“I think it is changing”: Hegemonic masculinity, hetero-relating and singleness in Aotearoa

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Chelsea Pickens

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Abstract

This thesis will examine single men's constructions of heterosexuality and masculinity in a New Zealand context. Using the data from 31 semi-structured interviews, I will discuss how men made sense of and (re)produced discourse around singleness and heterosexuality, while simultaneously positioning themselves in relation to hegemonic practice and ideals. As men strove towards acceptable masculine identities, both in their retelling of events and ideas, and within the interview context, their identity positionings were forged alongside their relations with women, other men, and a 'progressing' gender order (Connell, 2012). I will employ discourse analysis from a social constructionist perspective to analyse how men located themselves and made meaning through these relations, including ideas around: the interview context; a new progressive/'open' masculinity; the (post) #MeToo climate; and men's rights and 'closed' masculinity (Elliott, 2020). I will additionally locate my own experiences of interviewing participants within hegemonic and patriarchal structures, and reflect on how my responses have shaped the resulting analysis. Through these conversations I will present a view of contemporary hegemonic masculinity in New Zealand, with the goal of contributing to continued efforts to discuss and expand understandings of what masculinity is/can be, by examining where we are at – and possibilities for where we might go.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Unpicking the patriarchal fabric

My decision to conduct a study around men and singleness was initially almost a reflex to complement my Master's study around women and singleness (see Pickens & Braun, 2018). I had come to my Master's project with personal investment and a proud feminist agenda, with the aim of speaking the unspeakable for uncomfortable single women, constantly reminded that their time is 'running out.' I saw that, I felt that, I wanted to voice that, in an attempt to interrupt harmful discourses that continue to pressure women towards traditional couplings and domestic means (and ultimately, socially punish those who don't comply). The master's project went well. I thoroughly enjoyed talking with the participants, and I enjoyed analysing their responses and creating a coherent piece of work that spoke to the issues I felt were at hand. Continuing on to a doctorate project was almost a 'no brainer' – I had learned so much from my master's. However, I initially approached this study with a much less clear idea of what my real aim was, or would end up being. It seemed almost obvious that I should interrogate "the other side" (as one participant put it) to learn what was happening in the world of single men. Journalistic assumptions about 'objectivity' through representing 'both sides' of a (gendered) story (Fahy, 2018) inevitably played into this decision (upon reflection), as I sought to understand a more 'well-rounded' story of heterosexual singleness. But masculine singleness was an area largely unknown to me (thought it seemed inextricable from larger issues of pressure and stigma around heterosexuality and gender, of which I was more familiar). I appreciated that studying masculinity was integral to feminist work, or any work concerned with social justice, as an important 'part of the pie' – perhaps the most important part in considering some sort of 'unpicking' of patriarchal social fabric. But my heart was not in it the same way – I had so long been passionate about and invested in 'women's issues,' that I struggled to imagine having the same sort of empathy and general research experience with men.

So, I thought about my own brothers – one in particular. I thought about the way he has struggled to grow into a 'man' alongside all the ideas of what that seems to mean. I thought about him lifting weights as a teenager, exhausting his growing muscles, and over-eating

when he wasn't hungry to try put on weight. I remembered when all my sisters managed to get service industry jobs in high school, but no one would give him a chance (as only 'pretty girls' served the counters), leaving him unable to get any job experience. I thought about his anxiety with social interactions, his shy nature, and how he has particularly struggled with talking to women and initiating any romantic contact – an act he felt exclusively rested with him. I remembered that he only disclosed his struggles to me because he was drunk, and that normally he felt unable to discuss anything personal or emotional. I thought about his mental health plummeting as he struggled to finish his degree and at first try to find a job that was 'good' enough for our father (invested in patriarchy), and later any job at all. I also thought about a particularly painful break-up I had with an ex-boyfriend who could not and would not allow himself to appear vulnerable and talk about emotions, who wouldn't take his hat or shirt off in any public space on account of his hairline and body, and whose only pivotal emotional expression was anger. And, of course, I considered how I had longed to support and help both of them but never seemed to be able to with much effect. The pressures and force of hegemonic masculinity are bigger than me, and bigger than all of us. I had long contemplated and acknowledged the struggles of women living within a patriarchal society, and I knew that when I really dug for it, I could use that same empathy when considering how a patriarchal society can negatively affect men.

And with that source of motivation I forged ahead, imagining that men with similar struggles would fill these pages with stories of pressures and hardships. Of course, in a way, these issues were present through men's voices, but on the whole, that was not what was said. I came to the project expecting to be on the participant's 'side' and to work towards interrupting harmful discourses for men, as in my project with women. But as will be explored throughout these chapters, men were not often candid or upfront about these sorts of struggles. In fact, often the opposite was true, where they would take up independent and strong identities, explaining that there were issues 'out there' but that they didn't affect *them* (or not anymore). Men preferred to enact hegemonic ideals of mental strength against adversity and contained emotionality, this, as Wetherell and Edley (2014) explained, is still one of the most convincing ways to perform a masculine identity. I was often left with an impression that these men were playing a part, like impenetrable knights of masculinity fighting off dragons of vulnerability – and, of course, that is what has

been demanded of them through hegemonic masculinity. As a result, this thesis has taken on a different form to what I imagined it would, and many men talked about entirely different struggles to what I had prepared for. As will be discussed more fully in chapter 5, this has at times required a significant adjustment in my expectations and 'loyalty' to representing the participant's 'side.'

At the time participants were recruited, conversations about #MeToo were playing out in the media and subsequently my own life (for a full description of the #MeToo context, see chapter 3). The issues being talked about, and the context in which they were embedded, were issues reflected in my life and work as a consent educator in high schools (and as a woman in general). While I firmly held my own beliefs around the problematic nature of rape culture to which the movement drew attention, I considered myself open-minded in listening to what others (i.e. mostly men in my life) had to say – it is part of my job to be responsive to these concerns and challenges. When having these conversations, not with young people who were expecting to be educated, but with peers who also firmly held to their own ideas, I started to feel what I had sometimes felt when talking about feminist issues with less feminist others – that they perceived me as going 'too far,' that I was blind to reality because of my 'extreme' feminist bias, and that my defence of the aims of #MeToo and other feminist goals stubbornly ignored other perspectives. This construction of the 'militant' feminist is, of course, a common stereotype of feminist women and can deter women from identifying as feminist (Calder-Dawe & Gavey, 2016; Edley & Wetherell, 2001; Percy & Kremer, 1995). This makes it a particularly effective means of silencing women. In social situations, this often did make me feel insecure and question myself, and this also became part of my emotional journey during the research process, when participants would express similar 'antifeminist' views (see chapter 8). Initially this was a dilemma for me. As will be explained in chapter 5, I really wanted to empathise with the men I was talking to – I was just starting a whole doctorate about men's issues and felt so uncomfortable occupying a perceived 'enemy' position. How to occupy a feminist position in a gender order which can often situate these views as 'extreme' and 'unfair' has been a big part of my journey in this doctorate and in trying to represent men's words.

However, by analytically constructing participants' *shared discourses* as the problem (but also the potential solution) in gender inequality, I (largely) resolved this dilemma through

remaining mindful that this study was not an attack on these men as individuals (Weatherall, Gavey & Potts, 2002). It was an attack on the patriarchal structures that have allowed them to interpret a sought dismantling of inequality as a claim to their own victimhood. There was discomfort in taking a firmly feminist position because there is social approval in conforming to patriarchal structures and there is social consequence to calling it out. These are the discomforts that must be borne and managed in the pursuit of social justice. So, in working towards 'calling out' these structures, I will analyse men's accounts as acts of masculine relationality (Connell, 2012) (see chapter 3) in a (still) patriarchal influenced society. Their accounts were fraught with similar influences and consequences from patriarchy, both through the interview experience itself, and in their descriptions of their lives. However, influences of a new and more progressive gender order were simultaneously at play, allowing for (some) different identity positionings for men to gain power (see chapter 6), providing us with hope in this fight for gender equality.

Aims of the research

By analysing men's shared discourses and practices through the lens of their *relationships* (e.g. primarily with women, other men, and with me, the interviewer), I aim to contribute to a body of work which interrogates how hegemonic masculinities are changing and progressing, and what structures remain the same. Only through examining the discourses that are available for men to take up, and the impact of this on them and others, can we think about ways in which harmful discourses can be challenged and (hopefully) dismantled and replaced, towards the goal of social equality.

In hopes of achieving this type of social contribution, I came to this project initially with the broad, primary aim of exploring men's accounts of singleness, masculinity and heterosexual desirability in Aotearoa. More specifically, this involved identifying and analysing the process though which men 'do' heterosexuality and masculinity by talking to single men about their lives. To achieve these aims, I developed three distinct areas of questioning. Firstly, I sought to identify pressures and challenges around masculinity and heteronormative desirability. Secondly, I sought to explore resistances and compliances (both acknowledged and latent) within dominant cultural discourses around hegemonic

masculinity and heterosexual relationships. Thirdly, I aimed to consider power structures through how men talked about women/non-hegemonic masculinities through the above conversations. The resulting analysis, however, was data-driven and inductive, meaning that the men's voices (through the use of data extracts) guided the direction and themes of the analytical chapters. Some of the data they produced was in relation to the above aims and my subsequent questions to those ends, while other themes and data were unexpected and not specifically asked about – i.e. were driven entirely by participants. During the analysis, the first aim became less important in terms of heterosexual desirability explicitly, and my remaining aims became 'tweaked' to focus more around homosocial and heterosexual 'relations,' (and fit with relational theory more widely) rather than necessarily romantic/sexual relationships or singleness. This thesis will integrate and consider data both within and outside of these initial aims, which has resulted in a final, generalised research question of: How does contemporary hegemonic masculinity play out in the accounts of single, heterosexual men in a New Zealand context?

I hope this thesis will offer a unique contribution to masculinity studies, both contextually as an example of what hegemonic masculinity in Aotearoa looks like in a (post) #MeToo context, and also through the application of masculinity as *relational* to this context (see chapter 3 for description). By theorising masculinity as relational, we can analyse the power structures that exist within these relations, with the goal of allowing for more room for change, and for men to be agents of that change in their everyday relations with others (Connell, 2012).

Chapter outline

This thesis will be structured by the following chapters which will work in different ways to accomplish the above aims:

Chapter 2 will contain the initial discussion of the literature related to my project, including research central to social constructionist understandings of masculinity, centred around Raewyn Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity. I will outline key conceptualisations of masculinities that work alongside and reinforce the power of hegemonic masculinity,

including complicit, subordinated, marginalised and hybridised masculinities. The theorisation (and contestation) of more contemporary 'new' and inclusive masculinities, including Elliott's (2020) framing of open/closed masculinities, will also be discussed.

Chapter 3 will include further review of the literature around masculinity, focusing on the conceptual tool of masculine relationality. First, I will outline how the body is implicated in men's relations, before discussing key issues within research of homosocial relationality. Finally, I will explore issues central to heterosexual relating, such as discourses around women and hetero-sex, the #MeToo context and men's singleness. The aim of these literature chapters will be to situate men's accounts both within existing academic theory and within the local context.

Chapter 4 will detail the methodology used for this project and explain *how* I worked to achieve the above aims. It will provide an overview of the research process, including details of the recruitment and interview process, participant demographics, ethical considerations, and analytical approach. This chapter will locate this work as grounded in social constructionist thought and as utilising a critical discursive approach for the analytic chapters.

Chapter 5 is the first analytic chapter and will provide a reflection on the research process and analysis from my position as researcher (and a woman) interviewing men. This will involve considering my assumptions in designing this study and the challenges I experienced through being underprepared for an unexpected 'gender war.' The purpose of this chapter will be to consider the interview context as an opportunity for examining implicit power structures at play, and how, as researchers, we might better equip ourselves (emotionally and practically) for interviewing men.

Chapter 6 is the second analytic chapter. It will be primarily focused on a case study of 'new' and 'open' masculinity (Elliott, 2020), including discussions around intersections of race. It will be guided by the case study of one participant's account, supported by similar data from other participants. This participant's data will be used to highlight key discursive constructions within 'new' masculine ideals and how these might both diverge from, or conform to, different notions of traditional hegemonic masculinity. I will further illustrate

how more progressive expressions of masculinity are beginning to compete for hegemony, providing us with hope for increasingly egalitarian gender relations.

Chapter 7 is the third analytic chapter and will contain discussion of men's accounts in relation to the local #MeToo context and heterosexual dating in general. Here I will examine the interpretive repertoires drawn on by men to make sense of 'changing rules' in modern heterosexual dating and sexual encounters, and how they positioned themselves and other men in relation to these 'rules.' Through this analysis I will demonstrate that patriarchal and victim blaming constructions of women still dominated the discourses taken up by men in heterosexual talk, albeit through more subtle and socially 'acceptable' means. The goal in this chapter, and the next, will be to draw attention to these harmful constructions in a bid towards interrogating and (eventually) dismantling them.

Chapter 8, the last analytic chapter, will examine and dissect men's talk in relation to misogyny, sexism and men's rights. I will identify commonly used rhetorical building blocks and justifications of misogynist claims, such as male victimisation and discursive tactics used by men to separate themselves from misogynist identities (while still engaging in misogynistic discourse). By drawing on ideals from a traditional 'closed' masculinity (Elliott, 2020), men in this chapter worked to justify a return to a patriarchal gender order, where older forms of hegemonic masculinity, in which they were invested, were not under threat from progressive ideals.

Chapter 9 will provide a conclusion for this thesis, including how it may contribute to existing literature around masculinity, heterosexuality and feminist critical theory. I will explore where there is room for optimism in current and future masculinities, and how we might continue to foster more open and socially just masculine expressions and practice. I will also outline the limitations of this study and identify key areas for further development.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Understanding and theorising masculinity

This chapter will review literature around masculinity, specifically locating this project within the broad theorisation of social constructionism. Included are some of the key concepts of masculinity and identity research, which will be used in the analyses ahead to make sense of men's experiences and positions in relation to masculinity and heterosexuality. The concept of hegemonic masculinity, as theorised by Raewyn Connell, will be key in my understanding and analysing of men's talk. This chapter will be structured by the following sections:

- What is masculinity?
    - Multiple masculinities
- Hegemonic masculinity and power
    - Complicit masculinities
    - Subordinated masculinities
    - Marginalised masculinities
- Critiques of hegemonic theorisation
- 'New' masculinities
- Hybrid masculinities
- Masculinity in Aotearoa

What is masculinity?

What masculinity *is* depends on one's theoretical positioning, whether it is constructed or theorised as a "social role, a set of personality traits, or a conglomerate of evolved genetic mechanisms" (Addis, Mansfield & Syzdek, 2010, p. 77), or another competing idea. For the purpose of this project, I will discuss masculinity from the theoretical framework of social constructionism. Social constructionist positions reject the 'objective' truth proposed by biological or personality trait theories of masculinity, and instead theorise many possible 'truths' of what masculinity is/how it is experienced. These truths are produced through discourse that is informed by social practice and subject to the cultural understandings of

any different time, place or context (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Chouliaraki, 2002). An independent truth of how masculinity can be defined is unreachable due to each individual's different biases and perspectives, as every attempt towards 'truth' is mediated by innumerable influences over one's perspective, such as class, gender, race, ability, experience, etc (Kuhn & Westwell, 2012). Thus, truth (and understandings of masculinity) can only be subjective to one's individual experiences and understandings within their specific culture and environment (for more discussion of social constructionism, see chapter 4).

Within this framework, "gender is neither sex organs or sex acts, but the socially constructed ideal of what it means to be a woman or a man" (Coltrane, 1994, p. 1). With this in mind, we can conceptualise masculinity as a culturally recognised set of ideas, constructions and discourses in society about what it *means* to be a 'man.' This includes shared expectations about the "attitudes, norms, values, behaviours and personality traits" (Taylor, Nair & Braham, 2013, p. 775) that those considered biologically male (e.g. with male anatomy, chromosomes, hormones, reproductive organs, etc) will have. However, we must also recognise that these expectations will always be inevitably (at least slightly) varied between individuals and influenced by their own specific perspectives.

Researchers in the field of gender have struggled to conceptualise masculinity in a definitive way, regardless of their theoretical positionings. Common quantitative tools used to 'measure' masculinity (e.g. Bem Sex Role Inventory, 1974) have often been conceptualised within North American ideals of gender, limiting their scope and relevance for other cultures/parts of the world (Taylor et al., 2013). Similarly, most of the qualitative research and literature referenced in this chapter have been developed from, and with references to, dominant ideas and understandings within and about Anglo-Saxon 'Western'/Global 'North' culture (e.g. North America, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand). The scope of this chapter (and most of this thesis) is localised within such understandings, as I conducted and analysed my research in a New Zealand context, which fits into such cultural frameworks.

We must also be critical in conceptualising masculinity as a 'real' and tangible concept within research. Asking participants explicitly about 'masculinity' and using such concepts within analytical framings may allow for only certain possibilities for discussion and

accounts. This may also contribute to implicitly reinforcing the constructed masculinity/femininity gender binary, without acknowledging the potential fluidity of individual and gendered experience and identity (Budgeon, 2008). This treatment of gender can contribute to stereotyping and differences/divisions between genders (Taylor et al., 2013), yet also allows for theorising about common gendered behaviour in relation to shared understandings of masculinity. This is something I continually reflected on throughout the course of research.

Multiple masculinities

Before explaining the idea of hegemonic masculinity, which positions a singular form of masculinity as the most powerful and influential across (most) contexts, it is also useful to consider the idea of multiple masculinities, of which hegemonic masculinity can 'rule' over. This is the basic concept that there are different forms of masculinity, and people may inhabit different masculine identities depending on where they are, who they are interacting with/their perceived audience, or over different times/sites in their lives (Berg & Longhurst, 2003). Gender identities or masculinities often adapt and change as a result of a variety of contextual factors, such as culture, peer/work groups, institutions and individual relationships (Connell, 2002; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998) – and different variants of masculinities might be hegemonic in different contexts. For example, men might be more likely to express certain emotions or depart from the norms of a traditional 'stoic' masculinity when in the company of women as opposed to other men (Flood, 2013b). It is also important to note that masculinity, for any one individual, will also intersect with many other aspects of identity, such as class, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, etc, making for many varied experiences and interpretations of masculinity (Berg & Longhurst, 2003). However, despite the concept of 'multiple masculinities' and identities, it is widely acknowledged that some forms of masculinity hold more social power and influence than others, and exist as more visible in regards to how men see both themselves and other men .

Hegemonic masculinity and power

One key conceptualisation of masculinity through a constructionist lens is the theory of hegemonic masculinity developed by Raewyn Connell (1987). The concept marked an

important development from sex role theory, which largely defined two genders as singular and complementary, and underplayed dynamics of power. Hegemonic masculinity, however, acknowledged and emphasised relationships of power both between and within genders as central to masculine practice (Demetriou, 2001). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) explained that this mode of masculinity "embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man, it required all men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men" (p. 832). Put simply, hegemonic masculinity can be understood as "the dominant normative form of masculinity within any particular context" (Cohen, 2016, p. 13), which is embedded in social context through formal (i.e. institutions such as schools) and informal means (socialising norms) (Connell, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity is based on "winning and holding power" (Donaldson, 1993, p. 644), particularly over women, but also over subordinated men. It can therefore refer to both the systems of power that maintain patriarchy and the dominant form of masculine practice (Flood, 2002). Hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily the most common form of masculinity in terms of numbers, but the most powerful and the most revered in comparison to subordinate masculinities (Connell, 1995). It provides ideals that men must respond to in a variety of different ways in order to gain social status/acceptance. This pressure is still felt regardless of whether men choose to conform or not.

Power is considered a key element of hegemonic masculinity, often legitimised through biological or essentialist explanations, which position power and dominance as innate to, or the natural traits of men (as opposed to women), borne from a natural aggressive instinct and physical strength (de Oliveira Pimenta & Natividade, 2013). These essentialist explanations, which sit contrary to constructionist approaches, work to validate and justify gendered inequalities. Underpinned by these assumptions, masculinity around the world has largely produced the gendered construct of patriarchy, which translated means 'rule of the father.' Patriarchy refers to an organisation of the sexes where men have historically been enabled through social structures to hold more social, political and economic power than women (Hepburn, 2003).

Patriarchy has structured traditional gender roles, especially concerning the division of labour and basic rights. Men and women are offered different ways of being that enable patriarchal power, and constrain gendered practice to socially desired gender roles, or they

risk social consequences through non-conformity (Foucault, 1990). As women were traditionally relegated to the domestic sphere, almost without exception, and men were expected to financially provide as the 'breadwinner' (Budgeon, 2016), education and 'intelligence' were traditionally rights and opportunities awarded only to men (particularly in the middle classes). It is worth noting that within lower classes, women were often required to enter the public sphere to help financially support their families (usually in low-paid, menial work), in addition to domestic work, and in upper classes, women were often exempt from domestic duties (as they were able to hire other women to assist with this) (Weiner, 1985). However, throughout all classes, a woman's accepted role has traditionally been centred around marriage and motherhood. In his 'marriage manual,' European sociological and ethical writer Gustav Spiller (1914) discussed men as the "stronger sex," "which can rule" (p. 51), while women were assumed to be living a "shadowy dream existence" (p. 63) until the time of marriage when her work began – the domestic work of keeping her husband and children comfortable and happy. Men were clearly positioned here as the dominant sex, undertaking 'real' work in the 'real' world, while the female-relegated role was solely supportive and appeared to hold little value – yet required strict adherence (Budgeon, 2016). Desirable femininity was therefore considered synonymous with the supportive traits of a caring mother and wife – traits that would best fit in with male monopolising of the public sphere, making *agreeableness* and passivity essential within femininity, complementary to maintaining overall male control and autonomy (Bem, 1981; Budgeon, 2016; Butler, 2013).

These patriarchal gender roles continue to influence current gender orders of the Western world to varying degrees, despite ongoing rhetoric of women's liberation and equality (Cohen, 2016). Men in Western society have continually been awarded more attention, respect and authority than women across different spheres, often unconsciously (Whelehan, 1995). American researchers Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin (1999), in a review of sociological research, reported that in mixed gendered group scenarios, men were more likely to be picked for leadership roles and to behave in ways associated with power and superiority. It has even been reported that in feminist spaces drawing attention to this gendered inequality of power, men who participate are often afforded immediate praise and respect, unlike their female counterparts (Cobb, 2015; Edwards, 2008), or end up

dominating conversation and silencing women in the group, even while critiquing this power imbalance themselves (Luxton, 1993; Whelehan, 1995). Men still typically have more resources and power. For example, records from 2018 show that 88.3% of the world's billionaires are men (Duffin, 2020), while women reportedly lose about half their lifetime earning potential to caregiving (MacInnes, 1998). There has been considerable acknowledgement of barriers women face in rising to more powerful positions across almost all sectors of the workplace, resulting in men continuing to dominate the top professional positions, both in actual numbers and perceptions (Ministry for Women, 2015; Grimley, 2015). A persistent pay gap still exists in most countries, including New Zealand, which currently pays women approximately 91 cents for every dollar a man earns (StatsNZ, 2019a). In the UK, this pay gap extends to 83 cents for women (Francis-Devine & Pyper, 2020), and it is 81 cents in the US (PayScale, 2020).

This emphasis on power within masculinity can also be seen as manifesting through aggression and competition for boys and men, with 'masculine' activities commonly centring around competitive sports, drinking alcohol to excess and risk-taking behaviour (Donaldson, 1993). For instance, contemporary literature advocating for single-sex schools is an example of the work institutions can (and still) do to legitimise these ideas of traditional gender roles, through explaining that boys are essentially 'different' than girls, and as such need to be taught differently to girls – learning best through sports, competition and activity to satiate their 'natural' aggression (which girls are assumed to be lacking) (Cohen, 2016). The highly visible 'pageantry' of 'physical' masculinity can be seen through images of men in sports media as the epitome of hegemonic role models (Sabo & Jansen, 1992). Participation in group sports has been theorised by Bullingham, Magrath and Anderson (2014) as a way for men to reassert their *hetero*masculinity (Pronger, 1990) through a display of physical homosociality that is hetero-sanctioned and legitimised as masculine (as opposed to homosocial physicality/affection, which might risk being perceived as homosexual – a subordinated masculinity).

In line with this idea of 'natural aggression,' one emotion that has been constructed as masculine and traditionally acceptable for men to express within hegemonic masculinity (due to a perceived association with aggression, power and strength) is anger. Anger, when expressed by a man, has been found to hold more influence over others, as compared to

anger expressed from a woman in the same scenario (Tourjee, 2015). A value in masculine displays of anger can be particularly problematic when considering the correlation between anger and violence, and the hugely disproportionate levels of violence perpetrated by men towards other men, women, children and marginalised groups. Displays of aggression/anger and getting into/winning physical fights with other males are often legitimated as 'heroically' masculine (Andersson, 2008), and glorified as a mechanism to reassert masculinity when a man does not have the control or power over others that he desires. A cultural acceptance and naturalisation of male violence can consequentially spill into domestic spaces, resulting in cultural patterns of violence against women and children (Taylor et al., 2013):

> "As women in the west reach levels of parity in the world of work, education and income earned, it becomes obvious that the one area they will never surpass men is in violence and destructive behaviour" (Moss, 2012, p. 123)

This aggression, when recognised as problematic, can often be constructed as apart from hegemonic masculinity, to avoid the possibility of censure to the dominant form (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Consalvo (2003), for example, discussed how the media reporting of the 1999 Columbine shooting removed the idea of masculinity from commentary around the violent act, instead constructing the shooters as simply individual 'monsters.' Similarly, men's violence is commonly associated with marginalised groups, such as working class men or men of colour, who are constructed as representing more regressive masculinities, as opposed to hegemonic masculinity's constant adaptation to the current ideals of the time (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). Through these constructions, hegemonic (and white) masculinity can continue to trade in different acts of unacknowledged aggression, while largely avoiding the possibility of masculinity being called to account.

However, hegemonic masculinity has also been theorised as largely able to perpetuate patriarchy *without* violence, i.e. through sheer influence alone. Drawing on the work of Gramsci and Hoare (1971), a dominant class can recruit and lead allied marginalised and complicit classes through common interests (i.e. male dominance), achieving internal hegemony. In uniting these allied classes in what Gramsci and Hoare call a 'historic bloc,' some allied groups' interests will be subordinated for the common goal of external

hegemony over the enemy class (i.e. women). Once assimilated, these hegemonic and allied groups (i.e. men) can assume power over subordinated enemy groups (i.e. women and homosexual men) without the need for violence, as they have the numbers and influence to take control easily. This theory of class control can also account for other models of hegemony, such as the existence of billionaires off the 'backs' of complicit and marginalised working classes. Relatedly, 'transnational business masculinities' can be seen as a particularly dominant, current form of 'global' hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Wood, 2005) of 'billionaire' figureheads, who hold influence (over women *and* the working class) through economic power rather than violence.

Associated with this power and naturalised subordination of women is a general devaluing of all things deemed 'feminine' – to be behaving in any way 'like a girl' has been seen as a punishing insult (Connell, 2000). To be accused of femininity is a general indication that the behaviour in question is not being done *well enough,* thereby normalising the idea of male superiority and female weakness. Likewise, appearing unable/unwilling to live up to or strive for such notions of power within accepted masculinity is a risky identity position. Young men and boys in particular, but also some adult men, regularly report being bullied and excluded for failing in different facets of hegemonic masculinity, routinely being called 'wimp,' 'gay,' 'faggot' or a variety of other aggressive words designed to call into question one's strength or sexual orientation (as not adhering to strict heterosexuality) (Kehily & Nayak, 1997; Michele, 2011). This is in line with gay men being a key example of a subordinated masculinity, as will be discussed in the following sections. To combat this, men might find ways to be complicit to hegemonic ideals, or exaggerate particular conformities in the pursuit of hegemony, even while failing in other aspects of hegemonic masculinity (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). The ways that men manage their identities in relation to hegemonic ideals will be discussed further in the following sections of this literature review and will be a central theme through the analytical chapters.

Though the above descriptions refer to a generalised type of 'Western' hegemonic masculinity, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) conceptualised three levels of masculinity in relation to geography/context: local, regional and global. These levels will be used throughout this thesis to locate particular cultures of hegemonic masculinity. Local masculinities are the most micro, and refer to masculine practices in specific and localised

communities, i.e. at the level of face-to-face social interactions, such as in families, institutions or towns/cities. Regional masculinities refer to national masculine identities within a particular country or state, which may be influenced by national sports stars, celebrities, national politics or pastimes. The overarching umbrella for both of these forms is global masculinity, which represents a transnational masculinity, influenced by the media, world politics and business (e.g. Connell and Wood (2005) theorised that transnational business masculinity can be seen as the current hegemonic form). Local masculinity might be distinct from, or inevitably influenced by, both regional and global masculinity. This theorisation allows for the possibility of difference within masculine culture, as dependent on time and space, which means that hegemonic masculinity is always subjective, while still retaining some features that are recognisable across masculinities (i.e. the subordination of women).

Complicit masculinities

Hegemonic forms of masculinity exist as elusive and something that very few men can actually live up to, instead promoted through the production of hegemonic 'examples' of masculine stereotypes, often through the media (Demetriou, 2001). Complicit masculinities, however, can be seen as the true force behind hegemonic masculinity. In theorising hegemony, Gramsci and Hoare (1971) stated that a dominant group "leads the classes which are its allies, and dominates those which are its enemies" (p. 57). In applying this to hegemonic masculinity, complicit masculinities become the beneficiaries of patriarchy, and women and subordinated masculinities become the enemy. Complicit masculinities are conceptualised as implicitly supporting hegemonic behaviour within the group, or "men who received the benefits of patriarchy without enacting a strong form of masculine dominance" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). The defining requirement of complicit masculinity is simply to not challenge or critique the hegemonic ideals, thus maintaining the benefit of group inclusion (Bird, 1996). High numbers of men who are complicit passively (or actively) sustain patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity, even if their own behaviour strays from hegemonic ideals. However, "a degree of overlap or blurring between hegemonic and complicit masculinities is extremely likely if hegemony is effective" (Connell, 2005, p. 839). Men might move through enacting hegemonic or complicit practice, potentially while also embodying aspects of subordinated or marginalised masculinities –

most men will find themselves simultaneously members of both dominant and marginalised groups (Cheng, 1999). Hegemonic masculinity can thus remain elusive, powerful through its invisibility and infiltration of various degrees into different areas of men's lives.

Subordinate masculinities

Where there is external hegemonic masculinity, built on subordination *between* the genders, there must also be subordination *within* masculinity, which reveal "relations internal to the gender order" (Demetriou, 2001, p. 342) – and help produce external hegemony. Masculinities are subordinated when "the configuration of practice they embody is inconsistent with the currently accepted strategy for the subordination of women" (Demetriou, 2001, p. 344). Connell (2000) identified two main determinants of subordination of men from hegemonic masculinity – men who are considered gay, and men who are considered feminine (and therefore stereotyped as homosexual-like).

Gay men have historically been considered subordinated to straight men within hegemonic masculinity, as they fail to conform to heterosexuality and heteronormativity, features that remain central to the subordination of women and reproduction of patriarchy (though there is evidence to indicate this might be shifting, as will be discussed in *New masculinities*). Gay men have been subordinated both through social status but also through material means, noted by Demetriou (2001) as including "political, cultural, economic and legal discrimination" (p. 341). Heterosexuality has long been a central and defining feature of hegemonic masculinity, with the associated expectations and pressures surrounding men's sexuality all relying on the assumption that a 'masculine' man will be undoubtedly and strictly heterosexual. To be sexually interested in men, or to be intimate with another man, has traditionally been positioned as something that "girls do" (Cohen, 2016), and therefore devalued and scorned. Gay men, in turn, became stereotyped as feminine – positioned as weak, emotional and effeminate. Effeminate masculinities outside of homosexuality have likewise, although to a lesser extent, also been subordinated to the hegemonic model (Demetriou, 2001). Men who publicly display emotions, are not physically strong or aggressive, and are perceived as lacking in 'control' have risked being coded as feminine, and thus bullied and/or ostracised from the dominant group (Cheng, 1999) – though some of these ideas exist in flux within 'new,' more progressive hegemonic values.

Homophobia has been a key binding discourse within hegemonic masculinity, serving as another tool to distance oneself from all things feminine. This strengthens the dominance and power of heterosexual and hegemonic masculinities to censure men's behaviours, evidenced through homophobic verbal teasing, physical bullying and the historical criminalisation of homosexual acts (Roberts, 1993). Anderson (2010) described a type of 'homohysteria' within heterosexual masculinity – or a fear of being perceived as gay (and, as such, suffering social consequences that come from being excluded from hegemonic masculinity) – which works as a fear-induced divide to further exclude and emasculate non-heterosexual men. Ging (2019) did note, however, in certain men's rights spaces (which can be seen as complicit with hegemonic masculinity and striving for hegemonic recognition), gay men were talked about favourably and included when they demonstrated similar levels of misogyny and oppressive ideas towards women. This, perhaps, indicates the basis of homohysteria as grounded in not only gay men's association with femininity, but also their perceived lack of subordination of women. Whether (Western) ideas around hegemonic masculinity and homophobia have changed/are changing with progressing social and political ideas around LGBTIQ+ rights remains a complicated picture and will be further interrogated in *New masculinities*.

Marginalised masculinities

Marginalised masculinities represent the "relations that result from the interplay of gender with other structures, such as class and ethnicity" (Demetriou, 2001, p. 342). Dominant and subordinated classes and ethnicities produce different cultures of masculinity, with more dominant ethnic and class groups generally monopolising models of hegemonic masculinity (e.g. rich, white men). Working class, disabled and black (or most non-white) masculinities are key examples of marginalised masculinities (Connell, 2005). However, any group whose gender performance deviates from the hegemonic form might be understood as marginalised, such as 'nerd' masculinities, who might fit into the dominant ethnicity and class, but fail to embody hegemonic ideals of strength and sexual prowess (Kendall, 2000) (they may, however, be able to redress some of this later in life through economic success).

For example, as the male 'provider' role is central to patriarchy and thus hegemonic masculinity, being of lower or working class can threaten a man's capability to financially

'provide,' relegating him to a marginalised status (Cheng, 1999). Ideas of power have largely shifted from physical strength to wealth and influence in capitalist societies, with money now signifying more power (Walker & Roberts, 2017). This results in lower classes having less power in an array of areas, and less claim to a more 'cerebral' hegemonic masculine status (Nixon, 2018). Where a man does experience some economic success in working class employment, this is often contingent on the capabilities of his body, which changes how this 'providing' role is embodied compared to upper-class men, and limits sustainability for working class men (Ajslev, Møller, Persson & Andersen, 2017).

Of course, a marginalised class status may be undercut by various other identity memberships – a white, heterosexual, working class man will still, in a variety of contexts, have more claim to hegemony than a black, homosexual, working class man. In fact, in research by Weis, Proweller and Centrie (1997), white, American working class men *blamed* their loss of material privilege on affirmative action policy and the men of colour for 'taking' the jobs/positions of wealth and status that they believed they deserved. This was rather than blaming the white managers or men in higher positions who made such decisions, illustrating the availability of racist discourse to uphold the hegemonic structure. Such an example demonstrates how belonging to some privileged/complicit groups can lead men to further marginalise other groups of men (despite experiencing marginalisation themselves), rather than challenge hegemonic structures.

Some aspects of marginalised masculinities, however, might be 'authorised' as hegemonic by the hegemonic forms. Black athletes in the US, for example, may be used as models for hegemonic masculinity, despite their marginalised ethnicity (Connell, 2013). This allows them to occupy both dominant and marginalised groups, but it is again contingent on the capabilities of their bodies and the capital of their athletic prime (and is thus potentially fleeting). Likewise, research has indicated that interest from dominant groups (i.e. white men) in black culture and some hip hop artists (particularly in the US), commonly accessed 'colour-blind' discourses to appropriate elements of black culture into hegemonic (white) culture (Rodriquez, 2006), while still largely marginalising black people. These examples demonstrate how different masculinities may influence and interact with each other, but how ultimately, dominant groups will adjust to cultural change and relational dynamics by taking on what is needed from subordinated and marginalised groups to ensure their

continued power (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Demetriou, 2001). This borrowing, appropriating or hybridising will be discussed further in *Hybridised masculinities*.

Marginalised identities can be precarious positions for individuals to occupy and have significant influence over masculine practice. 'Children of immigrants' in the US, in research by Rumbaut (2005), talked about acute and explicit awareness of their marginal and dual ethnic/cultural status, unlike their parents, who more implicitly accepted their ethnic self-identities (as being dominant in their home countries). These participants described a sensitivity and consciousness of their ethnic identities or associations, despite higher levels of acculturation than their parents, and the difficulties of not *quite* being 'insiders' to either their ancestral or the dominant group. Such a consciousness of marginalisation can increase pressures to conform (or reject) to the dominant practice to compensate, often resulting in exaggerated performances. Within practices of masculinity, this can result in strict and over-the-top performances of hegemonic masculinity, *or* in a 'rejection' of hegemonic ideals, resulting in 'protest' masculinities. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) defined protest masculinities as existing in working class and/or ethnically marginalised settings, enacted by men who protest their lack of power and support within a hegemonic structure (Elliott, 2020). These men might outwardly reject some traditional masculine behaviours associated with hegemonic masculinity (such as sexist comments in chapter 6), but implicitly conform to the contemporary hegemonic structure (such as masculine independence/autonomy, or even violence) (Roberts, 2018) in order to (try to) lay claim to power. They are, however, confined without the economic and institutional support of hegemonic masculinities. Protest masculinities will be explored in chapter 6, as an example of how marginalised men might use protest masculinity to separate themselves from hegemonic forms of inequality (challenging ideas of marginalised men as regressive/patriarchal in their use of protest masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005)). However, in chapter 8 I will also discuss how men who might *perceive* themselves as marginalised (despite relative access to privilege/the hegemonic centre) may also take on protest masculinities, here to protest the increasing influence of feminism over society/masculinity – and in *support* of patriarchal gender orders. Through my theorisation, protest masculinity might be taken up by *any* men, regardless of their proximity to the hegemonic centre, and be used in progressive *or* regressive ways. What is important is the *perception* of marginalisation, and how one might

deploy protest discourse in response to this (regardless of how 'accurate' we might theorise this marginalisation to be).

Critiques of hegemonic theorisation

Many researchers turn to Connell during their formulation of masculinity, who described hegemonic masculinity as above – emphasising and valuing traits such as dominance, aggression and competition (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). For example, MacInnes (1998) acknowledged the strong intuitive power of Connell's hegemonic masculinity argument, through his observation that powerful/successful men often display similar traits of arrogance, misogyny and homophobia – all qualities that complement patriarchy in maintaining/reproducing a social order that privileges men and oppresses women and marginalised others.

