mean you're always asking me, you know, I couldn't see anything coming from it. I saw the money, the transfer of the money between from me to [previous partner] as something which equalled the spending power that both parents could have with the children, for the children, but what I saw was, and this could be just my perception, was the kids still coming to me and asking me for extra things and me not seeing a lot of extra things going their way. When the kids got older and I could rationalise things with them a little bit more and explain to them how child support worked and that, and I felt as though they needed to know, um, it seemed to me that the money was being used, but [ex-partner] has, this is what

my daughter would say, [daughter]. Um, [ex-partner] says that I use electricity and I use the phone and there's a mortgage and we have to pay all those things, but as far as [daughter] getting a benefit other than homing her and putting a roof over her head there didn't seem to be a lot coming in the way of um knickers and underpants and deodorants and all that other stuff which she would still come to me and ask for, school fees and all that. Now it hasn't been like that all the time, um, like sometimes, yeah, the school fees would be paid, but for a lot of the time from what I remember from the times that there was shared custody with the kids still coming to me and me still supporting them because they're my children, natural love and all that sort of stuff, yeah. And of course there was the overseas holidays that [ex-partner] was going on to [ex-partner] and [ex-partner] being away quite a bit and that must've cost money, and at that stage I wasn't going anywhere.

Henry: ... she sold the house, she sold all the whiteware, sold the car, everything like that. It was all new stuff. She knew I was desperate because I didn't have anything and then she sold it all to other people cheap and took the money, so I thought, well, you know, if that's the way you're going to play it, you play it that way. ... she went to see my sisters and told them that I wasn't giving her any money, that I'd thrown her out, etc, etc. She didn't tell them about the house, and, or the houses, I should say and all the rest of it, so, um. Yeah, I think it may be that it was her way of having a go back.

Sam: My ex-wife was always very hard on [the children], every time, you know, after I brought them back after a visit. My mother-in-law, who, my ex-wife had my mother-in-law stay with her at that time, was also very hard on the kids, um, for no reason, they would be scolding, especially my daughter.

An attribute of rationality is moral action, as Arendt (1963/1994) has pointed out. In these passages the men position themselves as rational and therefore moral, while their ex-partners are denigrated as parsimonious, lacking in care, vengeful and selfish. The men describe themselves as magnanimous, concerned for their children and committed to their welfare. They have conformed to the conventional discourse of morality and their women have not. This provides an explanation and as reason for casting a new identity. In this way, the men prepare the ground for the first steps of their new lives. Identity is a major part of these constructions.

The Masculinity Discourse

So far, the analysis has investigated the men's stories as they portray themselves as innocent victims of a radically changing society. This story renders the men as innocent but also as somewhat passive and unmasculine - and men in New Zealand are supposed to take charge and be in control. The

basic pattern by which men have traditionally fulfilled the code for masculine behaviour – that of being a good provider and the head of the house(Phillips, 1996) - has changed in the last few decades (Kaufman [cited in Brod & Kaufman, 1994]; Levant & Kopecky, 1995/1996) to produce what Levant (1997) refers to as a crisis of masculinity where men lack resources to halt the decline in this traditional role or to supplant it with other roles, (for example, being more nurturing of their children and more willing to work at domestic chores). Men are ill-equipped to address the loss of the good-provider function in collaborative ways with their partners because of the power prerogatives that a patriarchal society confers upon them (Kaufman, cited in Brod & Kaufman, 1994) and because they have been socialised to feel discomfort with the expression of emotions which introduce vulnerability and emphasise a feminine perspective opposed to the masculine discourse.

So powerful has the good-provider role been in defining masculinity that its removal occasions in the men's talk a lassitude of desperation - and then an impelling move for an alternative. To overcome the loss of their traditional masculine role, the men in this study superimpose assertions of determination and activity on their stories of quietude and passive innocence as they begin journeys towards new identities. Up to now they have portrayed themselves as naive dupes of an immoral, ambiguous, postmodern world. This positioning permits them to tell stories about victimhood, whose function is to evoke sympathy and support; and to relate tales of high morality, whose function is to elicit acceptance of and respect for their selflessness and high-mindedness. But at some time after their separations, it becomes important to assert independence and effort. In Greimas's square, the distinct polarities are masculine and feminine, and the men's talk outlines a move from a position that has sundered conventional ideas of masculinity towards a place that is not entirely feminine but less rigidly masculine. Some inflexible masculine attributes are shed on the voyage of self-discovery and some feminine qualities are taken on. The shift is discerned in their talk where the rigidity of their lives is expressed in their talk of life of their early relationships and where a more accommodating, 'balanced' identity is revealed as the men progress.

Their talk, however, is sometimes performed in fields of contradictory information, for instance where the speakers wanted to convey their courage and their vulnerability. Sometimes the performance outweighs the performer and the discourse speaks the speaker, as Foucault (1977) might say. So Henry asserted his masculinity in traditional terms: 'Because I had this, I don't know, reputation as a bit of a hard man and such ...'. Jack similarly proclaimed his toughness by mentioning a formative episode from his youth:

Jack ... when I was six, I was being bullied by another six or seven year old in the neighbourhood, and um, my father was a boxing champion and a very good rugby player [] and ah, I came home crying. I'd been bullied by this kid, you know, dadadadeda ... 'Wait till your father gets home', was the standard response, so I waited for that, he got out the boxing gloves and he taught me how to deliver a straight left at the age of six and um, most six year olds wade in waving like this, and um, I generally delivered a couple of days later ...

And Ron exhibits a masculine competitive edge:

Ron ... you know, I always, if I ride a bike I ride it fast, if I climb a hill I climb high ...

Men do not surrender their conventional masculine identities lightly or completely but they can modify these identities in accord with new positionings. Tannen (1990) finds that men tend to take up roles of expertise when reporting on experience, and in their descriptions of their former positions, the men described their status elaborately. In their characterisations as partners and fathers, they gave firm gendered ascriptions of their functions as 'provider' and 'head of the house'. The control is pronounced:

Ted: She never worked for a long time because it was my idea that she stayed home, looked after the kids and I was very happy with that while I worked. I was that sort of male who wanted their woman at home looking after and raising his children, she had 14 years at home, my ex-partner.

Jack: I had expectations, I guess, from my mother, um. My mother comes from that generation where a woman's purpose is to serve the men in the family. My father and I had a gift ride. I, the day I, the night before I left ... she told me how to iron a shirt and I'd never done a tap around the house in all the time I was growing up ... you know I'm a great cook now and I do more than my share at home ...

Henry: At the time, she was working at a [] part-time, er, and that was the first time since we got married that she'd ever had a job. Prior to that she'd never

actually worked. As an employee, she'd always, y'know, been a housewife and a mother, which I'm not saying is not work, you know, not paid work, yeah, so income-wise she was always reliant on me and ... that carried on.

Ron: ...but I knew exactly that that was my path, job, trade, marriage, kids mortgage [...] We were brought up knowing what we had to do and then found out that that wasn't what was expected. So I was, I knew, you know, as I say [...] I came up with the '60s and that [...] I knew that my role in life was to be a provider, get married, everything else, and I married a girl that believed that also [...]

The talk works to locate the men as good providers for their partners and children, in traditional positions consonant with a patriarchal ideology that privileges heterosexual men in conventional masculine roles (Jeffreys, 2005). But, as Ron says, times were changing. Increasing numbers of women were entering the workforce and participating in providing a substantial part of the household income. Men could no longer assume that their women were willing to stay at home to take care of domestic responsibilities, but neither were the men willing to take on any large-scale involvement in housework.

Old patterns continued. Ron claimed to have worked excessively, in part to escape the unhappiness he saw at home, and that when his partner wanted him to spend more time with the family, 'to save the marriage, I went off to the Poly'. However 'there was a revolution going on'. New Zealand culture was changing. Mythologies of male behaviour and identity were being challenged. In these men's lives, the trajectory of abrupt dysfunction had begun and they were the last to know:

Jack: One day, um, our marriage hadn't been going very well and she was never a good communicator and nor was I, you know, within our relationship, you know, we didn't get down to the sort of intimate feeling stuff at all and after thirteen years of marriage she sat me down one night and said that she was a lesbian.

Fred: [M]y partner got up in front of everyone and told them including myself 'cause I was not aware of this, that we were getting divorced. ...

Ted: I came home one day to find half the bedroom missing, quite a few important knick-knacks around the place missing, but Ted, being slow, realised that this had been going on over a period of about 3 weeks and I didn't notice it happening.

Henry: Basically, I think, we both lost interest. I know she did and I know I was losing interest.

Ron: We were having a row and she gave me, she was getting stuck into me, and in this particular instance, and I was just thinking, this is just fucking ridiculous. And she was off her head. And we calmed her down a bit and then we just had this huge verbal thing going on, and she said to me, lots of stuff, but she said to me, we'd be, be better off if you left.