Yet, while Connell has been at the forefront of formulating a highly regarded theory of multiple masculinities and power that has been of great influence, her work is not without its critics. Most of these critics have proposed further nuances to her ideas. Beasley (2008) disputed this material power of hegemonic masculinity through citing the example of working-class men. These men conform to many of the cultural ideals of hegemonic masculinity (in ways more so than higher class, more powerful men, e.g. in terms of physicality, aggressiveness and manual work), yet hold little power. She argues that the values of hegemonic masculinity are, in fact, then symbolic, rather than material or political, as Connell's model claims.

Other researchers have similarly queried the ambiguity of hegemonic masculinity (i.e. what it actually looks like in practice and who can represent it unequivocally (see Griffin, 2018; Jefferson, 2002; Moller, 2007)). In relation to this, one exemplar or model of hegemonic masculinity described by Connell (1990) included the 'iron man,' who excels in sports and physical/mental endurance. This example was disputed by Donaldson (1993), who signalled that the iron man's 'sport champion' status actually prevented him from partaking in many of the activities his peer group might deem masculine, such as drinking to excess, 'partying', and getting into physical fights/confrontations – complicating the idea of how hegemony is

actually embodied. However, through the conceptualisation of 'masculine capital' (De Visser, Smith & McDonnell, 2009), the iron man might be understood as embodying excess masculine capital (or power) through his athletic performance. Here, masculine capital "can be used to compensate for non-masculine behaviour in other domains" (De Visser et al., 2009, p. 1047), allowing him to withdraw from other hyper-masculine performances often used by others in the pursuit of capital, while still retaining a hegemonic status.

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005b) responded to Donaldson's and other criticisms through their 'rethinking the concept' paper, which theorised that patterns of hegemony may change and incorporate elements of different masculinities as they influence each other, varying and/or linking at local, regional and global levels. Additionally, constructions of hegemonic masculinity are theorised as only rarely corresponding to the lives of actual men, existing more as a "cultural ideal" of reproduced patriarchy (Demetriou, 2001), which is part of their power. We must "understand hegemonic masculinity by its mechanism of domination – force accompanied by consent – rather than via certain pregiven masculine qualities" (Yang, 2020, p. 318). Through distorting actualities and direct paths to accomplishing hegemonic ideals, hegemonic masculinity represents more fantasies and desires for men than reality. This results in men working endlessly to live up to such goals, and making "uncertain calculations about the costs and benefits of different gender strategies" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 853), as their work is always provisional and subject to change.

In line with this, Wetherell and Edley (1999) additionally argued that Connell's original model was too simplistic, and that due to variations and complexities in context and individual sense-making surrounding identities, there must be more than one form of what is deemed hegemonic in masculinity. Connell herself did acknowledge that norms and traits of hegemonic masculinity will shift and change with time, dependent on changing social factors within society, such as changing politics or economics (Connell, 1995, 2005). She conceptualised masculinity as not something essentialist, with fixed characteristics, but produced out of specific cultural locations and times (Connell, 2013), versions of which each individual might take up strategically in particular circumstances based on their interactional needs (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). For example, men might take up hegemonic subject positions in contexts of threat to a masculine identity, in order to alleviate feelings of

powerlessness or social rejection (Jefferson, 1994). Connell reformulated the concept in regards to such criticism to include more layers, including the idea that each individual's relationship with models of hegemonic masculinity will be fraught with a variety of tensions and resistances through the course of daily life (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This fits with social constructionist views of gender, which position masculinity as something acquired, or (re)produced from social interaction and discourse within a given culture/context/time (Coltrane, 1994).

Many argue that Connell's model holds limited relevance to emerging and what might be considered more 'liberated' masculinities, or for those men who oppose hegemonic values. While acknowledging that hegemonic bounds are always changing and being contested, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) said the defining feature of hegemonic masculinity ultimately remained the subordination of women (however that may present). However, they did consider that "older forms of masculinity might be displaced by new ones," and that, in line with 'new' masculinities, "more humane, less oppressive, means of being a man might become hegemonic" (p. 833). The idea of 'new' masculine values becoming hegemonic, however, remains complicated. Traditional forms of masculinity can be theorised as continuing to influence 'new' masculine practice through more indirect means, as will be discussed in *New masculinities* and *Hybridised masculinities*. However, "hegemonic masculinities can be contested and undermined through alternative practices that do not support unequal power relations," which can become "culturally conceptualised as legitimate and authentic alternatives to gender hegemonic relations" (Messerschmidt, 2018, p. 142). Each step towards more egalitarian gender relations, even outside of hegemonic practice, can be considered a contribution towards an alternative option for men. Messerschmidt (2018) described these alternatives as 'counterhegemonic practices,' and in his book provided examples of adolescent boys, musicians, athletes, 'fair' heterosexual couples and anti-violence activists as providing different forms of 'counterhegemonic' paths for men. These examples provide the possibility for hope in eventually reconfiguring the hegemonic practice to something more equal.

‘New’ masculinities

Sidestepping the question of whether Connell’s original conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity still holds, Elliott (2020) instead developed the theory of ‘open’ and ‘closed’ masculinities. In this theory, closed masculinities refer to ‘bounded’ masculine practice and discourse, most aligned with the hegemonic or complicit masculinities described by Connell. Closed ideals reflect ‘traditional’ masculinities associated with male privilege and sit at the hegemonic centre of the framework. These masculinities commonly reiterate patriarchal ideology associated with male power (such as masculine autonomy), and in more ‘extreme’ forms are represented by men’s rights ideologies (see chapter 8). Men most aligned with closed masculinities typically benefit from the ‘patriarchal dividend’ through experiencing privilege along multiple intersecting axes (e.g. white, heterosexual, middle-class men). Though privilege does not necessarily restrict movement towards more open masculinities, and many men with privilege do often show alignment with open masculinities, men with privilege along more axes often remain tied to closed masculinity in different, implicit ways.

Closed masculinities sit in contrast to masculinities on the margins, with less access to privilege (i.e. marginalised masculinities), a site where “open possibilities for masculinities are fostered” (Elliott, 2020, p. 188). Open masculinities can be associated with more caring and progressive masculine discourse and practice. These men might protest/separate themselves from patriarchal power (i.e. through protest masculinities) and represent more generally egalitarian views (see chapter 6). Open masculinities can be linked to ‘modern’ liberal thought and ‘new’ ‘socially minded’ configurations of masculinities. Masculine identity and practice, however, are not binary as the formulation of open/closed masculinities might initially suggest. Elliott described that masculine expression can be situated anywhere between the centre and margin, and can shift, entangle and intersect. Men are never entirely open or closed – their identities, practice and expressions will always be moving between both at different times and sites in their lives. This theory of ‘open’ and ‘closed’ masculinities is central to discussion around new masculinities, where contemporary masculine practice can be seen to incorporate and move between both open and closed aspects.

While hegemonic masculinity in the West can be conceptualised as historically tied to ideas of 'closed' masculinity (Elliott, 2020), different factors have allowed for/contributed to a climate where there is room for new and 'open' masculinities to push through (or new configurations of hegemonic masculinity). Both neoliberalism and feminism have been credited with contributing to a reshaping of gender roles in contemporary society. Perhaps the most notable influence over 'new' (Western) gender roles has been the opportunity for large numbers of women to participate in professional/paid work and education. The first half of the 20th century saw women (including middle-class women) enter into the paid workforce at higher numbers than ever before, to fill the spots left by men away at war and make use of an expanding labour market (Gerson, 1986; Weiner, 1985). While a lot of women were initially encouraged back into the domestic sphere to make way for returning servicemen after the war, the post-1940s saw initiatives to expand the labour market for women to work in reconstruction efforts (Anitha, 2013). In the 1970s, another surge of women (in the West) entered the workforce as family structures changed and birth rates went down (Gerson, 1986) – changes that would not have been possible without feminism in the 1970s, which focused on establishing equality for women in the public sphere (Moseley & Read, 2002). These trends have been continuing with an overall increase in the female labour force. Statistics from 2017 showed that 65% of women of working age in New Zealand were either employed or looking for paid work (Newshub, 2017), and in 2019, women made up 48% of New Zealand's workforce (StatsNZ, 2019b) (however, women within this 48% were still much more likely to be in unstable, low-paid and part-time work (StatsNZ, 2019a, 2019b)). Thus, the contemporary woman is now (potentially) able to (and arguably expected to) participate as fully as a man in the public sector, increasing her options for living outside of "the constraints associated with conventional gender roles and norms" (Budgeon, 2016, p. 2). More than simply being offered such opportunities, women are now expected and encouraged to financially earn and/or otherwise achieve (at least before having a family), and fully participate in a neo-liberal society that values individual achievement above all else, or risk being positioned as irresponsible and undisciplined (Rose, 1990). Thus, a type of 'new femininity' can subsequently be identified, which emphasises values of intelligence and achievement (see Jackson & Lyons, 2013 discussion of femininity with New Zealand girls).

This ‘new’ femininity has invariably influenced contemporary masculinity. The Western world in particular has simultaneously witnessed the evolution of the more open, egalitarian ‘liberal man.’ Rutherford (1988) was one of the first to conceptualise this idea of the ‘new’ man, in opposition to, and in tension with, the traditional ‘retributive’ man, who is patriarchal, authoritative and unemotional (i.e. closed masculinity). The ‘new’ man, in contrast, joins marches against sexism and inequality, rejects homophobia, critiques traditional understandings of what it means to be a man, then heads home to take over childcare (Stotzer, 2009), representing Elliott’s (2020) open and caring masculinities. In line with this, ‘homohysteria’ (a fear of being perceived as gay) as described by Anderson (2010), is reportedly in decline. More men are comfortable associating with gay men, being physically affectionate with other men, engaging in more behaviour traditionally deemed feminine, and are generally showing less prejudiced behaviour (Jarvis, 2015).

Modern political moves reflect these positive changing shifts within Western gender relations, as gay (and LGBTIQ+) rights have improved significantly over the past few decades, with societies and governments now actively challenging discrimination and hate crimes. As of June 2020, a total of 29 countries (mostly in Europe and the Americas) had legalised same-sex marriage, including New Zealand, with more countries in consideration, indicative of societies where homophobia is decreasing, and more supportive discourse around diverse sexualities is flourishing (Tang & Hauler, 2020). In reference to this changing nature of Western society, Anderson (2010) theorised that as cultures of ‘homohysteria’ diminish, and more inclusive ideas grow within masculinity, that Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity will hold less relevance. Anderson argued that orthodox (or closed) masculinity will be surpassed by an ‘inclusive masculinity,’ where multiple masculinities will be able to exist without hierarchy and will incorporate more ‘liberal’ and inclusive positions. O’Neill (2015), however, pointed out that this theory risks simplifying conceptualisations of masculinity *as* homophobia, where hegemony has centred around subordinating gay men, and inclusivity is solely defined through a declining ‘homohysteria.’ This focus on hegemonic men’s relationships to gay men lacks engagement with women and feminist thought (Waling, 2019), ignoring heterosexual politics and gendered power relations. This is a serious omission, as many forms of hegemonic masculinity are defined by the ongoing

perpetuation of sexism and subordination of women, with much less focus on homophobia (de Boise, 2015).

In contrast to the stoic 'retributive' man (Rutherford, 1988), changing ideals of a 'new' or modernised Western masculinity have also seemingly made it easier for men to express emotion and seek support in areas of physical or mental health. A 'new' open masculinity that is more accepting and inclusive of women and diverse sexualities in turn creates a masculinity that is more accepting of the stereotypical values aligned with women and diverse sexualities (for example, emotionality and social support/talk (Connell, 2005)) and reorients to whom those 'apply.' Becoming emotionally aware and sympathetic towards marginalised others, but also more emotionally expressive of themselves, has become a key narrative of men's health, in order to maintain 'healthy' lifestyles and relationships (Illouz, 2008). This idea of increased emotionality also fits with neoliberal (and hegemonic) ideas of self-improvement. To be in touch with and aware of one's emotions can be positioned as becoming one's own psychologist by working through emotional issues independently, thus improving and being in control of one's self and relationships (Rose, 1998). However, traditional ideas of emotional control and restraint in closed masculinity still persist as an underlying and ever-present expectation (Cohen, 2016). Pease (2012) argued that men are now existing within an environment of competing masculinities, including new and traditional masculinities, all dictating how to manage emotions and behaviour, leaving no clear way of 'doing' emotions for men. This constructs emotions as a complicated and somewhat unknown territory for men.

Some have positioned these more modern ideologies of 'new' masculinity as growing out of more educated and liberal (middle and upper-class) backgrounds, gaining increasing support and popularity from younger generations (Messner, Greenberg & Peretz, 2015), and produced in largely city locations, where the bulk of education institutes are based (Jacobs, 2016). However, Elliott (2020) positioned open masculinities as growing from the margins (i.e. marginalised men who are restricted from access to the (white/middle-class) hegemonic centre), which include less educated men from working classes (with less power). Elliott (2020) argued that the possibility of real change and progression towards a more 'enlightened' and egalitarian, or 'caring' masculinity is situated at the margins, contrary to stereotypes of marginalised men (e.g. working class and/or men of colour) as

more patriarchal/regressive than white and privileged masculinities. Some recent research can illustrate Elliott's case and presents examples of a potentially emerging, authentic 'new' masculinity. In a New Zealand context, Baines, Charlesworth and Cunningham (2015) acknowledged a culture of caring masculinities within (low-paid) support/care work roles. Roberts (2018) reported working class men in England as equally engaging in domestic labour with their partners and displaying an increased inclusivity of gay men. Gill (2020) similarly found narratives of care as central to the masculine practice of British/South Asian men, challenging patriarchal norms and stereotypes. This is not to say that progression and positive change are not possible or evident within more privileged or hegemonic spaces, but that a marginal status might allow for the distance from the hegemonic centre to be able to consider doing things differently. Men with more hegemonic access (white, upper/middle class, educated), however, may *become* the voice of new masculinity due to the platform provided to them through their more visible/powerful status – allowing for associations of privileged men as "the harbingers of progress and change" (Elliott, 2020, p. 1). Here, men might use the advantage afforded to them *through* hegemonic masculinity to in turn *protest* that masculinity, dominating the conversation over marginalised others.

Additionally, O'Neill (2015) criticised of the idea of inclusive masculinity as *too* optimistic. Despite such revolutionising of potential gender roles and identities over the past half century, this is not to say all men (or women) subscribe to 'new' ideologies of inclusion, as homophobia, transphobia, racism and misogyny still exist as very real issues across different communities. Some also argue that inclusivity may be a strategy used by (straight, middle-class, typically white) men to adapt and maintain hegemonic power in a changing world (de Boise, 2015), to retain parts of closed masculinity, yet changing other parts in order to avoid criticism of being 'sexist' or homophobic (Toerien & Durrheim, 2001). Ingram and Waller (2014) described this as "adapting to the requirements to assume a veneer of inclusivity" (p. 48) in an increasingly liberal society. For example, it is argued that some men may identify as feminist in an instrumental capacity, to attract feminist women or further their careers (Ashe, 2007), often abandoning feminist positions once in the company of other men (Holmgren & Hearn, 2009). Instead of explicit homophobia or sexism, men may also use subtle tactics of prejudice, such as innuendo, irony and humour, often used to "frame

problematic statements as innocuous" (Gough & Edwards, 1998, p. 431). Such methods are hard to explicitly call out or challenge, making them particularly effective.

Men often mix inclusive/open behaviour with indirect homophobic/sexist behaviour, carefully navigating their way through the contrasts between traditional/closed masculinity and the modern world (Connell, 1995; Korobov, 2004). This illustrates that 'new' hegemonic masculinity may still perpetuate patriarchy in more concealed and nuanced ways (see *Hybridised masculinities*). For example, in talk with American adolescent boys, Korobov (2004) argued that, "a heterosexual man might try to distance himself from homosexuality without seeming obviously or knowingly homophobic in so doing. Men may also attempt to display heterosexual desire without coming across as sexist or shallow" (p. 179). While instances of explicit homophobic hate speech, discrimination and violence have decreased within general masculinity (in a Western context), there appears to be little change in men's and boys' homophobic comments 'within group' to police each other's gender performance (as deviating from hegemonic practice) – despite this more 'inclusive' social climate (McCormack, 2013; Pascoe, 2011). Ralph and Roberts (2020) also critiqued Anderson's optimism through their study with young Australian men. These men were seemingly more open to homosocial displays of affection such as kissing, but these were not largely considered authentic displays, and were alternatively used as exaggerated displays for humour. Thus, this perceived loosening around homosocial affection was still governed by implicitly homophobic rules, failing to meaningfully challenge hegemonic structures. Such findings challenge how new 'new' masculine ideals really are. *But* as noted by Ralph and Roberts, even the possibility for men to kiss in a heterosexual context does indicate some loosening around the influence of closed masculinities – a necessary first step towards change.

Relatedly, Connell (2013), argued that the more 'straight' a gay man can present (i.e. the more he can blend in with hegemonic masculinity), the more social esteem and acceptance he will receive. This is set up in opposition to a 'stereotypical' gay man, who is represented as feminine and emotional – the image of homosexuality that hegemonic masculinity has worked to subordinate (though in current contexts, gay men may have now reached marginalisation within hegemonic masculinity). Within the professional/middle-class workplace, professionalism is associated with values of closed masculinity (such as logic

rather than emotion), which can lead gay (and other) men to feel pressured to further distance themselves from any behaviour deemed 'stereotypically' gay or feminine, in order to succeed (and/or survive) professionally (Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009). Here, masculinity can be seen to retain a strict, yet more disguised, hierarchy of masculinity and system of inequality among men (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014).

In regards to heterosexual relations, Sanchez, Fetterolf and Rudman's (2012) research review challenged the widespread idea that the sexual roles taken up by men and women have become more egalitarian in current society. They argued that contemporary research overwhelmingly supports the idea that heterosexual relationships are still structured around traditional sexual roles – i.e. the active male and passive/submissive female. In their discussion, they highlighted automatic associations that are made between sex and power, which might amplify or encourage gender stereotypic sexual behaviour. Research has additionally shown that older men and women largely still conform and subscribe to old hegemonic ideas of the male breadwinner, while younger men and women tend not to (Scott, 2008) – which may be influenced by the less stable nature of the modern workforce (Shaw, 2018) (i.e. both people in a heterosexual partnership commonly *need* to work, financially). Despite this, research still indicates that younger heterosexual men still prefer female partners who are less professionally ambitious than they are (Bursztyn, Fujiwara & Pallais, 2017). Some younger men even voice resentment towards women who might 'steal' job/graduate or general economic opportunities from men (Cohen, Luttig & Rogowski, 2016; Gough & Edwards, 1998), or threaten the masculine role of 'provider,' leaving men insecure about their place (Paquette, 2016). In relation to this, Shaw (2018) argued that the increasingly unstable nature of the global workforce is linked to, and fuels, expressions of misogyny and racism, as men now find themselves potentially without the economic security of men before them, making the traditional role of male provider harder to embody. Thus, it seems some of the traditional features of masculinity persist into current hegemony, despite changes in social politics, but in more unspoken or indirect ways:

> "While new forms of masculinity may have emerged from the challenge of feminism and gay political activism, the weight of evidence points to the resilience of patriarchal structures rather than to any dramatic shift in the balance of power between men and women" (Jackson, 1991, p. 199).

Though Jackson wrote this 30 years ago, this point appears to hold across much of the literature, despite the emergence of new masculinities. It appears that contemporary hegemonic masculinity calls for displays of both open and (more implicit, concealed) closed masculine practice. The idea that men might now be unsure of their role, caught somewhere between traditional expectations of closed masculinity, and newer ideals of modern society, appears to be a poignant concern. In a 2015 US study by MTV Insights research, one participant commented on this particular bind in relation to how to act towards women: "You want to be respectful and a gentleman but that somehow gets seen as nice-guy and pushover. Finding the balance of being an alpha male gorilla and a decent human is sometimes hard since everyone wants to label us as one thing" (Paquette, 2016, p. 1). Men today can be seen to be experiencing an ideological dilemma (Billig et al., 1988) of how to conform to masculine values in a world that is (at least explicitly) increasingly rejecting these values. Korobov (2004) has commented that: "Young men are encouraged to be independent, confident, and secure in their masculinity while simultaneously being advised to reform or abandon their oppressive habits, to be more open and tolerant, and to practice sensitivity and compassion" (p. 186). Thus there exists a battle between open and closed masculinity for hegemony in contemporary society, which can often inevitably be influenced to some degree by the idea that "even if men are uncomfortable with this (patriarchy) and would like to change it, they still benefit from living within a male-dominated society" (Holmes, 2008, p. 3).

Some men have responded to this ideological dilemma in more extreme forms, with explicit pushback against feminist and liberal ideology through a desire to retain or reinstate those patriarchal obstacles that have been overcome. While feminist action has produced some equalising in areas of law, economy and politics for women (despite the fact that men still overwhelmingly monopolise public power and economic status), some groups view this shift as an 'attack' on male privilege and traditional order, resulting in the formulation of men's rights groups and movements (see Flood, 2004; Ging, 2019; Jaki et al., 2019; Jordan, 2016; Shaw, 2018). Evidence of men's rights groups exists abundantly online, with many calling for a 'return to patriarchy,' and providing tips for fighting and resisting feminism (e.g. returnofkings.com). MacInnes (1998) quoted the 'United Kingdom Men's Movement' in 1995 as stating "men are now discriminated against in most aspects of life" (p. 47), to which

he replies in his book *The End of Masculinity,* "if it is a bad time to be a man, it is still, in almost every area of life, a worse time to be a woman" (p. 48). Chapter 8 will further discuss and interrogate the relationship between expressions of men's rights and masculine identity.

Some argue the rise and power of former American president Donald Trump, elected in 2016, reflected a symbolic protest of the increasing loss of power and privilege of 'older' closed masculinities (tied with sexism and patriarchy), appealing to men who might feel emasculated by 'new' open masculinities and changing gender roles (Watkins, 2016). These protest masculinities show how older masculinities have failed to hybridise and adapt to more progressive contemporary ideals, resorting to violence and force in an attempt to preserve the privilege they enjoyed when these masculinities were hegemonic.

Trump's rise may also reflect the geographical/class constraints of 'new' masculinities/gender roles as largely centred in affluent and urban locations. Traditional, closed masculinity appears to hold more strength and influence in more rural and working class areas – areas and states in which Trump won the required majorities for his election (Jacobs, 2016). However, middle-class, educated men *and* women also voted for Trump, potentially highlighting that Anderson's 'inclusive' masculinities may be constrained to only some small changes (i.e. outward 'acceptance' of gay men), and is not meaningfully challenging patriarchy (O'Neill, 2015). A study by Powell, Butterfield and Jiang (2018) with American students reported that in the students' 'ideal president' preferences, masculinity was rated higher than femininity. This study provided some indication that a traditional valuing of the 'old' closed masculinity represented by Donald Trump and a devaluing of non-traditional, agentic 'new' femininity represented by Hillary Clinton, even in middle-class, urban and educated areas, may have been part of the complex picture that contributed to the 2016 result. This commentary indicates how complicated a 'new' hegemonic masculinity might be, as ideals of open and closed masculinity clash and converge, potentially resulting in hybridised identities.

Hybridised masculinities

In relation to hybridised masculinities, Demetriou (2001) theorised the concept of a 'masculine bloc.' This idea was built upon the earlier discussed conceptualisation of a 'historic bloc' by Gramsci and Hoare (1971), who theorised that the objective of a leading class was to unite all the associated allied groups under its own hegemonic umbrella, to create a homogenous project of domination over other external groups. The leading class could thus achieve hegemony externally though uniting internally. Within the masculine bloc, Demetriou (2001) theorised that hybrid masculinities were a strategy of hegemonic masculinity to likewise unite allied complicit, marginalised and even subordinated masculinities under the shared umbrella (or bloc) of domination over women. To unite men's diverse practices would ensure the best strategy for the success of patriarchy. Through constant hybridisation via the appropriation of diverse masculine practices, the masculine bloc can reconfigure and adapt to any historical setting in an attempt to internally unite and ultimately subordinate women.

The resulting hybrid masculinities have been described by Bridges and Pascoe (2014) as "the selective incorporation of elements of identity typically associated with various marginalised and subordinated masculinities and – at times – femininities into privileged men's gender performances and identities" (p. 246). Men must adapt to, and hybridise with, popular ideals of the time/place in order to ensure "continued domination" in a changing world of 'new' femininities in current contexts, where the objective is still continued social power over women/subordinate others (Demetriou, 2001). Traditionally, hegemonic masculinity has been associated with more open subordination and discrimination, which complicates the picture for men striving for hegemonic ideals in a current, progressive context. As older versions of closed masculinity stop ensuring power and lose value in the current gender order, masculine practice is fluid and responsive. What eventuates out of this context is an outward distancing from older versions of closed masculinity, as "one of the most effective ways of 'being a man' in certain local contexts may be to demonstrate one's distance from a regional hegemonic masculinity" (Connell, 2005, p. 840). This idea is central to the concept of discursive distancing, as developed by Bridges and Pascoe (2014): "Hybrid masculine practices often work in ways that create some discursive distance between White, straight men and 'hegemonic masculinity'" (p. 250). In fact, as will be discussed in chapter 6, this

can be true of less privileged men as well, due to a general awareness of a societal distaste in ideas deemed misogynistic, racist or homophobic (Billig, 1991). Wetherell and Edley (1999) similarly found in their UK study, that young men were more likely to align themselves with 'ordinary' masculine positions (that took on some progressive/egalitarian values) as opposed to 'heroic' positions associated with 'stereotypical' hegemonic masculinity (i.e. exuding strength, protectionism, etc). They suggested that due to the wide take-up, these 'ordinary' masculinities were/are becoming the hegemonic form, potentially providing the space for more men to take on progressive identities.

However, Bridges and Pascoe (2014) argued that "as men are distanced from hegemonic masculinity, they also (often more subtly) align themselves with it" (p. 250), often through indirect ways. Hybridisation can work to conceal and obscure patriarchal ideals that can hide beneath selective 'progressive' elements, an invisibility that makes them particularly effective, illustrating the "flexibility of systems of inequality" (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014, p. 247). As put by Ging (2019, p. 642), "hybrid masculinities symbolically distance men from hegemonic masculinity, while simultaneously compounding existing social and symbolic boundaries." If one cannot easily distinguish patriarchy, one cannot challenge it. Chapter 8 will provide further analysis of men attempting to hybridise misogynist and men's rights discourses with progressive elements to create an 'acceptable' masculine identity that obscures sexism.

This description paints a picture of the dominant group (white, heterosexual, middle to upper-class men) appropriating elements of non-white, feminine or homosexual cultures into their masculine performance in a way that is "more style than substance" (Messner, 1993, p. 724), and does little to challenge or change hegemonic power structures. Certainly, this can be seen in examples of privileged men incorporating aspects of gay, black and 'new' masculine practice into more hegemonic forms, without ever challenging the hegemonic structure. Arxer (2011), for example, studied heterosexual men's interactions at a college bar, and described an assimilation of characteristics associated with gay masculinity into these men's performances, such as displaying an emotional 'sensitivity.' However, men drew on these displays of emotionality with the understanding that such displays were socially valued, and did so for the purpose of gaining sexual interest from women, thereby utilising aspects of gay masculinity to reassert and sustain existing systems of heterosexual

and male sexual power and dominance. Likewise, aspects of black and working class culture (such as hip hop) have repeatedly been appropriated into white masculine culture to "boost masculine capital" (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014, p. 253). This may be particularly taken up by younger men who might be looking for avenues to bolster their masculine status, due to a lack of economic/career masculine capital (De Visser et al., 2009). This hybridisation associates toughness, risk-taking and hypersexuality with hegemonic masculinity, but further inscribes (and subordinates) black and urban masculinities as deviant (Messner, 1993; Rodriquez, 2006).

I would further argue that subordinated, marginalised or otherwise less privileged men can also produce hybridised identities through incorporating hegemonic ideals into their masculine practice. Hegemonic masculinity is theorised as something unobtainable in the full sense for most men – something to strive towards rather than something able to be fully actualised in all areas (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Men might be able to inhabit more hegemonic identities in some contexts or justify hegemonic 'failings' through emphasising or exaggerating other hegemonic conformities (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). This would result in complicit/marginalised and hegemonic masculinities becoming hybridised as they strove towards hegemonic ideals. This argument also connects to points made by Wetherell and Edley (1999) that due to variations and complexities in context and individual sense-making surrounding identities, there must be more than one form of what is deemed hegemonic across different masculinities. Indeed, men of more dominant, patriarchal masculinities may adapt, and hybridise with, progressive or 'new' masculinity ideals (as discussed in *New masculinity*). This can in turn increase the power of (some) progressive masculine discourse, allowing these ideas to potentially vie for hegemony and call for better behaviour from men – a theme that will be explored throughout this thesis. What counts as hegemonic in masculinity is always open to change, and hybridisation risks that these new influences will alter the hegemonic form, potentially towards more equal power relations.

Masculinity in Aotearoa

Hegemonic masculinity within New Zealand (Aotearoa) retains features of what Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) conceptualised as a general 'Westernised' global hegemonic

masculinity, but with several key elements influenced by regional and local culture. As argued by Berg and Longhurst (2003), masculinity is both "temporally and geographically contingent" (p. 352), suggesting that how one perceives, experiences and embodies masculinity will vary depending on the time and place an individual inhabits. Before colonial times, Māori (the indigenous people of New Zealand) men have been described as part of an oral culture, centred around genealogy, spirituality and family connectedness (Hokowhitu, 2007). However, the "violent turmoil of colonisation has resulted in the silencing of the creative, caring and expressive forms of Māori masculine cultures" (Hokowhitu, 2007, p. 70), and changed the face, and hegemonic form, of masculinity in Aotearoa.

Common of post-colonial contexts, hegemonic masculine culture within New Zealand has since been structured by a type of white 'settler' masculinity (Noone & Stephens, 2008; Terry, 2010), where "Māori and Māori culture were assimilated into what became a New Zealand-wide, male cultural practice dominated by white cultural norms" (MacLean, 1999, p. 1). This type of masculinity represented a traditional 'closed' masculinity, as theorised by Elliott (2020), and was structured by colonial history when the first Pākehā (New Zealand European) settlers were required to work the land and exude strength, stoicism and 'roughness' in doing so (Suckling, 2016). Centred around rhetoric of hard work and 'doing it yourself,' "discourses of national autonomy became associated with masculinity through the trope of self-sufficiency" (Bannister, 2005, p. 5). Terry and Braun (2009) provided a succinct summary of how these elements have been reproduced into the 21st century, in their outline of the 'Kiwi bloke' as a "hard-working, beer-swilling, rugby-playing, homosocial, homophobic, sexually predatory male whose lexicon includes terms such as 'harden up' and 'get hard'" (p. 165). This 'Kiwi bloke' can be theorised as a type of imaginary position (see chapter 4 for definition) of traditional, macho or even heroic 'closed' masculinity (Wetherell & Edley, 1999), maintaining an almost 'mythological status' in New Zealand (Law, Campbell & Dolan, 1999) (e.g. the cultural idolising of the All Blacks rugby players).

This masculinity has been so revered and seen as so central to New Zealand identity that even femininity in this context has been classified as a type of 'misperformed masculinity,' or an attempt to live up to or (unsuccessfully) reproduce this idealised masculinity (Brady, 2012). In fact, Bannister (2005) described that "the dominant iconography of New Zealand

identity is masculine" (p. 1) – women are expected to replicate, support or fit into this culture. Aotearoa's colonial history also laid the foundation for this masculine monoculture. During 'settling' periods, there were much smaller numbers of women compared to men, and part of self-sufficiency and 'working the land' involved women working alongside men (Daley & Montgomerie, 1999). This resulted in a relative type of gender 'neutrality' and egalitarian rhetoric (compared to other Western nations), driving social ideas of 'fairness' and a strong value in human rights – with a lack of fairness/rights as a strong justification for social change (Fischer, 2012). As such, New Zealand was the first country to give women voting rights in 1893 (Curtin, 2019), (somewhat) allowed for the normalisation of women in paid employment following the Depression (Daley & Montgomerie, 1999), and has been at the forefront of fights for women's and gay rights (Carroll, 2016). *However*, this construction of equality has come from a male-dominated ideology, which can often obscure the patriarchal roots that structure these modern ideas (which will be explored further in chapter 3).

Elements of this traditional masculinity continue to inform parts of a contemporary New Zealand hegemonic masculinity. Although New Zealand does appear to produce its own flavour in terms of hegemonic masculinity (e.g. with influences from rugby and farming), this masculinity largely falls in line with what might be termed wider 'global masculinity,' which likewise values aggression, stoicism and competition (Cohen, 2016). This 'global' masculinity, as theorised by Connell and Wood (2005), can be represented by a hegemonic model of managerial, transnational business masculinity, where important, rich and powerful businessmen (such as CEOs) serve as exemplars. More contemporary 'regional' hegemonic masculinity in New Zealand might be closer to this standard, where masculine 'success' for the upper and middle classes is built around managerial and economic power (i.e. being in charge and making large amounts of money at work). An example of this might be past prime minister John Key, who was celebrated for his business and financial success, while his employment allowed him to be effectively 'in charge' of the entire country. This type of man is influenced by a 'new' and open masculinity (Elliott, 2020), and might display some aspects of inclusive masculinity (i.e. outwards acceptance of gay men) (Anderson, 2010), yet he retains covert sexist and racist elements that complement a white, male hegemony. A certain level of 'stoicism' and a healthy support of the national rugby team is

still part of this hegemonic make-up, yet these 'Kiwi' factors now appear more relevant to a working class masculinity in New Zealand (which can arguably be seen as now less hegemonic). As described by Hokowhitu (2007), "while New Zealand's working-class masculinities (including the skewed population of Māori men who are located to the working class) have remained tethered to traditional 'Kiwi bloke' traits, middle- and upper-class New Zealand men are transforming" (p. 65) – or have the opportunity to transform to a 'new' global model of hegemony.

However, while New Zealand has taken on aspects of this global masculinity and retained influences from a colonial past, it is also largely a multicultural society. Masculine ideas and identities in New Zealand therefore may often intersect with different identity positionings, such as racial/ethnic identities. For example, Māori masculinity has often been conceptualised with regards to how the effects of colonialism may have contributed to lower levels of health outcomes and higher rates of incarceration for Māori compared to the general population, particularly for men (Rua, Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). Hokowhitu (2012) conceptualised the post-colonial Māori man as an ambivalent figure, existing as an "indigenous heterosexual patriarch," where he is both oppressed through colonisation, and oppressive in a patriarchal system – both resisting and mimicking dominant forms of 'invader/settler' masculinity, creating a complex picture. Rua et al. (2017), however, draw emphasis to positive forms of identity construction in Māori masculinity, where men value and emphasise interconnectedness with family, cultural traditions and practices, and the health of themselves and others. This sits contrary to Western hegemonic conceptions of masculinity where men may disregard health in favour of risk-taking or stoicism, and place value on individual pursuits over collective interests. As New Zealand has high levels of migration and local communities are comprised of many different ethnicities and cultures, there are a multitude of other ways that New Zealand masculinity might intersect with racial/ethnic identities. Chapter 6 will involve the analysis of an Indian-New Zealand man within a New Zealand setting.

Importantly, marginalised and indigenous communities in New Zealand continue to experience worse physical and mental health outcomes than Pākehā (Beautrais & Fergusson, 2006; Rua et al., 2017). Courtenay (2011) noted that some marginalised men might manifest hypermasculine behaviours (in a response to a lack of power), in line with

(traditional) conceptualisations about protest masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), resulting in exaggerated performances of potentially health-harming masculine behaviours. These behaviours, combined with lower social and economic power, and higher levels of poverty, employment insecurity and stress, can contribute to worse health outcomes for marginalised groups. This can be particularly poignant in regards to mental health outcomes for men in particular, who are socially encouraged to base their identities around aspects of employment/power/money (for more details of related social determinants of health, see Marmot & Wilkinson, 2005). These aspects of homosocial relating will be discussed in the next chapter, along with hetero-relational aspects of New Zealand masculinity.

Summary

In this chapter I have summarised some key social constructionist theories and conceptualisations within the study of masculinities. These conceptualisations will guide the following analyses and help make sense of men's positionings in relation to the interview topics and questions, and ultimately in relation to various masculinities. The next chapter will continue to discuss literature around masculinity, but in consideration of how masculine relationality operates. I will address aspects related to men's experiences of homosocial relating and hetero-relating, around topics such as sex, men's bodies and singleness.

Chapter 3: Literature review

Masculine relationality

This second literature review will outline some of the specific elements of the research context through the framing of masculine relationality (Connell, 2012). I will discuss research around areas relevant to masculine relating, with a focus on identifying power structures within heterosexual and homosocial relations, and how they operate. This chapter will locate men's talk within a Westernised context and include literature specific to masculine relating in New Zealand, through a critical lens. This chapter will be structured by the following sections:

- Relational theory
- Masculine relationality and the body
- Homosocial relationality
    - Masculinity and sex
    - Homosocial relationality in Aotearoa
- Heterosexual relationality
    - Discourses around women
    - Heterosexual relationality in Aotearoa
    - The #MeToo context
    - Masculinity and singleness/dating

Relational theory

A relational conceptualisation of gender builds on many post-structuralist assumptions about gender explained in chapter 2, such as positioning of gender as socially produced. Like these theories, relational theories also exist as alternatives to common essentialist and categorical understandings of gender (i.e. which position men and women as two fixed groups, who are always 'naturally' different in behaviour due to their different biology). Connell (2012) agreed that post-structuralist conceptualisations do important work in inspiring resistance to problematic discursive norms around gender. However, she argued the theory could do little to actively shape policy and social change, as a theory "focussing

on cultural processes, does not have much to say about economic processes, organizational life, material interests, or non-discursive forms of power" (Connell, 2012, p. 1676-1677). This critique speaks to a wider subtle, yet notable mismatch between post-structuralist approaches and critical studies on men and masculinities, which has been explored by Beasley (2015). Beasley (2015) outlined that common approaches within current post-structuralist (feminist) thinking challenge the rigidity of gender categories and emphasise the plurality of identity. Much of men and masculinity studies, however, often still define gender in fixed terms, often linked to sexed bodies (e.g. hegemonic masculinity as linked to *actual* groups of men, such as transnational business men), providing the framework for more tangible material change – but continuing to categorise gender. Beasley argued that some theories of masculinity, however, do some work in bridging this gap, such as the theorisation of *multiple* masculinities (see chapter 2). Connell (2012), through her relational theory, also contended that by treating gender as *relational* (i.e. contingent on social relationships, not bodies) gender could be constructed as both fluid and 'real' through interactions, while allowing for more material change.