There is a degree of tension about roles here, and a failure to engage emotionally ('we didn't get down to the intimate feeling stuff at all') which accords with the masculine discourse reluctance to express feelings and reveal vulnerability. But the journey towards new identities had begun. At the start, the men position themselves as enduring severe hardship immediately after their separations. They lack control and the only way to be in control is to express generosity towards their former partners – which act affirms the traditional masculine standpoint and confirms their position in the discourse. Talk here serves the function of painting the men as both continuing the provider role and of being stoical survivors:

Henry: I was broke. I had \$8000 [...] four cups, four plates etc, etc, er, a duvet and a blanket. A sheet, a pillow, and er, that was it. I took the back seat out of the old van and used that as a settee and a bed.

Ron: And of course I was paying, um family support till, April of this year with my youngest which was, oh gar, I get good money so it was like \$180 a week or whatever it was a bloody shitload of money you know and um it was always bitter, you know.

I was paying family support plus a bit on the top to keep her reasonably ok [...] and literally, I had a rubbish bag and my clothes, and she kept everything else.

I lost all my friends [...] that's the other thing, completely broke, I mean, there is, there is no acknowledgement that when you start paying that family support it leaves you with no money, and I, there were often times when I didn't have enough money to feed me and the kids when they came to stay so I would have to do without, and I, I bought second-hand shoes at that time, I couldn't afford a new pair of shoes losing my income to give to her ...

Yeah my payments average round about from \$11 000 to \$14 000 a year cash after tax.

All the men expressed an obligation to look after their ex-partner and children. Ted cared for the children in the family home while he and his partner divided their assets: 'I just let her come and take what she wanted.' Support payments

were not expected even though he was entitled to them as the custodial parent. '[She] said she would pay what she could [...] Invariably she had no money. What upset the men was what they perceived to be careless and selfish use of the support payments – and their lack of control over how the money was spent. Part of being a provider is having power over how resources are dispersed and George was annoyed at what he perceived his maintenance payments were going towards. 'I saw the money going there, the kids not seeming to be deriving much from it and me still buying them shoes and paying for things for them even though I was paying money as well and I saw [ex-partner] going away on lots of overseas holidays and buying a house and paying a mortgage.' He sometimes asked his children what their mother spent on them. His older child would ask for personal items and school expenses which should have been paid for by his maintenance payments.

Henry claimed that his ex-partner had bad-mouthed him, stating that he was not giving her any income, ignoring the house that he had provided for her. Again, the codes of masculinised control and morality are presented:

Henry: We had a house in [], quite a nice house, four bedrooms, swimming pool, on a third of an acre, y'know, so we sold that and paid the mortgage off and what was left we used to buy [partner] a house and the kids (.4) and I went er, to (.2) flat [...] I was conscious she would have difficulty coping because she had never had to before so I made sure she had, er (.1) a good start, y'know, all she had to do really, she didn't have a mortgage, all she had to do was er, um (.2) work to, work to feed herself and the kids basically [...] I think I paid her something like \$200 a week, yeah, and I was on about 45 000 at the time.

Ron wrote to his partner suggesting they put his maintenance payments into a bank account for their youngest child but his partner declined and showed the letter to her friends claiming he was trying to avoid paying maintenance. Ron stated that the children were in need of clothing when he visited whereas his partner always wore expensive clothes.

At this stage of their separation, the men weaved into their stories some conviction of maintaining control over their families by continuing to provide in part for them while their own lives were unexamined as their masculine provider identities had eroded. Part of this masculine discourse is the notion that men

are independent and resourceful and I asked the men if they had sought or received any support. Most men said they received emotional support from women but they claimed little from men perhaps in line with the 'man alone' determination of New Zealand masculine identity (though five of the seven stated there had been supportive men in this period). Here are their responses:

Ted: [I] talked to a number of very friendly (.) women mainly, because men, men's attitude at the time unfortunately was grab her by the arse get her back here give her what she needs and she'll be right but it didn't work like that. ... You don't heal by boozing, you don't heal by going out with other women, I did a lot of that. ... Look, your, your real friends, in life Ross, you're lucky to have the number of friends you got on one hand. Real friends. ... I, um, realised that my friends were the friends that I found at the bottom of a glass and they never talked much sense.

Ron: I lost all my friends ... all of them, except my workmates. ... Well my colleagues were bloody useless. ... You know one of my friends, not one of my friends, one of my workmates said to me, aw, you know the trouble with you young fellas is you can't put up with it, you should've stayed. That was that level of support. But one, a guy called [], who I, I still see all these guys, he was the only man actually, I was in the staff room one day and he walked up to me and said, you look like shit, and I said aw, thanks. And this guy was a bit of an outcast, the other people didn't like him and I did and I stuck up for him a little bit too actually. He said, you look like shit [name] and I said aw thanks, and he said why don't you go home and I'll do your classes, go home. And I just cracked up, I was off, even now thinking about it 'cause it was just like, Jesus he's giving me some bloody support here, actually it wasn't about doing my teaching it was just, empathy, I thought fucken hell, here's a bloke that actually, so I had to take off. But it was mainly women, my women friends who looked after me.

Jack: I went and spoke with other men and I think it was, talking with other men about those kind of things was really good. You know I will be ever grateful for my neighbour for suggesting I go along to that group, and ah, it was a really good group, you know, I mean we weren't women haters or anything like that, it was just a men's group that talked about men's issues and, you know, we spoke openly about a lot of the taboo issues like, you know, masturbation and um, you know, ah, sexual performance and, you know, that men get hung up on at times and so it was really good. ... it's one of my weak areas. I had never cultivated friends as much as I should have. Um, I don't know. Its part of my make up, I don't know. I actually get on better with women, you know ... we did, yeah which is good yeah because I found that other men, you know, sometimes you know we're more complex than just being male and female and um, you know I said I don't have strong feelings towards men I [] move around quite a bit and I'd always use that as an excuse. Had a lot of good male colleagues from time to time ... we used to go for a drink at the pub and there'd be about five or six of us there and there'd be quite a lot of other men in the pub and we always used to speculate about what they were talking about. Here we were talking about feelings and things in the pub and we used to have a little smile and think I wonder if they're talking about rugby and beer and things like that, but you know perhaps we were being elitist. I don't know.

George: Ah that's, I, personally myself, yeah I had some good friends and they were new friends which was the funny thing about it. Um, one of my good friends now, [name] and his wife [name] ...um, when I was going through that process of separating [name] befriended me, I'd talked to him and said that I'm in the process of separating, and ... I think there's quite a bit of anxiety when you're separating, and you tend to talk, I tend to talk a lot you know, like this is what's happening in my life, it's really important to me I'm gonna tell the world. So I would be talking to lots of people about it and I think that by talking what's happening inside my head is that I'm rationalising things, I'm getting things into little compartments and that by speaking. So, [friend] seems to be the type of person that befriended me, but he didn't say he befriended me because of what I was going through. I think he actually made up some excuses why to be my friend but in reality he was actually supporting me. He made up these other excuses why I need to spend time with him but really what he was doing was supporting me as a person. So I felt really good, he'd make up some lame excuse why I had to go round there to do something with his computer, but I knew he could do it himself and we'd have a few bottles of red wine. ... So when I look back on and reflect on that, yeah I had support and it wasn't only [friend] ... it was all those other people as well in there, that I would still be talking about this and they would throw their tuppence worth in. ... I don't think that I said I felt bad but I was letting people know what I was going through. Like I was having the kids all the time and the relationship was ending. I think as soon as you say that people that have had it happen to them before know there's a whole lot of feeling stuff happening in there, and it was those type of people that gave me the support I needed. Yeah, I think it was good. But it wasn't only men either, there was women also, like [friend's] wife [] she was very supportive and there was, come round for dinner on the weekend off when [ex-partner] had the kids. Um, there was a lot of supportive people at work as well ... I had a lot of valuable work colleagues, mostly women that also are very supportive. ... Supportive in talking, um invitations to go round there, continuing the, in the, when you split up you have um mutual friends, and some of those friends, you really find out who your friends are, some of those friends you're just completely out of the picture ...

Henry: Yeah I got a lot more sympathy off guys than I did off women. That's because they think oh you're a bloke and I'm a woman so I gotta be on their side or not, I don't know. But what was also surprising was the number of women that popped out of the woodwork that were free and available. They made it quite clear that they were, which wasn't what I was looking for at the time. I thought it was a bit tasteless.

A key part of the men's misery *and* recovery, they claim, was a sincere interest in their children. This talk simultaneously draws upon the discourses of legality, sociality, morality and journeying, but it is included here as part of the hegemonic masculine standard of responsibility for their children's progress. All criticised their former partners for not providing adequate care for their children and described their concern over this and the loss of care they were able to provide:

Ron: [...] I absolutely adored my kids. That was the biggest pain, losing my kids [...] I was bereft [...] we had certain rituals for bedtime and stuff like that, you know, and all of a sudden, I was living on my own in a squat, basically [...]

[My older child] was getting violence [...] my son completely went off the rails which probably had something to do with it, almost certainly had something to do with it [...] my oldest daughter [...] said to me, it's better, no dad, it is better, and I just felt like, this huge load come off my shoulders.