As explained by Connell (2012), "in such studies (i.e. academic), and in many policy documents, men and boys are not seen in active relations with women and girls (except as perpetrators of violence), nor as actors in gender change" (p. 1676). Relational theory alternatively recognises gender *as* a relation (Hagemann-White, 2001). Connell (2012) further explained that within relational theories, gender could be treated as "embodied social structure," which operates "in a complex network of institutions" (p. 1675). These relations can operate at "intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional and society-wide levels" (Connell, 2012, p. 1677).

Through this theory, the most defining relation for masculinity is its contrasting relationship with femininity. Messerschmidt (2018) argued that "patterns of hegemonic masculinity are *always already* socially defined in contradistinction from some model (whether real or imaginary) of femininity" (p. 51). Put simply, masculinity is here inevitably defined through its differences to femininity, as discussed in the previous chapter. It cannot be conceptualised outside of femininity, as "women are central in many of the processes that construct masculinities – as mothers; as schoolmates; as girlfriends, sexual partners and wives; as workers in the gendered division of labour; and so forth" (Messerschmidt, 2018, p.

51). Through these patterned gender relations, (external) gender orders are produced, which are the culturally sanctioned structures of power between men and women at any given time period in a society (Connell, 2012). Likewise, the theory of hegemonic masculinity proposes *multiple* masculinities (e.g. complicit, subordinate and marginalised masculinities) (Connell, 1987), which all interact as men exist in relations with each other, as explained in chapter 2. These relations produce the *internal* hierarchy of masculinity.

By treating masculinity as always interconnected to social relationships, and gender orders as socially produced through these relations, we can analyse the power structures that exist within and around heterosexual and homosocial interactions, and how they operate. This "mutual conditioning of gender" (Messerschmidt, 2018, p. 51), however, is ultimately influenced by the social climate of the time. As will be discussed further in this chapter, feminist gains and "new configurations of women's identity and practice" (Messerschmidt, 2018, p. 51) have played an important role in structuring modern gender relations and subsequent 'Western' gender orders. For example, as the axes of legal and social ideas around gender in the global North move closer towards equality, there is a tension with past forms of hegemonic masculinity centred around patriarchy, which change at a different pace (or in a different direction, i.e. *away* from equality). Thus, men must reorient themselves and their masculine identities around this evolving gender order. The masculine expressions that arise from this (e.g. open masculinity in support, versus closed masculinity in protest) will be the focus of discussion in chapters 6 and 8.

By theorising gender and masculinity in this manner, we can recognise that gender relations and greater gender orders *can* change according to the social context. By "getting our concepts adequate to the problem" (Connell, 2012, p. 1681), positive change can be encouraged in a variety of social and institutional settings geared towards equality. Recognising the relational aspect of masculinity allows for movement and progress through these relations, and for men to be potential "actors in gender change" (Connell, 2012, p. 1675).

Masculine relationality and the body

Central to masculine relating is the body. Before discourse is even employed in a social setting, people will relate in different ways based on their physical embodiment of gender, as bodies do a lot of primary gender identity work for us (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001). For example, men will relate differently to those with similar bodies (i.e. other men), to those with different bodies (i.e. women). As explained by Edley (2017), "we usually make up our minds on the basis of how people look, move and act" (p. 5), of which the body is a central part. Analysing how the body is implicated in structures of power within the current gender order is an important beginning point for examining how masculine relationality is 'done.' Discourses about gendered bodies are always open to movement and change, as ideals ebb and flow with the historical trends of any given time (Edley, 2017). Thus, the ideals detailed below reflect the dominant societal discourses of the current gender order (i.e. within the past few decades). These ideals about the body and its functionality are linked into the subsequent sections of this chapter.

Closely tied to the interview topics of heterosexual desirability and masculine performance are ideals around the type of bodies men might be pressured to strive for. One particular physical marker of a successful embodiment of hegemonic masculinity has been a physically imposing, strong and muscular body – one that is "broad and tall" (Thompson, 2015, p. 23). According to Moss (2012), in his analysis of representations of masculinity in popular media, excelling physically in sports and other physical pursuits has traditionally been encouraged from a young age and within a continuing jock culture for boys, in order to 'fit in' with masculine values of aggression and strength. Messerschmidt (2018) similarly commented, "in youth, skilled bodily activity becomes a prime indicator of masculinity" (p. 54). Here, an athletic and strong body becomes firmly linked with sporting success and leadership among other men, and consequential masculine privileges of power and dominance. Increased muscularity additionally increases the perceived threat of the body as a weapon to physically establish masculine dominance and ensure submission from other men (Andersson, 2008). A powerful physique thereby becomes representative of power in homosocial spaces, which is illustrated through research that indicates that men overwhelmingly desire (a lean) muscularity (Tiggemann, Martins & Churchett, 2008). In line

with hegemonic ideals, women rate upper-body muscularity as important for heterosexual attractiveness (Swami & Tovée, 2005), adding pressure on men to 'bulk up' to increase their desirability (but not to bulk up *too* much). Along with muscularity, men overwhelmingly desire to be tall, believing they will be perceived as more attractive in heterosexual relations (Jacobi & Cash, 1994). In fact, in some men's rights spaces, being 'small framed' and short was positioned as being unequivocally *un*desirable to women and a reason for men's 'involuntary' celibacy (Maxwell, Robinson, Williams & Keaton, 2020).

In recent years, this body standard has further been inflated and built upon through the media to require men to not only have a tall, strong body, but also one that *looks good.* More specifically, the ideal body for men has been described by Australian psychologists as "a mesomorphic (V-shaped) body with broad shoulders and well-developed upper body, but flat stomach and narrow hips" (Tiggemann et al., 2008, p. 1164). Moss (2012) cited media images of 'washboard' abs in movies, eroticised images of muscular Calvin Klein models, and reality TV stars spending their days in the gym and tanning (e.g. *Jersey Shore*) as contributing to "a creeping sense of self-consciousness and inadequacy" (p. 134) for men. In an increasingly consumerist society, male appearance appears to hold more and more media (and in turn, social) importance (Hall, 2015), both for heterosexual desirability and homosocial dominance. In line with this idea, young European men have reported dissatisfaction, in particular with biceps, shoulders, chest and general muscle tone, which is consistent with "culturally defined ideals" (Furnham & Greaves, 1994, p. 183). However, such body concerns for men are often overlooked or conflated academically, as research is often centred around measuring dissatisfaction about being *overweight* (which is assumed to be a central concern for women). Yet, for men, the picture looks different, as the same number of men are equally concerned about being *under* a desirable weight as over, due to pressures around 'bulking up' and gaining muscle mass (Grogan, 2016). Importantly, such standards appear aimed at *young* men, who might be marginalised from approximating a current form of hegemonic masculinity linked with age and employment/financial success (e.g. transnational business masculinity (Connell & Wood, 2005)). Men who have approximated such hegemonic ideals might experience less pressure to embody physical masculine ideals for masculine capital. The body can be considered a tool or a source of masculine capital in attempts to approximate and embody masculine ideals, furthering

one's position towards the hegemonic centre (at a lack of reaching it in other ways) (Elliott, 2020).

Such body standards can be linked with the rise of a large 'gym culture' in the West, where men might feel pressure to 'get in shape' and gain muscle. Extreme implications of this can include men feeling compelled to compulsively work out, over or under eat, and/or use steroids or other drugs/supplements to increase muscle mass and decrease body fat. Western society has also seen an increase in plastic surgery for men across different classes, in order to achieve (or at least strive for) such ideals. A study by Frith and Gleeson (2004) considered the more mundane behaviours, such as clothing choices, that men might enact, in order to hide departures from such bodily ideals, or alternatively, emphasise conformity. For example, men reported choosing to wear darker, looser clothing to hide perceived thinness and/or a lack of muscle tone, but also to hide a perceived overweight appearance. Men who felt they looked 'good' and fit into such body ideals opted for closer fitting or more revealing clothes/styles. Yet despite disclosing such concerns and behaviours, the men in the study also worked throughout the interviews to reject the idea of appearance as important, or as a real or relevant concern. The idea that men should not be concerned with body appearance or clothing conforms to discourses that separate masculine interests from superficial and 'frivolous' things such as clothing and appearance (which have traditionally been considered as concerns for women). Instead, ideals around traditional/closed masculinity position that men should (outwardly) be concerned with only 'practical' and 'important' issues – an idea that might inhibit men's voices around such body ideal pressures.

In addition to these body standards, body/head hair has become a heightened issue for men, with a full head of hair rated as more desirable by both women and men, and baldness or thinning for men rated as less positive and attractive in heterosexuality. In research, men experiencing thinning or balding have perceived themselves as less attractive, and reported greater self-consciousness and stress, often opting to 'conceal' receding or thinning hair through shaving the whole head (Cash, 2001; Franzoi, Anderson & Frommelt, 1990). Conversely, body hair (e.g. chest hair) has become less desirable for men, despite the idea that body hair has traditionally represented 'manliness' and virility. A total of 60% of men in a study by Boroughs, Cafri and Thompson (2005) reported regularly removing body hair

below the neck, and (Tiggemann et al., 2008) reported body hair on one's back and buttocks as a particular source of dissatisfaction and concern for men. While men's body hair can still be considered something 'natural,' men are under increasing pressure to keep body hair 'groomed', or remove what might be considered 'excess' hair/hair in the 'wrong' places (Terry & Braun, 2016). The rise of beards in 'hipster' culture, however, further complicates the picture for men. Beards/facial hair have traditionally been displays of 'manly' hairiness, yet 'hipster' culture can be considered a type of 'new' masculine brand, centred on progressive, liberal and open rhetoric (Bridges, 2014a). Here, attempts at 'new' masculinity are mediated by traditional displays of masculine physicality, allowing 'new' masculine brandings to enjoy some of the benefits of 'old' masculine embodiment.

Along with muscularity and body weight, penis size is reportedly a prime source of anxiety or concern for men, despite the less visible and (generally) unchangeable nature of genitals (Tiggemann et al., 2008). In a UK study, Veale et al. (2014) found that two-thirds of their sample reported dissatisfaction with their penis, in either shape or size, indicative of a discourse where "a penis means masculinity or manhood" (Edley & Wetherell, 1995, p. 9), and holds strong ties to perceived sexual performance and virility. Hall (2015) cited such magazine articles as '*Size does matter: Study shows women judge male attractiveness by penis size*' (*Time*, Szalavitz, 2013) as examples of how the media can contribute to perceived expectations around penis size and heterosexual desirability. In turn, companies capitalise on penis anxiety through products and services aimed to help men change their penis, including various penis-enlargement approaches (such as herbal and pharmaceutical remedies, penis clamps, pumps and weights, or surgical interventions). Men in recent years have also been encouraged to groom or remove pubic hair, under the assumption that doing so will have the effect of allowing the penis to look bigger/better (Boroughs et al., 2005). This idea is aided by marketing from various hair-removal/shaving corporations, despite the fact that such grooming techniques have traditionally been associated with women and femininity (Boroughs et al., 2005; Hall, 2015; Terry & Braun, 2016). Yet, the decision to remove hair can leave men in the risky position of appearing to care 'too much' about aesthetics and appearance, and also expose a man as having concerns over penis size, in a culture where he must appear to always be confident about his genitals as reassurance that his penis is, of course, large.

Attention to these body standards contradicts values within Western 'macho' and closed masculinities, where image and beauty are considered (inferior and superficial) interests of women. Men, considered more 'practical', ought not to care, particularly within homosocial relations. Thus, there exists a tension between achieving the physical ideals of new/media masculinity for heterosexual desirability, and maintaining a strict and traditional masculine code of behaviour homosocially. Reframing such practices as pubic hair removal in masculine ways (e.g. in order to make a big penis look *bigger*, or *for* women so they will offer more (hetero)sex) was one way men negotiated this risky position in Hall's (2015) study, to both engage in genital grooming and maintain hegemonic status. Men must always be negotiating these often conflicting ideals of hetero-desirability and homosocial status in such ways, in order to achieve an acceptable masculine identity.

Homosocial relationality

Masculinity and sex

Men's (active) sexuality is not only celebrated in homosocial spaces (i.e. with other men), but it is naturalised and *expected* for a 'successful' masculine identity. These expectations begin even before puberty, with arguments for single-sex schooling centring around the 'natural' differences between the sexes, and boys requiring a space where they will not be 'distracted' by girls (Cohen, 2016). This argument perpetuates the discourse that males are biologically sexually 'visual' creatures (Farvid & Braun, 2006; Hollway, 1984) who can (and will) find themselves sexually overwhelmed by the presence of females, and, as such, where concentration is required, the genders must be split for the boys' benefit. As adults, it is almost unquestioned that this same overwhelming desire will exist, and that men will always pursue and be ready for (hetero)sex whenever it is 'available' (Farvid & Braun, 2006), that men will initiate sexual encounters (Stephens, Eaton & Boyd, 2017), and that men are more interested in 'experimental sex' than women (Lai et al., 2015). Men are positioned as the active party, seeking out sex and controlling sexual exchanges, in opposition to the submissiveness and passivity of women, who sexually acquiesce in exchange for (real or potential) heterosexual commitment (Gavey, 2019; Hollway, 1984). This discourse can be linked with, or part of the formula for, patterns of sexual coercion from men, where

potentially sexually aggressive behaviour becomes only one step further than the expected action of 'actively seeking' or leading/controlling a sexual exchange (Gavey, 2018).

In a culture where (hetero)sex is perceived as a 'key path' to masculine identity (Flood, 2008), to not be constantly sexually desirous is presented as a problem or type of 'dysfunction' for men – something that works to risk or discredit their masculinity (Potts, Gavey, Grace & Vares, 2003). For example, some media narratives of single heterosexual men position not having regular sexual contact as something to lament. This is evident in a piece within *The New Zealand Herald,* where the writer discussed his own perspective on single life, describing his lack of sex as the 'dark' side of being single, reproducing the discourse that "sex is still as strong a motivator as ever" to both date and get into relationships (Gugala, 2017, p. 1). Here, a lack of sexual activity is treated as unfortunate and a type of disclosure – something men may not always be ready to 'admit.' Along with this emphasis on male 'readiness' and appetite for sex, common discourses around male sexuality also position sexual performance as inherent to masculinity and one's sexual self-esteem or ego, where "possibilities of sexual inadequacy become linked to masculine inadequacy" (Farvid & Braun, 2006, p. 298). Women's sexual pleasure is framed as important, but more as a signifier of masculine expertise and achievement, rather than of value in its own right (Farvid & Braun, 2006).

Related to this emphasis on male sexual experience/expertise, one New Zealand study of men in long-term relationships by Terry and Braun (2009) positioned knowledge (real or perceived) around sex as a type of 'currency' to use with other men, and a way to cement or enhance one's masculine status. This again highlights the need to have (or appear to have) sex to prove masculinity. Here, heterosexual events were used primarily as sites of homosociality, showing sexuality in this context as an "enactment of masculinity and a site of male bonding" (p. 170). Similar themes of sexuality were outlined by Flood (2008) in his study with Australian men. He described (hetero)sexual activity as key to status and bonding among young men, while non-sexual relationships with women were conversely perceived as "dangerously feminising" (p. 339). The men in Terry and Braun's study described sexual knowledge or experience with multiple partners as integral to masculinity in one's younger years. As the men got older or more 'mature,' this pressure around sexual prowess lessened and/or they were less affected by it (or they had other sources of

masculine capital). This fits with further research that has described different constructions and definitions of hegemonic masculinity for younger boys opposed to adult men (Bartholomaeus, 2012).

While high levels of sexual activity are expected and encouraged within heterosexual masculinity, the women with whom men have sex with (or are perceived to have sex with) further contribute to the level of homosocial status men receive. In an Australian study (Flood, 2013a), men's talk described that women perceived as unattractive brought little to no status, yet 'ugly' sex was still considered better than no sex, despite such acts producing scorn and amusement from male comrades. Sex with stereotypically attractive women – considered a more challenging feat – appeared to gain men the most status, and these were the women with whom it became 'acceptable' and 'tolerable' (in the eyes of other men) to have a relationship with. Here, the 'selection' process encouraged in masculinity perpetuated punishing beauty standards, and continual categorisation and sexual objectification of women. Female beauty standards and sexuality were positioned as *for* male pleasure and approval (Farvid & Braun, 2014), while also leaving men homosocially constrained and scrutinised for their choices when considering heterosexual relations and commitments.

Homosocial relationality in Aotearoa

Using one's forementioned big/strong body to play sports such as rugby has been (and arguably still is) positioned as central to hegemonic masculinity within New Zealand. In fact, men and boys unable to participate in rugby due to medical reasons have regarded this inability to play the sport as "the most pervasive idiom of distress" within their illness (Park, 2000, p. 446). Rugby can be seen as both a symbol of traditional masculinity and a poignant source of masculine practice and relationality (Park, 2000), promoting physicality, violence and male bonding. A stereotypical 'manly' persona can be seen as synonymous with that of a rugby player persona, commonly involving "suppressing emotions, overcoming pain, taking terrible risks and taking them like a man" (Park, 2000, p. 446). Associating oneself with this source of masculinity, even through simply watching and supporting the game, in turn becomes a way to show support for, and alignment with, a New Zealand hegemonic masculinity. While rugby can be positioned as relatively accepting

of men from different classes, ethnicities and sometimes sizes (although 'large' is preferred), the sport has typically and consistently sidelined women to either supportive or invisible roles, continuing the well-worn pattern of male dominance and female subordination (Park, 2000). Meanwhile, males who have no interest in or do not/cannot play rugby often experience harassment and exclusion from other men (Suckling, 2016).

Alongside this rugby culture, New Zealand masculinity has called for strict conformity to (ever valued) heterosexuality, in a culture that continues to devalue, scorn and alienate diverse sexualities and gender identities. These homophobic and sexist notions, particularly visible in this revered 'rugby masculinity,' have been a large component of hegemonic masculinity in New Zealand, calling for particular codes of 'anti-gay' homosocial behaviour (Town, 1999) (though this can be seen to be changing, see Sexton (2017)). This sits contradictory to the idea that New Zealand has historically been politically progressive in formally recognising women's rights and gay rights, as compared to many other Western countries (Carroll, 2016), indicating the presence of hybridised masculinities.

'Rugby' culture in New Zealand also lends itself to a denial of emotionality or help-seeking in times of mental hardship – part of a 'harden-up' mentality where 'boys don't cry' (Suckling, 2016). This closed masculinity encourages boys from a young age to supress emotions, not to cry or reveal upset, or risk being "like a girl" (Cohen, 2016), discourses that are still credited with producing an environment where men are required to suffer emotional struggle or mental illness in silence, or risk failing in their masculine status (Addis & Cohane, 2005). Low levels of help-seeking within New Zealand masculine culture have been linked to poor mental health outcomes and suicide among men. New Zealand has one of the highest suicide rates in the world, with male youth suicide rates reported as double that of Australia (Gaffaney, 2017). These statistics are bolstered by intersections such as age and ethnicity, with young men and Māori men over-represented (Beautrais & Fergusson, 2006), indicating the increased vulnerability of men marginalised from hegemonic masculinity. Due to this reluctance to seek or accept help, or discuss/acknowledge emotional issues, some researchers argue that maintaining a sense of masculinity (through other means such as emphasising personal agency or taking control of one's issues) is key to steering men towards support and therapy to aid recovery (Emslie, Ridge, Ziebland & Hunt, 2006). I also argue that reconfiguring hegemonic masculinity (which is evidenced in this thesis as

beginning to happen through expressions of 'new' and progressive masculinities) may also be part of this picture of prevention.

These traditional masculine values of glorified risk-taking and 'toughness' have additionally been attributed to higher levels of recklessness and health-jeopardising behaviour (e.g. drinking alcohol to excess) and lower levels of help-seeking (i.e. not seeing a doctor), resulting in poorer outcomes for men in regards to physical health (Charles & Walters, 2008; Creighton & Oliffe, 2010). For example, Campbell (2000) identified hegemonic masculinity in New Zealand as closely linked to alcohol consumption, resulting in particular homosocial pub and drinking performances. Drinking alcohol to excess, particularly beer, has been constructed as an especially masculinised activity in Western contexts, and notably in New Zealand. 'Holding' as much alcohol as possible can indicate a successful masculine performance among other men (associated with ideals of toughness and endurance), which gains men masculine 'capital' (De Visser et al., 2009), but can also commonly result in accidents/violence and injuries, and/or long-term health complications (Gough & Edwards, 1998).

Relatedly, male-to-male violence and harassment has also been a common facet of New Zealand masculinity. In one study of New Zealand men, more than half reported being harassed online (the most common form of harassment), and this extended to 70% for men under 30 (Suckling, 2016). Workplace bullying towards men was also reported as more likely (than women) to involve personal harassment, such as violent threats and public humiliation. Men reported often brushing off or tolerating such treatment, owing to a 'she'll be right' philosophy of Kiwi stoicism and an unwillingness to appear affected or vulnerable to bullying (and as such putting oneself at risk of further bullying) (Suckling, 2016).

Heterosexual relationality

Discourses around women

Central to the framing of men's (hetero)sexuality as celebrated/tolerated are judgements of women's sexuality as comparatively negative and policed (see Flood, 2013a; Greene & Faulkner, 2005; Lai, Lim & Higgins, 2015). Traditional ideas around gendered sexuality

appear to remain largely intact, despite some evidence that aspects of this double standard may be changing or loosening (e.g. increased negativity or policing around males deemed sexually excessive or 'male sluts' (see Flood, 2013a), or incorporation of the sexually agentic 'sassy' female into positive rhetoric (see Farvid & Braun, 2006)). This double standard was particularly evident in one US social psychology study by Fowers and Fowers (2010), which utilised quantitative survey measures to report responses (from women and men) towards sexual so-called 'promiscuity' in women, which included hostility and sexist attitudes. The same study (and others) lacked reporting on responses to sexual 'promiscuity' in men – providing some indication that men's sexuality is considered less of a societal concern. It appears that while women are no longer constrained sexually by marriage, casual sex is still less accepted for women compared to men. The woman who practises casual or 'fast' sex is still labelled as sexually excessive and deviant, while the woman who 'waits' for sex with heterosexual commitment – albeit not necessarily marriage – is valued and deemed *worthy* of that commitment (see Greene & Faulkner, 2005; Budgeon, 2015; Taylor, 2015). These discourses position only women who are considered stereotypically attractive and sexually 'unscathed' (but not 'frigid') (Morris, 2007; Pickens & Braun, 2018) as acceptable candidates for commitment within hegemonic masculinity. In line with this, women who were perceived to be sexually active/experienced were talked about as less 'worthy' of relationships by men in Flood's (2013a) study, reproducing a classic 'slut' versus good 'marriable' woman dichotomy (Crawford & Unger, 2004). These discourses of 'slut shaming' towards women (still) commonly exist within societal narratives, from men and women alike (Endendijk, van Baar & Deković, 2020). Where these discourses can be observed as most aggressively deployed is in men's rights spaces, where women are routinely sexually objectified and simultaneously berated for being sexual, commonly being labelled 'sluts' or even recipients of such labels as 'cum dumpsters' (Ging, 2019).

Thus, there exists a general expectation within heterosexual relating that (desirable) women will not be the *active* party (as men are), both in seeking sexual encounters, and in interactions with men more widely (Pickens & Braun, 2018). An article from social news/entertainment site Buzzfeed News (2017) illustrated this expectation through describing comments from social media personality 'Feminista Jones' around women's responses to unsolicited 'compliments' from men. The argument was that women are

required to be attractive to men, but also oblivious or denying of that attractiveness, by not actively acknowledging it. To agree with men's 'compliments' was to be constructed as 'cocky' or 'rude,' or risk 'upsetting' men and/or consequentially inviting criticism or insults (Chen, 2017). Women all around the world took to social media site Twitter to both agree with Jones's argument and share their own stories of similar instances, where through agreeing with various compliments, women had experienced punishing behaviour, such as verbal aggression or criticism from men. Such anecdotes reinforce a sociocultural positioning where not only are female appearances and other various attributes *for* men, but men are situated as the judges of this performance. Thus, men's patriarchal power gets (re)articulated through compliments/criticism and objectification. To agree or own self-awareness or confidence around one's own body, sexuality or attributes is to challenge that power and is met with resistance.

These points of feminine 'undesirability' appear to centre around and mimic the converse – the desirable traits of masculinity – echoing the conceptualisation by Brady (2012) of New Zealand femininity as a type of 'misperformed masculinity.' While women have traditionally been devalued and given fewer rights due to their *differences* to men, in this instance they are devalued and scorned due to their perceived *similarities* to men (e.g. sexual prowess, assertiveness, disregard to criticism). Here, hetero-desirability is defined through *opposites* (Butler, 1990) – a woman is considered desirable through a type of hegemonic hyper-femininity, with desirable feminine traits positioned in binary opposition to masculinity (Schippers, 2007). In fact, to be desired by men can be considered a large part of hegemonic femininity (Schippers, 2007). To be *like* a man is to be undesirable and failing in hegemonic femininity. Within objectifying discourses, this also makes a woman 'unworthy' to men and deserving of scorn/harassment. Research with men has shown that those who endorse the values of this type of closed masculinity and conform to traditional masculine norms are reportedly more likely to also endorse sexist sentiments and sexual violence myths (Cole, Brennan, Tyler & Willard, 2019; Korobov, 2004).

Heterosexual relationality in Aotearoa

In line with normalised sexual double standards and objectification, with an emphasis on an active *male* sexuality, cultural patterns in New Zealand also support what is termed as rape

culture. This is where women and girls are sexually objectified/dehumanised and sexual violence is trivialised, arguably contributing to a culture where sexual violence is normalised and even tolerated (Gavey, 2018). This idea is supported by statistics that show gendered and sexual violence is widespread in the nation, with New Zealand in fact ranked as the worst of all OECD countries for rates of sexual violence (United Nations Women, 2011). New Zealand theatre-maker Eleanor Bishop, in reference to her 2017 play *Boys* (which focuses on local masculinity), described this cultural pattern: "When you get a group of men into an intimate space without women, one of the ways that they have of relating to each other is to objectify women, to boast about sexual conquests, to casually joke sometimes about sexual violence" (cited by Marvelly, 2017, p. 1). This type of 'locker room' talk can be seen as central to a traditional 'closed' masculinity (Elliott, 2020), which promotes sexuality as a type of homosocial competition for males, utilising 'Kiwi' values of promoting sporting competition (Park, 2000), here within the context of heterosexual relations. Though the more overt features of this rape culture might be considered as fading with the influence of 'new' progressive masculinities (see chapter 2), more implicit types of this sexist homosocial relating continue to manifest (see chapter 7), as do New Zealand's staggering sexual violence statistics. Examples of an overt rape culture can be observed in other parts of the Western world, such as in the widespread denial and dismissal of Donald Trump's audio-recorded boasting about his sexual misconduct and harassment in the United States – weeks before he was voted in as president (Ramos, 2017). Trump's election and support serves as an example of how long it can take for these traditional and harmful modes of closed masculinity to die out, despite more 'inclusive' (Anderson, 2010) and open masculinities (Elliott, 2020) becoming more apparent.

In line with this emphasis on violence, New Zealand has been reported as having the highest rate of family violence in the 'developed' world (Adams, 2017) – violence that is overwhelmingly perpetuated by men towards women and children. Patriarchal structures still clearly manifest in a significant way through harmful closed masculine practice in New Zealand, despite our reputation for progressiveness on a world stage (Carroll, 2016).

The #MeToo context

Features of this rape culture, such as issues around heterosexual dating, consent and sexual violence, regularly featured in men's accounts in this study. The scope of this offered an unanticipated opportunity to explore men's sense-making in relation to the #MeToo context. As interviewing for this project began in late 2017, the '#MeToo' movement was both current and relevant to the research topic of masculinity and heterosexuality, and was therefore often referred to and talked about by participants. Chapter 7 will analyse the ways men navigated and made sense of gendered practices and sexuality in this 'changing' context.

The #MeToo movement was founded in the US in 2006 by Tarana Burke, predominantly to connect women and girls of colour to resources for help and healing after sexual violence (metoomvmt.org, 2018). It was not until October 2017, and one tweet of frustration by actor Alyssa Milano, encouraging women to tweet/post '#MeToo' if they had ever experienced any type of sexual violence, that the hashtag went viral. In the 2017 and 2018 (global North) context, various high-profile men, including a string of powerful Hollywood men, were (publicly) accused of various sexual violations (Hawbaker, 2018). In some of these cases, the men were charged and found guilty (the most high profile of these, Harvey Weinstein, was convicted of two counts of criminal sexual acts (BBC, 2020) and sentenced to 23 years imprisonment (Ransom, 2020)). Milano's tweet resounded and produced a global reaction: innumerable (mostly) women posted online about their own experiences of sexual violence, revealing the commonplace nature and high prevalence of different forms of harassment and assault.

The #MeToo hashtag ignited a movement beyond social media, forcing the issue of 'true' sexual consent into public consciousness, and led to widespread conversations about sexual violence as a societal and gendered problem (Lee, 2018). Part of this discussion included how norms around the ways in which men and women relate in a heterosexual/dating context might be considered harmful and/or contribute to the wider spectrum of sexual violence (e.g. see media article *Can I do this?' How #MeToo is changing the dating scene* (Lily, 2018)). This connects to long-standing feminist scholarship on the 'cultural conditions of possibility' around sexual violence (Gavey, 2005). This public conversation continues into

the present, although the pervasiveness of discussion that characterised the #MeToo-moment has shifted, and we are now potentially in a post-#MeToo context.

Sexual violence has historically been publicly understood and reported as a binary phenomenon (Kitzinger, 2004), rather than a continuum (Gavey, 2018) – as *either* harmful sexual violence, or as (implicitly consensual, and non-harmful) sex. To qualify as 'real' sexual violence, an encounter has typically been required to be physically violent, harmful and 'traumatic.' A wide range of unwanted sexual experiences, which have not typically fit into dominant constructions of sexual violence (i.e. violent stranger rape), have largely been excluded from much serious consideration in societal discussion, constituting what some have labelled the 'grey area' of sexual violence (Hindes & Fileborn, 2019). Such experiences as sexual coercion, pressure, unwelcome sexual comments or touching, or sexual contact when one party has not or cannot give explicit consent (e.g. through intoxication), which are potentially harmful, all form part of this 'grey area' of sexual violence. Societal discourse around these behaviours has, prior to #MeToo (and indeed in too many cases since) positioned them as 'just sex' (Gavey, 2018) – a part of *normal* heterosex, to be expected (and tolerated) by women from men. These behaviours together form normalised patterns of heterosexual behaviour, justified through discourse around 'natural' roles for men and women (Hollway, 1984), and are often framed as 'just the way things are' – expected and unchangeable. Feminist scholars working in this area have, in contrast, framed sexual violence as a spectrum, including nuanced and subtle violations, which all have the potential to cause harm (e.g. Gavey, 2018; Kelly, 2013). Here, all unwanted sexual experiences can be considered interconnected and part of the same underlying problem. #MeToo adopted this framing and provided a societal-level challenge to existing dominant framing around (hetero)sexual norms and practice.

The #MeToo movement, while greatly successful in starting a public conversation around coercive sexuality and uniting survivors globally, has, however, been evaluated as mostly a consciousness-raising exercise, lacking in any substantial change in policy or heterosexual behaviour and discourse (Rosewarne, 2019). For #MeToo to be successful in changing public discourse to recognise this 'grey area' and legitimise victims' experiences, men needed to be on board. Australian sexual violence and masculinity scholar Michael Flood (2019b) identified three tasks that #MeToo required of men: #MeToo asked men to listen to

women's stories; to reflect on and change their own behaviour; and to contribute to wider social change. While the #MeToo context has set the cultural conditions for possibility of such change, the extent to which the movement has been successful in these aims appears limited. Flood reported that there have been some pockets of social change among men, and some evidence of shifting of ideas around consent, but not much has actually changed with men. This socio-cultural context also set the conditions for the possibility of backlash and resistance to change, which was evident in the considerable societal backlash to #MeToo – which continues into the post-#MeToo context. This backlash was not just from individual men or men's groups, but from some high-profile individual women (such as French actor Catherine Deneuve), and much of the mainstream media – demonstrating the feminist claim that problematic and patriarchal ideas are not just a 'problem of men,' but of society (Fileborn & Phillips, 2019; Gavey, 2018; Hindes & Fileborn, 2019). This type of backlash will be discussed further in chapter 8.

Media coverage around #MeToo commonly resorted to questioning and blaming around victims' experiences, particularly if they fell within the so-called 'grey area' of sexual violence – within binary understandings of sexual violence, their claims could easily be dismissed (see Hindes & Fileborn, 2019). Newspaper *The Australian*, for example, described some public disclosures of sexual violence during the #MeToo movement as simply "bad sex." It also discredited victims' stories of sexual pressure and coercion as "girl power gone wrong," blaming women for not saying no or avoiding the situation, and instead "outing" men for an encounter they simply "didn't enjoy" (See Albrechtsen, 2018, p. 15). Of course, this type of backlash to feminist activism is not new, but the online world has changed visibility both of activism, and backlash (Sills et al., 2016). Mendes, Ringrose and Keller (2018) reported nearly three-quarters of participants who engaged in online feminist activism experienced "negativity, hostility or trolling" (p. 242), which was largely misogynist, and commonly sexually violent and shaming. Such responses have been commonplace during (and post) the #MeToo movement, and debate has been particularly heated around the risks these types of accusations might pose to 'innocent' men (Fileborn & Phillips, 2019).

Such backlash is unsurprising, given that #MeToo sought to dismantle and disrupt aspects of hegemonic masculinity, and "when any movement seeks to redistribute power, those with the most to lose invariably retaliate" (Rosewarne, 2019, p. 174). Entitlement to power is a

key element of hegemonic masculinity. Within this framework, men come to understand and enact their own (and women's) sexuality, where women have typically been understood as more 'responsive' in their sexuality (Gavey, 2018; Hollway, 1984). Within an understanding of sexual aggression as a continuum, sexually aggressive behaviour is not diametrically opposed to the 'expected' masculine actions of leading or controlling a sexual exchange (Gavey, 2018). Indeed, a key criticism of #MeToo is that questioning how we 'do' heterosex threatens traditional sexual norms – that 'flirting' and 'seduction,' positioned as essential to heterosexual encounters as we know them, become conflated with coercive male sexuality (Fileborn & Phillips, 2019).

Masculinity and singleness/dating

Within these frameworks of heteronormativity, singledom has commonly been understood as representing a time to be endured or a 'condition' to be cured, before one conforms to normative heteronormative coupling (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003). Research indicates that single people are typically represented or understood as desiring a committed heterosexual relationship, yet are failing in their ability to acquire this, leaving them incomplete and less happy than those who are coupled (Budgeon, 2008; Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003). This results in what has been identified as negative stereotyping and discrimination towards those who are single (Morris, 2005). These negative perceptions can be observed within common social discourses. For example, single people have reported often having to explain or account for their singleness as a violation of the norm in social circles, unlike those who occupy the unquestioned and privileged (hetero)normative status of married or coupled (DePaulo & Morris, 2006; Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003). Research has also indicated that social meanings attached to those who 'fail' to find a committed relationship are primarily negative, with single people often assumed to be more lonely, selfish, immature, irresponsible, maladjusted, and less happy and loving than those who are coupled (DePaulo & Morris, 2006; Miller, 2005).

Yet there appears to have been little recognition within academia, or society in general, of the pressures and negative treatment experienced by single people. Despite research that provides individual accounts of negative treatment (see Addie & Brownlow, 2014; Lahad & Hazan, 2014; Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003), even single people have reportedly not

recognised singles as a discriminated group (Morris, 2005). For instance, DePaulo and Morris (2006) have reported that only 4% of adults in their study spontaneously mentioned singles as a stigmatised group. People who are single are also vastly under-researched, representing part of what has been called a 'cultural invisibility' of single people (Bethune, 2012, p. 1). This is despite single-person households being the second most common and the fastest growing type of household in New Zealand (Edmunds, 2019) – a demographic that parallels trends in the UK (Sanders, 2019) and the US (Duffin, 2019).

Research that has investigated the experience of singleness has generally been focused on single people in general (see Budgeon, 2008; DePaulo & Morris, 2006; Morris, 2005), or on the experiences of heterosexual single women, who have been considered particularly stigmatised due to traditional norms of femininity centring around marriage and the family (see Addie & Brownlow, 2014; Lahad & Hazan, 2014; Moore & Radtke, 2015; Pickens & Braun, 2018; Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003; Sandfield & Percy, 2003). Relatively little research, however, has focused specifically on the experience of singleness for heterosexual men. Research focused on masculinity has at times considered the necessity of (eventual) heterosexual coupling to succeed in a normative masculinity. Coupling in this context represents maturity and duty, and the following of a normative and legitimised life path for men (see Appleby, 2012; Terry, 2014; Terry & Braun, 2009; Thompson, 2015) – "marriage offers with it a guarantee of neutrality and invisibility, as the individual has successfully conformed to the social norm demanded of him" (Thompson, 2015, p. 23). Singleness for men demands a certain 'upkeep' of a heterosexual and masculine performance, to assure other men and potential sexual or romantic partners of one's heterosexual desirability, while to be married is to already have achieved this desirability and heterosexuality symbolically (Thompson, 2015).

However, to be single in one's youth, or to be a 'bachelor,' is often viewed positively, or even encouraged for men – evoking notions of success, freedom, promiscuity and fun. To be coupled in one's youth is often represented as an unnecessary and premature 'ball and chain' dampener on 'boys will be boys' fun (Appleby, 2012; Terry & Braun, 2009; Thompson, 2015). These types of constructions continue markedly into the current sociocultural context for men within Westernised understandings of masculine singleness. Researchers in the UK have described a type of 'lad culture' as hegemonic among young men (often within

a university setting), characterised by problematic/harmful masculine practices, such as "excessive alcohol consumption, sexual violence and bullying/intimidation" (Stead, 2017, p. 126). Key to these practices are single men as utilising "pack behaviour" (Jeffries, 2020, p. 908) to 'hunt' for desirable (or even vulnerable) women to have casual sex with, often with disregard to full consent and resulting in sexual harm (Stead, 2017). Similar displays of an objectifying and hypersexualised masculine singleness can be observed in a New Zealand context (Marvelly, 2017).

While this type of hyper-sexualised singleness has been glorified in masculinity, to be single past a certain youth (e.g. 30s) is to risk being perceived as 'weird' or sexually excessive (e.g. a 'womaniser'), and non-conforming (Appleby, 2012). Waehler (1996) described generally disapproving attitudes towards middle-aged men who had never married, which may involve stereotypes of being a womaniser, women or marriage hater, 'mama's' boy, nerd, narcissist, sexual deviant, workaholic or generally immature (p. 4). Similarly problematic assumptions and stereotypes (or pathologising) of abnormality are often made of men who are celibate (Terry, 2012) or asexual (Mitchell & Hunnicutt, 2019), reinforcing the centrality of both hetero-coupling and physical expressions of that heterosexuality to masculinity.

Yet, to express a desire to couple is often marked as feminine, and contradictory to some expectations produced within hegemonic masculinity (Thompson, 2015). In a social media poll of single men, *The New Zealand Herald* reported the reasons men cited as 'justifying' or explaining their single state, which included aspects of both choice and freedom, elements of circumstance (e.g. "I don't put myself in positions to meet new people" (Gurkan, 2016, p. 1)), to self-described laziness, or a lack of effort/self-confidence (Gurkan, 2016). The tone of the poll suggested many men were not in fact happy or content being single, yet this is not a discourse often expressed within masculinity. The rise of 'involuntarily celibate' men ('incels') in men's rights spaces (i.e. single men who are socially isolated, often desiring hetero contact, sexuality and/or coupling, but unable or reluctant to obtain it (Maxwell et al., 2020)) further complicates this space. Discourse in 'incel' spaces commonly resorts to aggressive, misogynistic rhetoric denigrating women for their perceived inadequacy and toxicity, to justify men's singleness/celibacy (Maxwell et al., 2020). This rhetoric *blames* women for male singleness, for not accepting men who 'fail' to display and exhibit

hegemonic masculinity – excusing male singleness through the 'failures' of women. These themes will be explored further in chapter 8.

Summary

In this chapter I have summarised some key areas of research central to masculine relationality, which will be key in setting up the following analyses. I have outlined the various pressures and constraints for men to relate in prescribed ways in homosocial and heterosexual contexts "in order to count as men" (Edley, 2017, p. 154). The research within this chapter also illustrated various gaps in research around masculinity, particularly in single men's experiences and positionings in relation to heterosexuality. The analyses ahead will consider this gap and look to extend our critical understandings of masculinity, specifically from a post #MeToo and New Zealand context.

In the next chapter I will outline the methodological approaches I have utilised in order to analyse and understand men's talk around masculinity and heterosexuality.

Chapter 4: Methodology

"How an actual researcher interprets stuff"

The title for this chapter came from an extract from a participant, who credited me with being an "actual researcher." The full portion of the extract explained this more fully, and was in response to the question, "Why were you interested in participating in the study?":

> *It would be interesting to see how an actual researcher interprets stuff and then asked questions rather than social media like demonising men for the most part (Craig, 30)*

These discourses around the "demonising" of men by feminism, and men participating out of a duty to men's rights, will be key components of analytical chapters 7 and 8. However, Craig's comment also illustrated commonly held assumptions about the nature of 'scientific' research – that it is unbiased and objective, revealing of the 'true' state of things. This discourse, present throughout the data, positioned scientific studies, statistics and theories as the *most* credible, or only, sources of truth about an objective social world (Urla, 1993). This is in line with realist ontologies that theorise an objective, knowable state of reality, which is able to be 'uncovered' through the 'right' research (Wilkinson, Ibáñez & Íñiguez, 1997). These assumptions, however, sit in contrast with the approach taken in this study – that of social constructionism.

Theoretical approach

The overarching ontological assumption within this work is relativist, which positions that reality can never be entirely separated from human practice and experience. Within a relativist ontology, knowledge is produced through human interpretation, which is inevitably bound to subjective factors such as context and time period. Thus, there can be no singular or static 'truth,' but instead many changing productions and interpretations of what might be true (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999). This contrasts with realist ontologies, which position that a singular and objective truth exists, and is available for researchers to

access through positivist/empiricist means. These realist *epistemologies* (i.e. the research approach used to access 'truth(s)') have traditionally represented the dominant research approach within the sciences and mainstream psychology, and often inform quantitative and experimental designs (Wilkinson et al., 1997). Contemporary social research, however, has become less aligned with positivist epistemologies and more inclusive of frameworks that acknowledge contextual factors, particularly within qualitative research (Edley, 2001).

As noted in chapter 2, the epistemological framework used within this study around masculinities is social constructionism, which complements a relativist ontology. In coming to a theoretical and methodological framework, Marecek (2003) proposed that researchers must ask themselves, "what kind of truth am I interested in hearing?" (p. 54). I was interested in exploring men's different productions of 'truths' around masculinity and heterosexuality, through analysing their words (within an interview context). I wanted to investigate what these words might indicate about gendered power relations, and how dominant ideologies might adversely affect men and women, and in what ways. I was critical of what I had observed in my own life around traditional and hegemonic masculine discourse and practice, and sought to understand men's experiences and positionings within this. A social constructionist approach is particularly suited to qualitative research such as this, as it positions that our social world is constructed through our interactions with others, and constituted through discourse and cultural systems of meaning (Burr, 2015; Chouliaraki, 2002). Knowledge here is considered "a product of how we come to know it" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 30). A social constructionist approach can therefore offer access to rich, in-depth accounts focused on individual utilisation of particular cultural discourses (Burr, 2015), which is consistent with my aims. From these accounts, we can analyse personal meaning-making around gender in relation to power and identity, in an attempt to deconstruct, expose and challenge dominant discourses that sustain various forms of oppression (i.e. patriarchy).

Social constructionism has, however, been criticised for being "politically paralysing" (Edley, 2001, p. 433) through not having the 'teeth' to sufficiently attack systems of oppression, as any claims or analysis of inequality can be theoretically dismissed as relative and simply one's 'perspective' (Edley, 2001). However, social constructionism does not go so far as to position that there is no material reality at all (i.e. 'real' experiences of inequality (Edley,

2001)), but that the 'truth' of reality is socially and culturally mediated, and we are always dependent on subjective language to access it (Gavey, 1997; Weedon, 1987). This positioning does not make experiences or claims invalid, but contextual. Acknowledging and attempting to understand that context is a key component of dismantling oppression. And like the 'hard' (positivist) sciences, this understanding of participant experiences is still sought through an empirical process, which is grounded in data and used to make claims (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

In line with an interest in dismantling systems of oppression, my research interest and the subsequent analysis were also influenced by poststructuralist feminist theory. Weedon (1987) described feminist poststructuralism as "a mode of knowledge production which uses poststructuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change" (p. 40-41). Poststructuralism also theorises meaning as produced through social discourse and other signifying practices, which are always changing and never fixed (Burr, 2015). These meanings in turn organise society *and* individual subjectivity (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Gavey, 1997). Through a feminist lens, these dominant discourses in society commonly not only naturalise, but perpetuate and sustain systems of gendered inequality. My interest in contributing to feminist change is at the heart of my research motivation. In this study, I endeavoured to identify and analyse discourses around masculinity and heterosexuality, which revealed gendered power relations and the impacts of patriarchal structures. The hope in writing this thesis has been, of course, to contribute to some type of social change by critically disrupting naturalised and problematic discourses, in an effort to make way for something more socially just.

Active and ongoing reflexivity throughout the research process is integral to this feminist work. As described by Cotterill and Letherby (1993):

> *The general agreement is that the 'conscious subjectivity' of much feminist (and other) research which has replaced the 'value-free objectivity' of traditional research is not only more honest, but helps to break down the power relationship between researcher and researched (p. 72)*

My own subjectivity and identity positionings (i.e. Pākehā, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied, cis-gendered woman) are implicated in my feminist alignments and cannot be separated from my decision to undertake this research, the research design, the interview experience (see chapter 5), or this research output. This reflexivity is equally important when considering the interview data, as "the reproduction of the gender order is a joint accomplishment" (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001, p. 101), where "because both the researcher and the respondent have the capacity to shape the encounter, interviews are best conceived as performative collaborations" (Walby, 2010, p. 640). This 'collaboration' will be analysed in depth in the next chapter (chapter 5), as a reflexive analysis of the interview experience.

This study

In this study I utilised an in-depth semi-structured interview design to talk to 31 men who identified as heterosexual and single about how they understood, made sense of and reported acting in relation to masculinity, heterosexuality and being single. I chose to use an interview study as I was interested in capturing qualitative data that fit within a social constructionist framework, in considering that "constructionist interviews are dialogical performances, social meaning-making acts, and cofacilitated knowledge exchanges" (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008, p. 430). Through treating the interview data in this way, I could also analyse men's performances during the interviews as examples of masculine relationality, and examine how they made sense of, and meaning around, homosocial and heterosexual relations through discourse/words (within this particular interaction). This allowed for rich data, which contributed to themes of identity and power. The method of individual interviewing was also appropriate for the potentially personal nature of the topic, allowing participants to discuss private or intimate experiences in a confidential setting, to encourage open disclosure (Willig, 2013).

Recruitment

To recruit for this study I used a media release on November 14, 2017, which was posted on online news sites Scoop.co.nz and Magic.co.nz, and followed by two radio interviews on RadioLIVE (November 14) and 95bFM (December 5) (see appendices for images of media

recruitment). The study was also advertised on the University of Auckland website and shared via social media (e.g. Facebook). The reaction to recruitment was slow, which was unexpected, following a large public reaction to my master's study about singleness with heterosexual women. In that study, the media widely took up the study press release, resulting in multiple online publications and offers for radio interviews. This then resulted in approximately 120 expressions of interest from women. The popularity of that recruitment gave me confidence in pursuing similar topics (with a different gender) for my doctoral recruitment, illustrating "how the research itself is implicated in (re)shaping us, and our future research directions" (Farvid, 2010, p. 235).

The media take-up for this study was not only slower, but the online places where it was published were less 'well-known' than major media sites, indicating less general 'interest' around these issues (singleness, dating, relationships) for men in comparison to women. This perhaps should not have been surprising, given the traditionally gendered discourses commonly reproduced by the media (and society) that relationships and marriage are expected to be of greater importance to women, while men are encouraged to value more individualist pursuits of public life (Budgeon, 2016). In stark comparison to my master's recruitment drive, I struggled to find enough participants for the study. This may also indicate cultural norms around men's willingness to discuss topics of a 'personal' nature (Flood, 2013b), participate in 'talking' research in general (Oliffe & Mroz, 2005), or that singleness/heterosexual topics might be more of a 'non-issue' for men (which was a discourse presented by some of the men who did participate).

Once participants were contacted, they were initially offered a choice between participating in an individual or group interview. I intended to use the data from group interviews as a way of accessing discourses *between* men (as opposed to the interview structure of discourse from men to a woman researcher). All declined the option of a group interview, except one participant who was willing to participate in either format. This hesitation from men might indicate that the proposed interview topics (masculinity, heterosexuality, singleness) were not topics men felt comfortable, able or willing to talk about in front of other men or in a group. This is consistent with ideas around men as more likely to choose women to talk to about personal subjects rather than other men (Flood, 2013b; Snell, Miller, Belk, Garcia-Falconi & Hernandez-Sanchez, 1989), as was the case in the proposed

one-on-one interview. This may reflect traditionally hegemonic ideals of emotional stoicism and restraint as particularly amplified as barriers to disclosure in homosocial contexts (Cohen, 2016). As remarked by Goldberg (1976):

> *"It has long been recognised that men seem to be 'blocked' when they try to relate to each other. That is, they are not comfortable sharing their downsides – their failures, anxieties, and disappointments. Perhaps they fear being seen as weak, complaining losers or cry babies, a perception that threatens their masculine images. Neither do they seem to feel comfortable sharing their ecstasies or successes for fear of inciting competitive jealousies or appearing boastful"* (p. 137)

As such, I made the choice to discard the option of group interviews due to lack of interest, and focus on producing a higher number of individual interviews than planned. As individual interviews can be more suitable for 'sensitive' or personal topics, they were an ideal avenue for accessing individual understandings and constructions where men might feel inhibited by the presence of other men (Smith & Braunack-Mayer, 2014).

Participants

Participants were recruited according to the following inclusion criteria: men who identified as heterosexual and currently single, had resided in New Zealand for more than two years (to locate the study within the local sociocultural context), and were over 20 years old. This minimum age allowed for men to have potentially had some experience in adult dating/heterosexual relations outside of school/teenage years, and an open-ended age bracket allowed for a cross-section of different experience based on age. I recruited specifically for heterosexual participants, due to the heteronormative nature of popular discourses around masculinity and singleness/relationships. I offered the use of phone or Skype interviews as an alternative to face-to-face interviews in order to extend my recruitment outside of Auckland and include men across the country.

Most participants were recruited following the media release and subsequent media take-up mentioned above. Other men who expressed interest had heard about the study through 'snowballing' (also known as 'chain referral sampling' (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981)), mostly

via word of mouth, including from other participants. This allowed word to 'spread' among potentially 'like-minded' peers of participants, who might also have interest in contributing. Snowballing can be particularly useful for studies of a more personal nature, where locating potential participants might be difficult (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981), as was the case with my recruitment in the later stages. Participants were recruited using an 'opt-in' process where respondents were required to email to express interest.

Approximately 33 respondents contacted me regarding participation, of which 31 were interviewed, as two failed to reply after initial contact. Most participants resided in Auckland (22). Participant locations outside of Auckland included Wellington, Invercargill, Palmerston North, Taranaki and Dunedin. These participants were interviewed via phone or Skype (see table 1). Participants were aged 23 to 68 (mean age 36.58; standard deviation 11.86), and all identified as heterosexual or 'straight' and currently single – but otherwise encompassed broader diversity (see table 1). Men were predominantly NZ European/Pākehā, but identified with various ethnicities, some of which overlapped (collected via open question), including: Caucasian, Chinese, Croatian, Egyptian, English, Ethiopian, European, Fijian, Indian, Irish, Kiwi, Korean, Māori, Native American, NZ, Pākehā, Scottish, South African. Of the 29 who indicated class, a range of identities were reported, but the largest groupings were middle class (13) and working class (6). Two did not answer the class section, and one answered, "unsure what this means." Most participants seemed confused about the class question and were prompted to just write whatever they thought. This confusion may stem from ideas around individualism and the concept of class not being an integrated (or immediately obvious) idea within a neo-liberal, post-colonial New Zealand culture, which has often been positioned (largely by Pākehā) as "classless" (despite ongoing and significant inequalities) (Duhn, 2006).

Most of the participants reported being in paid work, many in professional roles. A wide range of occupations was reported (e.g. management jobs, farming, hospitality, IT/software, law, teaching, trades); a few (3) identified as students or provided no occupation information (2). Two men identified as having a disability, and one replied "sort of." Twenty-two described themselves as having been in a relationship previously, nine had not been in a relationship; four had one or more children. Of the participants without children, five participants answered that they did not want children, 10 said that they did, while six did

not answer. The remaining six answers were 'we shall see,' 'maybe,' 'neither for nor against,' 'possibly,' 'unsure' and 'not opposed but no particular desire.' This information is captured in the table below. All participants were provided with pseudonyms in the table and all analytical work.

Table 1: Participant demographics[1]

Pseudonym	Age	Sexuality	Ethnicity	Class	Disability	Been in relationship	Children	Wants Children	Location	Format
Ali	36	Heterosexual	Caucasian	Middle	n	n	n	y	Wellington	Skype
Edward	30	Heterosexual	NZ Pakeha	Lower-middle	n	y	n	n	Auckland	In person
Stuart	37	Straight hetero	Pakeha	Middle	n	y	n	we shall see	Auckland	In person
Cameron	38	Straight	Irish/Kiwi	Mid	n/a	y	n/a	n	Auckland	In person
Rob	55	male heterosexual	European	Middle	n	y	y		Taranaki	Phone
Paul	49	Straight/heterosexual	European/Maori	Middle	n	y	y		Palmerston North	Skype
Ben	34	Straight	Pakeha	Working/middle	n/a	y	n	n	Auckland	In person
Jarrod	40	Hetero	Scottish/South African	Upper	n	y	n	y	Auckland	Skype
Noah	24	Straight	NZ	Working	n	y	n	maybe	Auckland	In person
Tom	40	Hetero	NZ Pakeha	Middle	n	y	n	neither for nor against	Auckland	In person
Rangi	37	Straight	Maori	Working class	sort of	y	n	possibly	Auckland	In person
Liam	27	Straight	NZ European	Working (white collar)	n	n	n	y	Auckland	In person
Don	29	Straight	European/NZ	Upper middle	n	y	n		Auckland	In person
Larry	60	Heterosexual	NZ Pakeha	Middle?	n	n	n		Invercargill	Phone
Lewis	29	Heterosexual	Pakeha	Unsure what this means	n	y	n	Not opposed but no partic	Wellington	Skype
Dae	24	Heterosexual	Korean New Zealand			y	n	y	Auckland	In person
Alan	68	Heterosexual	NZ European	Middle	n	y	y		Invercargill/Southla	Phone
Alex	23	Heterosexual	NZ European		n	n	n		Auckland	In person
Simon	29	Straight	Kiwi	Middle class	n	n	n	n	Palmerston North	Skype
Patrick	32	Straight	Maori/Pakeha	Working/Middle class	n	y	n	y	Auckland	In person
Timmy	28	Heterosexual	Chinese	Professional	n	y	n		Auckland	In person
Kevin	27	Straight	Korean	Working class		n	n	y	Auckland	In person
Joseph	37	Heterosexual	Pakeha/Native American	Middle class	n	y	n	y	Auckland	In person
Jaanesh	28	Heterosexual	Indian		y	n	n	y	Auckland	In person
Eric	61	Heterosexual	NZ European	Working class	y	y	n	n	Dunedin	Phone
George	34	Hetero for now	Maori, Fijian, Ethiopian, E	Lower	n	y	n	Unsure	Auckland	In person
Craig	30	Heterosexual	South African/NZ Caucasi	Middle class	n	n	n		Auckland	In person
Frank	50	Straight	Kiwi	Professional	n	y	y		Auckland	In person
Drishti	24	Heterosexual	Indian	Middle class	n	y	n		Auckland	In person
Lance	26	Heterosexual	New Zealand/Pakeha	Middle class	n	y	n	y	Auckland	In person
Nolan	48	Straight	European/Croatian/Englis	Average working class	n	n	n	y	Taranaki	Phone

[1]Participant information is in order of data collection and verbatim by participant

Procedure

A participant information sheet (PIS, see appendix B) was emailed to each respondent following initial contact, describing considerations of confidentiality and anonymity, and stipulating the requirements for participation. Once respondents had signalled that they had read and agreed to the procedure, a time/place was arranged for interview. I interviewed each participant individually. Twenty-two interviews were conducted face to face in Auckland, either at university interview rooms or at a public cafe convenient to the participant. Nine participants were interviewed virtually via Skype or on the phone, due to their location outside of Auckland. While virtual/phone interviews can limit some of the cues and body language available in face-to-face interviews, they allowed me to include men outside of Auckland, providing greater diversity within the sample. Phone interviews can also offer the benefit an increased sense of anonymity

and therefore potentially encourage more open disclosure (Shuy, 2003). All participants signed a consent form and filled out a demographic form prior to the interview and were informed about confidentiality and anonymity.

I introduced myself at the beginning of each interview and spoke briefly about the research aims and my master's work that preceded this study. I chose not to disclose any personal details in these introductions. While I did disclose some details around my relationship status in my interviews with women as a form of relating and encouraging open conversation (and a more equal power relationship (Oakley, 1981)), it did not feel appropriate (nor did I feel comfortable) in a male/female, one-on-one context with a male stranger. This hesitation indicated my own knowledge around, and responses to, discourses connected to 'strange men,' danger and the assumed sexualising of women (McCarty, Iannone & Kelly, 2014). Within these discourses, responsibility is often seen to rest with women to 'avoid' sexualising or inappropriate behaviour from men through pre-empting it and acting accordingly (Fileborn, 2012). In line with this, I felt it was important to keep my own engagement professionally minimal, both for personal comfort and safety reasons (for more discussion, see chapter 5). I also chose to meet the participants in public spaces (i.e. a cafe), or in university rooms that were private, but in a public building I was familiar with, for these same safety reasons. This was despite at least one participant insisting I visit his home. Many women who have interviewed men in their homes, however, have reported various safety and comfort implications (Lee, 1997), influencing me to be firm in my stance. In recognising that data is always co-constructed by the interviewer and participant engagement (Finlay, 2002), these decisions inevitably and inextricably impacted on and shaped the type of data that was able to be constituted in each respective study.

I used an interview guide (see appendix B) to provide the framework to guide the conversation, organised by semi-structured questions, covering topics such as experiences of being single, representations of single men in the media and societal expectations of masculinity/desirability. The semi-structured design was used to enable a fluid method of data collection, allowing for flexibility when responding to in-depth personal accounts, generating detailed and potentially rich qualitative data (Willig, 2013). The interview guide began with the question, "Tell me why you were interested

in participating in this study?" The following questions set the discursive tone and tasks for participants (Edley & Wetherell, 2001), covering topics around experiences of being single (e.g. "How do you feel about being single?," "Do you ever experience pressure to 'couple up'?," "How do you think *others* perceive you when they know you are single?"), and societal expectations of masculinity (e.g. "How do you think single (straight) men are *perceived* in our society?," "As a single man, do you feel our current society gives you messages about the right ways to behave?") (for full interview guide see appendix C). Participants were given an opportunity at the end of the interview to provide any additional information or ask questions. Questions specific and related to #MeToo or men's rights issues were not a part of the interview focus, and subsequent discussion of these issues was mostly instigated by participants, without explicit questioning.

Following informed consent processes (which will be described below), interviews were audio recorded. Interviews lasted between 23 minutes and 1 hour, 26 minutes, with an average length of 60 minutes. The interviews were transcribed verbatim by myself in an orthographic manner, omitting minor speech hesitations to facilitate readability (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In quoted extracts, non-relevant parts of the data have been excluded, depicted by (…). This style of transcribing, which cuts out some of the 'messiness' of speech, has been critiqued as omitting more fine-grain features of speech and interactions, which might allow for a more in-depth or thorough conversation/discursive analysis. Yet, through recognising this limitation, we must also acknowledge that "the very notion of accuracy of transcription is problematic given the intersubjective nature of human communication, and transcription as an interpretive activity" (Poland, 1995, p. 292) – i.e. the spoken word can never truly be represented 'accurately' by its written counterpart. With this in mind, I have adopted a more 'macro' style of discursive analysis (Burr, 2015) for most of the analytic chapters, which are focused on overall discourses and themes outside of discursive nuances.

Ethical considerations

This research conformed to all standard ethical expectations as set out by the American Psychological Association's Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (2010); an approval was granted by The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics

Committee on November 3, 2017 (UAHPEC – Reference number 020089). This project conformed to the guidelines set out by The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee in the following ways:

In constructing my research aims and design, I worked closely with my academic supervisor to ensure the alignment of research objectives to methods, and to demonstrate that the research output would be beneficial in a wider sense to social justice (i.e. in working to disrupt harmful discourse around gender). The ways in which I recruited participants using an 'opt-in' process (as described above) allowed participants to have autonomy and power over initial contact and identifying themselves. This was still the case for participants who were recruited via snowballing, as I was not the one to tell them about the project, they were still required to make first contact and they were under no pressure to reach out. Participants who failed to respond after initial contact were sent one reminder email and then no longer contacted, to allow for men to implicitly withdraw easily.

Participants were offered a $20 grocery voucher as koha (token of thanks) for participation. This amount was chosen as a way to thank men fairly for their time and effort, and to allow for inclusivity within the sample (i.e. allow men to attend for whom money for transport, etc, might be a barrier), but was minimal enough to not intentionally present as a source of incentive for participation, which could change the nature of the sample (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This was consistent with guidelines around renumeration from The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, which recommend any koha not be large enough to be the source of motivation in participation.

To ensure free and informed consent, I emailed all men who made contact a participant information sheet (PIS) before making any agreements to interview. In the email, I encouraged them to read the PIS and then contact me if they wished to continue in the process, reminding them they were free to withdraw/cease contact at any point. The PIS outlined the scope of the study/project aims (i.e. what questions they could expect), recruitment requirements, what the process would involve (likely length and process of the interview), benefits (e.g. enjoyment and contribution) and risks, how the data would be used (and stored securely), and listed the contact details of my superiors and the ethics committee (for full sheet see appendix B). I also detailed in the PIS that the interviews

would be audio recorded and transcribed for use in my analysis and potential publications, but that participant details would be anonymised and confidential. In terms of risks, I advised participants that there was a chance interviews could be distressing due to the personal topics being discussed, though this was not largely anticipated. I also advised participants that if they wanted to end the interview at any time, and/or withdraw their data, that this was their right for up to one month after the interview. For the consent form I truncated these points (see appendix C), also including that I would be using demographic information in the research output, and would require men to sign the form before commencing the interviews. I verbally went through these points with the men before starting the interviews to ensure understanding.

To maintain privacy and confidentiality, demographic questions were designed to only capture information relevant to the research aims (data minimisation). All participants were given pseudonyms within all research output to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, and any potentially identifying features of extracts have been changed or masked. No third-party transcribing was used, and only I dealt with non-anonymised data. Data has only been used in the ways intended in my research aims. Hard-copy data will be kept in secure storage (e.g. a locked filing cabinet) for a minimum of six years or until all interest in the project has finished, and electronic data will be backed up and stored on The University of Auckland server for the same amount of time. Hard copies will be shredded and digital files deleted after this time.

In terms of minimising harm, I did not anticipate any type of harm to come to participants, except possibly some distress from talking about potentially sensitive topics. In preparation for this, I developed a support services sheet that I gave to each participant, listing nationwide (mostly) mental health and counselling services. No men were visibly distressed during the interviews, and many expressed enjoyment. Despite this, I encouraged men to keep the sheet and reach out to a service if anything came up for them later.

For more reflection about ethical concerns specifically around participant representation and interview power dynamics, see chapter 5.

Analysis

A thematic approach

My analysis initially involved a constructionist thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2013) but developed into a discourse analysis during the writing process. I used a thematic approach as my beginning phase, as this was an approach I felt comfortable with, and knowledgeable about, and found it a logical and simple way to initially make sense of a large quantity of qualitative data. I was also interested in capturing recurring patterns in talk, which I used to indicate elements of collective sense-making, for which a thematic approach is suitable. Some approximation of this approach is commonly used in qualitative research for such purposes and provides an effective means of grouping ideas (themes) within a data set (Holloway & Todres, 2003). However, it is often considered an 'intuitive' part of the research process and may not be commonly referred to explicitly as an analytic technique (Roulston, 2001), though this can be seen to be changing (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017). For the purpose of this study, I referred to the six phases of thematic analysis outlined by Braun, Clarke, Hayfield and Terry (2019). These steps were particularly suitable for my project as they are aligned with *critical* and *reflexive* qualitative research. A reflexive approach to thematic analysis is usually built around understandings of meaning as contextual, where findings are developed through researcher *interpretation*, as opposed to 'uncovered' and representative of some pre-existing 'truth' (e.g. positivist or realist assumptions) (Briggs, 1986). Here, the researcher's voice is inevitably woven through the research process and output, just as each participant's reporting of events and ideas within the interview is always mediated by personal and cultural subjectivities (Roulston, 2001). This approach was thus compatible with my constructionist conceptualisation. The six phases outlined by Braun and colleagues (2019) include: familiarisation, generating codes, constructing themes, reviewing and developing, defining/naming themes, and producing the report. These steps were not conceptualised to be strictly linear, and/or might be used in a recursive way to match the individual process and development of each unique project. My process for each of these steps was as follows:

Familiarisation with data: Through transcribing myself, I was able to get a sense of the story of each individual interview and what might be interesting about it. I listened to each interview thoroughly – most sections more than once – in order to type the transcript of each interview as correctly as possible (while still acknowledging that a transcript can never fully reflect a research interaction (Poland, 1995)). For some interviews, I alternatively used a voice-typing tool, which meant I both listened to and repeated the interview out loud, manually correcting mistakes during the process. This process of going over each interview thoroughly, in working towards producing an 'accurate' transcript, allowed me to 'get into familiarisation' and gain a loose sense of some of the ideas occurring through the entire data set. From this I began to think about and take notes of areas that would be relevant and interesting for coding. I also wrote reflexively in my research journal at this time to take note of both the interesting things happening in the data, and my reactions to these. Every few weeks I would meet my supervisor and discuss these 'noticings,' and we would share our insights and perspectives on the data. From these discussions I took additional notes for potential coding.

Generating codes: The entire data set was then coded. I read each interview systematically in hard copy for segments of meaning (codes) in response to my original research questions and aims (see chapter 1). I initially coded inclusively for any idea that might be interesting or related to masculinity or heterosexuality, allowing the data to 'tell the story' (an inductive approach). I coded for both semantic (explicit, 'surface' meaning) and latent (more implicit and 'deeper' meaning) content (Terry et al., 2017). I chose to code in hard copy as it allowed me to stay 'close' to the data (Braun et al., 2019) and provided flexibility in terms of working space and code organisation. Once I had systematically coded all the interviews, I transferred each code to a Microsoft Word document, grouped by interview number (i.e. all codes from interview one remained together). From this document I started to group the related codes *across* interviews and grouped approximately 600 codes under 28 more broad categories to capture code overlap. I added this step as it allowed me to see which codes were consistent *across* interviews, and let me to begin to manage and make sense of codes as bigger 'chunks' of data (Braun et al., 2019). I then refined these codes further, eliminating repetitious codes, and produced a smaller document of between one and four collated codes under each of the 28 categories.

Constructing themes: Following this coding process, I grouped similar codes and categories, and used these as the building blocks to construct larger provisional ideas through visual mapping (in hard copy, see images in appendix G). For my first main visual map of the overall data set, my 'broad domain summary title' (Braun et al., 2019) was 'men, masculinity and singleness.' This map was used to note down all the different candidate themes (Terry et al., 2017) produced from the summary of all the clusters of codes and provide linkages between them. From this larger map I made three smaller visual maps, which explored relevant topics in more detail. These maps were named by what were more like domain summaries – a summary of the reduction of the data (Braun et al., 2019). The determination of domain summaries rather than themes can be common at the start of the analytic process, as the researcher has not yet engaged with the data enough to conceptualise themes, which are based on more implicit and connected patterns of meaning. As such, the three domain summaries I constructed, which would inform my development of themes, were: 'hetero-single men and dating,' 'the experience of interviewing men versus women,' and 'different voices' (see appendix G).

Reviewing initial themes: Using the above maps and my summary of codes document as the "building blocks" for theme formation (Braun et al., 2019), I eventually produced 11 broad candidate themes (with numerous sub-themes). Initial potential themes were reviewed and explored through a process of writing and data revision. To prepare for writing, I went through every interview transcript systematically online, in consultation with the hard copy that was coded, and copied and pasted extracts relating to each provisional theme on to a new Word document. This document was 29 pages of organised extracts, once completed. With the help of my visual maps, the candidate themes and the corresponding extracts were ordered in the document by how they might be connected to each other thematically. This document provided me with an overview of what appeared to be the most robust and patterned potential themes, and the nuance within each group (i.e. what was interesting about this theme, and the differences/similarities between men's reporting around it).

Defining/naming themes: From these documents of ordered extracts, I selected the most robust and analytically relevant candidate themes on which to base an exploratory analysis. I started by selecting themes that were evident across a large part of the data set (i.e. topics many participants talked significantly about). From these themes I selected those that were

interesting in regards to my research aims (but were not *just* reproducing well-documented ideas that I had summarised in my literature review), and seemed linked to a larger story about masculinity. I then began with writing generally about men and hetero-relating, specifically utilising extracts around dating, the #MeToo context, fear of being accused of sexual violence, misogyny, and victim blaming. I produced a 9000-word document that explored these ideas but did not quite *work* alone analytically. This pushed me to further consider my approach, and refine and name which final themes might work for the overall analysis.

Reporting: Meanings, interpretations and experiences relating to four areas were finally collated and further developed for the purpose of analysis. These areas were: the reflexive experience of interviewing men (chapter 5), 'new' and open masculinity (chapter 6), #MeToo and heterosexual dating culture (chapter 7), and men's rights and closed masculinity (chapter 8). The process of writing each analytic chapter involved many drafts, edits and continual engagement with the data, including the incorporation of different theories as the analyses developed. The data used within the analyses included mostly extracts from the interviews with participants, though in some sections I additionally used extracts from my own research journal and (anonymised) emails with participants (see chapter 5). Extracts were largely used analytically (i.e. I provided an extract and then analysed the meaning), with some use of illustrative extracts (extracts used to simply illustrate my analytical points).

A discursive approach

The following analysis is a blend of both inductive and theoretical techniques, where the overall 'story' was guided by participant accounts (bottom-up approach), but was strongly structured by different existing theoretical concepts (top-down approach) (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In my first attempt at a type of generalised analysis document (described above in the step *defining/naming themes*), I found that *how* men used words, and the discourses they drew from, were the most interesting and poignant aspects of the data. I wanted to look more closely at how these specific discourses worked to create meaning in the interactional context, and believed I could create the most interesting analysis of participant stories through focusing on what they were *doing* with their words. Thus, I shifted from a

thematic approach to draw on tools from discourse theory as I developed my next analytical iterations. Within a discourse analysis, discourse can be understood as a "system of statements which cohere around common meanings and values (…) (that) are a product of social factors, of powers and practices, rather than an individual's set of ideas" (Hollway, 1983, p. 231). This is particularly suited to poststructuralist understandings, and was therefore in line with my theoretical positionings in coming to this project. More specifically, a poststructuralist discourse analysis is concerned with how discourse can constitute reality and make available certain 'subject positions' within dominant systems of power (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Language is treated not as a means of accessing men's reality, but a mode through which men constituted and produced their experiences and realities. For this reason, discourse analysis is particularly suited to a social constructionist epistemology (Burr, 2015).

In using a critical discursive framework, I aimed to examine and interrogate the discursive resources drawn on by men evident in patterned sense-making around heterosexuality and masculinity. One central concern for (some) discourse analysists is how individuals draw on common discourse to construct and (re)produce different 'realities' (Wiggins & Potter, 2008), with a focus on the relations between discourse and (societal) power (van Dijk, 1993). Language is treated as part of what makes social life possible and meaningful, as "what gives people ideas of what they can do and of what they have just experienced" (Alcoff, 2018, p. 3). Discourse analysts acknowledge a tension, as "people are, at the same time, the products and producers of discourse" (Wetherell & Edley, 2014, p. 355). They draw on different discursive resources across sociocultural contexts and times, to both make sense of the known and experienced world, and construct identities in relation to the world – and the specifics of the interactional context.

While I continued to utilise aspects from thematic analysis, often still grouping ideas by theme or discourse, as part of the style of discourse analysis, I also employed the key analytic concepts of interpretative repertoires (Wetherell & Potter, 1988), subject positions (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and imaginary positions (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). These concepts can capture the possibilities made available for individuals – and groups of individuals – to identify, see, feel and act within a discourse.

Interpretative repertoires were used as the primary analytic concept in chapter 7, providing a conceptual tool for exploring and analysing patterned meaning. Interpretive repertoires, referred to as "a recognisable routine of arguments, descriptions and evaluations distinguished by familiar clichés, common places, tropes and characterisations of actors and situations" (Edley & Wetherell, 2001, p. 443), capture discursive patterns of (embedded) meaning. They are established through discursive repetition, but often articulated only in partial ways (Edley & Wetherell, 2001). Through identifying common interpretive repertoires drawn on by men through the data set in chapter 7, I aimed to explore the most common patterns of sense-making around gender, heterosexuality and dating in the sample, and consider the implications of these in a wider, more globalised context.

In drawing on these interpretive repertoires, and in the wider data set, men would take up different *subject positions*, producing temporary identities or positions to speak from in the moment (Wetherell & Edley, 2014). Such positionings work to present the speaker – and those they speak of – in a particular kind of way, such as the 'innocent man' or the 'good man.' These positions functioned differently across different contexts, and as I will illustrate, changed as men negotiated their sense of selves in relation to different topics around heterosexuality. Similarly, I drew on the notion of *imaginary positions* to describe how men throughout the data set would take up positions to describe the self in line with "socially sanctioned images of ideal selves" (Wetherell & Edley, 1999, p. 342). These positions were similar to subject positions but involved necessarily imagining the self in an idealised way, and with stability. By using imaginary positions, men could talk about themselves in full, describable and coherent ways, as an (illusory) character of unity and substance – which sits in contrast to the fragmented and ever-changing nature of subjectivity (as theorised through social constructionist thought) (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). These modes of 'self-authorship' functioned as discursive resources for men to describe themselves as certain types of men, deployed into conversation to create an imagined favourable identity and 'achieve' masculinity within the context.

The next four analytic chapters will draw on these concepts through a critical discursive framework, informed by social constructionist theory. Each chapter will use some form of discourse analysis, drawing on different conceptual tools and ideas to analyse the words of participants. More specifically:

In *chapter 5* I will draw on theory from feminist poststructuralism to provide a reflexive account of recruiting and interviewing men, with regards to how ideas around gender and power – and my own presence – may have shaped the data. While I will employ discourse analysis to examine *how* men used words to make claims to power, the chapter will be structured by themes. I will use themes as a more 'inclusive' conceptual tool in order to capture and organise both the discourses used by men, and my responses to them.

Chapter 6 will be organised around one participant's story as a type of case study of new masculinity, with extracts from other participant interviews that demonstrated or reiterated the same discourses and constructions. I chose a case study design for this chapter as the data from this participant's interview represented much of the range and depth of discourses available for men to take up around a new/open masculinity. I will therefore use his story as a type of guiding tool in navigating the terrain of men's talk around new masculinity. I will construct this chapter again through discourse analysis, where I will focus on what types of identities men worked to create through their words, and what types of power and acceptance this might have afforded them. I will again organise these words and discourses into themes, to capture both the breadth of the ideas *and* the individualised content provided in the case study.

As described above, in *chapter 7* I will utilise the analytic tool of interpretive repertoires to group men's rhetoric around the #MeToo movement and related issues of heterosexual dating and consent. Men used distinctive and patterned types of arguments and tropes throughout the related data to make (well-known) points – of which interpretive repertoires are well placed to capture. This mode of grouping ideas was therefore more analytically useful than themes or discourses. Using discourse analysis, I will present these interpretive repertoires with the aim of exploring patterns of meaning in men's talk and examine how they might sustain systems of gendered inequality.