Henry: It's not, something that goes away. My youngest daughter at the time, I used to bring her [to see me] every year [...] In some ways that was self-torture because it, yeah, you'd be looking so much forward during the year to this child coming over, and then this person'll get off the plane and you think, who's that? y'know, they grow quick at this age and so that this new person'd come off the plane and you'd see them for four to six weeks, get used to them, get to know them and then they'd be off again, and you'd never see that person again and another person'd arrive the following year, if you know what I mean, so that was, difficult to take.

Jack: Yeah you think about guilt and you think about responsibility and you think about what it would be like to have them there all the time, 'cause you miss out on half their growing up in some ways. You have regular contact but you do miss out on quite a bit ...

Most of the things are just regrets about, um, you know the less time you spend with them and from their point of view they've expressed, you know, a lack of stability, you know, in where they lived, they could never really put down roots in one house and maybe visit the other one.

I think, I think, in hindsight, being separated from your kids even if it's just periodic, um, I think it had an effect on my closeness to them.

Ted: The thing that probably annoyed me, hurt initially, but also annoyed me tremendously was the fact that she would make promises to the kids that she was coming to pick them up, especially my, youngest daughter. My older daughter usually went, also the youngest, and she'd make promises to this girl I'm coming to get you Friday night. Come Sunday morning, pick her up. On one occasion she wasn't there. Of course this kid was beside herself. I was peed off, to be honest with you. This happened two or three times.

Fred: I was extremely ... [the children] were my friends. In fact, they didn't, a couple of them didn't call me dad, they called me Fred but people used to look at me and say what the hell's going on here but we were just ah, it was devastating. Totally devastating.

How do you express losing your children to []? I remember going to the airport, my daughter came [], I pay, so you could understand that. So I flew her from []. I'm standing there at Hamilton airport ... they come along that mezzanine floor and you come down the stairs, so I was standing there waiting for my daughter and I spy this absolutely stunning young woman. I thought, god, she's attractive, that little thing. So anyway, I'm standing there waiting for my daughter, comes up [...] and gives me a big kiss and of course it's my bloody daughter, you know? Yeah.

I: And you'd missed out on those previous years?

Fred: Well, it was probably only an 18 month period, but jeepers-creepers,

yeah all that stuff. Yeah, the boys. when they have their first shave and all the rest of it, that stuff yeah. ... All that dad stuff ... 'Cause we used to go fishing and all that sort of thing, bloody nearly every weekend I'd take them out and go camping or something.

Again there is grief and confusion expressed at the loss of the provider function of husband and father. But masculinity is not wholly composed of these attributes. Masculine purpose and determination are expected to prevail in stories of endurance and overcoming and these men's accounts are no exception to this structuring. The men began to move from a period of relative calm into a situation where complication and chaos loomed. They had descended to an underworld of despair and they struggle to locate inner resources. Here are their tales of regeneration:

Ted: Then I came to the realisation very quickly that, and I mean within three weeks we're talking, three weeks, that I had to do something about it. That I had to put some priorities in my life and decide what was important. And what I realised very quickly was that I was the most important being on Earth at the time ... I needed to have my head straight so at that stage I stopped drinking. I didn't need that in my life, not that I drank much. I stopped socialising to the extent that I used to and I focussed on two things, one, doing my job very well ... Two, I began to focus on my health and fitness. ... yeah, all that got me through. My mind was clearer, I did my job better, I focussed on my people skills which weren't that great. I think one of the good aspects of separation was my people skills really picked up.

Ted's 'taking charge' account positions him as masculinely in control while modesty encourages him to claim that he did these things for the sake of his children. Two elements of purposeful action are expressed here: the self-discipline of stopping injurious habits, and the perseverance of beginning and continuing new good ones.

Ron's upward trajectory actually began before his separation. Despite being desperately unhappy ('I used to ride a bike to work and I remember, well, wishing, that I would be killed and because I was so depressed and yet at the same time I had a completely outside thing going on, everyone thought I was a nice guy..') when he received some staff training. In his words:

Ron: [It] was a revelation, you know, it was like, I still think it's the most amazing thing I've ever done, because I was a trades' bloke working in a trades

area with trades blokes from a trades' background and I was a working class boy and I was suddenly exposed to, you know, Maoris, women, you know, like feminism, um, biculturalism, um, and all of it, and I loved it. I just thought, I can see this, I can see this, I can understand this, I, it was very difficult, um, and I didn't love all of it of course, but for me, um, it changed my life. ... After that time, I walked away a completely different person.

The epiphany that Ron experienced is typically explained by him as an extrinsic societal force. It sets the stage for his moving from passivity to activity. During a heated argument, Ron's wife said they would be better off if he left:

Ron: ... I said, you're right, and I just walked out of the bedroom, grabbed a plastic rubbish bag, threw some gear in it and said I'm off. She said, I didn't mean it, you know, and I said, I think you did and you're definitely right. Anyway, she persuaded me to stay the night but I knew at that instant. ... I knew that instant that she'd given me the licence and the next morning I jumped in this old car and drove away and I was just screaming with joy. I drove down the road going ye:::s, I was, I was just yelling with joy, I'm out, I've got out, I've done it. The biggest sense of relief I've had in my life.

Ron says he felt like a 'winner' once he had made the decision to leave: 'I was so pleased to be out of it'. Like Ted, he had 'learned a few communication things, you know'.

Jack began to take responsibility for and pride in his new skills and achievements after his separation:

Jack: ... I had expectations I guess from my mother, um. My mother comes from that generation where a woman's purpose is to serve the men in the family. My father and I had a gift ride. I, the day I, the night before I left for Teachers' College, she told me how to iron a shirt and I'd never done a tap around the house in all the time I was growing up till the age of 18. Of course when you go flatting, you know, I'm a great cook now and I do more than my share at home but um ... [I've] changed my view about some of my behaviours and how and so you know ... I've grown up.

In summary, the men's talk draws upon newly legitimising, feminine discourses of permissible actions for *people* undergoing separation. They grieve over their failed relationships (a strategy not acceptable for males in short-term relationship collapse) and they mourn the loss of their children. In typical masculine mode, on the other hand, they allow themselves to drown their sorrows and even seek solace with other women. Transgression from the straight and narrow and from customary masculine behaviour is acceptable as a

short-term carnivalesque response to collapse here as a temporary respite, it seems. But for a short period only - and then society's masculine discourse is reworked as the men continue their life journeys in search of stable new identities that rewrite their experiences as different men.

The Journey Discourse

The journey discourse is a particularly strong way of meaning-making in Western society. It resonates with society's notions of linear time and produces lives seen as stories of travel pursued over a dangerous terrain. It has the ideological effects of validating a coherent sense of self and of stoically enduring the journey to the 'end' (in novels and films, marriage). Journey stories are a way of dealing meaningfully with the world and with people's 'selves' as subjects developing over time and are accordingly indispensable to systems of social and linguistic control because of this maintenance of a sense of stable identity, community and progression. The journeyer's orientation is subject to change, but only insofar as it binds the metonymic movement of time within the greater structure of teleological closure and always conducted within the parameters of society's discourses. Thus the men's stories have as their major frame an unspoken future perfect tense. 'Having made these mistakes in the past, I am doing these things in the present so that *I will* be able to *write* a coherent story of my life'. They choose present articulations that offer the opportunity of future significance and cogency. They choose future goals that provide their present stories with order and significance. And it is noticeable that the alterations they make to their previous lives rearrange connections to other discourses in ways that retain consistent logical links.

Separation and divorce present crises in individuals' lives, as Giddens (2003) points out, but they also provide opportunities for self-development and potential happiness, emotional growth and the strengthening of new relationships beyond the bond of earlier ones.

A separated or divorced person needs moral courage to try new relationships and find new interests. Many people in such circumstances lose confidence in their own judgements and capabilities, and may come to feel that planning for the future is valueless (Giddens, 2003, p. 11)

Separated people carry on their lives but with differences. Living after separation is an active reconstruction of social universes, of intervention and transformation, as people struggle to acquire a new sense of identity:

Modes of behaviour and feeling associated with sexual and marital life have become mobile, unsettled and 'open'. There is much to be gained; but there is unexplored territory to be charted, and new dangers to be considered. Giddens, 2003, pp. 12, 13).

After separation there is a period of mourning deriving from the loss of shared experiences. But there is also a reclaiming of oneself as a prerequisite for establishing a 'new sense of self' (Wallerstein and Blakeslee, cited in Giddens, 2003, p. 11) and this is expressed in the men's stories as a tale of voyage and discovery. The discourse of journeying and exploring new territory is as old as the first recorded stories. *The Arabian Nights* is a collection of stories about voyaging and discovery, couched in a framing story of metonymic suspense and deferment of desire. Northrop Frye (1957) mentions the sagas of ancient Greek journeys of voyaging as stories of self-discovery. According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003), partners in a relationship often describe themselves as travellers on a journey with their common life goals seen as destinations to be reached. The relationship is their vehicle, and their relationship is seen as fulfilling its purpose as it allows them to make progress toward their goals. There are obstacles and there are places (crossroads) where decisions have to be made about which direction to go and whether to keep travelling together.

The men support stories of their experiences with descriptions of movement and progress. The metaphor involves understanding one area of experience, relationship, in terms of a very different domain of experience, journeys, where the two Greimasian binaries are the discourse of stasis and (presupposed) security and the discourse of movement and adventure. Ontological correspondences: the erstwhile partners, their common goals and difficulties, correspond to entities in the domain of a journey: travelling, the vehicle, the destination, and are used by the men to talk about their relationships and their lives. For example, 'We're stuck', one said about his relationship. 'We're stuck' is used to talk about travel and the image is one of travellers in a vehicle voyaging to a common destination. Mapping the metaphor of journeying on to

the relationship provides a number of alternatives for action: The travellers can attempt to move the relationship along, either by fixing it or getting it past the obstacle, they can stay in the non-functional relationship or they can abandon the relationship.

The option of remaining in the non-functional relationship does not satisfy the masculine discourse of setting and achieving goals. So the men in this study have abandoned the vehicle and continue their journey (and the metaphor) without their partner. But metaphors are not just linguistic expressions. They are descriptors of and motivators to action, and within the journeying motif, the ordering power of prospective closure exerts strong control over the men's stories, enabling a shift in the discourse of marriage-as-a-journey to life-as-a-journey.

In most cases, what the men in this study relate of their present lives depicts a similarity to their previous relationship, including in their telling, this time the conscious determination of 'getting it right' and of understanding their lives as having shifted from previous roles. The similarity and the different telling effect a symbolic gesture wherein the men convert impotence and immobility into controlling mastery.

The men's stories begin from the 'A' position of stasis and passivity: Ted had been 'bopping along' in a position of comfortable ignorance until his wife informed him that she was departing. Fred, most abjected of all the men, was blithely unaware of any problem until his wife declared at his birthday party that she was leaving. Ron, conscious that there were problems in his relationship, worked harder. Jack was unhappily married until his wife 'sat [him] down' and declared her intention to leave. George was upset by a friend's revelation that his partner was conducting an affair, while Henry decided rationally to leave a failing marriage. Nevertheless, despite some small individual differences, in all cases what the men present in their accounts is a period of relative complacency and security before the event of separation awoke their energies. This state of affairs in itself generates a narrative situation. Beginning with the

extra-referentiality of their situations, the language the men use moves to a personal account of events from a minimal start.

The journeying discourse is characterised by patterns of description which act to associate separation at first with talk of despair and loss, then later with talk of liberation and independence. The men's accounts are organised around metaphors such as 'joy' and 'for the first time in my life' as preliminary motivation for commencing the voyage. A number of repeated metaphors is used by the men in discussing their experience, particularly nominated as objects or places, presumably because this allows control of them. So the events of the men's experiences, including notions like states, changes, actions, causes, purposes and means are characterised by metaphor in terms of space, motion, and force. Prominent metaphors in this discourse of journeying are:

States are positions. These metaphors are structured in terms of oppositions featuring positions of *up* and *down* and *back* and *forward*, *in* and *out*, with the value of good being placed on the higher, inner or more forward position and the value of bad being placed on the lower, outer or behind position. '[T]he choice of one physical basis from among many possible ones has to do with cultural coherence' (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p. 19). The men, for instance, speak of their previous relationships as being 'shallow', as 'lacking depth'. Here, the term 'metaphor' includes metonymy, because images, while they are symbolic on one level, also often express parts for the whole.

Henry: 'I had the opportunity to go for higher education'; 'then a little house came up'; 'the credit card's at zero';

Ted: 'At that stage'; 'one year you're okay, three years, I think you're there, five years I think it's what you need and I say it took me all of that, it took me all of that'; 'that I was always on the left foot instead of on the right foot going forward'; 'I kept to that'; 'I had to keep my health and fitness up'; 'I had to put the needs of my children pretty high on the list'; 'it had no balance'; 'he has his own goals in life'; 'he went ahead and did it'; 'I made it a point';

Fred: 'It just came out of the blue'; '...this goes back and back and back and back';

Jack: 'that's two marriages down'; 'I haven't gone through a lot of the things men go through, going through breakups'; '... becoming a bit of a battleground'; '[my wife is] a straight up person'; 'they've expressed a lack of stability'; 'he tries

to keep in contact'; 'he was always held up to me'; '...men get hung up on'; 'I actually get on better with women'; 'this is rambling all over the place'; 'they steer well clear of them';

Ron: '... the I had a had a bit of a change in direction'; 'basically, he left me in the lurch'; 'I'm the winner', 'I never ever got anywhere near attempting it';

George: 'my love that I have found'; '[she] had to get a stable environment'; 'I had started another relationship'; 'she would never take it on board'; 'seemed to be sitting on the fence'; 'he lost this one match I think on purpose to uplift my sprits'; 'people choose sides you know'; 'it's like a train station at my place'; 'children being central'; 'there's some connection happening there'; 'the number of women that popped up out of the woodwork'; 'it's a bit of an ego boost'

States are united or disunited, possessed or surrendered. Here, relationships and other identities are hypostatized as objects possessing or lacking physical integrity.

Ted: 'I admit to trying to keep it together'; 'separating assets'; 'had to split everything'; 'try and secure myself'; 'I gave up the assets'; 'I did have a job'; 'I just let it go'; 'I had something to hold on to'; 'my children's progression would be intact'; 'I had strength'; 'I had a job'; 'I had strength'; 'I began to get a little bit better'; 'she couldn't get hold of me';

George: 'I should frame it [the relationship]'; 'the family's sort of dissolving'; 'the bond is already forming'; 'I think that by talking what's happening inside my head is that I'm rationalising things, I'm getting things into little compartments and that by speaking'; 'dad's got someone to fill his life up with';

Henry: 'I knew she'd be secure'.

Changes are movements. This is the journey proper. There are stages, vehicles, changes of direction, barriers and an implied end, where these events and the passage of time itself is anthropomorphised and is variously presented as something approaching the speaker or as a position the speaker approaches. The entire effect is of a lengthy and arduous expedition towards an anticipated goal.

Ted: 'I came to the realisation'; 'I'd come to realise'; 'When [women] decide to leave and they've actually left the relationship sometimes up to five years in advance of physically separating'; 'I wasn't going to be in that boat'; 'just in case things turned'; 'things have changed'; 'we have to come to an agreement'; 'I ran into my ex-wife'; '[the children had] sort of done a complete reversal'; 'as a dad I've done my dash'; 'I've been there for them'; 'it's your turn now'; 'once she turned sixteen';

Fred: 'after the event'; 'approach the window of opportunity';

Jack: 'always an easy thing to look at in hindsight'; 'our marriage hadn't been going very well'; 'we didn't get down to the intimate feeling stuff at all';

Ron: '... but when we got there people didn't admire it'; 'but I got to a point'; 'the answer was, 'get out' '; 'I walked away a completely different person'; 'my son went completely off the rails'; 'I just cracked up';

George: 'I've move sideways '; 'I'm in a new relationship'; 'so we ended up having to come to an agreement'; 'I didn't pursue it madly or passionately'; 'the reason was we're growing differently and going separate ways'; 'let's get right down in there and sort it out and then it's sorted and then you move on'; I would still be talking about this and they would throw their tuppence in';

Within the voyage thoughts, ideas and decisions were personified and anthropomorphised. These were sometimes given as impetus for action.

Ted: 'it's just a question of setting it up'; 'I put the needs of my children very closely in line with that'; 'I put that priority in place'; 'that focus sort of supported me and carried me'; 'it told me something'; 'It [weight] just fell off me without doing anything, it just fell off me'; 'I never said anything that would cause them to know'; 'things have changed'; 'I put the time constraints on';

Fred: 'I thought I had this big thing tattooed on my head'; 'it's like dealing with a bloody monster'; 'there's a twist in the tail'; '[I'll] hide from things' ; 'you can't fight the IRD'; 'the criminal bloody rip-off system'; 'you're touching on a huge bloody are here'; 'it blew me out of the water'; 'it never crossed my mind'; 'relationships fall over'; 'I'm getting shafted'; 'this bloody yoke around my neck'; '... society had changed';

Jack: 'I thought about picking up the cabers'; 'a clean break'; 'I had a gift ride'; 'hormones racing though their bodies'; 'they just lost it for a year or so';

Ron 'I just don't put up with it any more'; 'it was pretty miserable'; 'to save the marriage';

Henry: 'the rent paid the mortgage'; 'I sold the house ... which raised our capital'; 'things weren't working for us'.