In *chapter 8* I will again use a critical discursive analysis to interrogate men's use of misogyny, sexism and men's rights rhetoric to support or justify patriarchal ideas. I will use four representative discourses to structure the chapter, in place of themes, as the data related to each discourse fit more neatly into groupings that utilised and represented men's arguments. I will structure each category around a representative discourse, which will

speak to the core idea of men's talk, and examine how this discourse works to contest and rebuke perceived threats to male power from a more equal gender order.

Chapter 5: Reflection: Interviewing men

Crossing enemy lines amid a 'gender war'

Introduction

I came to this study assuming I would, on some level, notice a difference between interviewing men and women. As previously discussed, my master's study involved interviewing 21 single, heterosexual women. This led me to conceptualise this doctoral study, where I interviewed 31 single, heterosexual men about similar topics – heterosexuality, dating, pressures of being single, masculinity/femininity. I mostly expected different answers to the questions, generating different themes about being single as a man, as opposed to being single as a woman. And, of course, there were many differences in the ways that singleness and heterosexuality were talked about by men and women respectively. However, the most striking difference for me, as the interviewer and researcher, was the interview experience itself.

Common discourses around hegemonic masculinity and femininity were at play, not only in semantic data, but in strong latent themes that were never prompted or directly asked about, and the way that participants related with me, as a young(ish) female, Pākehā interviewer. These interviewer/participant dynamics have traditionally been ignored or little reported on in literature (Lee, 1997). Some critical researchers have, however, at times treated such interactions as an opportunity to further explore displays of gender and power (see Arendell, 1997; Farvid & Braun, 2018; Lee, 1997; McDowell, 1998; McKee & O'brien, 1983; Oakley, 1981; Pini, 2005; Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2002; Smart, 2013; Walby, 2010). These authors largely recognised the researcher and interviewee as engaged in an "interactive, dialectical relationship," with the researcher positioned as "the primary research instrument" (Arendell, 1997, p. 343) – i.e. *who* the researcher is, *what* they do, *how* they do it and *where* inevitably influences and shapes the data (Pini, 2005; Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2002). Men's identities can here be understood as "something constantly reproduced in the interview setting through the content of their stories as well as through our interaction" (Grenz, 2005, p. 2103). Thus, "*how* men answer questions and *how they behave in the interview* (in relation to the interviewer) are potentially valuable sources of

data" (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2002, p. 204), particularly in the study of identity management and masculine performance (Allen, 2005).

In this chapter, I will explore the interview experience as an example of Connell's (2012) masculine relationality (see chapter 3), in which men were required to present particular presentations of self in relation to the shared/assumed understandings of the gender order within the relational context of the interview. Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2002) have described many of the possible masculine practices at play in an interview setting, particularly with a woman interviewer, and provided advice to researchers about how to prepare for and mitigate potential issues arising from this. Their work will be referred to throughout this chapter where their conceptualisations were relevant to my own experiences. Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2002) categorised the research context as already a 'baseline threat' to masculine power, based on ideas around researcher authority. This also operated within a broader heterosexual dynamic with me as a woman interviewer, asking about gender, which can be categorised as a 'surplus' threat linked to "who is asking whom about what" (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2002, p. 206). This interpersonal relationship was situated within the gender regime of the university (Connell, 2012) (i.e. the *where* of the equation (Pini, 2005)), and expectations about what might be appropriate or socially 'acceptable' within that particular setting were inevitably tied into the resulting data.

Interviewing men

Typically, within a research context, the researcher/interviewer is implicitly positioned as the more powerful party (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Flood, 2013b) – they set the topics, arrange the interview, ask the questions, decide what becomes of the data, etc. By contrast, the participant is generally thought to be in the less powerful position (a position some researchers have sought to change (see Kauffman, 1992; Kosygina, 2005; Oakley, 1981; Smith & Braunack-Mayer, 2014)). Participants hold certain powers, such as the decision to participate, the option to withdraw themselves or their data, how they will answer, and often they decide collaboratively where/when to meet, etc. However, the participant can still be considered as largely in the less powerful position, offering up their time for a research experience set and led by the researcher, and for their gain (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001).

Participants in my research with women fit into this pattern of power, despite some efforts to neutralise the power difference with rapport and (some limited) relatability from my own identity. There was a large amount of interest in recruitment stages, and interviews were generally quite straight forward – I asked questions; they responded and were malleable to the process. These interactions fit with traditionally feminine ideas around how women should behave, particularly in such settings of differing power (i.e. they should be agreeable, compliant and not dominating (Bem, 1981; Budgeon, 2016; Butler, 2013)). This was not to imply there was no content I found problematic – I did at times feel uncomfortable when women expressed ideas around slut-shaming and sexual double standards. But this talk was mostly in relation to questions asked and not entirely unexpected, given the common societal uptake/reproduction of such patriarchal ideas in men and women alike (Fowers & Fowers, 2010). I experienced minimal emotional fatigue or frustration in getting through the 21 interviews, and mostly found them enjoyable and interesting, and my participants likable.

Due to this relatively positive and benign interviewing experience with women (where I had mostly failed to consider the gendered aspects of the actual interview, i.e. as an example of feminine relationality with the researcher), I did not engage in much emotional 'preparation' prior to interviewing men. My preparation mostly involved reviewing literature in relation to the expected *content* of my interviews (i.e. singleness, heterosexuality, the pressures of masculinity), rather than the interview experience itself. In my doctoral study, however, men responded much differently to the research process. Thus, when my initial interactions with one of my first male participants began with him 'mansplaining' (Bridges, 2017) to me 'how to interview' via email, I was taken aback. Was I not meant to be the one in charge, instructing him about the process? Was the assumed power not to rest with me? Would he be advising me about how to do my job if I were a male researcher? And so started my journey with interviewing men, an entirely and markedly different experience than interviewing women. Rather than being positioned as a collaborator (and a professional) in presenting their stories to the world, in some ways it seemed as though, as a woman, I was framed as the enemy in a greater gender war, who had unknowingly crossed lines into their camp of masculinity.

As discussed throughout this thesis (and feminist literature more widely), men typically experience more power and privilege than/over women in patriarchal/Western societies – power that is often well entrenched, implicit and part of how we learn to 'do' gender (Butler, 2004; Connell, 2013). Thus, a potential clash or struggle of power may exist when the researcher is a woman and the participant a man. This leaves women researchers potentially vulnerable to the social dominance of men (Lovering, 1995), as "the availability to men of masculinity discourses presents them with greater opportunities to exert power when interacting with a female interviewer" (Pini, 2005, p. 203). Aspects of this vulnerability were integrated into my experiences of interviewing men, where the interview appeared to represent "both an opportunity for signifying masculinity and a peculiar type of encounter in which masculinity is threatened" (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001, p. 91). These gendered differences in participants asserting versus submitting power within an interview context were similarly discussed by Arendell (1997). In comparing her studies of divorced mothers versus divorced fathers, she described that men would often "take charge" of and challenge the interview process, "establishing that they were collaborators if not actually conductors of this research enterprise" (p. 350), while women were compliant. A similar pattern existed in my two sets of research.

To discuss this experience of interviewing men, this analysis is divided into different themes (see chapter 4 for general process). I constructed these themes by compiling all the participant extracts related to the interview experience and taking notes of any patterns. I also looked through the research journal I had kept of my own thoughts and processes throughout the research experience, including around participant behaviour before, during and after the interview. To this collated material I added some excerpts from participant emails, which illustrated or expanded on my discussion. I used this document as my guiding plan for constructing themes. The first theme of this chapter will be *My empathy for men's experiences*, which will set up my expectations going into the research process with men. The next themes, *The role of male 'educator,'* and *Involving me in the interview,* will subsequently explore some of the challenges I experienced in interviewing men, including strategies men employed to make claims to power within the interview (and within a greater gender war). This last theme will discuss my reflections on *Dealing with sexism and misogyny* and why this research, despite its challenges, remains important. These themes

will be illustrated through relevant participant extracts and emails, and also with some excerpts from my research journal.

Analysis

"In some ways it absolutely tears my heart out" – My empathy for men's experiences

As explained in chapter 1, I came to this study with the presumption that I would construct my analysis around the challenges of masculinity, using men's words to highlight their struggles with singleness and dating. As with my study with single women, I expected to be able to utilise a sense of empathy in thinking about how gender roles can negatively affect men and to use the interview data to benefit them. I expected to be 'on their side,' and part of a common goal together. In some cases, the interviews met (some of) my expectations and seemed to offer something beneficial for men, too:

> *You've given me a lot of food for thought, a lot of thinking to do (Lewis, 29)*
>
> *It's interesting though, talking about this stuff (Don, 29)*
>
> *That was pretty sweet, that was all good, totally worth the gift card (Noah, 24)*

Multiple men talked about the interview as "interesting." A few described the process as therapeutic, allowing them to be able to discuss things they had not been able to talk about previously ("*I've talked a fucking lot actually,*" Ben, 34) and expressed enjoyment ("*that was awesome,*" George, 34) and gratitude ("*thank you for letting me take part,*" Paul, 49). In a few cases, men also seemed genuinely interested in my study with women and learning more about the gendered nature of the topic:

> *I really appreciated that opportunity to talk about it, what I'll do is I'll go online and try to find your thesis about women because I don't really know what women think of it (…) you're giving people the opportunity like myself to perhaps reflect on something that's probably had a profound effect on their lives you know (Eric, 61)*

These instances were gratifying and an extremely positive part of the interview experience where I could, in fact, be 'on the same side' as men, or at least offer them something valuable from the experience. That some might want to learn more about gender norms or

women's perspectives felt like a great feminist achievement. However, these positive aspects did not represent the majority of the interview data – but neither did the more challenging aspects. Almost all the interviews were a mix of positive/progressive and implicitly problematic/challenging discourse, as men took up varying subject positions across different discursive contexts (Wetherell & Edley, 1999) (as will be explained throughout this thesis). Many participants showed problematic elements in more implicit, difficult to distinguish ways, presumably without much awareness. And as will be signalled in chapter 6, a lot of participants *did not* display a lot of the more explicit behaviours or patterned sets of accounting that will be mentioned in this chapter. Despite this 'mix,' most men were respectful of me and the process in general ways, even if there were some more implicit or subtle claims to power.

Some, however, were not so respectful in various implicit *and* explicit ways, which transformed the interview process into a very gendered experience. A collection of participants across the sample reproduced patriarchal discourse and practice consistently, as will be evident by the use of some participants' extracts more than others. These patterns were evident enough to make the overall interview experience more challenging and gendered than I had expected, and illustrated the influence of a "cultural prescription for self-presentation" (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2002, p. 203). This cultural prescription required men to exert power and control over women/others (me, in this context), and was most persistently evident in the accounts of men who represented Elliott's (2020) closed masculinity. As outlined in chapter 2, this masculinity is tied to traditional versions of hegemonic masculinity, based around patriarchal ideology and male dominance. The over-representation of these men in this chapter makes sense, as they were the most outwardly committed to patriarchal power, and their masculine identities appeared most dependent on displays of it (see also chapter 8). They were thus more likely to interpret a woman interviewer as a threat to this male power, and to make compensatory claims to power to counter this (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2002).

As I came into the research process prepared to be empathetic, I struggled in the early stages of interviewing with being positioned by some participants as an ally to men's rights or concerns (see chapter 8), and acting in a way that might confirm/allow this (i.e. empathetic listening). This was most notable during interviewing (as opposed to

transcription or analysis), as 'in the moment' emotional arguments or humanistic elements such as admissions of vulnerability seemed to require an empathetic response within my role of listener (Arendell, 1997). In this role, I felt as though I 'owed' my participants an analytical representation of their struggles that would match their expectations. But gender was constructed as a 'battleground' topic within these men's accounts, where they were opposed to women and feminism (see chapter 8) – both of which I was aligned to. In some instances, I was positioned as an 'honorary male' (Warren, 1988), through being let into their world and trusted to fight for their male cause – as though I had accidentally parachuted over enemy lines in a gender war. This was a presumed position I did not expect to be in and thus was not prepared for. Arendell (1997) also detailed these types of assumptions in her study with divorced fathers, who assumed she must be conducting her research with the aim of redressing the legal 'wrongs' against them, and to air their grievances against their ex-wives. Illustrating these types of assumptions, one of the men in my study who provided the most material in relation to misogyny and men's rights emailed his appreciation after the interview: "*Hope you have the opportunity to interview more men on this issue. It's an area that needs so much more focus, it's really great that you're bringing attention to it. Thanks again*." Some men also reiterated their goal of furthering ideas around men's issues during the interview, and as a reason for deciding to participate:

> *I'm hopeful I can add you know a contribution, hopefully you can make a change to the world and make it a better place because I do believe in you know, I do believe in like uh change, sometimes small things can lead to you know, such big consequences and then it changes everything yeah I do, I do believe in that um that's why I decided to participate in your interview and even it perfectly suits me so (Kevin, 27)*

> *I* *Why were you interested in participating in this study?*

> *P* *A voice for us single men, also us single men need to speak up about things, and I thought well yeah I'm not afraid to, um just like you see so many men out there who will not speak about their depression, will not ask the doctor for a prostate check and where do they end up? Six feet under (Nolan, 48)*

These men positioned me as a tool in forging a world that would better their needs – needs that were often portrayed as valid and dire. Throughout the experience, I contended with

how to balance empathy and kindness to these men who had opened up to me and shared their thoughts, ideas and struggles, with the idea that I would inevitably be using their data in a way they would likely be unhappy with (i.e. for my enemy feminist 'agenda'). Like many feminist researchers before me, I struggled with the ethics of representation, where I had the power of representing the 'results' from other's words (Weatherall et al., 2002; Wolf, 2018). Whose perspective was 'right' and worth propagating – mine or theirs? This crisis was born not only from a sense of default loyalty to participants as a researcher – that I was on their 'side' – but out of empathy for their positions and journeys. Kevin, for example, often talked about his depression, social isolation and difficulties in education environments. Nolan also expressed bewilderment as to why he was still single, and great sadness at the prospect of remaining alone:

> *Well to be honest my singleness in some ways it absolutely tears my heart out (…) ya know what really hurts? Is that I look at myself and think all the gifts and talents I've got and I've got no one to share it with, I have a wealth of knowledge to do all sorts of things and I have no children of my own to pass it on to and um also, the thing that really tears me to bits is um I just think even at my age I look at it and think well, will I ever get to have grandchildren? (Nolan, 48)*

I found it extremely difficult to listen to men's struggles and empathise with them, alongside the idea of critically examining all the problematic things they said – particularly as I had conceptualised the study with the initial aim of highlighting men's struggles. The recruitment themes were comparatively mild and benign, and I had not meant to lead into men's rights. This data, however, would allow me to tell the most interesting story about masculinity through a feminist lens. I felt compelled to draw critical attention to it, but also guilty in knowing my participants would construct this as an 'enemy' (feminist) position – as though I were a spy. This illustrated my assumptions about being *able* to be an ally to male concerns in the design stage of the data as later creating potential barriers around the analysis when unexpected misogyny arose. Feminist and discursive researchers, committed to giving participants 'a voice,' have long faced such dilemmas of how to negotiate with participant responses that "don't tell 'our story'" (Weatherall et al., 2002, p. 532), and research output that might challenge or be critical of participants. These types of risks and complications are something the qualitative researcher must continually reflect on and be

transparent about, recognising how our own aims and decisions inevitably impact and shape the participant stories we tell, or are able to tell (Farvid, 2010). Two different excerpts in my research journal spoke to this dilemma, illustrating a type of 'shellshock' amid this gender war:

> "I feel like I'm misleading them … like they're trusting me to represent them in a way that tells their story like they intend it and is consistent with the themes that I recruited them with." (14/12/2017)

> "The worst part is it feels like they trust me, like they feel like I'm on their side and they're making sense and I'm going to spread the word for them, not 'misinterpret' it like some 'crazy, over-the-top feminist.' They really seem to feel like this is their chance to be understood, like these attitudes are logic." (14/12/2017)

With some time and space after the interviews, and during the process of transcribing where the sheer amount of implicit and explicit sexism and misogyny became more apparent, this dilemma faded. As articulated by Flood (2013b), "feminist calls for empathetic and non-hierarchical modes of research can run counter to the accompanying call for emancipatory research, especially in researching men" (p. 71). Analysing and understanding the problematic mechanisms of men's discourse became more important than the inhibiting effect of my guilt and empathy, as has been put forth by other feminist researchers:

> "It has been accepted by feminist researchers that the need to negotiate these kinds of difficulties will be inherent in feminist research that adopts a more activist agenda which sets out to 'unearth, interrupt, and open up new frames for intellectual and political theory and change' (Fine, 1992, p. 220) and to denaturalise the taken for granteds in our own cultures." (Weatherall et al., 2002, p. 533)

However, I reflect on this dilemma with interest. My sense of empathy towards men's struggles had threatened the surrender of my feminist interrogation, and to instead try and empathise with men's rights positions. This was *despite* the levels of sexism and misogyny in general, and towards me. Empathy from others was clearly effective towards men's cause and almost worked as a tool to 'close down research' (Watson, 2009). This is not to position these men's struggles as not real or valid, or that they necessarily knowingly used empathy

as a weapon. But the result remains the same. That I, a researcher explicitly invested in feminism, could almost feel inhibited in critiquing patriarchal rhetoric through empathy was really quite astonishing, and points to the effectiveness of the wider men's rights battle through discourse. This realisation was documented in my research journal:

> "Why am I being sympathetic when I know the reason behind what we're doing and I can see the social structures that enable it? It was easy to empathise with my women participants; it's very hard to be critical of my participants now … it feels like demonising. And just so us against them. So, I'm trying to understand them and be empathetic because that's what I do, but god damn it, that's what enables people." (01/11/2018)

Yet, one can not entirely remove empathy when dealing with individuals in moments of distress and vulnerability, nor should it be desirable to do so. Of ongoing consideration should be "the balancing of careful critique with generosity and kindness when interviewing young men" (or anyone) (Elliott & Roberts, 2020, p. 768). *Yes*, men did draw on harmful and problematic discourse to make sense of their distress, to the detriment of women and others, and this should not be underplayed. This type of discourse of course *needs* critical analysis towards the goal of *dis*abling it, but we must focus our criticism on the discourses made available as a "shared cultural product" (Weatherall et al., 2002, p. 533), not on the individuals who find them as options. Weatherall et al. (2002) described this type of discourse analysis as a *cultural* analysis and critique, not a critique of individualised accounts. Empathy towards individual accounts, however, is an important tool in understanding (when kept in check!), and can help us distinguish other factors that might lead men towards these problematic constructions, such as social isolation, emotional barriers and internalising rhetoric (i.e. of weakness), kept in place *because* of masculinity and wider neo-liberal social processes (Copland, 2020). It is these larger processes that this thesis will seek to interrogate and critique.

"You can find any number of psychological studies to back that one up" – The role of male 'educator'

The next two themes will discuss the strategies employed by men within this 'gender war' to exert control over the enemy (i.e. women), who in the research context was implicitly

represented by me. Though I went into the interviews with an investment in empathy for men's experiences, this position could not be maintained in a general sense. It was often eroded or overridden by men's expressions of frustration in the current gender order, manifesting though sexism, domination and marginalisation of women (see chapter 8). The data I used to construct this theme demonstrated several ways in which men attempted to reclaim power and dominance within the interview setting with me, a woman interviewer (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001).

One strategy participants used to reassert power in the interview was to assume the subject position of male educator, where men positioned themselves as exceptionally knowledgeable (e.g. *"When I look at the sort of person I am, I'm a very knowledgeable person" (Nolan, 48)*). They would continually 'instruct' me – and the assumed audience – on things I/we presumably did not know. One participant, before meeting, described in his email that he could offer "*well thought-out perspectives backed up by research,"* which he positioned as likely to benefit my study – conforming to the role of male educator, informed by science and 'reason' (see also chapter 8). Another participant, Cameron, described having observed and reflected a lot on masculinity, gender-relating and dating behaviour, which therefore gave him a certain authority in speaking about it. For example, in relation to various things, Cameron would position himself as more competent in speaking/thinking about masculinity issues than others:

> *They (other men) may not have a sort of um insight into that because they're not as introspective as I am and sort of thought it through (Cameron, 38)*

Cameron here seemed to be striving to approximate his impression of a hegemonic identity through positioning himself as an expert who was above other men. This was an illustration of Schwalbe and Wolkomir's (2002) assertion that "success at crafting a masculine self depends, in part, on the lesser success of other men's efforts" (p. 205). This type of positioning oneself as knowledgeable and superior in insight worked to construct Cameron's statements as valid and beyond argument/reproach. This pattern of expertise was consistent across examples of 'closed' and 'open' masculinities (Elliott, 2020) within my data. This allowed men to assume a type of authority when speaking, that they were to be listened to, and their words treated as 'truth.' This discursive move of establishing power and authority via 'knowledge' can be seen as a particularly 'masculine' and patriarchal

technique. This is the main ingredient in what has become known as 'mansplaining' in popular culture ("a portmanteau of man and explain" (Bridges, 2017, p. 94)), allowing men to assume power over the discussion. Kidd (2017, p. 2) described 'mansplaining' as "a systematic and institutionalised form of oppression that silences women, implicitly disclosing the lesser value of the female voice." It manifests through "the way in which men make needless explanations to women, usually in a condescending manner, but also as the chronic interruption of women" (p. 2).

This 'mansplaining' was most clear to me when, in trying to set up the time of the interview, a participant emailed to advise me of the process: "*I presume you have some questions or points to keep the discussion on track? It's quite easy to get side-tracked on this sort of thing, so you'll have to make sure you capture information that you can actually use*." Here I had interviewing 'mansplained' to me – a somewhat experienced interviewer performing a doctoral study – before I had even begun. Through this direction, the participant worked to exert control over the exchange by displaying his 'knowledge' around research and authority over the process (and me), challenging any automatic power usually ascribed to the researcher. I described the event in my research journal: "This patronising 'mansplaining' and 'teaching' me – whom he clearly seemed to view as some type of 'naïve little girl out of her depth' – was infuriating" (24/08/2019).

This 'mansplaining' also included common anecdotes about 'psychological' or scientific studies that worked to legitimise their statements as 'factual' and equalise their position of knowledge with mine, as a researcher in psychology. As observed by Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001), "the desire to signify a masculine self may lead men to exaggerate rationality, autonomy and control when giving accounts of their experiences" (p. 96):

> *Men present, women choose, that is actually that's it, like you can find any number of psychological studies to back that one up (Tom, 40)*
>
> *I went for psychology (…) I didn't like it because they didn't understand, I didn't feel like I could help people, I didn't feel like I knew what I was doing, I think a lot of ability with this kind of stuff is not just society it's actual biology, we always play down biology (…) the research I've seen that backs it up (Craig, 30)*

Both these men referred to their knowledge around 'scientific' research – presumably relatable to me, a researcher in psychology. These extracts provided evidence for the claim that "a masculine self is thus always a product of the performance tailored to the situation and audience at hand" (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001, p. 90) – i.e. a 'scientific' interview with a woman 'psychologist.'

Tom worked to equalise the power between us by positioning himself as equally knowledgeable in psychology, or even *more so*, to be instructing me, who may not know of these numerous studies. In contrast, Craig positioned psychology as inferior, and 'hard' sciences focused more on "biology" as superior. He implicitly positioned himself as superior to psychologists (i.e. me) for recognising these 'hard' sciences' greater worth. His extract was a complex negotiation, involving personalised reasonings and self-deprecating caveats to soften his rejection of psychology to me (e.g. "*I didn't feel like I knew what I was doing*"). He also used the term "we" to evoke the sense that psychology's 'faults' were more societal (e.g. "*we always play down biology*"), which worked to create a more generalised judgement, avoiding directly criticising me/my field. Chapter 8 will discuss in more depth how men commonly employed this type of 'scientific knowledge' to explain and justify normalised (and problematic) gendered behaviours.

In a study of cane growers in rural Australia , Pini (2005) similarly reported that men often took on a role of "enlightener/teacher/father" (p. 210). This often occurred through "mini-lectures" during interviews, which often redirected the questions to what the men would rather instruct her on. Pini attributed these acts of male authority as potentially linked to the "gendered context of the industry" (p. 213) and these men's positions as industry leaders. However, this pattern was similarly evident in the data from my study (and others, see Arendell, 1997), which was in a university field (i.e. social sciences), which is not (now) especially associated with closed masculinity/patriarchal practice (not to discount psychology's deeply patriarchal history (Gergen, 1990)). The men in my study were also not recruited on the basis of leadership. Thus, I contend that this masculine 'role of educator' may illustrate more about the prevalence of Elliott's (2020) closed masculinities and the perseverance of gendered power relations within the current gender order. This may be particularly visible within heterosexual relations where men may feel a threat to masculine power of expertise – i.e. with a female 'expert' (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2002).

More specifically, I theorise that the role of male educator was a way of 'firing shots' at me in this particular 'gender battle,' as a young(ish) woman presumably in a position of power in a research setting, as the researcher. Men displayed a desire to reassert masculine authority through positioning themselves as more knowledgeable than me, specifically in the field where I might be able to lay claim to power (psychology). Cameron spoke directly to this power difference in his 'educating' me around gendered behaviour: "*But for me because I'm older than you, I've seen it (dating behaviour) change, I've seen a lot more hesitancy come into the equation (Cameron, 38).* In this instance, Cameron involved me in a comparative sense and *directly* positioned himself as more knowledgeable than me due to assumptions around age and experience, which might cancel out my psychological knowledge. Here, age was a compounding factor in my marginalised identity as a woman (Tang, 2002), and a socially more sayable factor than gender in the current, more liberal gender order.

But if these gendered power battles were, in fact, 'unsayable' in the current gender order and executed most safely through 'undercover fire,' how can we make sense of Cameron and other men explicitly involving me in their discussions? The answer, again, seemed inevitably related to power – and more directly taking away *mine*, as discussed in the next section.

"You might hate me for saying this" – Involving me in the interview

One of the most striking and uncomfortable aspects of the interviews for me were instances where men would often attempt to flip the "established researcher-respondent roles" (Walby, 2010, p. 641), co-opting the interview to their control. One way of doing this was to include me in their conversations about women in personalised ways that would make me subject to their questionings. These instances illustrated how researchers can be "unwillingly woven into interview stories" (Grenz, 2005, pp. 2091-2092), particularly within gendered settings where power might be contested.

In my study with women, I disclosed some aspects of my identity such as my singleness as a symbol of belonging and 'matching' to the insider group (Sawyer et al., 1995), in an attempt to somewhat equalise the commonly hierarchical relationship between interviewer and interviewee (Oakley, 1981) and construct a type of 'mateship' (see Smith & Braunack-

Mayer, 2014). In doing this, I hoped to foster a sense of understanding in what might be a difficult identity position for women (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003), and encourage comfort, rapport and open disclosure – with little expectation of any safety issues arising. In a study with heterosexual men, my relationship status posed an entirely different unspoken meaning, and I did not feel comfortable disclosing my relationship status (or personal information outside of my research history) as a heterosexual woman, to 31 unknown heterosexual men.

Men and women are implicitly positioned through heteronormative discourses as on opposing 'teams' on account of gender, and interest in one's relationship status can be inevitably tied to evaluations about their availability, sexualisation and resulting heterosexual 'value.' Even in the context of research, we still exist as gendered beings, as our bodies do much of this gender identity work for us (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001). As such, the interviewer is still inevitably subject to dominant heteronormative discourses and understandings – that is, if someone from the opposite gender is single, they can be perceived as 'fair game' for a potential heterosexual (romantic/sexual) encounter (Gutek, 2013). The discomfort of this sexualisation is particularly amplified for women, where meeting unknown men already poses certain potential safety and comfort risks (Gavey, 2018), based on highly gendered patterns of sexual and physical violence from men towards women (Moss, 2012). Lee (1997) suggested this threat could be experienced as further amplified if the interview topic could be related to sex/sexuality, such as mine. With this in mind, I had made the decision to only invite men to interview in public places (e.g. cafes) or university offices (which were private but in a public building I was familiar with), and not to offer personal information.

However, despite these premeditated boundaries, a couple of participants asked me outside of the recordings if I were single, which was not disclosed in the participant information sheets or interview introductions. These types of intrusions are not uncommon for researchers, particularly in research related to sexuality. Walby (2010) described a similar situation in his interviews with male-for-male escorts, where he was often asked by his participants if he were gay, also typically before the recorder had been switched on. He described this as a sexualising of the researcher, in which he had pre-planned to answer in an ambiguous way in an attempt keep rapport open, but avoid sexualising and bonding

ploys (see Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001). Arendell (1997) also described instances of male participants asking her out on dates, despite her disclosure of being in a committed relationship; and Foster (1994) detailed an account of a male participant *actually* tricking her into a 'date-like' scenario at a pub, curtailed by her discussion of a partner.

Though I had decided not to disclose personal information, when directly asked if I were single, I *did* feel obligated to answer the question, conforming to notions of hegemonic femininity to be friendly, polite and please others (Bem, 1981; Butler, 2013; Kitzinger & Frith, 1999). I also felt uneasy and even guilty about not answering when I had asked my participants to share so much with me, as though I were violating norms around social reciprocity (Lee, 1997). Researchers in this bind might experience a feeling of social obligation to restore the power balance for the comfort of participants, at the expense of their *own* comfort – a researcher vulnerability that has often been taken for granted in a research context (Lee, 1997). Watson (1994), however, has argued that feminists should not seek to abide by rules of reciprocity when conducting interviews with men, due to the differing purpose of the information and what it was used for (i.e. research aims that were consented to versus potentially invasive personal wonderings/sexualising). This is particularly salient with instances of comfort/safety concerns. Therefore, preparation is key where researchers might be able to anticipate potential areas of personal questionings, so they might plan how to share/not share with their own boundaries and levels of comfort in mind (such as by Walby (2010)).

This premeditated professional distance and planned lack of personal sharing was further challenged by (some) men who found ways to pointedly involve me or ask me other questions both before, after and during the interview. Some questions, captured during the interview, were positioned as relatively benign, and simply inquisitive:

> *So the first thing I'll ask, and I hope you don't mind me asking, what sort of age group are you? (Nolan, 48)*

Nolan positioned his question in a relatively polite and complimentary way. He described it as his 'first' question (of potentially many), as though the implicit social contract was to ask each other questions, and that he would lead this – a practice used to establish power over an exchange (see Arendell, 1997; Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2002). This was in contrast to the

commonly understood interview process of the researcher asking questions and the participant answering (Walby, 2010). The question he asked was personal in nature, requiring him to acknowledge the potentially inappropriate nature of this in a professional gender regime, with the caveat "*I hope you don't mind me asking*." This set up a certain politeness through 'checking in,' but represented little authentic consideration of my comfort due to the social difficulties involved in refusal, particularly for women, and particularly when a question is positioned as polite and benign (Kitzinger & Frith, 1999). My options to refuse to answer were limited within the realm of social civility. This was both as a young woman to an older man (who is assumed to hold more social power) (Tang, 2002) and in the context of an interview where I might be positioned as indebted for his 'help' in participation. This question served to shift the dynamic of the interview, creating an obligation to answer to maintain rapport (a common dilemma faced by women interviewing men (Lee, 1997)). Some other participants also asked me questions positioned as 'simply' garnering my opinions, or validating theirs:

P *What do you think is cooler, what do you think has been more idolised from media, being single and having heaps of girls or being taken?*

I *I don't know, what do you think?*

P *I think I know the answer, I just want to know your thoughts (Dae, 24)*

(….)

P *What do you think of my observations so far, I want to hear your feedback because I'm just rambling and you're like the social master here, not me (Dae, 24)*

Despite the apparently 'harmless' content of these men's questions (and Dae's complimentary 'lip service' to my presumed knowledge/power as a psychological researcher), they worked to flip the power in the interview, giving themselves the authority to question. This dynamic aligns with arguments by Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001) that men will engage in this kind of activity as a type of "compensatory control" used to manage risk to masculine identity (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001). In these examples, men

reconfigured the experience to serve their own inquiries, relocating *me* as the answerable party to their unknowable questions, adding to *their* knowledge and expertise.

Dae appeared to position me, as a researcher, in a professional position to confirm his own observations and 'performance' during the interview. When asked about why he was interested in participating, he answered "*um my thing was just that I wanted to hear personally like how you thought about it.*" This constructed the interview process as *for* him – to satiate his curiosity, to add to his knowledge, and to provide him with a sense of personal validation/reassurance. While it is not undesirable for participants to also gain some sense of satisfaction and knowledge from the research process, Dae seemed to be asking for this service as the sole purpose of the interview.

Another participant, Tom, while drawing on the subject position of male 'educator,' involved me in his discussion around psychological knowledge:

> *P* *I have the same list as everybody else you know, kindness, intelligence and physical attractiveness, yeah it's the universal traits that people look for and it's cross societal, you must have read that, surely (Tom, 40)*
>
> *(…)*
>
> *I* *Would you agree that people are staying single for longer and more often?*
>
> *P* *Oh absolutely yeah yeah yeah totally, I mean that's measurable, there must be you know, you must be able to pull some data (Tom, 40)*

Tom (and some other participants) seemed to treat the context of the interview as a fact-gathering exercise, where they could both gain knowledge from me as a 'psychologist,' and demonstrate their own knowledge of the presumed field. They did this by invoking generalised studies that they linked to stereotypes of psychology to illustrate their points. Rather than inquiring further into what it was I actually did, on several occasions participants such as Tom set the terms of the context by positioning me as naïve and inferior for not matching their perceived knowledge around psychology, elevating their knowledge/power above mine as they fought for control in the gender battle. They positioned me as not performing in the way one might expect from a 'psychologist,' and unable to impart the psychological 'knowledge' or validation in the interview that might be

desired from a 'true' expert. Thus, men seeking this validation might not have benefited from the interview in the ways they had hoped. Yet, in constructing me as *not* a psychological expert, despite being in the university-sanctioned role of researcher, they could bolster their own identity positions around superior masculine expertise and power.

In contrast to Dae and Tom treating the interviews as *for them*, other men often expressed their reasons for participating as an act to 'help me out,' which appeared 'nice,' altruistic, or at the very least benign (i.e. not primarily for their needs): *"Well I just thought well if it can help somebody I suppose"* (Alan, 68); *"I was like well you know (…) it could be nice to help with their research"* (Edward, 30)*; "I know from friends of mine have been in that position how difficult it is for people to find subjects to interview (…) I just thought if there's anything helpful I'd like to offer my uh time"* (Rangi, 37). These intentions of helping were often based around talk of doctoral students as struggling to recruit for their studies (which was accurate in this case, see chapter 4), and I did express gratitude and thank the men for their participation. However, this reasoning also implicitly positioned me as *in need* of help, and them with the power to give help or not, regardless of how selfless they constructed the act of participation. As I wrote in my research journal at the time of 13/09/2018, I felt assumed to be "a little girl with a big project." This positioning also reconfigured the research context to something that was equally in their power, leading back to ideas of reciprocity, and that I might also offer them my thoughts/knowledge in return when requested. This idea was referenced by one participant directly:

> *I get to participate in lots of studies because I'm co-operative and I've done tertiary stuff and I'm also asking the other people questions so I'm very happy to help (Larry, 60)*

Larry directly located his participation as an opportunity to equally ask questions of the interviewer, leaving very little space for me to *not* answer his questions within the rules of reciprocity (Lee, 1997). Our positions of power were further equalised through his mention of tertiary involvement. We had *both* studied and *both* had questions to ask, with the implication that we might both be equally knowledgeable/powerful in the situation (or him more so to have already "done" studies). This reconfigured the context to a joint venture for mutual benefit. It was thus set up as fair and logical that I should equally share my thoughts with him, when asked.

In asking questions of me, some men would personally involve me within the interview discussion as a rhetorical technique to make their points. This would often draw on the imagined experiences of a heterosexual woman:

> *The chance of a girl coming over to you and saying 'hey I want to get you a beer' it's not going to happen, have you ever asked a guy out? Have you ever gone up and just like 'hey I like you, do you want to go out' or have you ever told his friends, told your friends to tell his friends? (Craig, 30)*

> *I never get like girls coming up to me ever like, and like have you ever gotten flowers from anyone? Yeah I haven't (Aiden, 24)*

In these extracts, there was almost a type of blame directed at me as a female – a member of the enemy group who turn down men and leave them with all the responsibility to initiate heterosexual encounters. Dae also involved me in his talk about heterosexual rejection, constructing the 'privilege' of being a white woman in dating interactions as a blind spot:

> *P* *You know what I mean it's 'no I'm not into Asians'*
>
> *I* *Someone said that?*
>
> *P* *Of course heaps, what world do you live in (laughs)? Have you ever been turned down because you're a white girl? (Dae, 24)*

In these extracts, I was used as an indirect target of men's frustrations, with the assumption that, as a woman, I must have enjoyed privileges in heterosexuality that they had not. The obvious answer to these questions was set up to be 'no,' and the purpose of my response as device to 'prove' their claims as true. If I, as a woman, could affirm their constructions *about* women, they must be valid and a 'rightful' source of grievance. This tactic was to 'make' me understand the difficulties of masculinity (compared to the 'ease' of hetero-femininity), if even *I* could agree once they 'explained' it to me correctly. Of course, what was lacking was the option for me to disagree or share experiences outside of this within the confines of professionalism and empathetic listening in an interview setting. They could use me in their claims and *invite* me to counter them, but in a space where this could not realistically happen (lest the interview turn hostile or into a debate). Thus, in this act of hetero-relating

they held the control, not only over their narratives, but also (somewhat) over mine. This is again something researchers interviewing men might consider prior and be able to prepare for (i.e. *how* to politely excuse oneself from another's narratives).

Not only did these tactics ignore how little space there was for me to disagree, but they also ignored any feelings of discomfort I might have had during these personal questions/accusations. Dae's questioning in particular illustrated some of the "routine intrusions women experience from men" (Vera-Gray, 2016, p. 2), which are often minimised, normalised and hard to distinguish in everyday gendered discourse – making them difficult to name or confront (Vera-Gray, 2016). As such, I felt pressured and almost forced to answer within the social etiquette of the conversation, lest I be perceived as problematising or escalating an exchange constructed as 'normal' and 'harmless' – an everyday negotiation faced by women in the current gender order (Fileborn, 2012).