Difficulties are impediments to motion. In this metaphor, purposive action is self-activated motion toward a destination and difficulties are things that impede moving to this destination. Metaphorical difficulties of this sort were expressed in four ways: barriers and burdens; features of the terrain; counterforces, and diminished energy. Some examples of each:

Barriers and burdens:

Ted: 'There are two sides to separation'... '[I] never did put a barrier in that regard'; 'I'm well and truly over that now'; 'carry out this mammoth task of

raising my children'; 'very tough with my middle daughter';

Fred: 'they keep adding penalties'; 'it was a hurdle';

Ron: 'we were whacking a lot off the mortgage'; 'a huge load came off my shoulders';

George: 'I'm breaking the barriers very slowly'.

Features of the terrain

Fred: 'I've lost my way in life'; lost in space';

Ron: 'That would be a way out';

George: 'we're treading carefully'.

Counterforces

Jack: 'she doesn't allow me ... to dodge issues'; 'colleagues ... who struggle away'

Ron: 'there's a lot of poison there'; 'there was a lot of pressure'; 'I'm trapped'; 'that was my escape';

George: 'to try and get some advice on how to minimise the impact'.

Diminished energy

Fred: 'It's totally stuffed me'; 'knocks your self esteem'; '...totally ruined my life';

George: 'I appreciated the need to recharge my batteries'.

Expected progress is like travel, and the men are like travellers who reach destinations at certain times. Long term, purposeful activities are journeys while external events are large, moving objects. The men speak of being in or out of particular states, entering or leaving them or arriving at them. Of particular note are statements which express that the inability to act is the inability to move, and that progress is equivalent to the distance travelled or distance from their goals. In Greimas's scheme, the start is the non-end of a larger journey and the non-start also, because it incorporates the end of that relationship.

Much metaphoric work is achieved by employing descriptions of vision, transportation, motion and healing. Time in English is often conceptualised in terms of space and is understood in terms of things (ie an entity or location) and motion. Thus Ted 'came very quickly' to the realisation that his children needed him' and adopted a 'focus' that kept his 'head straight' The 'mammoth task' of

raising children was 'put in line' with this focus, and this focus 'sort of supported me and carried me' through the stress of separation. He rejected placing 'barrier[s]' in the way of his ex-wife's or his own progress, because he 'wasn't going to be in that boat'. The metaphors he uses to describe the sequence of events are continued throughout his tale as he figuratively sets the first stage of journeying. His wife: 'set [her departure] up, got it right and chose the moment and just left ...'. As his journey continued Ted claims 'putt[ing] his priorities in place' made him feel he 'had something to hold on to', his focus helped keep his 'children's progression intact' and he regained 'strength and then I began to get a little bit better'. It wasn't a straight forward progression, however:

Ted: I always felt that when I ran into my ex-wife ... that I was always on the left foot instead of on the right foot going forward. I'm well and truly over that now. It has to do with healing, I hate using those words, bloody touchy feely crap, but you have to heal in all ways. You don't heal by boozing, you don't heal by going out with other women, I did a lot of that. I joined a dining club called dining for six and I made contact with a lot of people but it never heals, you gotta heal. One day you're better. The sure signs of healing for me was when I began to put on weight again and I realised that I was getting better and that was good.

As his tale concludes, Ted tellingly re-marks the structures in his tale:

Ted: But my children are grown up now, they're 30, 28 and 22 so um, right now, so um, they're grown up individuals, that's important to remember. I think as a dad, I've done my dash. I've been there for them, I've worked hard for them. I've probably done as much as any other man can for their children and I can look myself in the mirror every day knowing that I made the right decision eleven years ago, one, to prioritise what was important, that I was important, so I had to do my job, I had to keep my health and fitness up ... and I had to put the needs of my children pretty high on the list. So yeah ...

Connected to the upward trajectory, one aspect of their recovery very important to the men was their children's affirmation that they had done the right thing:

Ted: I think the greatest healing moments came when the kids began to see for themselves and tell me how they felt about the situation, where they thought their allegiances were, with their mother they'd sort of done a complete reversal and that took about one year. ... Anyway my son, oldest son, within a year was gone, he'd become a missionary, my oldest daughter came up here to university within two years, I was left home with the younger one. Then, when I decided to move south, she was 14. And um, my youngest daughter had just turned 14, was at high school and she made a decision to go and live with her mother. I agreed. ... Um, four years later I moved back up north here to Hamilton and within one week of me moving up here my youngest daughter

was back living with me so I don't know whether that tells anyone anything but it told me something. ... My children are grown up. I continue to support them all, in all ways, including finance now and then, but I think that's just a natural parent's role. ... I think as a dad, I've done my dash. I've been there for them, I've worked hard for them. I've probably done as much as any other man can for their children and I can look myself in the mirror every day knowing that I made the right decision eleven years ago ...

Ron: And looking back, I mean all of my kids, I've talked to all of my kids, I've talked to them all about it now 'cause they've grown up. [] is, who's the younger one she's very, very loyal to her mum, and I think probably, my son went completely off the rails which probably has something to do with it almost certainly, my oldest daughter I think who's an extremely intelligent person probably could rationalise it says it was awful then and it's awful now but that's okay, you know, and she said to me, she must have been about twelve or something, it is better, no dad, it is better, and I just felt this huge load come off my shoulders.

My son just, as I say, went off the rails, he got into bloody drugs and crime and everything else although that was after a couple of years. But basically he pushed his mother and his mother couldn't deal with him you see and he just has this strange sort of thing about injustice and I think he felt a lot about the injustice that was going on for them at home. But the young one, she heard everything that everyone else said, she had no knowledge of the fact it was bad, and I think she picked up that, you know, um, he's a bastard, basically he left me in the lurch.

These forward, teleological descriptions draw from a life-journey discourse available in society and usually associated with a life-partner. But new and preferred stories emerge from the men's accounts which offer the exhilaration of change and the challenge of independent action. The discourse is not altogether consistent with ones they have left behind: wife and family, good provider, subject under law, etc. There is a degree of reflexivity here as the men are mindful of the need to stay connected to the story they tell in order to aid them in the present and also shape their future life in ways consistent with their preferences and values. The men reject - as they have been rejected by - the dominant discourses of legal and moral propriety, conventional masculinity and the life-plan of job, marriage, mortgage and children, and they resist society's pejorative labelling by attempting to create more of what they want. Articulating alternative pathways by way of resistance to the dominant discourses allows them to further detach from the effects of separation and provides a framework within which future actions and events of survival and strength can be mapped and the past assigned a diminished influence.

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION

A New Story?

The interviews demonstrate two opposing forces. One shows the men's experience in a negative manner, as something to be fought against and endured; the other reveals their separation as something positive, as a period of growth, self-recognition and self-acceptance. The research indexes a discursive strategy which creates a trajectory of progress: offering first a background and starting place of stability under the old rules of traditional behaviour, next a passage through a troubled period of potential dissolution and finally the arrival at, and the construction of new identity and purpose. The analysis indicates that the talk serves at least two purposes: the first to express the men's vulnerability and confusion they describe during the period of separation, and the second, the decisions they were obliged to make in their changed circumstances. The function of both is to author and justify their actions logically, morally, socially and authoritatively within the acceptable discourses available. Importantly, if these dramatic events were not played to an audience from time to time, then the stories would lack (self)referential context for meaning. Repeating the stories in different contexts permits the elaboration of a (continually constructed) meaning which enters into a relationship with listeners' interpretations. As a result, the stories acquire independent lives with their own validities, sense and meaning. In this way, the stories remain indeterminate and always unfinished, allowing a space for change when interacting with new contexts as the men develop and have different experiences. The stories are not things given once and for all.

Their talk positions the men as resolute supporters of their children, determined to have a significant say in their care and development, and this nurturing theme, together with the confirmation of independence and control, elaborates the development of a different identity. But, as creative and different as they are, the men's stories are always already 'disciplined' (Dunn, 1998) by the social circumstances and practices that produce them and by the men's sense of how they should be and how they should behave at particular times and

places. This individual identity arises from the social, as Mead (1934/1974) puts it, because an articulated sense of individual identity is the basis for decision-making throughout life. Identity requires social input, but it is also a matter of interpretative practice, engaging as it does in the work of orienting a coherent set of practices towards other people.

Identity also constitutes its own moral agency. By interactionally constructing a self, the men tacitly provide reasons about why they interpreted events in a particular manner and why they acted in a particular way. This legal, moral, masculine identity appears as a detailed prerequisite construction for men's action in society, produced to account for who and what they are. While it is a cultural requirement to have such a subjectivity, its particular expressions are fashioned by local practices, institutional restraints and contemporary behaviours, emerging from historical events which have seen the decline of community, the tribe and even the family, and the growing pragmatic adherence to the modern individual self. This self is in continuing dialogue with society's discourses which define and constrain it and to which it struggles to conform.