Another participant, Nolan, consistently incorporated me into his discussion, seemingly in attempts to shock or surprise me through 'unconventional' or confronting disclosures, seemingly to build a type of rapport:

> *P* *I'll um put you in the picture a bit. I'm 48, I've been single all my life, now what does that say to you?*
>
> *I* *I, I, I do, I try not to draw conclusions*
>
> *P* *Right well I'll tell you what it says, that means I've never had a date and also being single all my life and with my Catholic faith, no monkey business before marriage, so you're speaking to a 48 year old virgin (pause) you haven't fainted have ya?*
>
> *I* *No no I'm still here (Nolan, 48)*

Nolan appeared to treat the interview as an opportunity to have a 'chat' with a woman (i.e. a heterosexual encounter). He used such instances of humour as a 'bonding ploy' (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001), possibly to create familiarity. However, he also displayed a type of 'gender insensitivity' (Lee, 1997) in introducing his virginity to me, a younger, unknown female, in a way clearly designed to shock ("*you haven't fainted have ya?*"). Nolan introduced sex into the conversation unprompted and at the beginning of the interview as

being the most salient feature of his singleness. In the context of research roles, where I felt obliged to listen and respond, he moved to define the terms of the interview. This move tested the boundaries of professionalism, by discussing the specifics of his personal sex life without invitation. Smart (2013) talked about this type of exchange in an interview context as producing complicity in women interviewers, as they are expected to fulfil the role of women as facilitators of male speech. Such occurrences challenge the view that the researcher always holds power in an interview context, as Nolan set the terms of engagement through his confrontational style.

In my research journal I noted these types of claims to power felt "almost like a reluctance to go along with my questions, like they don't apply to them, they don't need to fit into what I'm doing" (13/09/2018). Nolan continued in this way to involve me in his discussions, positioning me as a particular 'kind' of woman:

> *The other thing I'm finding too, there seems to be, and this might touch a little nerve, there seems to be a lot of very career orientated females and it's sort of like ya know they put their career in front of everything and it's like well um hang on, do you young ladies ever think of settling down and having a family? (Nolan, 48)*

Nolan used my professional position as part of his critique of "*career orientated females*," highlighting and undermining my 'unfeminine' life choices. He clearly articulated my belonging to the enemy group acting outside of the prescribed gender roles, through pointedly claiming "*you young ladies*" and using the disclaimer that his statement "*might touch a little nerve*." In this way, his framing worked to undermine any negative reaction I could potentially have through his prediction that women 'like me' (i.e. feminist-influenced 'modern' women) were likely to be offended. While he took on a role of rationality, taking offence was constructed as a loss of the argument/loss of control. He positioned this offence as 'little' and unimportant, like my nerves, and himself as having the authority (of an older man) over the matter. The idea that 'modern' women might be financially independent from men was also discussed negatively by some other participants:

> *Women have got to a point in the workforce which is great and all the rest of it, they've got agency they can make their own decisions, they don't need men, at the same time it's like where does it leave relationships? (Cameron, 38)*

> *I've got friends who are single who have money who now kind of feel disenfranchised because women have money too (…) and there's women in the workplace at higher than them and they don't know what am I, what am I offering anymore? (Ben, 34)*

Women's (and therefore my) independence was constructed as a general threat to male power and desirability in the heterosexual marketplace. The modern gender order was thus set up as not 'natural' or conducive to relationships, implicitly positioning older, more patriarchal gender orders as preferable for heterosexual peace and *happiness*. Relatedly, Ben went on to talk about his racial 'preference' of women as influenced by "conservative" or traditional gender roles (i.e. not feminist, independent 'career' women). Ben's talk constructed women from more overtly patriarchal cultures as more submissive, and therefore more desirable, in comparison to "white" (less submissive) women – like me:

> *You might hate me for saying this, but one thing I do enjoy about non-white women is generally, generally I just, I'm not a conservative but I just like a few conservative, like ideals (Ben, 34)*

These men's statements could be treated as a type of 'lesson' to women, that the more power they accrue, the less desirable they will be to men. Through the use of a disclaimer, Ben positioned that a woman like me (i.e. Western, white, educated) "might" protest these misogynist and racist statements about women. As such, he also set up his statement with the necessary caveat to diffuse any reaction, restricting my ability to challenge his claim. Nolan and Ben's extracts implicitly positioned me as a 'modern' woman who would likely protest "conservative" ideals or traditional gender roles. Through rationalising their statements as valid and 'logical,' but positioning me as likely to oppose them anyway, my assumed worldview was constructed as restrictive and potentially illogical. Positioning feminists and any opposition to patriarchal rhetoric as unnecessarily 'angry' and illogical is a particularly effective means of silencing critique, and women more generally (Edley & Wetherell, 2001). Again, I felt 'put on the spot' *and* silenced, both in my role as interviewer and as a woman, a double oppression feminist researchers are often subjected to in interviewing men (Smart, 2013; Winchester, 1996).

In preparing for research with men, it can be helpful to be aware of these dynamics, where men might seek to establish and hold power over the exchange. This can be done in

personalised ways that are confronting and difficult to respond to 'in the moment,' within the confines of professionalism/the interview setting. 'Studying up' ahead of interviewing might help women interviewers become aware of what this possible 'enemy fire' might look like within their sample. This may aid the researcher in brainstorming ideas to maintain their own comfort and professionalism during these instances, while also minimising the effect on rapport and participant data (for more specific ideas, see Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001, 2002)).

"Uncomfortable, depressing and draining" – Dealing with sexism and misogyny

As might be expected, dealing with the mostly unanticipated sexist and misogynist material was overall one of the more difficult parts of interviewing men. As noted in my research journal, "I wasn't prepared for it because I thought my interview questions and the topic were pretty mild, and not overly controversial or inflammatory" (24/08/2019). These unexpected contributions have also been reported by some other women in their experiences of interviewing men (see Arendell, 1997; Pini, 2005). Arendell (1997) aptly captured this surprise in her analysis of sexism and misogyny from divorced fathers: "One of my concerns when I began the project was that men would be 'genderwise,' sensitive to issues of sexism and so careful to not express such sentiments even if they held them. I need not have been so concerned" (p. 359).

I described the experience of listening to sexist/misogynistic rhetoric from men during interviews as "uncomfortable, depressing and draining" (24/08/2019). Not only were these instances fatiguing and frustrating to listen to, both in the interview and later in the transcription and analysis, but I found such instances depressing in a broader sense. The idea that so many men out of a particular sample would spontaneously offer up misogynist rhetoric to a woman interviewer, without much hesitation, started to affect my ideas about men in society around me. I described these feelings in my research journal: "I really thought men were better than this, or at least more aware than this" (14/12/2017). After the first 10 interviews, I noted in my research journal some of the misogynist ideas coming through the data:

> "Take the couple of men who have expressed their concern about having sex with women because they can accuse you of rape ... 'Did you know that if people are

drunk they can say they didn't consent?' That's because they can't consent when they're drunk, you stupid. 'Relationships are too risky because she might take your assets, money and custody of your kids. It's so annoying when women can't cook. I mean, personally I prefer no pubes because 'I don't want a mouth full of hair.' Women are the ones that instigate divorce; rather than trying with a good guy, supported and empowered by their female friends, they leave their families. I wouldn't want a relationship with a woman I knew that slept around. If a woman were to approach me, I would think there's something wrong. 'I'm not a men's rights activist but…' Women buy into attractiveness ideals more than men; men are more comfortable to just be themselves. A revolving door of sluts,' in reference to something a friend said." (14/12/2017)

This conglomerate of misogynist ideas over the first 10 interviews fatigued me emotionally and led to a pause of a few weeks in my interviewing. This was noted in my journal, "even in the good interviews there was usually something that was problematic. After about 10 I had to take a break as I really wasn't enjoying it and it was a struggle to get back into" (24/08/2019). In particular, I struggled listening to men's justifications of sexual coercion, sexual violence and victim blaming (as will be outlined in chapter 7). However, due to my background in teaching about sexual consent, I was well aware of the pervasiveness of these discourses in general society. As such, this rhetoric was not shocking to me – despite my frustration at *adult* men still reproducing such ideas. However, I found some of the men's casual acceptance, or even endorsing of a generalised violence against women particularly jarring and extremely worrying:

I was about to punch her in the face (Kevin, 27)

They did a poll like if a woman hits you would you hit her back and I said I agree, like if that woman screws my life and yeah, you have to take some kind of punitive action to punish the person (Kevin, 27)

Height comes from the fact that you know, with a woman it's going to show more status, it's inherently violent but they don't want to admit to it, it's downward punching power (Cameron, 38)

Some of these extracts will be discussed and analysed in chapter 8. I include them here to highlight some of the more shocking and unexpected levels of misogyny within the interview context, and explore how I as a researcher worked to negotiate that space and my own emotional responses. This is for the purpose of reflecting on how some of my own reactions are inevitably tied into the resulting analyses (as is the nature of qualitative research), and also to provide some guidance for other women interviewing men. This is not to instruct women that misogyny and sexism *will* inevitably arise, but that preparation may aid in how to manage these dynamics *if* these enemy shots are fired.

One of the most difficult parts of the research process was transcribing and analysing the implicit and at times explicit expressions of sexism and misogyny. It was harder to work with the material after the point of collection, and wonder how I was able to let men 'get away' with such shots without objection. Although not appropriate in a research context to debate/argue with participants, or even explicitly add differing positions, listening to my silence around misogynist rhetoric evoked feelings of betrayal to my feminist identity, an 'emotional tax' identified by other feminist researchers (Flood, 2013b; Schacht, 1997) (though some interviewers report ways to gently 'interrupt' problematic narratives (see Elliott & Roberts, 2020)). Upon hearing her recorded interviews back, Arendell (1997) similarly questioned, "by my silence was I condoning the re-enactment of the gender stratified order?" (p. 358). The idea that I felt obliged to let them talk to me that way, and that I let them talk about women and others in such ways, represented a double oppression often experienced by feminist researchers in having to be subjected to misogynist views, and having to (largely) allow them uncontested (Smart, 2013). Through transcribing, I also became aware of and recognised much more of the implicit sexism that I may have missed or not noted/interrogated fully in the moment of interview, when there were multiple tasks to negotiate (e.g. showing listening/appropriate responses, lining up the next question/prompts, outside distractions). Sentiments such as Frank's could often sail past without much questioning: *I'm totally into equality of opportunity but I don't have a problem with the gender pay gap (Frank, 50).* I again noted these issues in my research journal:

> "Transcribing was tough, too, as it really put me back in the zone, having to really and carefully listen to each word, and I could feel the full force of the problematic

> narratives that I might've been able to skim over or might not have completely absorbed in the actual interview. And the empathy and worries about representation faded off a lot through that process." (24/08/19)

Withstanding this "ethical discomfort" (Flood, 2013b, p. 71) in the moment of interview, however, ensures that analysis can occur. Permitting these problematic discussions unobstructed allowed this analysis of *how* they were problematic, and the types of misogynist resources available to men in the current gender order. Within feminist research, these efforts are to ultimately "increase the possibilities for progressive social change" (Flood, 2013b, p. 72), potentially towards "progressive political uses to which the research can be put" (Flood, 2013b, p. 71). Despite my feelings of frustration and at times guilt, my task was not "to try to educate them to my way of seeing things, (or) raise their consciousness on matters of gender" but to allow participants to "tell their stories in their own fashion" (Arendell, 1997, p. 363). In this way, I could later (re)consider the interviews as a success, which provided me with rich data to analyse masculinity and potentially contribute towards drawing attention to, and disrupting, harmful societal discourse.

The emotional difficulties discussed in this section are often minimised or not directly reported on through the research process, even largely in the accounts of women researchers that have been mentioned. Many, however, described harmful incidences where they were "shaken" (see Arendell, 1997, p. 361), "angry and frightened" (see Foster, 1994, p. 91), "annoyed and frustrated" (Pini, 2005, p. 208), or "uncomfortable" (see Lee, 1997, p. 562). However, most of these incidents were described analytically with the purpose of theorising gender, (mostly) falling short of giving any account of the effects on the researcher/author. This is an area in need of more consideration and theorising. As qualitative researchers, we typically reflect on how we shape research, but largely fail to consider how research shapes us as academics (Farvid, 2010), and therefore how future researchers in the field might be affected. Through sharing the challenges I experienced while interviewing men (as mostly underprepared), I aim to provide awareness to other women in designing their research. I hope to highlight how preparation, with the dynamics of these potential gendered power battles in mind, might better equip women emotionally and practically for feminist studies with men.

Conclusion

During the interview process, I struggled with the tension between remaining empathetic, while dealing with problematic masculine practices, and many more subtle, almost undefinable claims to power in this 'gender war.' Despite only some men providing usable data to demonstrate my claims, I found interviewing men in general much more difficult than interviewing women, on account of a gender order that still seems to define masculinity in terms of power (even if this power is often obscured). As stated by Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001), "in Western culture, men who wish to claim the full privileges of manhood must distinguish themselves from women by signifying greater desires and capacities for control of people and the world" (p. 90-91).

While these claims to power seemed particularly amplified by the interview relationship with me, a woman, some male researchers have also reported similar dynamics in working with men, illustrating this desire for control as somewhat generalised (see Chowdhury, 2017; Flood, 2013b; Oliffe & Mroz, 2005; Walby, 2010). The gendered nature of some participants' behaviour may have also been amplified by the interview topic of heterosexuality/masculinity. These are topics which Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001) described as a "surplus threat" in an already masculinity-threatening context – i.e. "the threat may be heightened if it seems that the interviewer is interested in gender since this increases the salience of the participant's identity as a man" (p. 91). In researching such topics in particular, it is important that we illuminate our challenges and discuss the dynamics and implications of men's claims to power within an interview setting. This is for the purpose of better equipping future researchers for interviewing men.

Though, importantly, not all men in the study conformed to this pattern of power – some only in slight ways and some not at all. This might signal the beginning of a change around a hegemonic masculinity centred on patriarchal control, as will be explored more in chapter 6. And despite the challenges indicated in this reflection, there were some particularly heart-warming aspects of interviewing men, such as hearing these discourses around new masculinity open up, or seeing men appreciate and enjoy the interview experience (as mentioned in the first theme). One participant, for example, later emailed:

> “My hesitation on some questions made me realise that I haven’t given a lot of thought to many things and to be honest I’m actually excited to explore my own understanding and interpretation of masculinity and the underlying basis of it so thank you for the wealth of knowledge I have yet to gain that you’ve inspired.”

I found moments like this validating and encouraging, and some of these discussions energising, providing me with some very positive experiences and hopes for masculinity going forward. And importantly, regardless of any of my frustrations through the experience, all these participants shared their time and thoughts with me for the purpose of this thesis, allowing me to fulfil my doctoral requirements, and more largely interrogate the state of hegemonic masculinity in New Zealand. Despite the challenges of this on a personal level, I can only be grateful and appreciative that they have enabled me to do so, thanks to their contributions.

Chapter 6: Analysis: A case study on 'new' masculinity

A whole new world?

Introduction

During the 31 interviews in the study, men described many different behaviours, practices and ideas around masculinity. Based on their accounts, some men could be categorised as largely conforming to ideas and discourses around Elliott's (2020) 'closed' or traditional masculinity in their constructions and sense-making of the world. Other men could be categorised as representing more of a progressive or 'open' masculinity in their accounts (for descriptions of each, see chapter 2). However, most men's data, interpreted at both latent and semantic levels, lay somewhere in between, incorporating resources from both traditional and new masculinities. This is consistent with Elliott's (2020) conceptualisation of open and closed masculinities always interacting, moving and intersecting. At times, men would explicitly report or more implicitly align themselves with what could be considered closed masculine practices, and at other times reproduce more progressive discourse and practice as they discursively moved through various interactional contexts (Edley & Wetherell, 1999). These contexts called for different masculine displays in relation to the shared/assumed understandings of the current gender order (Connell, 2012).

According to relational theory (see chapter 3), as the axes of political and social ideas around gender in the global north move closer towards equality, there exists a tension with past forms of hegemonic masculinity centred around patriarchy, which change at a different pace (or in a different direction, i.e. *away* from equality) (Connell, 2012). Men must reorient themselves and their masculine identities around this evolving gender order – either in support through the development of more progressive, open masculinities, or in protest through attempting to retain more closed, traditional masculinities (Elliott, 2020). These two forms of masculinity (open versus closed) appeared to be in competition for the hegemonic spot within the data. These ideas became evident throughout the interviews, i.e. that the current gender order in which the men were situated was becoming (or at least presenting as) more 'progressive-leaning' than past, more closed gender orders. In order to socially

navigate this new gender order, in which their masculine performances were recognised as more answerable than past gender orders, men relied on outwards sign postings of progressiveness, even sometimes while simultaneously reaffirming sexist discourse (see chapter 8). Most often, men would take up and reproduce both open and closed ideals, keeping their identities fluid and changing to fit different contexts, as is the nature of identity (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). Here, men might be able to implicitly retain closed or patriarchal practice, while their outwards discussion around masculinity and heterosexuality would commonly disavow sexist/patriarchal practice, in keeping with socially accepted contemporary discourse. Within these discourses, a stereotyped closed masculinity was often constructed as archaic and regressive, and the men who represented it as similarly regressive and stereotypically 'macho.' Thus, successful navigation of this new gender order within the local context often called for a more 'progressive' presentation of hegemonic masculinity, particularly in relations with women (e.g. myself), or in discussing men's relations with women. Some men navigated this gender order more successfully and consistently than others, such as Drishti.

In this chapter I will analyse the interview with Drishti (with some related extracts from other participants who illustrate or expand on Drishti's ideas), as one of the most poignant and singular examples of an articulation of 'new' or 'open' masculinity. Throughout the interview, Drishti consistently drew upon what could be categorised as progressive and liberal discourse around different aspects of gender and heterosexuality. However, this was not without complexity, nuance, and at times contradiction as he inflected his life's narrative with descriptions of the strong influence of traditional closed masculine ideals, which he had at times both conformed to and resisted. These experiences indicated the remaining regulatory force of an 'old' hegemonic masculinity and its pivotal role in ordering gender relations and masculinity (Connell, 2002). In relation to this, I will discuss the theorisation of 'hybrid' masculinities, led through the case of Drishti, and how closed masculinity continues to inevitably influence and intersect with constructions of 'new' masculinities specific to heterosexuality, in the competition for hegemony. Despite this, Drishti presented as largely successful in navigating the new gender order in his conversations with a woman interviewer. To achieve this, he incorporated ideas of feminism into his conversation, along with an explicit disavowal of 'stereotypical' or closed masculine

practice. This included outlining the ways he failed to embody and enact old, closed forms of hegemonic masculinity himself, as evidence of his progressiveness.

Drishti was one of the later interviews in the process and had been recruited via snowballing (i.e. a friend recommended he might like to 'help' with the study). Despite not expressing strong feelings about participating in the study initially, Drishti produced a clearly articulated and critical account of masculinity and dating. This was done with passion at times, indicating that it was a topic he had thought considerably about and was invested in. The experience of interviewing Drishti was considerably less challenging than with many other participants in the study (see chapter 5). The process was easy and interesting, and I found myself agreeing with and personally appreciating the ideas he presented, particularly as he expressed many feminist ideals that I was strongly aligned with. Drishti appeared to know how to successfully interact interpersonally with women such as myself, and within the University institution, which can be commonly considered as a progressive or 'liberal' gender regime (Barker, 2008) (and arguably more so within feminist-oriented fields). Drishti's feminist and progressive alignment made me feel comfortable and positive about his contributions and the general experience. It felt like we were on the same 'side,' despite the 'removed stance' I felt obligated to present as a researcher. This stance, however, can only be attempted while still acknowledging research as a *subjective* process, and my own position as inevitably influencing the interview experience and subsequent analysis to some inextricable extent (Oakley, 1981).

Drishti was also agreeable to the interview process. He allowed me to direct and ask questions, which he answered when required, without some of the difficult aspects I found in interviewing many of the other men (such as the assumed role of male 'educator' taken up by many participants, as discussed in chapter 5). As such, the interview was well ordered and flowing, resulting in a slightly shorter than average length of about 52 minutes. Drishti was 24 at the time of the interview, and described himself as Indian, middle class, not disabled, without children, and had been in relationships previously. His occupation would be considered 'semi-professional' and relatively low paid, indicating the potential for job insecurity and low-level opportunities. These are issues that commonly characterise the workforce for younger people, threatening a 'middle-class' existence going forward (Roberts, 2011). These different identity positionings must be considered as inevitably

intersecting with Drishti's experiences of being single and being a man, and inextricable from his production of self (Crenshaw, 2017). In this analysis, I will outline how Drishti talked about and presented contemporary masculinity and heterosexuality, and his location within them. I will also analyse the ways in which he (and others) used rhetorical tactics to navigate the available discourses of the current gender order and produce certain types of masculine self-identities. This analysis will categorise Drishti's production of self/masculinity into three themes around identity: *Alignment with feminism; Masculine practice as problematic;* and *Personal experiences of masculinity, race and bodily practice.*

Analysis

"With women there's more pressure" – Alignment with feminism

In contrast to some men's accounts, where women's issues were constructed as valid in only the most extreme or common-sense instances (e.g. the 'real' sexual violence that will be discussed in chapter 7), Drishti showed purposeful consideration of women's issues. Drishti expressed an awareness of, and alignment with, feminist worldviews in a variety of different and nuanced contexts, often in response to questions aimed at his own experiences as a man. When questioned about singleness, for example, Drishti redirected the conversation to how singleness might be a more difficult experience for women, who are often subjected to more rigid expectations around 'settling down':

> *I think there's just like a general expectation of women to have had kids by a certain point umm whereas men it's not necessarily, like I don't think the expectation is the same, like I think men in particular get treated um whether it's through just societal expectations and narratives we're fed through like film and entertainment and stuff, men being single and like hooking up with people is acceptable at different age levels, whereas it's not as acceptable for women (…) there's a pressure on a woman to consistently just be trying to settle down or be in a relationship and yeah that goes into like you know, slut shaming and rape culture and all that stuff*

Drishti alluded to a sexual double standard (described in chapter 3), referencing the experiences of heterosexual *single* women, who have been considered particularly

stigmatised due to traditional norms of femininity centring around marriage and the family (see Addie & Brownlow, 2014; Lahad & Hazan, 2014; Moore & Radtke, 2015; Pickens & Braun, 2018; Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003; Sandfield & Percy, 2003). In this extract, he also referenced what might be termed as other feminist 'buzzwords' (e.g. "*slut shaming and rape culture and all that stuff*"), presenting his awareness of, and expressed alignment with, current feminist discourse. Some other participants similarly referred to these gendered discourses around age and singleness for women:

> *Like if a guy's single at 40 or 30 it's like yeah he could just be a bachelor, he's out having fun you know it can be perceived as you know he doesn't answer to anyone, he's cool you know but it seems to always come back to like what's wrong with her, why doesn't anybody want her (Alex, 23)*

> *Like even if a guy is like 50 and like getting all this attention from women just like they're attractive and everything like that, still like fine you know what I mean, um but if there's like a woman in her 50s, I think even if she is getting attention from guys even like younger guys it's still like not good (Lance, 26)*

Through such sympathetic conversations about women, these participants worked within the interview context to present themselves as 'progressive,' specifically with regards to societal standards for women. Taking up and reproducing feminist discourse has the effect of distancing oneself from the patriarchal ideology that has structured older, closed expressions of hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) . Despite these men's expressions of personal progression, they referred to these ideas around singleness and gender as still being largely present in a gender order that remains unfair for women. Thus, they engaged in identity work to present as (pro)feminist and above stereotypes of other men who might contribute to problematic standards for women. This commentary around women's struggles can be used to mark oneself as understanding and ideologically caring towards less powerful others, which can be seen alternatively as part of Elliott's (2020) conceptualisation of 'open' and caring masculinities, a key component of newer masculinity.

However, within general Western society, people are overwhelmingly motivated to present as believers in social equality, in order to successfully navigate a social context that has been

moving progressively towards these gains over time (Billig, 1991). In a New Zealand context, ideas of 'fairness' and a strong value in human rights can be seen as central organising principles of society, and a lack of fairness/rights as a strong justification for social protest (Fischer, 2012). Within such settings, to present as sexist/misogynistic (or generally 'unfair' to a marginalised group) has become an increasingly untenable subject position (see also chapters 2 and 8). In liberal, educated settings in particular (i.e. settings presumably familiar to Drishti in his work and study life), to be labelled as sexist, or otherwise prejudiced, can be coupled with social consequences/social shaming around morality and intellect, encouraging people to present as liberal and progressive (Watkins, 2019). In this way, these participants can be seen as successfully approximating what might be becoming a local form of hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) within a liberal setting, which requires men to perform sympathy towards women and marginalised others (and without inconvenience or threat to their own masculine identities (Friedman, 1994)).

Furthermore, this identity work was done in the context of a conversation with a woman interviewer researching gender dynamics – i.e. an audience who is likely to be aligned with feminist discourse. In this way, Drishti, Alex and Lance showed sophisticated communication in navigating a gender order in interaction with a woman, and within the (liberal) institution/gender regime of the university (Connell, 2012). Performing liberal discourse is a socially acceptable and positively read act of accommodation, likely to result in social acceptance from the audience. Sallee and Harris III (2011) relatedly reported that men interviewed by another man were more likely to show support for sexually objectifying behaviours, while men interviewed by a woman were more likely to oppose and resist these behaviours in others. Thus, men can occupy the subject position of ally and progressive 'new' man, and enjoy the social benefits and inclusion such positions can offer in heterosexual relations, simply by offering agreement with women's issues (and without necessarily forfeiting the privilege associated with identifying as a heterosexual man).

Drishti also talked about beauty standards for women in a similar context, with the aim of further noting and critiquing what he presented as sexist patterns in society:

> *Like for women it's like if you're just a little bit like not the specific image then 'you're ugly you're gross blah blah blah,' but like for men it's different in entertainment and*

> *stuff is all these different depictions, like Seth Rogen is a real popular dude he's and some movies where they're making fun of the way he looks but some movies are not remotely about the way that he looks (…) you know the narrative we're fed is like as long as there's a quality within them that's attractive and desirable it's fine whereas it's not necessarily the same with women there's more pressure to look a certain way behave a certain way yeah*

Again, Drishti critically discussed what he regarded as commonly held and problematic discourses around societal ideals for women, noting that men were not held to similarly harsh standards. Rather than using evolutionary/biological explanations to explain these differences between the genders (as was the case with many participants representing more closed masculinities, see chapter 8), Drishti attributed these pressures/restrictions on women as arising from "societal expectations" and perpetuated through the media, positioning these processes as the result of socialisation. In doing this, he performed sympathy for women (while some participants opted into and naturalised such standards, judging prospective partners accordingly).

Drishti was particularly critical of the media influence, which he (and others) positioned as a part of this socialisation and (detrimentally) shaping gender relations *(e.g. "Ads will play on these (gendered) ideas" (Edward, 30); "The media seems a bit out of balance" (Nolan, 48)*). Drishti worked to set himself apart from a less progressive and aware society, implicitly highlighting his own departure as a sign of strength, to be able to resist the forces masses are "fed." By positioning audiences as "fed" these gendered messages, Drishti implicitly set up others/society as "passive dupes" (Hobbs & Robbgrieco, 2010), who would undiscerningly and uncritically accept any societal messages they were given. In contrast, he was positioned as actively aware and critical in his protesting of these societal messages. This type of justifying of the validity or value of one's position, through positioning oneself as standing strongly against problematic social forces, was used similarly by other men – but often in a different direction. Men in chapter 8, for example, used this rhetorical device of personal strength to protest feminist ideals, which they alternatively positioned as the powerful force shaping problematic gender relations. In this instance, men fought for men, positioned as the less powerful group in an implicit men versus women war. However, Drishti and other 'progressive' men presented as being on the side of women against the

force of patriarchy. Both used the same performance of masculine independence against the 'unfair' norm in an attempt to convince the audience of their contrasting arguments, illustrating independence rhetoric as hegemonic across both poles of open and closed masculinity.

Another participant, Alex, spoke directly of a type of conflict between 'progressive' and illiberal/closed thought in relation to women and singleness, the latter of which was assumed to be dying out amid an increasingly liberal generation:

> *Like previously I've always had the thought that that that whole way of thinking like negatively about women and relationships was like, an old fashioned thing and that, I mean not that I'm hoping that people pass away, but that it would die out with that sort of generation, I thought that we were all good I was like 'oh my god it's going to get so much better, racism, everything' um but then you sorta come across people like that and it's like, and of course there's always going to be that sort of thinking and there's going to be people that believe those sort of things, but I thought that we were much more progressed then I guess what we are (Alex, 23)*

Alex positioned the liberal thought he espoused as an inevitable and positive *progression* from older and closed ideology, with society gearing towards increasing equality – a classic progression discourse among younger generations (Heinz, 2009). Within the 'new' masculinity Alex represented, 'old' value systems were equated with prejudice and 'new' with equality (which contrasted with participants' lamentation of feminist progression as biased and unequal for men in chapter 8). The idea of being 'woke' (Whitaker, 2017) to social injustices, such as patriarchy, where others (i.e. older, closed masculinities) might simply conform through a type of ignorance, can thus be seen as one of the defining features of a 'new' Western masculinity (Stotzer, 2009), and a general liberal identity. Here, younger men can be seen to more successfully navigate and support a modernising gender order, while older masculinities attempt to retain the hegemony they once assumed through the (often subtle, but sometimes aggressive) continuation of closed ideals. Butera (2008), for example, demonstrated this idea through research around men's friendships in Australia, finding that younger men showed greater openness and emotionality within male friendships, while this type of straying from traditional masculine values of emotional

stoicism was avoided by older men. This type of 'war' between generations – and implicitly between older closed masculinities and newer open masculinities for hegemony – underpinned much of Drishti's critique around what he presented (and opposed) as a stereotyped macho masculinity, as discussed in the next section.

In line with these pressures to present as liberal and 'woke' in a contemporary context, no men in my study explicitly self-identified as sexist/misogynist (or racist, homophobic, transphobic, etc). Indeed, they would often state the opposite by outwardly disassociating themselves with known prejudiced schools of thought. This was the case even within accounts where participants would often explicitly draw upon sexist or closed discourse (e.g. *"I'm not a men's rights activist, I'm not" – Cameron, 38*). This may indicate that while a social pressure to explicitly disassociate from prejudiced thought has grown through a new gender order, prejudiced ideas can remain to become repackaged through different rhetorical tactics (e.g. 'common sense' and 'fact') (see chapter 8). This pattern was consistent with Elliott's (2020) research, where men showed and reported value in openness in themselves and others, regardless of their complicity with closed ideals in other instances, demonstrating the interconnectedness of open/closed masculinities.

Though Drishti presented progressive discourse consistently throughout the interview, some participants who *did* reproduce problematic, sexist and evolutionary ideas elsewhere could, like Elliott's (2020) participants, at times also take part in similar progressive discourse. One such example was the participant Rob, who often drew on pseudo-evolutionary justifications for misogyny in his interview (see chapter 8). However, in the extract below, Rob examined his own privilege in accepting help from others when looking after his children as a solo father:

> *Yes I'm just a poor bloke trying to look after 3 kids on my own you know I couldn't possibly be able to cook and you know, that is really nice that really caring attitude from other people in the community, and I would be certain that solo mums don't get that (Rob, 55)*

Rob talked about members of the community supporting him through making meals for him and his children. He set up a sympathy for solo mothers through acknowledging that women were unlikely to receive the same support, demonstrating his alignment with fair societal

treatment (Fischer, 2012). Through contrasting these experiences as unfair, Rob might be seen as in agreement with progressive critiques around traditional ideas of the assumed domestic role of women as already 'able' to cook and care for children without support (Budgeon, 2016), and the stigma that solo mothers can also experience in communities (Neill-Weston & Morgan, 2017). This critique, however, came from the same interview where Rob produced several misogynistic ideas around male victimisation and women as 'gold diggers,' supported through his reproduction of pseudo-evolutionary rhetoric (see chapter 8). Rob served as a clear example of a hybrid masculinity, reproducing ideas from a more closed and patriarchal masculinity in some instances, and presenting more progressive and open ideas in others, in order to fit and negotiate with the current social climate (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). This process illustrated the idea that "hegemonic masculinity borrows aspects of other masculinities that are strategically useful for continued domination" (Ging, 2019, p. 642). This indicates the influence of (at least some) progressive rhetoric into a contemporary local hegemonic masculinity, even for those continuing to largely reproduce closed ideals.

Though less binary and clear than the example of Rob, in this chapter I will identify some ways in which Drishti also presented as caught between open/closed masculinities, even while championing almost exclusively progressive rhetoric. One such instance can be noted in Drishti's talk around dating, where he discussed (normatively gendered) expectations around who will pay for a date:

> *I have been on a couple of dates where I don't know the person very well and there is 'ohhh do I pay should I offer to pay for this' and stuff but me as a person like that's my natural instinct with anyone, like I will always be hospitable and offer to pay and like even if it's like I'm hanging out with friends and stuff I offer to pay for their stuff, but there is a little bit of that, a little bit of that chivalry that old chestnut*

Here, Drishti explained his struggle around 'old' masculine dating norms of paying for a woman in a heterosexual context. While he justified his conformity as mostly just 'being nice,' he also allowed for and acknowledged some influence of "chivalry," or traditional masculine practice over his behaviour. Heteronormative behaviours, such as men paying on a date, may be positioned as relatively benign, or even positive behaviour towards women,

yet are borne from patriarchal ideals of masculine dominance and protectionism (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005). Drishti examined his own responses to this heteronormative expectation/dilemma and used a justification that he would extend this behaviour to other relationships beyond dating. He later linked these generosity norms to general South Asian hospitality. This worked both to normalise and 'de-gender' his conformity, and provide separation between himself and explicit conformity to traditional masculine practice (despite such cultural norms often being strongly patriarchal in practice (Gill, 2004)). However, Drishti also displayed an awareness of the problematic social processes involved in his conformity, continuing to present himself as aware and critical of traditional masculine practice, even while participating in it. This slippage illustrates the complicated nature of masculine identity, and how closed and open forms of masculine practice continue to compete for hegemony. In the next section, further aspects of Drishti's account around masculinity will be analysed in relation to closed hegemonic ideals, both through his reported resistance and implicit conformity. These inconsistencies and variations both cut through and contributed to his progressive presentation of self.

"Drink that, fuck something" – Masculine practice as problematic

Drishti was critical not only of punishing heterosexual standards for women, but also of what he positioned as a hegemonic hetero-masculine culture. In contrast to the idea that women were expected to enter into and prioritise heterosexual relationships, in the following extracts Drishti discussed the idea that for men, heterosexual relationships could signify a loss in masculine control and *betrayal* to homosocial relations. This was despite the expectation that men should be strictly and actively heterosexual, and was particularly poignant for younger men:

> *When I've been around some people or like we've been friendly and like we have a mutual friend who's in a serious relationship and they're all like 'oh he's dogged us out he's dogged us out, nah he's not one of the boys anymore' like blah blah blah like all this looking down on him shit (...) like that whole attitude of like being whipped because you're in a relationship and like you say 'I don't want to go out I want to hang out with my blah blah like my girlfriend my wife whatever' it's like oh he's*

whipped it's like again and going into that losing control aspect of it but I think that changes once again getting older

Here, a man who 'prioritised' women by spending time with a partner was essentially shunned and ridiculed, positioned as choosing women *over* men. Another participant, Lance, echoed this idea by explaining the social consequences of heterosexual commitments within homosocial contexts: "*Every time that I have gotten started getting into a relationship, it's kind of caused friction with my guy friends" (Lance, 26).* Lance further elaborated on the nature of this friction as caused by a "*like you're with us or you're against us"* mentality, and reason for exclusion. Homosociality was here constructed as a type of all-male fraternity or 'mateship' (Towns & Terry, 2014) (i.e. *"the boys" (Noah, 24)*). This was built on ideas of masculine belonging as a hegemonic form of relating between men (Butera, 2008). Within this discourse, men are encouraged to prioritise male relations and devalue women/relationships with women as a form of camaraderie; and 'women-friendly' masculinities are marginalised and feminised (a key ingredient for misogyny) (Flood, 2008). Rejecting and excluding women thus works to enhance male bonds within the group, illustrating how relationships *within* genders can in turn affect and reproduce patriarchal relationships *between* genders (Demetriou, 2001). Being in a relationship with a woman was positioned as threatening male power over other men, and the patriarchal power to treat women as easily dismissed and unimportant. Investment in heterosexual relationships was therefore constructed as erosive to masculine status:

When they go into a relationship and they lose themselves then they lose masculinity you know, it's perceived like they've given it up (Timmy, 28)

In contrast to these participants critiquing these problematic homosocial ideals, some participants showed complicity and thus alignment with more closed ideals around heterosexual relationships:

Coupled up is at home sort of tied up and you know doing w-w-what the wife wants (…) the woman wears the pants essentially (Jarrod, 40)

The image of a woman 'wearing the pants' (i.e. having 'masculinised' control) or a man as being 'whipped' (a term otherwise described as "an incredibly heterosexist phrase that

indicated a man was crazy about a woman" (Gilmartin, 2007, p. 530)) drew on 'emasculating' BDSM imagery to conjure the idea of a dominant, controlling woman and submissive man. This is the antithesis of feminine desirability and 'natural' order of heterosexuality (Pickens & Braun, 2018). Such accusations positioned these men as failing in a patriarchal/hegemonic masculinity, working to police men's gender performance (particularly in front of other men), and to erode heterosexual relations as equal or important. Here, the only figure who should be able to control a man's time/behaviour are other men – and a man could only maintain masculine status if he treated heterosexual relations as unimportant.

While Drishti described this culture of masculinity as hegemonic among young men, his critical discussion of these homosocial relations as toxic to hetero relations represented a 'maturing' into openness towards a more progressive, equal gender order. He positioned this bullying behaviour towards coupled men as done by others (e.g. *"they're all like 'oh he's dogged us out'"*), separating himself from such practice – yet he simultaneously situated himself as a socially included part of the offending group. He further discursively distanced himself as outside of such influence through his clear critique of the behaviour (e.g. "*looking down on him shit"*)*,* drawing on a rebel identity against problematic masculine culture (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). However, one might imagine an 'in the moment' complicity within such events in a group context, as Drishti failed to mention exercising any outwards pushback or critique in such settings. A feeling of normalcy around this pattern of behaviour within his social groups was also created through describing the events as plural. Through such indicators, Drishti (and others) conformed to a complicit masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), where he could maintain the benefit of group inclusion through failing to challenge (and thus, implicitly supporting) the hegemonic practice. Complicity to problematic hegemonic ideals throughout the life course can be complex and often unacknowledged, even without the need for hybridity, as explained by Connell:

> "Marriage, fatherhood and community life often involve extensive compromises with women rather than naked domination or uncontested displays of authority. A great many men who draw on the patriarchal dividend also respect their wives and mothers, are never violent towards women, do their accustomed share of the

> housework, bring home the family wage, and can easily convince themselves that feminists must be bra-burning extremists" (Connell, 2005, pp. 79-80).