Goffman (1959) provides insights here where he explicates the dramaturgic 'staging', through the use of language, of the social self. In other words, language highlights aspects of the self as an enactment. As positioned in New Zealand society, the men in this study seem to have little choice but to present themselves in ways consonant with prevailing discourses of fatherhood and masculinity. These presentations are staged as 'performances' to accomplish the purpose of confirming listeners' approval and cooperation in their stories of everyday drama and are validated through lingual feedback to ensure accuracy and continuation of the conversation and of the positioning in the discourse that supports it. The discourse of masculinity benefits, supports and encourages these enactments on the rugby field and in the boardroom and in the stagings of traditional masculinity in practices like that of contemporary marriage because these practices reinforce the dominance of patriarchy and naturalise existing power relations in society (Parker, 1992). But by identifying and challenging the ways in which accounts of masculinity are constructed, the functional purpose of these ideological constructions - that of maintaining certain power relations of

benefit to particular groups, may be realised and resisted. In this way, enactments, statements and definitions of masculinity are not reduced to pre-determined, unquestioned obeisance to the lore, but instead offer a feasible alternative description and blueprint for change. The men in this study are demonstrating this process of articulating alternative stories from the edges of the discourses.

Getting the Story Right

The men are not wholly in charge of their accounts because an extra, socio-political dimension intrudes into their talk through the sedimented discourse of relationship and separation. This hegemonic discourse operates where elements of relationship which do not necessarily ordain specific effects combine as a result of particular articulations into a set of determining practices. Because there is a differential loss to the men under the dominant discourse – relationships are for life, women are caregivers, men are providers, etc - this is not a matter of contractual agreement for the men. The effect is to produce social actors who attempt to transform their practices and thus their relationship towards what they perceive as universal ideology by means of talk which ‘fits’ the prevailing discourse. This relation, however, under existing notions of appropriate behaviour within a discourse where the terms of acceptance are limited, is incommensurable and the resulting vertiginous tension is a major cause of the men’s unhappiness.

Nevertheless, the privileged discourse is always potentially changeable, and the men’s language actively challenges the particular universality of their situation, not as isolated language games, remote from connection to social practice, but as forms of articulation that serve to open a space for autonomous initiative. So, in addition to their enactments of conversational connection, a discreet and highly skilled performance occurs as the respondents mount a challenge against society’s *a priori* that labels men who leave (or are left by) their partners as inauthentic, deviant and irresponsible.

In the process of the interviews, the men’s talk was constructed and attended to by speaker and auditor as *doing* something in its production. Discursive

psychology operates on the understanding that people do not simply 'have' experiences; they construct and endow them with meaning on the basis of their present epistemological positions - making meaning of the past and anticipating the structuring power of future endings that retrospectively validate the order and significance of their stories. Interviews serve to elaborate an issue, and in this study, elaborate decisions about action in the face of changed circumstances.

The social (mis)recognition that places separated men into an 'infracton' category has belittling consequences for men's future social participation and self-image. Accordingly, this positioning is resisted in the men's stories where speakers oppose being labelled as deviant because they have strayed from society's current rules. They deny miscreance and they do not accept those rôles. This is the reason why the men in this study devise new social identities in their explanatory narratives that are consistent with, and better framed by a less universal set of rules, more flexible and more pragmatic than the previous rigid contractual code. In conforming to a deontic framework, the men had committed themselves to adhering to a conventional morality that hadn't worked. By adopting different behaviour that follows wider, more self-aware courses of action, they have positioned themselves in ways that anamorphically refract the conventionally derogatory picture of their circumstances into positive transformations of decent behaviour and new identities. Not done with mirrors but enacted with words - where the nature, strength and conviction of their tales marks a change in the discursive framework(s) in which future exchanges, accounts and behaviour can be securely inscribed. The discourses are altered, in other words, to suit the men's purposes. Important then, that the men get their stories right. Important too, that the stories are told again and again.

These narratives are significant because their reception determines the degree of their authors' social acceptance and reintegration into society and because accounts of experience are signifiers for agency and acknowledged as such in the language games of an interpretive community. In this regard, it is interesting to note that where two of the participants had had two previous ended relationships, both men assiduously minimised the commitment of their first

relationship and focussed on the split from their second. This may be because repetitive acts of separation have high visibility and societal stigmatisation, contributing to the formation of self-narratives of derogation and inadequacy.

His Story

The men use language to construct a sense of themselves in their new situations. Forms of masculinity are an important part of this new identity, and presentations of masculinity, unavoidable as social prescription, were not obstacles to interpretation but rather, comprised a valuable part of the data. How men *qua* men answer questions, how they tell their stories is a valuable source of analysis. In Western society, possession of an appropriately gendered self warrants being accepted as masculine, as being considered 'a good keen man'. Whatever the biological basis of masculinity, masculinity is actively created by men and 'can be seen as a personal trajectory that each man weaves through a web of social resources' (Wetherell, 1997, p. 320). Furthermore, although gender can be considered as a discrete identity, it is also connected to other social institutions, particularly marriage and the family. Gendered discourse is always a provisional 'work in progress', rather anxiously choreographed for the situation and audience at hand. In New Zealand, a prevailing discourse signifies men's greater desire and capacity for rational thought and autonomy, risk and adventure, plans and projects (Phillips, 1996). Expressive behaviour, including speech acts, is aimed at creating these attributes of self - sometimes unconsciously as habitual behaviour, sometimes consciously as strategy. Sustaining these kiwi images, 'strong, resilient and modest' (Phillips, 1996, p. 267), requires activities integrated into a performance accepted as masculine. But what occurs in the men's stories is the description of a new kind of masculinity, at once self-conscious and aware of contradictions and inconsistencies but also determinedly constructing an identity which opens old articulations of masculinity to allow new definitions. These definitions include a softening of legalistic conceptions of marriage and fatherhood and protector status and an greater acknowledgement of vulnerability, of acceptance of emotional expression, care for others and investment in social relationships.

Creation Story

The repetition of certain semantic elements allows analysis to perceive the structure of a discussion as not just something emanating from the demands of the interview event, not just about conveying information, but also about constructing a significant part of the individual's self and self-presentation. Like a work of art, an aesthetic effect emerges when the character of an individual's utterances tends towards the code rather than the message, but the oscillation between both is what is most important for the generation of an aesthetic effect. Hence, discussion about experience which is oriented towards auto-communication will manifest a tendency to turn an ordinary story into an elevated one and 'identify what is 'elevated', 'good' and 'true' with what is 'stable' and 'eternal' ' (Lotman, 32), that is, with a set of cultural standards which may be termed a discourse.

This is what occurs in the men's talk. And as well as their own organisations, their conversations introduce into the messages many extra-textual societal associations so that each recounting of the story necessarily transforms and reforms the story, changing the message and the person telling it. Every telling is affected by a variety of factors, ranging from the men's sense of individual existence and the construction of a new identity to the pressure of and resistance to hegemonic positionings. All accounts blend personal experiences with the available discourses so that a commitment to a particular way of being is produced.

Adjunct to this creativity is the men's experience of pattern and flow in their stories, although this is an illusion (albeit a necessary one) that obscures that it is the present recalling of events which retroactively confers the consistency of order on preceding events. Teleology is always retrospective. What is masked is the *contingency* of the chain of narration, that at every point in their stories, things might have turned out differently. The same events could have acquired a totally different symbolic value. As a result of changes in the texture of their relationships – what at one time was acceptable behaviour becomes a stated cause for separation, what was disallowed is now permissible - is thought so because talked so, although the act in its physical reality remains the same. But

the stories effectively insert the men into certain standpoints within society and it is this positioning that embeds their talk and their actions in a continuous spiral of interpretation.

But artistry cannot compel a statement's truth, nor social constructionism convince us of a denatured world. Nor can Cartesianism persuade us that we are utterly independent. We require signs from 'objective' reality. In this study, validation from external reality that the men have not themselves prompted provides that evidence. This confirmatory intervention acts as a powerful master signifier and is present in all the stories as a 'sign' from 'outside', providing objective support for the men's new lives and is incorporated into the men's discourses as sustaining balance for their positions. Thus, Ron knew he didn't want to die as he flew through the air when a vehicle hit him. He saw the incident as a sign that he had to get out of his marriage. George spoke of a bird perched on his shoulder reminding him of the likely consequences of events. Sam was reassured by his wife's maid that he was doing the right thing in leaving. Jack, Ted and Henry received unsolicited corroboration of their behaviour from their children.

All the narratives conform to the typical storyline of equilibrium being disturbed. The men's roles as head of the house, father, and husband and breadwinner have been destroyed. But these stories are not tragedies. The narratives are framed rather in the epic form, where the speaker is at least as good as other men but is unable to resist circumstances. Things happen to him and he must embark on a voyage to (re)claim something or rectify a situation that will return him to his rightful position. Epics often hinge on misunderstandings – and in their stories the men are often undone by misunderstandings – of their wives and partners' needs and behaviours or of the context surrounding events. There is no guilt or shame in misunderstanding, and the men can afford, generously, to acknowledge their ignorance, thereby reclaiming their lost power. The image of innocent, yet passive victim of the onset of the stories is contrasted with the purposeful master of his own destiny, and the conservative and authoritarian masculine law-giver is distinguished from the stories of independence and diversity. Ultimately, a masculine conservative sense of order may prevail, in

the men's lives, tempering the feminine liberal attribute of sociality. These are men's stories, after all. But there will remain some move along the axis to a more empathic, accommodating kind of masculinity.