'Progressive' men such as Drishti may find themselves implicitly conforming to aspects of patriarchy, as the rewards of complicity are often much greater than resistance – particularly in groups of men where risks of resistance can be high (which might include exclusion or implicit threats of violence) (Towns & Terry, 2014). Complicity and resistance are often blended within 'new' masculine practice, taken up depending on the rewards (or consequences) of any given interaction (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). This makes a 'new' masculine identity a complex negotiation with the old (resulting in hybridity). Within relations with men, hegemonic practice was talked about as conforming to an old, closed gender order. However, in the interview context (i.e. in relations with a woman), the new gender order allowed and prompted these men to critique closed ideals, making overt progressiveness hegemonic in the heterosocial context (while more covert closed ideals could still exist as hegemonic in homosocial contexts).

While, at least for younger men, being in a relationship with a woman was talked about as unimportant and a betrayal to other men, Drishti described that he had, contrary to this idea, experienced pressure to be in a heterosexual relationship. However, this pressure was borne from the motivation of *having sex* with women (as opposed to intimacy/commitment) in order to gain masculine status:

> *The culture of my school and my friends and the people I grew up with, it's definitely like a status thing like when are you losing your virginity, why don't you have a girlfriend, if you've hooked up with a girl before blah blah blah (…) I think it's just a what's wrong with you if you haven't, but I think that's like quite a general pressure for young people and young men in particular to like prove themselves almost*

In the above extract, relationships with women were talked about as a means to have sex/lose one's virginity, exemplifying patriarchal practices of sexual objectification of women (i.e. *"he was like 'drink that, fuck something'" Drishti, 24*). This sexual pressure reflected discourses around male sexuality (discussed in chapter 3) – that men are 'biologically wired' to experience almost 'overwhelming' sexual desire, and should thus always be pursuing (and objectifying) women in order to satiate their desire (Farvid &

Braun, 2006; Gavey, 2018). Relationships as a pathway for men to sex was a discourse reportedly reproduced by men and women alike:

> *P I have the same comments from the woman that I'm dating at the moment um you guys are all the same blah blah blah*
>
> *I like just looking for sex or?*
>
> *P yeah yeah you don't want to settle down and commit (Paul, 49)*

Within this extract, the discourse of sex-centred men was assumed to apply to older participants as well, although some participants did propose further nuance in terms of age:

> *I think for younger men it's basically assumed that all they're out for is you know getting in someone's pants, like don't care about anything else, um I think probably as men get older they might be more assumed um to actually be looking for something long term (Edward, 30)*

While this discourse of sexuality appeared to include men as a general group, Drishti and Edward pointed out that it was most poignant for young men, left out of the economic\experiential capital that comes with age (Roberts, 2018). These men might be particularly invested in forming a homosocially accepted masculine identity through sexuality. According to Connell (2012), "sexuality, including the intercourse through which reproduction occurs, is a main arena in which social masculinities and femininities are negotiated, defined, and enacted" (p. 1678). While for older men, this discourse might centre around coupling and reproductive success, for younger men (hetero)sex can be viewed as 'proof' or social embodiment of one's success in hetero relations. Thus, sexual exploration was talked about as integral to masculine identity, making posturing one's sexual experience/expertise a 'key path' to success and status within homosocial relations (Flood, 2008; Terry & Braun, 2009). As outlined by Drishti, to not be (hetero)sexually active or at least interested (in the socially prescribed ways) was presented as a problem, risking to discredit their alignment with hegemonic masculinity (Potts et al., 2003). Don described that men might even lie about women to avoid this risk to identity:

> *That's a legitimate thing that single guys do lie about women (…) it's not even about the woman at all it's just to look good in front of their male friends (Don, 29)*

Drishti and Don alluded to the complexity of struggling to present as masculine while experiencing a lack of sexual activity. This contradiction in masculine identity, often faced by men who are abstinent or (involuntarily) celibate, can result in exaggerated performances of masculinity to compensate (Taylor & Jackson, 2018), or further objectifying of women and misogyny (Maxwell et al., 2020), as men contend with 'proving' themselves in a world where (hetero)sex (and dominance over women) *means* masculinity. Another participant, Cameron, also highlighted the *type* of sex men had as directly related to masculine status:

> *People have a very limited allowance of what male sexuality can be (…) in terms of men experimenting and all the rest of it there is a lot of stigma and that's that's one of those moments where it's directly related to his masculinity you know (…) I've got a friend and he said he wanted to sexually experiment and I said you should go with- I gave him the number of a woman I knew and she took him up the ass for 500 dollars an hour, now he enjoyed that but if he told anybody about that that would be directly, well you'd look at him and you'd say 'well you're homosexual, you're this, you're that' (Cameron, 38)*

Cameron discussed the possibility of masculine status as confined to only a certain type of active (hetero)sexuality, where men were dominant, not dominated. Within normative heterosexual scripts, women have been expected to be the submissive, acquiescing sexual 'gatekeepers' to active, dominating and potentially aggressive men (patterns that perpetuate male control and remain part of the formula for sexual violence (Gavey, 2018)) (see chapter 3 and 7). Cameron argued that for men to deviate from this pattern of male physical power resulted in being shamed and likened to (subordinated) homosexual men (i.e. a loss in masculine status).

Cameron discussed this as a type of complaint, that men were unfairly constrained and shamed into certain modes of 'masculine' sexuality, which fitted with his larger position of male victimisation (see chapter 8). Yet, rather than protesting or blaming the new, more progressive gender order (as he did elsewhere), in the above extract he used new ideas around openness instrumentally to challenge old heterosexual scripts for men. He did this, however, without directly locating himself within diverse practices, minimising the risk to his own identity. By taking on more aggressively closed masculinist rhetoric elsewhere as a

form of masculine capital (Nicholas & Agius, 2017), he could be seen to implicitly compensate for diverse rhetoric/practice here (or at least his allowance of it in others). This drawing on excess masculine capital allowed him to manage more unorthodox arguments without sizable risk to his masculine status (De Visser et al., 2009). This was seen through his contribution to both patriarchal, closed rhetoric (see chapter 8), and here to alternatively open ideas around masculine sexuality. This also points to how men throughout the study continually constructed hybridised masculine identities, drawing on misogynistic or liberal rhetoric alternately across different discursive contexts, often in reference to/justification of their own life choices.

While Drishti talked about young men feeling pressure to have/display knowledge and experience with (a prescribed) (hetero)sex, he added that for him, race had become another dimension of this pressure. Drishti described that not only did he, and men of colour like him, feel pressure to engage in sex to "prove" themselves in masculinity, but also to prove "*that they're on the level of white masculinity*":

> *I think there's a weird sort of proving ground that people of minorities, that ah men have to go through to prove their masculinity than white people do, I think there's a different proving ground for- so like I'll just speak from my experience being Indian, again going into that whole thing around really wanting to lose my virginity when I was a kid, um being 16 and having white predominantly white friends there's that added layer with race where it's like I have to be like my white friends, my white friends are doing the stuff*

In Drishti's example, the pressure to 'lose his virginity' was complicated by the fact that he already felt pressure to live up to a default white masculinity that automatically conferred masculine status. In Drishti's argument, he was naturally excluded from this masculine status through race and had to scramble to achieve similar status – highlighting his investment in this masculinity as hegemonic. Race was seen here as limiting the options available to him in masculinity and heterosexuality, where white society 'set the bar,' and he had to best perform an approximated version of this masculinity to 'fit in.' Within this example, race relations can be seen as intersecting with homosocial relations, in turn affecting heterosexual relations as attempts towards hegemony played out.

Drishti went on to explain how this pressure to live up to white masculinity could be complicated by its failure to take into account *"cultural differences and stuff,"* such as family dynamics where *"the expectations are not the same that like white parents have of their white kids"* (e.g. in regards to issues such as relationships and sex outside of marriage). This discourse was echoed by some other (non-white) participants in relation to coupling: "*A lot of Chinese parents would- they'd be hounding you going 'oh wow you know you're getting on in age you should be settling down soon'"* (Timmy, 28). Drishti positioned himself as in a bind due to the pressure from his racial identity to try to fit in, but also a tension between the expectations of his culture and the expectations of white masculinity, which at times might clash and contradict around issues such as relationships and sex (Rumbaut, 2005). Drishti's racial and cultural identity, as well as his youth at the time, marginalised him from hegemonic masculinity. His efforts to achieve an approximated performance therefore became conscious and exaggerated as he struggled with pressures and contradictions surrounding heterosexuality and sex. Drishti described how he had wished to use his body to achieve masculine capital (De Visser et al., 2009) and conform to hegemonic structures around sexuality. However, any such claim to masculine status and power within the group (Roberts, 2018) was confined by a lack of support and marginalisation from hegemonic masculinities (Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In the next section, Drishti's marginalisation from, and subsequent protestation of, hegemonic masculinity will be further explored.

While particularly amplified for marginalised men, Drishti talked about relational and sexual pressures as an inescapable part of life for *all* young men in numerous social spheres (e.g. school, friendship circles and others). He situated himself as having been both within this culture and affected by it, but also critical and beyond it in retrospect. Here, navigating the new, progressive gender order successfully was explained through individualised discourses of maturity. Drishti referenced an idea that men 'grew out' of the ideas and pressures of masculinity (e.g. "*but I think that changes once again getting older")*, once they had presumably reached what was considered a more normative age to 'settle down.' This maturity discourse was also referenced by other participants (e.g. "*I think I would be very happy to be playing the field at 22, 23, not so much anymore"* (Don, 29); *"I've just changed, I'm not that guy anymore"* (Patrick, 32)). This idea was mirrored in research by Terry and

Braun (2009), where heterosexual male participants in long-term relationships reflected on their former 'immature' selves from a place of being older, 'wiser' and coupled – a time where coupledom (as opposed to a hypersexualised singleness) was more accepted. This discourse also fits with research that has described different constructions and definitions of hegemonic masculinity for younger boys opposed to adult men (Bartholomaeus, 2012), and with Drishti's constructions of himself as 'past' being affected by these masculine pressures.

The notion of being 'woke' to the more general liberal ideas of equality as opposed to patriarchy could also be constructed as not only a generational progression (as discussed earlier), but also often a personal progression – that as people/men matured, they would also become 'better' and aligned with 'new' and open masculine values. This was the case with Drishti, who often positioned himself as having 'grown out' of conformity and now progressed past pressures of problematic masculinity in his (new masculine) adult life. Another participant, Eric, similarly spoke about his experiences of personal growth out of closed masculine ideals:

> *In the past I may um have had a little bit of misogyny, you know to a degree, um and suspicion and um you know fear of and everything and I think that might have contributed to um you know, my early period of being single but um, I I've sort of managed to managed to unpack a bit (Eric, 61)*

Like Drishti, Eric positioned himself as becoming aware of problematic ideas towards women that contributed to his younger masculine self, and through locating these ideas as in the past and now 'unpacked,' he implied he had matured past misogyny. In this way, these men elevated themselves above the problematic nature of 'immature' hegemonic ideals, which might be positioned as a 'normal' part of being younger and less knowledgeable. Yet in expressing this, they conformed to other traditionally masculine and neoliberal ideas around personal 'growth' and betterment, constructing the self as rational and self-determining (Korobov & Bamberg, 2004). Thus, these examples again served to illustrate the hybridisation of progressive and 'new' masculinity culture, which was critical of 'boyish' conformity to masculine stereotypes, as married with hegemonic ideals of betterment and independence that slipped by unnoticed, and contributed to the overall picture of a masculine sense of self.

Drishti positioned himself as beyond particular masculine ideals at many different points. In continuing his discussion around sexual pressure, this independence was made explicit:

P *I think that's like quite a general pressure for young people and young men in particular to like prove themselves almost*

I *Is that something that still exists to a degree or something that eases off*

P *Not for me because yeah, but I think it does exist in society just for men in general not necessarily them like getting in a relationship, but being players, being like a man, having sex all the time, things like that*

In this extract, Drishti explicitly distanced himself from sexual pressures of masculinity, which he had earlier talked about as influencing his younger life. Similar to other extracts throughout this section, he managed his marginalisation from hegemonic masculinity through protesting the pressures and marginalisation of others – positioning himself as a feminist, liberal 'new' man (i.e. an openness forged from the margins (Elliott, 2020)). Through this tactic he enacted a type of 'heroic' masculinity that was independent and unaffected by the pressures that marginalised others (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). These configurations of practice and accounting contributed to a production of self that made *his* masculinity subjective, created by and only answerable to *himself*, and apart from the stereotypical, problematic ideals that may constrain others. Through this construction, he epitomised a masculine value on independence that ran strongly across both open and closed expressions of masculinity. Drishti navigated the discourses available to him to manage his marginalisation and produce a largely successful masculine identity within the current gender order, where at times acceptable masculine discourse might clash and contradict (e.g. around conformities to hegemonic practice, ideals of independence, etc). Drishti further illustrated this identity work around independence in his discussion of being single – a discursive site that most men in my study positioned themselves as invulnerable to, and separate from:

I *Cool so how do you feel about being single*

P *Pretty good pretty just- it's fine*

I *What's good about it*

P *Uhhh I can just do me yeah and just worry about myself*

In this extract, Drishti's production of self as trading on masculine ideals of independence and strength is exemplified. Within the interview context, participants would often implicitly frame heterosexual relationships as a type of 'imprisonment' to a boring or constrained experience, directed by women and without autonomy or interest for men. This lifestyle was often compared to the 'freedom' of singleness, and the man who had *"much more control over what it is you do" (Don, 29),* and *"doesn't answer to anyone" (Alex, 23)* – 'perks' of singleness referenced by almost all participants. This air of neutrality around singleness for men (as opposed to relationships) can link back to the devaluing of heterosexual relationships within hegemonic homosocial relating (and valuing of independence). This sits in contrast to gendered expectations for women to couple as a mandatory pathway to desirable femininity (Pickens & Braun, 2018), and the earlier critiqued stigma towards women who remain single as they age. Here, Drishti deployed the imaginary position (Wetherell & Edley, 1999) of an independent, autonomous man who was secure and happy in his solitary condition, emotionally unaffected by a lack of a heterosexual relationship. In their study with UK men, Wetherell and Edley (1999) identified such expressions of independence as one of the most effective strategies in which to be hegemonic. Like Drishti, this involved men mixing together resistance and complicity to create a seemingly 'autonomous' self, with autonomy being one of the most valued aspects of masculinity – likewise creating hybridized identities. Drishti also took up other parts of his identity to reinforce his strength in the face of conformity and pressure, again coming back to the added hardships presented through his life by race:

I *You were saying that (pressure to couple) doesn't bother you is that something that kind of rolls off*

P *Nah rolls off, again being an Indian kid it's just something you learn to deal with*

I *Is there ever any pressure or comments that do bother you in regards to being single*

P *(sigh) I can't really think of anything sorry*

Drishti reiterated his strong and autonomous identity as produced in the context of his experiences of marginalisation, where he had to withstand various pressures and expectations around coupling/sexuality from both his family and peer culture. This was solidified through a resulting rebellious masculinity position (Wetherell and Edley, 1999), where, through building up defences due to being exposed to more pressures than other men, he presented as impenetrable to social pressures. Here, strength and independence were exaggerated, allowing Drishti to lay claim to the hegemonic capital of a masculinity that he outwardly condemned. As described by Wetherell and Edley (2014), in reference to the same trend in their study with young UK men, "a dominant value – or hallmark of hegemonic masculinity – is reappropriated, even in a moment of resistance" (p. 357). Personal strength and independence remained as one of the defining features of hegemonic masculinity within my data, consistent throughout presentations of both closed and open masculinities – an immovable pillar from old masculinities, enduring through to new masculine ideals. One of the participants who most conformed with ideals around (closed) hegemonic masculinity, for example, similarly used claims of independence and autonomy to reassert his 'individualised' and strong masculine identity: "*I'm a guy that just wants to do his own thing*" (Cameron, 38), indicating the widespread nature of such ideals across masculinities. Drishti continued to talk about the ways his body and practice failed to fit into ideas of hegemonic masculinity in the next section, building a picture of *how* he had been marginalised from hegemonic masculinity. Limitation to alternatives from closed hegemonic values allowed him access to a strong and progressive/resistant (and successful) masculine position in the current gender order.

"Traditional ideas around masculinity ... I don't fit that at all" – Drishti's own experiences of masculinity, race and bodily practice

Throughout his interview, Drishti talked about the ways in which he disassociated himself from ideas around traditional masculine ideals and practice. He often used himself and his own experiences to construct perceived ideals of masculinity as limited (or closed), unfair, and potentially problematic for men/society. Drishti located masculinity as the problem within gender relations, in a similar way to how men in chapter 8 alternatively located *feminism* as the problem for men/society. Seeing masculinity as problematic, he made efforts to explain how he was outside of this, illustrating evidence for open masculinities as

grown from the margins (Elliott, 2020). An example of his disassociation from some masculine values appeared during his description of his own personal appearance and presentation:

> *P* *I'm sure for like traditional gender roles traditional ideas around masculinity I don't fit that at all*
>
> *I* *Do you think that's still the dominant idea about what masculinity is*
>
> *P* *Yeah I do, I do think it is*
>
> *I* *So in what ways would you not fit into that*
>
> *P* *I'm short and brown, I'm not tall and white, I also just like it's odd but even going into like my manner of speech or my body language, my mannerisms, everything*

Drishti described his relationship with masculinity as characterised by his departures from a stereotyped norm, and used his physical body and bodily practice as evidence of this. This bodily focus is unsurprising, as common constructions of gender continue to be defined by binary understandings of bodily and reproductive differences between men and women, and the social processes that surround this (Connell, 2012). Drishti referenced a commonly discussed physical marker of a successful hegemonic masculinity, a body that is strong, "broad and tall" (Thompson, 2015, p. 23), that can be seen to represent masculine privileges of power and dominance, and heterosexual attractiveness (Jacobi & Cash, 1994) (see chapter 3). For example, within 'incel' groups (men who are 'involuntarily celibate'), men have linked smaller height or stature as a key determinant preventing them from sexual access with women (Maxwell et al., 2020). Other participants in our study also commonly linked height to heterosexual desirability in men: *"Women on dating sites apparently a lot of them say things like (…) 'if you're not 6 feet tall at least like don't bother talking to me'" (Edward, 30).* Drishti described his physical departure from this, that he was "short and brown." Race was set as the other dual determinant of masculinity and therefore desirability. 'White' was set up as inherently masculine (as the most privileged and dominant social category (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014)), and therefore desirable by default, while 'brown' was set up as the 'other' – not desirable or less able to be so.

This framing was commonly used by participants who were not white, while participants who identified as white/Pākehā/European mostly failed to mention race at all. This is consistent with 'colour-blind' discourses that implicitly set white men as the norm or default group, allowing them to conceal/ignore race (and inequality) (Rodriquez, 2006). Drishti expanded his talk on how race relations might influence hetero relations within the local context, including rhetorical tactics he had observed from others to include (yet keep separate) ethnicities other than 'white' into talk about heterosexual attractiveness:

> *P* *Something that's not white and they always have that qualifier like a qualifier about someone's attractiveness, so like oh yeah he is this person's like cute and Indian or like something I heard a lot was like he's pretty cute for an Indian, or he's pretty cute for a Korean or Japanese, whereas that's not there with a like oh he's pretty cute for a brunette, he's pretty cute for a blonde*
>
> *I* *So it's set up an expectation that just Indian is not cute?*
>
> *P* *Yeah exactly*

Drishti described the racial identities of white men as invisible in appraisals of attractiveness, while race was assumed to *detract* from the desirability of Asian men. Drishti used the imagined idea of hair colour as a "qualifier" of attractiveness to draw attention to the unfairness of these appraisals, and the way that white men (who could presumably be brunette or blonde) escaped from such judgement. In this framing, white men were constructed as having automatic desirability capital and were therefore able to achieve normative attractiveness, while Asian men had to be *exceptional* to compete without such capital. Indian writer Leo Mirani described this as a mainstream discourse in *1843's* magazine article: *'Apparently I'm pretty handsome ... for an Indian*' (Marani, 2018), which discussed Indian men as specifically disadvantaged in evaluations of attractiveness on account of their perceived or acknowledged race and colour, even in other Asian countries. Drishti similarly considered himself as departing from masculine ideals around physical attractiveness and desirability, and through embodying this marginalisation in masculinity, produced an identity that was both critical and 'self-aware' of such problematic standards in response.

Another participant, Dae, who identified his ethnicity as Korean-New Zealander, discussed similar concerns around desirability and Asian men more generally, echoing Drishti's account:

> *P* *Like sometimes I'll get called Asian, like just being Asian alone like just being a male Asian alone is hard you know what I mean, in this society where it's like female Asians are almost idolised you know top of as you would say the food chain*
>
> *I* *Like sexually?*
>
> *P* *Yes sexually whereas men are at the bottom just above Indian (…) I've been turned down many times just due to my colour, race and like eyes or whatever (...) some girls are just like 'it's not my thing''*
>
> *(Dae, 24)*

In this construction, race intersected with sexuality and gender (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014), as Dae described heterosexual relations as challenging for Asian men, whose race was constructed as an *undeniable* barrier to (romantic or sexual) interactions with women. He used instances of personal rejection as directly due to his physical features (features that indicate race, such as "eyes" or skin "colour"), and instances of women explicitly stating their racial preference to impress on the imagined audience the lived reality of this bias against Asian men *from* women. This discourse can be evidenced in a wider Western context, through analysis of some online dating trends that suggest a dispreference for Asian men (See Hwang, 2013; Rudder, 2014). Additionally, Asian men shared similar experiences in an interview study in the US (See Oishi, 2019). Dae constructed a hierarchy of heterosexual desirability to emphasise these difficulties, where some Asian men were positioned as being treated even worse than others, e.g. Indian men. Indian men were here separated from 'general' Asian men, further illuminating an 'Indian-specific' type of racism in New Zealand (Hamilton, 2019). Asian women, in contrast, were constructed as at the "top" of this hierarchy of desirability, as Dai emphasised the 'man-specific' nature of this issue, while women might be assumed to 'have it easy.' While some data trends for online dating *have* shown a general preference for Asian women, black women, for example, have

been excluded at a higher rate (See Nguyen, 2018; Rudder, 2014). This illustrates that dating for women can be equally fraught with racial discrimination (contrary to Dae's male-specific construction), but in different ways.

Timmy proposed some further nuance to this dating discourse in his analysis of Chinese masculinity and desirability:

> *There is a difference between cultures Chinese masculinity is actually a lot more feminine, feminine and childish (…) but some girls like that mostly the Asian girls but I think Kiwi, generally like Kiwi raised people wouldn't so much like that (Timmy, 28)*

Timmy constructed differences in desirability as reflective of differences in Chinese versus "Kiwi" masculinity. He suggested Chinese masculinity might be devalued on account of its alignment with femininity. This draws on ideas of a stereotyped macho masculinity within a regional "Kiwi" masculinity (Terry & Braun, 2009), where femininity is seen as the antithesis of masculinity. What is also apparent in this extract are long-held feminised constructions of Asian cultures by the West, which can serve to devalue Asian masculinities/cultures as inferior (Said, 1979). However, Timmy still allowed space for this masculinity to be accepted and desired by Asian women in New Zealand. Through referencing the diverse makeup of Aotearoa, Timmy implied that these feminised constructions of Asian men as undesirable must inevitably be made by white/Pākehā or "Kiwi raised" others. These seemed to be the same imagined 'others' referenced by Drishti and Dai as general society in their accounts, again illustrating a naturalised 'white as the norm' influence (Carbado, 2013), even in critical discussion by men of colour.

This discourse around race and desirability was acknowledged by a participant who identified as Pākehā (New Zealand European), one of the few white participants to critically discuss race: *"I'm lucky I'm white you know, I know women definitely discriminate on skin colour" (Ben, 34).* While Ben failed to mention the specifics of Dae's 'racial hierarchy,' he acknowledged himself as a white man at the top, privileged with automatic desirability capital, consistent with this discourse. In positioning himself as "lucky," he painted a bleak picture for other, less desired men of non-white ethnicities, who were constructed as sure to encounter discrimination in the (Kiwi) heterosexual marketplace. Through acknowledging himself as privileged, Ben took up an identity that was progressive and 'self-aware,' fitting

with ideas around 'new' masculinity and general liberal identities as critical of, and 'woke' to, such biases as privilege and racism (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). However, this construction of 'progressive' masculinity risked being "more style than substance" (Messner, 1993, p. 724), as elements of even this short extract remain strikingly problematic.

The difference between these participant accounts is that in both Dae's and Ben's constructions, responsibility for this racial bias within heterosexuality was implicitly (or explicitly, in Ben's extract) positioned as resting with women, who inevitably decided who to accept or "turn down" within the heterosexual marketplace (see chapter 7). Blaming women for rejecting men and/or treating men badly (here through racism or 'shallowness') can be seen as a key manifestation of sexism and contemporary backlash ideologies, which inform and construct 'closed' masculinity (Elliott, 2020) (see chapter 8). Such accounts can be analysed as examples of hybrid masculinities, where men who might identify with progressive discourse are still influenced by, and complicit with, features of more closed masculinities. These features can often be concealed and disguised by progressive rhetoric, rendering them more effective through their near invisibility (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). Drishti and Timmy, however, discussed these perceived racial judgements as stemming from the influence of *masculinity*, a larger social process that removes blame from any one group and does not specifically blame women. By positioning himself in this way, Drishti distanced himself from patriarchal discourses, and from identifying with aspects of closed hegemonic masculinity. A protesting, progressive identity here became a robust decision as he was marginalised from the hegemonic racial ideal (but was still answerable to it).

In continuing his commentary about race, Drishti described that growing up he experienced and internalised "a lot of really really bad racism towards Indians," ideas that he learnt to become more critical about. In a New Zealand context, such racism against people of Asian descent has a long history and continues visibly today through incidents of racial abuse and acts of violence, and through more subtle discourses and issues of representation fuelled particularly around issues such as mass immigration (See Liu & Mills, 2006; Spoonley & Butcher, 2009). *The Spinoff's* media article *'New Zealand's long and violent history of anti-Indian racism*' (Hamilton, 2019) illustrated an Indian-specific facet of this racism in New Zealand, resonating with Drishti's account. Drishti demonstrated a critical awareness of

these more subtle aspects of racist discourse through his continued analysis of ideals of attractiveness through the media as excluding Indian men:

> *We're in a Western society so we consume Western media, American media, I don't ever see like Indian men like if I want to see like an attractive Indian man, Bollywood movies or like Indian TV shows things like that, there's never that, but also I'm removed from that because I was born in the West so I'm not quite, I can't engage with that stuff as much as like an Indian person living in India can*

Drishti identified an invisibility of people *like him* (i.e. Indian men) in Western media, and moreover, Indian men who represented attractiveness. This idea is consistent with research documenting a significant under-representation of Asian men in Western media, relative to white and black men (Schug, Alt, Lu, Gosin & Fay, 2017), and Mirani's (2018) commentary around discourses of Indian men as without attractiveness capital by fault of their race/colour. Drishti described his identity as an Indian man as in conflict with his identity of growing up Western, reporting a lack of space for him to see himself mirrored back in a 'positive' and relatable way in either a New Zealand or Indian context. Reflective of research with 'children of immigrants' (Rumbaut, 2005), he struggled to see himself as an 'insider' to either group, further compounding this 'otherness.' Thus, he was effectively 'left out' from the possibility of 'natural' or 'automatic' masculine capital (De Visser et al., 2009) and developed strategies to manage this exclusion. Dae, likewise, continued his observations about Indian men as treated *even worse* than generalised Asian men, here in reference to the media:

> *Western media, there's no like respected Indians you know, you know portrayed, when you know the most respected Indian we probably get is Aziz Ansari and and he's in trouble right now but you know, even him the way he's portrayed he's not masculine, he's the funny guy, he's the guy that everyone laughs at, he's the butt of the joke, he's even talked about that where it's like no one wants to fuck the funny guy you know everyone wants to fuck the manly man you know what I mean (Dae, 24)*

Dae directly spoke to the idea of Indian men as not only left out from desirability capital, but unable to even enter desirable or "respected" territory in the media, instead settling for

'unmasculine' typologies at best. This invisibility for Indian men might exist unnoticed by the dominant racial groups of society, of whom such trends presumably minimally affect (leading to an ignoring or denial of a problem). Yet this can set a precedent for who *really* belongs and is valued, amplifying the 'otherness' of minority/under-represented groups (Hirsch, 2018).

As described in the above sections, part of Drishti's identity management was to be critical of the stereotypical masculine ideals he failed to fit into, producing a non-conformist, liberal identity – illustrating the idea that "who we are is defined in terms of who we are not" (Wetherell & Edley, 2014, p. 356). Much like discourses of post-feminism, some societal discourses have positioned critiques such as Drishti's around racism as unnecessary and 'hyper-sensitive' in a society that considers such issues to be a 'thing of the past' and contemporary society as 'much better' in terms of explicit and violent racist acts (Song, 2014). This dismissive discourse can position these issues as almost unspeakable for minorities, who might risk negative societal appraisals of 'over-reacting' or unnecessarily 'complaining' about issues not easily recognisable as racism. A new, progressive (and more 'woke') gender/social order created space for Drishti to discuss race in this critical way, particularly around more nuanced or subtle issues that some may not consider *real* racism – further inscribing a type of 'rebel' or 'protest' identity against the old gender/social order (Edley & Wetherell, 1997).

In previous extracts, Drishti talked about the way his body was not aligned with norms around hegemonic masculinity. While Drishti could seemingly have no control over being "short and brown," he also described his bodily practice (e.g. "mannerisms," "gestures" and "body language") as outside hegemonic masculinity. His presentation of masculine self in a Western context could again be complicated by race, where stereotypes about South Asian bodies have been collapsed into stereotypes about Asian bodies in general – i.e. as "racially castrated subjects with a brain devoid of a body" (Thangaraj, 2013, p. 248). This results in Asian bodies standing as "queer bodies in relation to white masculinity" (Thangaraj, 2013, p. 248), both in physicality and culturally prescribed mannerisms. As argued by Connell (2012), "gender practice is a reflexive process of social embodiment" (p. 1677), meaning that masculinity can be defined not only by one's physical body, but the way in which one knowingly *inhabits* that body. In acknowledging his bodily practice as in opposition to

"traditional" or (white) hegemonic masculinity, he (consciously or unconsciously) reportedly failed to conform to masculinity ideals every time he, for example, crossed his legs – despite social consequences, such as the assumption that he must have a "small dick":

> *I think there are things that are traditionally considered not masculine, in terms of like my mannerisms I'm quite I gesture a lot, I'm not, I sit like this, I sit crossing my legs. This is another thing I got taught apparently that means you're girly and gay when you're a kid apparently if you cross your legs when you're a man and also has to do with like that means your dick is small*

Crossing one's legs could be seen through Drishti's account as a "body-reflexive practice" (Connell, 2005) – something that held socially inscribed meanings of being "girly" and "gay" for men/boys. This made the body both an 'object' to others' social meanings, and the 'agent' of one's own practice as he interpreted these social meanings and expressed himself in relation to them (Wellard, 2012). This body-reflexive practice allowed Drishti to express an alternative masculinity, in which he positioned himself in opposition to stereotypes of hegemonic masculinity through a subtle physical rebellion, i.e. crossing his legs. In doing so, Drishti drew on two determinants of subordination from hegemonic masculinity – being considered gay and being considered feminine (Connell, 2000). As discussed in chapter 2, part of the binding discourse within hegemonic masculinity has traditionally been a disdain for, and distancing from, anything feminine. Being gay has hence been a subordinated masculinity on the logic that being intimate with other men is constructed as something *women* do (Cohen, 2016). While these ideals may be continually changing/becoming more complicated in a more progressive society, Drishti suggested these are still concerns within the New Zealand context of masculinity. These concerns were also echoed in Elliott's (2020) research with young men, who likewise linked crossing one's legs with perceptions (or worry of perceptions) of homosexuality. Here, this traditional 'homohysteria' was used alongside body-shaming to police men's physical enactments of masculinity, for even everyday acts such as how they might choose to sit – indicating little *real* change within a homophobic hegemonic masculinity (Ralph & Roberts, 2020). This challenges theorising that positions new hegemonic masculinity as inclusive and accepting, incorporating elements of gay culture into contemporary hegemonic masculinity (Anderson, 2010).

By continuing to cross his legs despite these societal discourses around sexuality, penis size and masculinity, Drishti rebelled against hegemonic notions that being considered "gay," "girly" or having a "small dick" were negative or unacceptable things for men. This rebellion could be considered an act of 'heterodoxy,' defined by Brook (2015) as: "unorthodox, transgressive, or subversive ways of doing heterosexuality and being heterosexual" (p. 250) that those with privilege (i.e. straight men) can draw on in support of marginalised others in the pursuit of equality. This act of heterodoxy by Drishti can be likened to research by Bridges (2014) in which straight US men identified and claimed aspects of their behaviour as 'gay,' leaning into constructions of the self as progressive and liberal (i.e. accepting and celebrating of gay men), as opposed to a stereotyped homophobic masculinity. This discourse aligns with conceptualisations around the rise of new open and 'inclusive' masculinities, which provide space to challenge and resist sexist, homophobic and prejudiced ideals of traditional expressions of hegemonic masculinity, while remaining ostensibly masculine (Elliott, 2020; Jarvis, 2015; Stotzer, 2009). Thus, through presenting as rebellious and progressive, Drishti could embody a 'new' form of masculinity that relied on different measures of appropriate behaviour (Bridges, 2014b), and battled against 'old' forms of closed and homophobic masculinity for hegemony. However, while these types of challenges can be considered a necessary first move in the right direction, as noted with the men in Bridge's (2014) study, this progressive discourse can obscure the way 'new' masculine men can still "benefit from and participate in gender and sexual inequality" (p. 58). For example, in these instances, 'new' men can potentially capitalise on (re)stereotyping gay men, while still managing their own gender identity through disassociating with *actually* being gay, and receiving the masculine capital/social privileges that come with heterosexuality (Hall, Gough & Seymour-Smith, 2012). Thus, elements of hegemonic ideals can continue to run through explicitly progressive displays – displays that can simply become "adopted into the repertoire of ways men can perform masculinity" (Ralph & Roberts, 2020, p. 83), rather than representing the transformational change to hegemonic masculinity they might present as.

This non-conformity to elements of masculine practice continued to inevitably intersect with race for Drishti, further compounding the effects and stigma of the 'penis size' threat:

> *You know the whole thing around like East Asian men is that they have small penises blah blah blah (…) I remember it in like year 12, we were just joking around with my teacher and talking about studies or whatever and I I made a stereotypical joke about Indians you know around Asians being smart like clearly playing on the stereotype and like it's not, it's just a joke and I'm making it so I'm being self-aware about it, just like 'oh it's ok Miss I've already done my homework, I'm an Indian, it's fine I've got it,' and then there was a white kid next to me that got really, really like triggered by it, like really annoyed like 'what I really hate it when people do that make jokes about race' and then he like 'white people have bigger dicks' it's just like calm down, it was like this weird inferiority thing*

Drishti examined an instance where he had been a victim of racism, specifically involving penis-size stereotyping. In this extract, his classmate positioned Asian men as having below average-sized penises (or below the size of white men), a commonly reported racial stereotype (Bader, 2017; Grov, Saleh, Lassiter & Parsons, 2015). Drishti attributed this racist claim to white men's discomfort with racial stereotypes around intellect/work ethic (e.g. 'hard-working' Asian students (see Bader, 2017; Oishi, 2019)) ("*like Asian males are like nerds"* (Dae, 24)) being used in a potentially positive/neutral way. This was positioned as threatening white masculinity as the most dominant and therefore hegemonic group (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014) (with intelligence and achievement being situated as important parts of this hegemonic construct (Edley & Wetherell, 1997)). In response to intelligence traits being taken up by more marginalised (brown) masculinities, the classmate in the anecdote was described as attempting to reassert his masculine superiority. He did this through positioning himself as *physically* superior and more masculine through penis size, to neutralise threats to his (and white men's) intellect as dominant.

Drishti's construction of these events resonated with commentary from Edley and Wetherell (1997) about their study with boys in the UK, who distanced themselves from athletic and aggressive 'jocks' as examples of hegemonic masculinity, through positioning themselves as stronger *intellectually*, and implicitly *actually* superior as men through their wits. In this study, intellect was held up as a less recognised but deeper source of *real* masculine value. Physicality was comparatively positioned as a hollow 'show' of surface-level masculinity, illustrating how different discourses around masculinity can compete for hegemony. Drishti

followed a similar pattern through constructing his classmate's retaliatory claim on physicality as unreasonable and positioned himself as above such misguided attempts of masculine dominance. This extract provided a well-executed example of how Drishti again leaned into identification with 'new' masculine values as opposed to traditional hegemonic values, while still remaining complicit with other hegemonic values such as intellect and mental 'strength' to overcome adversity such as bullying (Wetherell & Edley, 2014). In doing so he also worked to set the terms of hegemony within a local youth masculinity.

In discussing these non-conformities to certain types of masculine ideals in this section, Drishti engaged in identity work that produced a self that was separate from, and critiquing of, stereotypes around masculinity – fitting with a 'new' masculine identity. In their work talking to men about masculinity, Wetherell and Edley (1999) discussed that men rarely explicitly identified with 'heroic' positions associated with 'stereotypical' hegemonic masculinity, and were more likely to outwardly associate with 'ordinary' less 'macho' masculinities. This discursive tactic was used to manage narcissism through self-deprecation and repackage hegemonic ideals as over the top, extreme and stereotypical, otherwise justifying a lack of compliance with masculinity through presenting ideals as unrealistic and problematic. This was evident in Drishti's account, where he explicitly outlined the ways his body and behaviour failed to fit with constrained masculine ideals, even in the face of bullying and shaming from other males. By talking about himself as "*short and brown*," and his behaviours and mannerisms as feminine, Drishti presented himself as stereotypically *un*masculine within a traditional gender order, and therefore potentially undesirable. This vulnerability was managed through presenting masculine ideals as limited and problematic, and his departure of them as thus normal, realistic and self-aware. This produced a self that was 'secure' in his identified masculine limitations, and provided the space for Drishti to take up a more open and progressive masculinity in response (Elliott, 2020). Wetherell and Edley (1999) suggested that due to the wide take-up, these 'ordinary' masculinities were/are becoming the hegemonic form, potentially providing the space for more men to take on progressive identities. These ordinary masculinities might assume various forms at the local level, where different positions (e.g. around intellect versus physicality) might compete for hegemony, with none being completely dominant (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Through examination of Drishti's account, new and open masculine values that

support a progressing gender order, however, appeared to be becoming a strong and validated position to hold in this struggle for hegemony.