The hero of the typical narrative must assert his masculinity by beginning a journey of self-discovery. The quest is to find an identity that is new and adapted to the changed circumstances. Typically in any tale of exploration, an agent is defined by his relationship to others, but in real life situations, this state of description is not wholly applicable. The social context impinges on and imbues these men's narratives to an extent that is not fully captured by a structuralist account or by discourse analysis. Nevertheless, the men's stories indicate a progression which can be schematised as a state of equilibrium existing before the initiation of separation, a movement for a time until a descent from this middle area into a 'slough of despond' of hard times, and then an active rise in fortune accompanied by a reconciliation to a new life.

The women of the stories are shown as exhibiting a similar progression through a series of parallelisms, oppositions, inversions and equivalences, offering support for the structural reading. Ted's wife, after a series of relationships, remains unhappy. Fred's wife remarried, but still maintains a legacy of intense dislike towards Fred. Ron's wife remarried and divorced and is unhappy. Jack's wife is single and unhappy, George's wife too. Henry's wife remarried to a (now) very sick man. Sam's wife remarried but is unhappy. Some of the men report that their ex-wives would prefer to be reunited with them.

Negotiating their journey towards stability and a new identity, the men's stories emphasised health and action as a formulation of control:

Ted: Then I came to the realisation very quickly, that, and I mean within 3 weeks, we're talking 3 weeks (.1) that I had to do something about it. That I had to put some priorities in my life and decide what was important. And what I realised very quickly that I was the most important being on earth at the time, not because of a big head or anything but if my children were to survive they had to have a lifestyle that they were used to, that I needed to have my head straight so at that stage I stopped drinking. I didn't need that in my life, not that I drank much. I stopped socialising to the extent that I used to and I focussed on two things, one doing my job very well. Why did I decide to do that? Because the income that I earned was very important for the progression of my children.

Two, I began to focus on my health and fitness. I realised immediately that I needed to be fit and well if I was going to carry out this, mammoth task of raising children and working and I put the needs of my children very closely in line with that, and that focus sort of supported me and carried me through the traumatic period of separation.

Ron: I've got a pretty good sense of self and um and I think that um, you know, I like who I am, I quite like who I am, I quite like what I do. I, I consider that I'm a reasonable sort of bugger and um, so that confidence, has allowed me to get through stuff and I think that there's a lot of blokes that don't, and I think there's a lot of blokes that get bullied and um [...] I never felt myself the victim [...] I was the winner ...

Henry: Survival instincts, I suppose, you know, er, I knew I could actually make money, I knew I was making money, I wasn't on a bad wage [...] so I knew I had the income, it was just a matter of, err, utilising that income to the best way to (.2) make money, so I went (.1) I got another job [...] just for money so I could get a ticket back to [...] to see my kids[...] I came right 'cause I went back to [] and I hated it, I hated it, and I knew then I'd made the right decision, y'know ...

One wrote a different narrative for himself:

I'm getting bloody old now, actually. I'm 50 bloody 4, like, last night, I got home, there was something wrong with my bloody hand, it was aching like shit up here. Don't know what's wrong with my arm. Yeah, I'm getting old and worn out. I've got no money and a huge bloody mortgage, riding a push bike 'cause my car's broken. I brought it in today even though it's got no warrant or registration which is naughty 'cause I was running late, um, I don't know and I'm not, in the, lost, basically drinking too much. Lost in space.

The men's stories describe an Odyssey of discovery, describing a tale of stability, through disruption, to a new, stronger identity and purpose. The analysis indicates that the function of the talk is formally to justify these new positions and identities as part of a new chapter of the discourse, involving a central affection for their children. This affirmation of affection and the conscious rewriting of life scripts following the collapse of old narratives nominate a new identity for the men. The conventional categorisations that society makes of these 'absent fathers' are contested by the men, their resistances deployed as empowering accomplishments. The men write what their experiences mean, they mobilise particular aspects of experience as resource for future direction. Their talk establishes the meanings of their experiences and how they are to be heard. Declining to be labelled as permanent victims most of the men find and perform in their conversations, a new support, strength and sociality, their

storied accounts providing a preliminary for action. The one man who claimed to be purposeless demonstrated a lack of consistency in his account.

The language the men use defines their paternal and masculine unity as morally cohesive within group-membership criteria. Such membership inheres, in part, in the use of their common language which constructs the identity of these men as a legitimate social class. For these men, much of what it means to be a man, a partner and a father resides in language. Their subjectivities are fabricated in the way they tell their stories, stitching some memorable parts tightly to the cloth of their memories, and creating varied patterns that provide individual and social meaning. Their stories confront current notions of fatherhood and partnership and elaborate their experiences as valid, meaningful and laudable. Their words shape their lives and they inhabit these shapes. Understanding the way men like these use language, and conversely, how men's use of language influences the personal and social dynamics identified in relationship breakup illuminates the environment of social change and helps to dispel negative labels to which separated men are subject. These discursive practices are then seen as reasonable, valid and perhaps essential responses to change.

CONCLUSIONS

When people are invited to participate in a discussion about the kinds of events explored in this study, they are invited into choice and selection based upon particular preferences. In discussion, people with secrets rarely possess a secure private space, and there is a sense sometimes in these stories of a façade inadequately maintained. In these stories men present images of duty, love and courage as much as they disclose themselves as sometimes lonely, baffled, marginal figures. There are layers of confusion where the men are out of their element and where they describe themselves as feeling not quite acceptable to society. The landscape is vaguely familiar but the characters have changed, and they seem to be acting as if on an empty stage where their well-rehearsed gestures are presented to an uncomprehending and critical audience.

At one level, the relationship between the men's accounts and the formal and systemic beliefs of society range from active dissent to a more nuanced balance of selected and voiced beliefs and enacted and justified experiences. Characteristic elements of tone, metaphor, vocabulary, etc, are experienced as thought, feeling and practical consciousness in living and interrelated continuity with other people, particularly partners, and with society as a whole. These elements can in turn be seen as structures, as semiotic sets, with specific internal relations, interlocking and in tension, providing a consistent, albeit limited, set of responses and articulations. The men's responses are limited because, as the Greimasian model proposes, there exist two main positions in each discourse. Eviction from the major discourse necessitates the adoption of the contrary discourse because there are no well-defined intermediate positions. So the men's responses are representations which blend with their preferred discourse(s) as they attempt to take up new and meaningful positions in their changed social world. Because discourses produce and reproduce social relations, morality, affective values and potential ways of being, and because language constructs and legitimises subjectivities and orders them in relationships, there is no other choice. Discourse's legitimacy is only itself, its authority reproduced and validated by its own practice, its construction of social

rules that evacuate or neutralise any contradiction in order to maintain equilibrium, its only logic. This is what the men clash against. However, far from the postmodern notion of a variety of texts and positions, these discourses actually produce master narratives which justify the existing political and social nexus. In this project, they self-generate the linguistic production of social reality using a logic more functional than mathematical and more denotative than connotative.

Discourses, and the men's parts in them, here inscribed as 'narratives', are thus indispensable to systems of social and political control because they help define a stable sense of identity, community and progression, through which 'reality' is derived. For that reason, I have tried to show how the men's stories may be examined through an analytical approach which places the insights of discursive psychology within a structural theory that maintains the attention to detail and integrity of both analytical frameworks and the men's accounts.

The men's experiences are still in process, sometimes not recognised by them as socially inscribed but taken as private, idiosyncratic and isolated. In this study, there can be seen controlling and connecting characteristics of speech which lock into conventional modes of expression and relationship and which return to the men images of social acceptance and/or deviance. After the trauma of separation, however, the men, no longer (just) fathers and partners, have become single agents and participants in different relations to and within society's discourses.

Because the ensemble of the men's subjectivities is no longer unified by orthodox laws of practice; because social reality is increasingly recognised by them as a fragile symbolic web; because they have been jerked from unquestioning compliance with the dominant discourses into a place of opposition, a space has opened for them to perform articulations which allow a multiplicity of forms of being beyond the conventional. This awareness of a separation from contemporaneous discourses (of morality, masculinity and the legal conventions) is a precondition for the assertion of these men's rights and

for the establishment of a new set of practices that might eventually consolidate these rights as alternative appropriate positions for other men.

The men ultimately accept that they are responsible for their present situations; that it is their actions, not the retrospectively constructed motivations behind events that define them. But they deny deficiency in themselves. In accounts, things and events begin to resemble their descriptions, and as the men relate their stories, they have already chosen their 'facts' and placed themselves at particular ideological intersections. Investigating their stories has opened up inconsistencies, red herrings and sometimes, surprising disclosures. The men's stories illustrate the slow painful reconciliations of change and the astonishing resilience of humans. Many questions remain unanswered and some assumptions are unexamined. For example, an investigation of why the men became as they are which focuses on men's stories after the event entails a conspicuous eliding of a pragmatics of discourse identity, of just *how* a concept of self-help for men in this position actually transmits words into decisions; which in turn suggests a need for an ethics of action as well. The boldness of such a project is daunting, and calls for a synthesis and pragmatics of the discourses examined in this paper. But the combination of a call to arms with empowering future potential proposes more dialogue to be had on these matters.

In any significant relationship and its aftermath, there is the possibility of losing one's identity or developing it. Most of the men have chosen the latter way. What strikes me in this study is how much the men have changed from what they once were. They are in no sense shut off from the world. Though their stories serve a variety of functions, I believe that filtering their stories through the norms of interdictional context and analysis has not eroded what makes them distinctive. It is dismissive to adopt an ironic detachment and arrogant to impose one's aesthetic on any life-story, and I hope I have avoided that and that my engagement has given point and pattern to the men's stories. I am optimistic they will continue to explore how their stories serve them as they examine the consequences of their scripts for their immediate and long term futures, for who

and what is likely to challenge the stories and how their stories affect their children and new relationships, their families and their work and friends.

As we make new connections and create different contexts in which we learn more about ourselves, we are more able to free themselves from the tyrannical aspects of past discourses. We understand that the narratives we construct are ones that take into account possibilities of connecting that are more flexible than we had assumed. Men like these seven may be in the vanguard of a constitutive movement that displaces the conventional discourses of family and relationship structure with more flexible groupings that encourage greater freedom and stronger association within and beyond that alliance. They may be writing the discourses of the future.

Certain it is that accessing experience through talk fashions a way where men can acknowledge their past loneliness, isolation and dislocation but also a way where the opportunity for creating rich alternatives is opened up. Ron's comment, an epigram for the study, appeals to this brighter future:

You don't have to be unhappy [...] you've got to have a life, you know?

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Massey Ethics Proposal: Men's Stories

1. DESCRIPTION

1.1. Justification

Custody arrangements, access to their children, the maintenance men pay to their ex-partners and the effects of all of these on the men forms the basis of this research. Anecdotal evidence suggests men feel a sense of injustice over these issues. This research is intended to add to the growing body of opinion and literature focused on the experiences of men by producing a qualitative (discourse) analysis of the experiences of 9 or 10 men examining these issues.

1.2. Objectives

This study will examine the conversations of 9 or 10 men and their experiences as fathers after separation from their partners. In particular, it will focus on what men say about the areas of child support, custody and access arrangements.

The study will ask the participants to summarise the impact that their situations has had on their subsequent lives and be qualitative in nature. It is expected that the research will be useful to other men in interpreting their experiences.

1.3. Procedures for recruiting participants and obtaining informed consent

Participants in this study will be gained from those men who have some link to my workplace. Following approval by the Massey ethics peer review process I will place an invitation on staff noticeboards inviting men to contact me if they want to participate in the research. On contact with respondents, I will discuss the research and provide participants with an information sheet and consent form (attached).

1.4. Procedures in which research participants will be involved

Participants will be involved in one interview of approximately one-hour duration in which they will be asked a series of questions concerning their experience of separation from their children. Interviews will be conducted at an agreed venue. Participants will be informed that they have a right to terminate the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

1.5. Procedures for handling information and material produced in the course of the research

Interviews will be audio-recorded and then transcribed. The recorder will be stopped at participants' request. I will transcribe these recordings.

1.6. Procedures for sharing information with research participants

Participants will be sent a summary of the material from their interview. They will be invited to make changes to this information prior to it being used in the final report. Upon completion of the study, a summary of the findings will be given to all participants.

1.7. Arrangements for storage and security, return, or destruction of data

Recordings, notes and transcripts will be kept in a desk in my home office. Word processing will be performed on my home computer, which is not connected to any network. Following the examination of the report, interview recordings, notes and transcripts will be destroyed or returned to the interviewees if so requested. Results will be used in the final report in a summarised and thematic form, thereby minimising the risk of breach of confidentiality.

2. ETHICAL CONCERNS

2.1. Access to participants

Participants in this study will be gained by my placing an invitation on staff noticeboards at my workplace inviting men's involvement. I will discuss the research and provide participants with an information sheet and consent form prior to the interview.

2.2. Informed consent

Full information regarding the aims and nature of the study will be conveyed in writing to the participants. The information sheet and the consent forms will be delivered to the participants prior to the interview (copies attached). In the interview we will review the participants' right to stop the interview and to withdraw from the research at any time.

2.3. Anonymity and Confidentiality

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality. However, in the case of a small selection group, anonymity cannot be completely guaranteed. I will endeavour to maintain confidentiality through non-identification of the participants and through the use of summarised and thematic presentation of findings in the report. All identifying information will be removed from the transcripts.

2.4. Potential Harm to Participants

Remembering their experiences may distress some men. I propose a feedback call to participants some two weeks after the interview to check on their well-being.

2.5. Potential Harm to Researcher

None anticipated.

2.6. Potential Harm to the University

None anticipated.

2.7. Participants' Right to Decline to Take Part

The participants will be invited to volunteer in this process. It will be made clear to them through the information sheets and at the interview that they can decline to take part in this study or withdraw at any time. They will also be told that the recorder will be turned off during the interview if requested.

2.8. Uses of the Information

The report will be made available to Keith Tuffin and Karen Frewin of the Psychology Department of Massey University. The results may also be more widely disseminated.

2.9. Conflict of Interest/Conflict of Roles

None identified.

2.10. Other Ethical Concerns

None identified

3. LEGAL CONCERNS

3.1. Legislation

3.1.1. Intellectual property legislation

Not applicable

3.1.2. Human Rights legislation

Not applicable

3.1.3. Privacy legislation

Not applicable

3.1.4. Health and Safety legislation

Not applicable

3.1.5. Accident Insurance legislation

Not applicable

3.1.6. Employment Relations legislation

Not applicable

3.2. Other Legal Issues

Not applicable

4. CULTURAL CONCERNS

This research will involve interviewees who will be asked to talk only about their own experiences. I will endeavour to be sensitive towards cultural and ethnic talk and behaviour.

5. OTHER ETHICAL BODIES RELEVANT TO THIS RESEARCH

None identified

5.1. Ethics Committees

None identified

5.2. Professional Codes

None identified

6. OTHER RELEVANT ISSUES

None identified.

Appendix B Men's Stories

Information Sheet

Researcher: Ross Kendall **Contact:** [REDACTED] Ph [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Supervisors:

Keith Tuffin, Senior Lecturer, School of Psychology, Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North. Ph 06 356 9099 Ex 2072.

Karen Frewin, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, School of Psychology, Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North. Ph 06 356 9099 Ex 2033.

The Project:

This study seeks to gain understanding of the experiences of men who, following separation, become non-custodial parents. It is the intention of this research to explore these stories on a range of issues such as maintenance and custody in order to build a base of information which may be useful to other men in interpreting their own experiences and to inform others undergoing separation from their families.

Applying discourse analysis, this report seeks to explore men's talk about their experiences of separation from their children in order to identify patterns of expression. Most of the information for this study will be gathered through the interviews, which will be approximately one hour for each participant. These interviews will be recorded on digital audiotape and notes will be taken. The recording and notes will be erased or supplied to the interviewee after Massey acceptance of the report.

Interviewees have the right to terminate an interview or request that the tape recorder be turned off at any time. If you agree to participate it will be on the understanding that what you say in the interview is confidential. You have the right to view the transcript material prior to it being used in the final report. The presentation of findings in the report of this research will be arranged

thematically rather than by individual interviewee's statements making it difficult to identify the interviewee. No identifying material will be included.

Conducting this research will be kept separate from my employment. As a participant you have the right to:

- Refuse to answer any particular question or request that the recorder Be turned off at any time during the interview.
- To conclude an interview or to withdraw from the study at any time.
- Ask any further questions about the study during your participation.
- Provide information on the understanding that it will be confidential to The researcher and his supervisors.
- Be given access to a summary of the findings of this study.

Appendix C

Interview Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions. I agree to provide information to the researcher in the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission.

I agree to the interview being audio-taped. I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audiotape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

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

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D

Focusing questions

- Who are you?
- How old are you?
- What is your present occupation?
- What is your educational and job background?
- What are your present domestic arrangements?
- Can you describe the events surrounding your separation?
- How has separation affected your life?
- Are there any comments on custody or access you would like to make?
- How would you say men are affected in the long term by the instances in which they experience separation from their partners and children? How does this affect those around them?

Appendix E

Transcription Notations

[]	Empty brackets indicate an omission to preserve anonymity.
(...)	Parentheses indicate a passage break.
,	A comma indicates a pause.
...	Ellipsis indicates a selected passage.
ye:::s	Colons within a word indicate a stretched sound in a word.
A: That's <u>right</u>	Underlinings indicate words that are emphasised.
A: (?)	A question mark in parentheses indicates that talk was not heard sufficiently clearly to be transcribed.