Conclusion

In this analysis, Drishti used rhetorical devices to outwardly separate himself from 'old,' problematic and 'closed' masculine ideals as a way of negotiating his marginalised masculine identity. Despite complex negotiations with a traditional hegemonic masculinity, Drishti was able to produce elements of what Elliott (2020) described as a more 'open' and progressive masculinity through his identification of being marginalised, both through race and body size/mannerisms. This analysis is consistent with Elliott's argument that less privileged and more marginalised men have greater access to the ideals and expression of 'open' masculinity, as the margin is "the location from which new, transformative, revolutionary potentials for masculinities are likely to stem" (Elliott, 2020, p. 23). Of course, Drishti still had access to various other intersections of privilege (e.g. gender, sexuality, class), and 'open' and 'closed' masculinities should not be seen as binary or bound, but contextual and constantly moving. However, through this framework, access to 'open' or 'closed' masculinities is aligned with how closely one can approximate hegemonic or complicit ideals at the centre – and here we can see that aspects of Drishti's marginalisation from (white) hegemonic masculinity created the space for openness. This case study contributes to work that proposes the margin of masculinity as a space for potential openness and progressive change (see Baines et al., 2015; Elliott, 2020; Hooks, 1989; Roberts, 2018). These works oppose common constructions in the West of marginalised men as representing problematic and regressive forms of masculinity (e.g. involved in gangs and/or patriarchal violence), and instead highlight possibilities for positive shifts in cultural constructions (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014; Roberts, 2018).

However, the version of the world Drishti presented was still one with high levels of pressure for men, laden with expectations to conform to often problematic and implicitly patriarchal masculine ideals which remained hegemonic. Hegemonic masculinity provides men with easily accessible and accepted discourses and subject positions in which to relate to the world and make sense of themselves (Connell, 2005), and openness was commonly

accessed through the boundaries of rebellion and independence created *by* a traditional hegemonic masculinity. These ideas were seamlessly woven into experiences for men and constantly available, even for those who considered themselves outside of such influence, or positioned themselves in contrast to it. As put by Ging (2019, p. 642), "hybrid masculinities symbolically distance men from hegemonic masculinity, while simultaneously compounding existing social and symbolic boundaries." These masculinities allowed Drishti and other 'new' men to continue to trade and benefit from other, more subtle modes of closed hegemonic practice as they navigated competing discourses. Nevertheless, relational theory provides space for optimism in the ever-changing nature of gender orders (Connell, 2012), and these hegemonic practices were a means or pathway for expressing and justifying more progressive and open masculine values, which can be marked as an important step forward in gender equality. There is hope (and evidence) that through taking up some of these ideals, aspects of progressive and liberal ideals can (and do) get absorbed into, and restructure, the contemporary hegemonic form. Drishti, and some other participants, evidenced some general ways within heterosexuality and masculinity that more equal and progressive discourse had been gaining momentum:

P *There's an ad on TV right now I think it's a mainland cheese ad, you know how they have that slogan 'good things take time' and I think it's like this guy keeps-*

I *Buying her things yeah*

P *Yeah and I was like doesn't that mean he's basically kind of like harassing her or something and he sort of, I know what they're trying to get at, but like I'm not sure it's actually such a great thing to be promoting (Edward, 30)*

All my friends especially guys, or the guys that I hang out with, all of them are very talkative about their feelings about their emotions and we're very accommodating, I cry in front of my friends and they cry in front of me sort of thing (Dae, 24)

Like if you seek out traditional gender roles like that kind of dynamic in a partner you can definitely find that, but you can also find a niche where you're not around people like that (Drishti, 24)

P *Yeah um yeah I just don't think I fit traditional I'm not loud I'm not like very forceful I'm not yeah*

I *And you think that's still kind of the dominant mode of masculinity for men growing up or is it changing*

P *Uhh I think it is changing I think there's more awareness around it there's more visibility around it you can see the gears and the mechanics around it but it's not, it's still the dominant thing, it's just that people are more able to critique it and as a result of it not feel.*

I *So trapped in it?*

P *So trapped in it yeah (Drishti, 24)*

This talk produced, and Drishti embodied, a masculinity that allowed emotion, rejected homophobia and many facets of sexism, strove to relate to women, and critically analysed issues of race, contributing to the conceptualisation of liberal/progressive masculinity as on the rise, albeit with complexities and at times contradictions. This talk demonstrated that many men were "searching for different, more fulfilling ways to live as men" (Elliott, 2020, p. 197), outside of a prescribed patriarchal hegemonic masculinity, and that feminism was influencing change within the current gender order (Connell, 2012). We can see that feminist and liberal discourse also worked to hold men aligned with closed masculinities accountable within various discursive spaces, as they worked to outwardly align with (some) progressive discourse. Masculinities and wider gender orders are continually evolving and open to change (Connell, 2012), and we must continue to foster these open and progressive discourses as increasingly available for men to be able to take up.

The next chapter will locate men's hetero-masculine identities as forged alongside the (post) #MeToo movement. This specific context appeared to have a strong effect on men's positionings around heterosexual issues such as dating and consent. While the more feminist and open rhetoric explored in this chapter held some influence over men's discourse, strong, yet veiled strains of closed rhetoric continued to structure much of the interpretive repertoires examined in the next analysis.

Chapter 7: Analysis: The #MeToo context

Beauty turned beast? Men's constructions of 'arrogant' women and 'innocent' men

Introduction

Here I will examine men's accounts contextually, with reference to a sociocultural point in time when I interviewed (i.e. late 2017/early 2018), where what was seen as acceptable/unacceptable in hetero-relating behaviours was being brought increasingly into the spotlight, largely through the #MeToo movement (see chapter 3). Men were not asked directly about the #MeToo movement or the associated issues around dating culture and sexual violence; however, they often and consistently spoke about these issues as *part* of heterosexuality (and being a man). The topical nature of the #MeToo movement and the related feminist issues that surround masculinity and heterosexuality provided me with an opportunity to analyse men's positionings and responses in relation to #MeToo-inspired issues. Part of the #MeToo discussion, and indeed a large part of participant talk, included how heterosexual dating norms shaped men's and women's behaviour in ways that might be considered harmful and contribute to the wider spectrum of sexual violence (see chapter 3 for a full discussion of these issues). These issues and debates became a central component of my analysis.

While separating the data surrounding these ideas, and grouping the related extracts into themes, I noted that men used particular discursive arguments in patterned ways, commonly invoking familiar tropes and cliches (Edley & Wetherell, 2001) to build a story that served their points. Thus, the data for this chapter will be primarily analysed through *interpretive repertoires* (see chapter 4 for definition) – understood here as rhetorical devices that served participants with "building blocks (…) for constructing versions of actions" (Wetherell & Potter, 1988, p. 172) around aspects of heterosexual interacting/dating. Across the dataset, men's talk around dating in the 'current' (i.e. #MeToo-influenced) context was largely patterned into or around three complementary interpretive repertoires specific to gender and gendered relating, and thus heterosexual dating, which I identified as: *I just*

don't understand…; *You can't do anything anymore!*; and *She's really only got herself to blame…*

Despite a robust patterning, men's talk was, of course, far more partial and contradictory than these three repertoires might infer. As in the other analytical chapters of this thesis, the gendered ideologies men articulated were often fragmented and inconsistent, or even contradictory, and they adopted different positions at different times, while discussing different contexts – something to be expected (See Billig, 1987). However, overall, men expressed confusion, worry and frustration over what they characterised as 'changing rules' in dating. They positioned that what had previously been 'normal' (closed) masculine behaviour in approaching/dating women could *now* potentially be considered inappropriate, harassment or even sexual violence within a new (more progressive) gender order (Connell, 2012). Men's expressed responses to this changing landscape varied from concern about offending women and a desire to act appropriately, but confusion as to how to do this, to voicing frustration at new ideas impinging on their behaviours and 'rights,' and feeling 'attacked' by women who they feared might, at any point (wrongfully) accuse men (i.e. more open versus closed masculine responses). There was a widely (explicitly and implicitly) expressed fear from most men that they might be perceived as inappropriate, or ultimately falsely accused of sexual harassment/violence, regardless of whether they explicitly blamed that fear on women or not. Of course, not every man constructed women as 'attacking/accusing,' or heterosexual dating as 'dangerous' for men. Yet these three repertoires, and associated subject positions, were widely evidenced, and thus appeared as key discursive resources available to single men more generally, to make sense of gendered hetero-relating in a (post)#MeToo New Zealand.

Analysis

I just don't understand…

The interpretive repertoire 'I just don't understand…' centred around the idea that men were naturally relationally incompetent in their interactions with women, who, in turn, might 'misinterpret' men's innocent dating behaviour – a 'miscommunication' theory of heterosexual mis-steps (Beres, 2010). One of the contributing ideas within this repertoire

was that within a dating context, men were expected to make the 'first move' (i.e. be the initiator of contact) (see Pickens & Braun, 2018). Many men talked about this being 'the man's job,' to approach a woman he might be interested in, for any interaction (romantic or sexual) to happen. This was often positioned as something natural, or innate to men:

> *I suppose it does come down to you know the man is umm I mean nature is a man is the pursuer (Frank, 50)*

Frank's comment evoked a biological or evolutionary cause to this social pattern – something that was effectively unchangeable, a 'fact' at the core of the behaviour. This type of essentialist reasoning was common throughout the data in relation to different topics (for more discussion, see chapter 8). Within this discourse of nature/biology, men and women were constructed as essentially *different*, and therefore as having naturally different roles and behaviours within heterosexuality. Due to these differences, women were positioned as often misunderstanding men's behaviours and intentions, particularly within this 'first move' encounter. Men were in turn positioned as unable to read or interpret women's behaviours in response. As such, some men expressed worry that this first move might not be welcome, and it would be difficult for them to read the behavioural signs or body language from women who would communicate this to them:

> *I can't read body language whatsoever (…) I can't tell whether they're hinting that they like it hinting that they don't hinting that I'm like a crazy guy and want me to go away I just can't tell" (Jarrod, 40)*

Jarrod described women's responses to men as communicated via 'hints' and body language that he was incapable of reading, presenting women and men as equipped with entirely (or essentially) different ways of communicating, and different frameworks of understanding/interpreting others (Tannen, 1990). In this scenario, Jarrod was the innocent and unwitting party who "just can't tell" what women want, despite his efforts and sincerity. This rhetoric worked to create a type of sympathy for men, that they were merely 'good guys' trying their best in a difficult situation that they were ill-equipped for, by nature. Jarrod's extract fits with longstanding societal discourses around gender and communication that construct men and women as from separate cultures, and communication between them as 'cross-cultural,' likened to two people from different

countries and languages (or even planets, e.g. *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* (Gray, 1992)), where errors of communication are expected and bound to occur (Crawford, 1995; Tannen, 1990). This type of talk, which emphasises differences *between* sexes/genders, can work to dichotomise and stereotype men and women, essentially laying the groundwork for the justification of harmful behaviour based on men's 'misunderstanding,' particularly in sexual/romantic scenarios (Kitzinger & Frith, 1999; O'Byrne, Rapley & Hansen, 2006).

Simon similarly constructed making the first move as risky and precarious for men, based on the idea that women's 'signals' were hard to read and men were limited in 'interpreting' them:

> *I've only done it (made the first move) a couple times, it's difficult because you don't know uh if they're even interested sometimes because some will have very uh some people who just are friendly but you don't want to misinterpret that friendliness (…) for guys it's a guessing game (Simon, 29)*

Simon described making a move as a "guessing game," evoking an almost impossible scenario for men, where women's communication was so hard to read that men were at the mercy of chance and luck. Women, in contrast to "guys," were implicitly constructed as relationally competent and able to understand all signals, and therefore were sure about how to act and what they wanted in heterosexual encounters. There was no space left for women to be unsure or have trouble interpreting men. They were constructed as effectively always able to give clear and unequivocal responses to clear and unequivocal interpretations of men's behaviour (and were at fault if they did not do so, as discussed in the final repertoire). Participant talk often referred to these perceived differences between men and women, specifically that women were better at emotions and relationships. This allowed them to read signs/be more competent in heterosexual encounters, a discourse that echoed Tannen's (1990) work theorising women's communication as more 'intimacy' based, with men positioned as relationally limited and unskilled. Craig (30) for example stated: *"It does bear out in like broad statistics that women are better interpreting nonverbal cues because with raising a baby and that kinda stuff."* A reference to "statistics" here positioned these gender differences as credible and factual, a rhetorical move constructing "knowledge as measurement" (Urla, 1993, p. 818). This shut down any

alternative readings and positioned Craig as removed and unbiased – the rational 'science man.' Through this discourse, the burden of emotional work and relational/caring roles is left largely with women in heterosexual encounters and relationships, who are assumed as the biological nurturers (e.g. mothers and wives) to be more naturally emotionally capable, and as such automatically responsible for relationships (Terry & Braun, 2011).

This type of reasoning from participants served as both an explanation for behaviours and a rationale for them to persist, appealing to a narrative of logic and science. This 'biological' reasoning allowed certain dating behaviours to continue without critique, as though they were a genetically determined (and therefore undisputable) truth. Such discourse of nature/biology may be taken up specifically and commonly by *men*, and validated as forms of knowledge, due to a traditional association between masculinity, and ideals of logic and reason. Thus, men were effectively encouraged into scientific ideologies (Sonnert & Holton, 1995) in order to conform to norms of an older, closed masculinity, which still wields power (Elliott, 2020). More discussion around 'natural' differences between the genders within a closed masculinity will continue in chapter 8, where this discourse was further used to justify misogynistic and men's rights rhetoric.

Some participants reported that their uncertainty around how women might interpret their first move behaviour inhibited them from acting in heterosexual interactions. An expressed fear of being a 'creep' was common throughout the data:

> *There's that line like being smooth and being creepy, well I don't want to risk being creepy so I don't risk being smooth (…) but at the same time I feel that not acting is limiting or like resulting in me going home and sleeping like a starfish every night you know what I mean (Liam, 27)*

Liam presented women's misunderstanding of men's actions as such a serious risk that he had resorted to "not acting," despite this resulting in being alone/a lack of sexual activity (which can be assumed to be a bad thing, due to the central nature of sexuality within hegemonic masculinity (see Farvid & Braun, 2006)). He implied that he did not know the difference between what a "smooth" successful approach or a "creepy" unsuccessful approach might be, again positioning himself as an unwitting male hampered by a natural inability to pick up on the signs of interest from women. This subject position relied on the

understanding and validation of the idea that men were socially incompetent with women and this was essentially unchangeable. This incompetence had become risky and dangerous in a 'changed' world (i.e. a more equal gender order (Connell, 2012)), where women now had the power to define 'well-intentioned' men as "creepy."

Definitions of 'creepy' within popular media appear to involve multiple undesirable behaviours by men. One blogger in popular media (Dupree, 2018), for instance, described that these behaviours most often included a man who continued to pursue a woman who was displaying signs that she was uncomfortable or not interested. Yet Dupree went on to reassure men that, "it doesn't make you a bad guy. It just means you aren't reading the signs correctly" (p. 1), conforming to and legitimising the repertoire within a public online space, that men do not *mean* to harass women, but they are just unable to read signs. Such discourse, in effect, removes accountability from men and legitimises (and normalises) men's behaviours (including harassment), with the justification that their behaviours are not their fault – it is all just a misunderstanding, legitimised through their gender membership (Tannen, 1990).

Dupree's (2018) definition positioned creepiness as dependent on men's behaviours, yet some participants alternatively described creepiness as built around women's levels of interest: *"The only difference between a creep and someone who isn't a creep is basically if they like you or not" (Noah, 24).* In Noah's construction, a creep was defined by acceptance or rejection of women, with rejection ultimately equated with creepiness. His use of the definitive "only" positioned this as unreasonable – there was no space for a man to be rejected by women and *not* be creepy. This idea, that only a woman's approval would define the social label of a man, was positioned as neither logical nor fair, and is a common complaint within men's rights rhetoric around 'creepiness' (Maxwell et al., 2020). Here, men's 'creepiness' was not treated as a real thing or possibility; women's precarious social judgements of men in a heterosexual context was positioned as the *real* situation, with men's behaviours in turn implicitly constructed as always innocent (at least of creepiness). There was an implicit (and problematic) expectation that women should *not* express their dislike of men, or if they rejected men, that they should be gracious or polite in doing so.

Ben, in talking about "confidence," similarly framed women's approval as a tenuous and uncertain, unknowable thing:

> *There is an expectation that you're confident and that you exhibit that confidence that you make a move but then it's it's almost like that's expected that its only done if she if you think she finds you attractive and you can't always know that (Ben, 34)*

Embodying confidence around women and being considered attractive by women were the circumstances in which Ben considered men's advances would be accepted, and the only way to avoid a potentially negative interaction – i.e. that of rejection. Yet Ben presented attractiveness as subjective and therefore not necessarily knowable before an interaction, again creating an unfair 'guessing game' for men who were simply trying their best in a difficult and confusing situation. The expectations outlined by Ben were spoken about in such a way to draw attention to the *unfairness* of heterosexuality for men – that they were laden with the responsibility of making the move, in a particular, confident way, *and* that they were at risk of negative reactions from women through making such a move. Rejections by women of these 'first moves' – and thus, the man – were positioned throughout men's talk as a risk of heterosexual interactions. Rejection was treated as an unwanted failure to be avoided, rather than a normal or expected part of dating/interacting with women. Women were not expected to make the first move (nor is it typically accepted within hetero-femininity (see Pickens & Braun, 2018)), and therefore suffered from no risk of rejection, effectively positioning them as the more powerful party. Women were positioned as merely deciding whether to accept or vilify inherently vulnerable men, presumably on a whim of attraction.

The idea of men and women as unable to understand each other's dating behaviours has been commonly discussed within popular media in the wake of the #MeToo movement. Newspapers and magazines published variations of advice, involving guidelines or dating 'rules' intended to instruct men about how to 'read' the signs of interest/disinterest from women (and what NOT to do) (See Eriksen, 2018; Parsons, 2018; Robinson, 2017). The assumption within these guides was that men would otherwise naturally be confused – and that *this* was the cause of sexual violence accusations (e.g. innocent miscommunication). This 'miscommunication' discourse (Beres, 2010) in men's data operated in gendered ways to position women as (more) culpable and men as innocent for what became constructed as a well-intentioned interaction gone wrong. The implication was that men were not at fault for potentially inappropriate or harmful actions, but simply confused by the complexities of

dating (and women's communication), and therefore their actions were misunderstood. They were effectively – naturally – positioned as under-resourced and in need of help, as opposed to blame (or accountability). This positioning of risk and action connected to the second interpretative repertoire: *You can't do anything anymore!*

You can't do anything anymore!

This interpretive repertoire centred around the expressed core idea (or fear) that men – themselves or others – might be (unfairly) perceived as, or accused of being, inappropriate, sexually harassing or sexually violent. This position seemed to offer an escalation from being considered a 'creep.' The potential that men might be (falsely) accused, by women, of some type of sexually inappropriate behaviour was explicitly spoken about – unprompted – by almost all participants, and more implicitly underpinned much of the talk around heterosexual dating. These fears were often talked about in the same context as the previous interpretive repertoire, that men were expected to make the first move and that men were bad at reading signs. In describing usually hypothetical scenarios, men continued to take up the subject position of innocent, well-meaning victim of *misunderstandings* by women:

> *I think the expectation still is that the guy needs to make the first move and um this has become a bit of a problem because with all the um expectations these days about harassment and all the ahh like it's a grey line, grey area basically and there's no clear line you know where it says this is ok and this isn't ok and um (pause) um yeah I'm not really the best person to ask in that area, but apparently there are signs (Ali, 36)*

Ali constructed heterosexual interactions as sites of confusion and risk for men, where there were no clear social rules or prompts from women about what was acceptable behaviour and what was not. He discussed that "these days" (i.e. implicitly referencing a #MeToo-influenced gender order), making the first move had *become* a problem due to potential accusations of sexual violence, setting up a more simple and ideal time in the past where men *could* make the first move without risk and scrutiny (i.e. a more patriarchal gender order). The problem was effectively constructed as changing times/expectations, not men's behaviours. Many participants similarly discussed this potential for accusation as a recent

phenomenon, and related to the social media #MeToo movement and subsequent societal discussion around sexual violence as common, or simply just 'modern' times. Some expressed frustration around the idea that women or society might now perceive them or other men's actions as sexually harassing, despite their 'innocence':

> *Whether it's just purely male anxiety or just a sense of arrogance that some women have started to develop over the past couple of decades but yeah there are guys who feel very very self-conscious, I'm certainly a lot more careful and um (sigh) particularly in the workplace, particularly at universities and stuff like that, to not say anything now that is complimentary because yeah I mean it only takes one comment now (Ben, 34)*

Ben constructed potentially unwelcome behaviour from men as simply "complimentary," with the implication that this was well meaning and benign, and that women were 'over-reacting' and irrational for considering it otherwise – or simply that they were reacting in the *wrong* way. In positioning women as 'getting it wrong,' this repertoire contrasts with the previous repertoire, where women were positioned as relationally competent and all-knowing. Here they were accused of interpreting the signs incorrectly, to the detriment of men, and notably without the understanding or sympathy that would be expected for men who might misinterpret a situation.

Men's positioning of women in heterosexual encounters across the dataset was thus contradictory, a discursive construct designed to do different things in different contexts. Women were positioned as relationally competent and superior when men could not understand women, but relationally lacking and misinterpreting when they *should* be understanding to men's 'true' intentions as harmless rather than harmful. Men were set up as the victim in both cases – of their own inability to read signs from women, and of what may follow women's misinterpretation of their 'innocent' actions. Ben explicitly positioned these wrong interpretations from women as stemming from female "arrogance," which was the cause of male victims' fear/anxiety and unwarranted need for carefulness around their behaviour. He balanced this accusation with the suggestion that "male anxiety" may also contribute to 'misunderstanding' – evoking a fair assessment – but went on to label women as the cause of this anxiety. In this way, Ben set up the current gender order as not fair or logical, where women had the power to vilify innocent and well-meaning men over

something as benign as just “one comment.” He painted a risky scenario where men could not do *anything* safely.

Like Ben, many men talked in ways that implied the #MeToo movement (and a new gender order more widely) had gone *too far*, making men ‘unnecessarily’ nervous and careful around women. This type of rhetoric represents a commonly heard backlash against the #MeToo movement, most notably expressed by then US president Donald Trump during Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh’s sexual misconduct trial (BBC, 2018): “It’s a very scary time for young men in America” as “you are truly guilty until proven innocent” (BBC, 2018, p. 1). This discourse of fear, that men may have to defend against ‘false’ accusations, can be used to excuse and exonerate men from inappropriate or harmful behaviour by portraying them as victims of (at best) women’s misunderstandings, or (at worst) maliciousness. This is a discourse that continues to flourish, even in a progressing gender order and despite false reporting of sexual violence being extremely low and under-reporting of sexual violence being extremely high (Flood, 2008).

While men situated themselves as victims, women were simultaneously portrayed as their counterpoints – as unreasonable, unnecessarily sensitive and accusing, misunderstanding or actively ignoring the *truthful intent* behind men’s (innocent) behaviours. This repertoire constructed a climate where women were not believed *or believable* with their own stories of sexual assault. The implication was that changing times have changed the role of women. Women were (still) expected, and indeed wished, by men to be the acquiescent, agreeable *beauties* of the past, not the threatening and feared *beasts* of the present, with the power – and indeed, inclination – to accuse men at any point in time. Within this repertoire, it was implied that women had (illegitimately) gained such power through a subtle backing from society or the media (e.g. through #MeToo), a common ‘post-feminist’ and ‘feminist backlash’ position (Jordan, 2016). This positioned society as increasingly alienating men by *overly* empowering women (a key argument in closed masculine rhetoric that will be explored in more depth in chapter 8).

Another way participants positioned men as reasonable was through disclaiming any objection to #MeToo, though often with the classic discursive disclaimer “but” (Edley & Wetherell, 1999): “(*There’s) a lot of degenerates out there of course but now it’s like political correctness has done away with due process” (Cameron, 38)*. The use of this disclaimer

allowed men to position themselves as allies against *real* sexual violence, but oppose what was constructed as hypersensitivity from women and society over *not real* sexual violence (e.g. uninvited touching or comments) (Hindes & Fileborn, 2019):

> *You see a lot of stuff on social media you know the whole #MeToo movement where it's well the movement is fantastic but it's sort of morphed away from actual sexual assault, rape and harassment to just men trying to hit on a woman and that's sexual harassment now you know like saying hey how it's going and you touch someone and they're like you're harassing me or a bad date with Aziz Ansari you know (…) I am a nice guy I would never do that kind of stuff but because someone may regret something, because I'm not a beautiful person like physically, that does inhibit me a little bit yeah (…) regret sex that turns into he raped me sort, it's not common but it is a worry (Craig, 30)*

Craig referenced "a bad date" popular media article, also known as *I went on a date with Aziz Ansari. It turned into the worst night of my life* (Way, 2018), in which a woman described her experience of a date with celebrity Aziz Ansari as sexual coercion. The legitimacy of her claims was subsequently publicly debated and contested. She described behaviours such as ignoring signs of discomfort, pressuring and failing to obtain explicit consent as part of coercive sexuality – behaviours that many of the general public (and many men in our study) argued were *not actual* sexual violence or *really* problematic (Flanagan & North, 2018). There was a sense that feminism in the current gender order had gone "too far" with this discourse, to attack closed ideas around masculine (active) sexuality. Craig stated that he "*would never do that kind of stuff*" (i.e. sexual coercion or violence), yet rejected the idea that unwelcome advances, unwelcome touching or any of Ansari's behaviour could be part of what was elsewhere theorised as a *spectrum* of sexual violence (Gavey, 2018). Such behaviours were presented as "*just men trying to hit on a woman*," which was spoken about and normalised by many participants as something *harmless*, both expected of men within heterosexuality as the agentic party, and something they should be naturally entitled to:

> *There's an expectation now or a perception that men engaging in behaviour that they've always engaged in you know they'll go out and get drunk on a Friday night and Saturday night and they go and try and hit on chicks you know it's always the*

> *way it's been done, and it's a mad fumble um but today that's perceived in a negative light um it's seen as toxic or I don't know potentially offensive and destructive and all the rest of it but young men need to make mistakes you know that's how they engage, that's always been the social lubrication so I think that perception is I don't know, it's unwarranted (Cameron, 38)*

In Cameron's account, men effectively *need* to "hit on chicks," despite characterising those behaviours as a drunken "mad fumble" or potential "mistakes" (i.e. potentially problematic). He constructed hitting on women as the natural course, "*always the way it's been done*," a necessary rite of passage and a right of manhood – therefore unmovable and beyond reproach. This was despite an almost implicitly acknowledged potential for women to be treated as collateral damage to men's "mistakes." This behaviour was constructed as innocent through naivety, and therefore it was expected to be tolerated due to its necessary contribution to masculine enactment of heterosexuality (Flood, 2008). Women's or society's changing construction of these behaviours as problematic or potentially harmful within a new gender order was rejected. The logic evoked was that as the behaviours have persisted over time, they must be necessary, natural and right (for men and therefore, society), consistent with essentialist (and closed (Elliott, 2020)) explanations of masculinity, which naturalise male behaviours related to power as biological and evolutionary (de Oliveira Pimenta & Natividade, 2013). Women and society were again constructed as overreacting – and as not understanding and accommodating men's needs and intentions.

The expression of frustration from men included not only the fear of being perceived negatively or being accused of inappropriate behaviour that they perceived as *actually* harmless, but a fear of a serious accusation of sexual violence:

> *You're definitely kind of a little bit assumed guilty until proven innocent as in you know an aggressive sexual predator dude (Tom, 40)*

Tom depicted an extreme image to personify this dilemma that men faced. They were reportedly 'judged without trial' and stood effectively accused by default in the #MeToo context, not just as inappropriate, but as a predator – an 'imagined' real threat. The implication was that to be a "sexual predator" was something extreme or rare, and that the masses – or men like him – were, of course, good. Such extreme and polarising language

presented the idea that he might *actually* be an "*aggressive sexual predator dude*" as unreasonable and exaggerated, implicitly framing the #MeToo movement (and women's responses) as unreasonable and exaggerated. These extracts articulated a distinct fear of being accused, when participants framed their behaviour as innocent:

> *One day I was yarning to a girl at a bar once and she was really drunk and she like waved at me and I'm like what's going on and then she lent in to kiss me and I was like really freaked out and you know, like even then I felt like I was like the pest (…) I feel like men are often perceived as the instigator and the pest and the one that wants to instigate things and the one that's guilty (Patrick, 32)*

Patrick described this fear in a situation where he was not even the one initiating an advance. This anecdote served as an example to illustrate *how bad* things were, that men would even feel at risk of accusation when the first move or the inappropriate behaviour had been enacted by the woman and *not* the man. Within a repertoire of *you can't do anything anymore*, the problem was constructed not as men's behaviour, but as society's (inaccurate) perceptions of men as 'guilty' and 'pests.' Indeed, that Patrick articulated this fear of accusation even in a narrative where he positioned himself as the *victim* of problematic behaviour, rather than the instigator, emphasised the *unreasonableness* that this repertoire invoked. This rejection of men as potential instigators of problematic behaviour and women as victims was the underlying backbone that structured this interpretive repertoire and contributed to a larger (overall) discourse of disbelieving women who might make such claims.

She's really only got herself to blame...

The third interpretive repertoire – *She's really only got herself to blame…* – positioned women as rarely *actually* the victims of sexual violence and as culpable for failing to take necessary preventative actions. This repertoire appeared primarily through evocations of 'not believing women' in their accounts of unwanted sex, sexual coercion and sexual violence. Men articulated this in mostly subtle and implicit ways, such as by displaying hesitancy in believing a female victim's account, or by a framed-as-logical questioning around her behaviour – positions that seemed intended to reveal her complicities in, or

mishandling of, the situation. Craig, continuing his commentary around the Aziz Ansari story, evidenced this repertoire:

> *I mean the way I read it was like it was just like she didn't enjoy it so she outed him (Ansari) for it (…) because he's a man he tried it again because he wants to be successful but again if she said no and the first time it was successful I don't see why she can't say no again (Craig, 30)*

Craig directly normalised the idea that men should be expected to be persistent, pushy or pressuring with women in sexual encounters. He constructed these acts as separate from *real* sexual violence, which was instead imagined as violent and physically forced (Edwards, Turchik, Dardis, Reynolds & Gidycz, 2011). Evoking the first (and second) repertoires, "because he's a man," Ansari failed to 'understand' or read signs of discomfort, and therefore did not listen to the first "no." To get sex was unquestioningly positioned as the first priority, treated as men's 'natural' prerogative, a biological 'urge' that they are entitled and expected to act on, and the only thing they were capable of listening to (in the moment). This account reflects earlier discussed dominant discourses around heterosexuality in chapter 3, where men are expected to be active, trying to 'get' sex, and women are expected to be the passive/acquiescing gatekeepers (Hollway, 1984), which can work to legitimise elements of sexual coercion as normal and normative within heterosex (Gavey, 2018).

In Craig's account, the woman was constructed as at fault for not *continuing to* say no and preventing Ansari's advances, illustrating the 'miscommunication hypothesis' discussed in the first interpretative repertoire. Here, unwanted sexual experiences were constructed as arising from a breakdown in communication, specifically men's inability to understand sexual refusal in the absence of a woman explicitly saying "no" – or in this extract, *repeatedly* saying no (O'Byrne et al., 2006). Belief in a 'token no' or "token resistance" (Beres, 2010, p. 3) (i.e. a woman saying no when she *actually* means yes) may be part of Craig's defence of Ansari. Within this discourse, women are expected to say no to preserve the illusion of 'modesty,' despite desiring to have sex, and men are expected to work past this (see Beres, 2010) – despite evidence of this *actually* occurring (at least in this manner) being disputed in research (see Frith & Kitzinger, 1997; McCaw & Senn, 1998; Muehlenhard & Rodgers, 1998). Women were again positioned as more relationally competent, and

potentially as playing a 'communication game' – and therefore responsible for the task of communicating refusal to men in a way that they, as less relationally competent, could understand. Women, in turn, became responsible for what might happen to them if they did not communicate sufficiently for men's 'inabilities' and assumptions.

Conversation analysis around women's sexual refusal has, however, highlighted the difficulties and complexities women may face in saying no and directly refusing men, overlooked by 'just say no' prevention messages. From conversations with young women, Kitzinger and Frith (1999) positioned assertiveness around direct refusal as generally difficult, due to norms of sociability, regardless of situation. They noted these as particularly amplified by gender in sexual scenarios, where young women might face "gendered linguistic problems associated with oppressive expectations about 'feminine' or 'ladylike' speech" (Kitzinger & Frith, 1999, p. 298), and expectations of a submissive femininity and/or sexuality (which still exists despite a progressing gender order (see Pickens & Braun, 2018)). As such, women might be more inclined to employ other more implicit (and socially accepted and understood) tactics of refusal, such as silences, hesitation or distraction to extract themselves from an unwanted sexual situation. The repertoires discussed here rely on and perpetuate the idea that men are unable to understand such subtle methods of refusal from women (despite research that has, in fact, demonstrated that men displayed an awareness of sophisticated and subtle verbal and non-verbal sexual refusals, in the absence of the word 'no' (O'Byrne et al. (2006)).

Craig further blamed the woman in the Ansari case for 'outing' Ansari for an experience that she simply "didn't enjoy" (as opposed to something *actually* sexually problematic) – the implication being that not enjoying a sexual encounter is not noteworthy for women. This construction relied on a logic whereby sexual encounters were or should be predominantly for male enjoyment, which legitimised his 'coercion' and delegitimised her complaint. He was expected to persistently pursue sexual pleasure, and she was expected to accept absence of pleasure or indeed, discomfort or worse. This idea relies on traditional discourses around heterosexuality in which there has been 'a missing discourse of desire' for women (Fine, 1988), and men's sexual pleasure has been considered more natural, important and urgent – a biological imperative (Hollway, 1984). This has allowed for "heterosexual women to be defined in terms of men's sexual needs, rather than as female

sexual subjects who can negotiate with men" (Holland, Ramazanoğlu, Scott, Sharpe & Thomson, 1992, p. 279). Such an interpretative framework sits uneasily alongside progressive and disruptive discourses in a new gender order, which now frame women's pleasure as (potentially even equally) important (Farvid, 2014). However, Craig's comments show the persistence of these patriarchal discourses within masculinity, coexisting alongside emergent popular discourse connected to women's sexual liberation.

Tom similarly blamed women for 'putting themselves' in or 'complaining' about a situation where men might make an unwelcome move:

> *You know women going out to you know have a good time you know, might go out with a group of girls and then they get super pissed off when a guy comes up and tries to talk to them, and I'm like um you know you can put Beyoncé on in your lounge you know in a super safe environment (Tom, 40)*

Men's sexually initiating behaviour is positioned as both a feature of public space and as innocuous – as innocently or benignly 'trying to talk to women.' Women's behaviour in response (e.g. being "*super pissed off*") is positioned as irrational and over the top. Given many of these same men constructed 'real' sexual violence or harassment as rare, women's affective possibilities were bounded in this construction. This aligns with research demonstrating that women often report having to avoid direct rejections or negative reactions to men's unwanted sexually initiating behaviour, as they fear being judged as unnecessarily 'escalating' a 'normal' – and benign – social exchange, and/or they fear unpredictable responses of anger from men (Fileborn, 2012). In these instances, women have reported using indirect responses designed to take care of men's feelings of discomfort (Fileborn, 2012). These actions are intended to prevent women's own potential victimisation, encouraged through discourse that denies they can even be legitimate victims in such cases.

Tom argued that rather than complaining about or reacting wrongly to (i.e. rejecting) men's behaviours, women should alternatively stay home to prevent complaints or claims of danger. By creating a contrast between *out* and the safety of the *home*, out was constructed as normatively unsafe for women (despite men being positioned as rarely *actually* dangerous). Any expectation of women being "super safe" outside of the home was

positioned as unrealistic, something that could not be expected in public environments. This is in line with common precautions taken by women in order to avoid gendered violence, which can include staying at home, not going out alone at night, or avoiding particular public spaces, etc – despite the fact that the majority of gendered violence occurs within the home (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018). Within this repertoire, women were expected to predict and be responsible for the risks that may exist for them in public spaces. Public spaces were therefore constructed as men's spaces, with room only offered for women who managed the risks and displayed 'appropriate' behaviour for that context. Liam discussed women's clothing choices as indicative of women's failings in managing these risks in public spaces, in this case at a music festival:

> *Like Laneway and stuff there were scantily clad girls and obviously they can wear what they want, but but sadly due to you know stereotypical guys you know getting drunk and you know touchy, they also need to have that education of you know dangers out there (Liam, 27)*

Liam positioned the risk of unwanted sexual touching from men as "sadly" unmovable, but women's behaviour, instructed by the right "education," as the only key to solving public dangers for women. He caveated his advice with a nod to feminist rhetoric that has been incorporated into popular and 'common-sense' discourse, that women should be free to "*wear what they want*." Yet, while this statement allowed him to situate himself as equal-minded and *not like them* (i.e. men who touch women without consent), he went on to implicitly construct women who were "scantily clad" as lacking in a vital 'social education' on public risk. These women were therefore positioned as negligent of their own safety and responsible for the harm that may come to them (and therefore excluded themselves from being legitimate or *actual* victims). In this way, he drew on rape myths around women 'asking for it' (Edwards et al., 2011), and traditional gendered discourses around women's bodies as bearers of morality (Ringrose & Renold, 2012). An exposed body was here positioned as an unsafe site of seduction for "drunk" or hapless men, unable to control their sexual impulses to touch.

A victim-blaming sense-making framework, for harm that may happen to women in public spaces, continued to be articulated by Liam, even in relation to his (woman) friend's experience of an unwanted sexual experience:

> *A drunk guy that was hitting on a friend of mine and he ended up like kissing her on the neck, like they set up a support line for this kind of stuff I don't know how she didn't know about it, but he was like hooking and then ended up hooking up with her and all that kind of stuff and she was like trying to escape (…) but then again she's the kind of, I hate to be like the devil's advocate, but she does like drama so I'm wondering if it was to the extent that she said it was (Liam, 27)*

Liam talked about not believing his friend's reports of sexual violence, reproducing the rape myth that women lie about sexual violence (Edwards et al., 2011), and conforming to ingrained patterns in societal responses to sexual violence – that women are not to be believed and/or are at fault. He undermined the validity of her report through constructing her as (overly) emotional (e.g. she "likes drama"), making possible a position where she may have made up or exaggerated a story for a reaction. This account rearticulated patriarchal theories of rape and 'hysterical,' 'attention-seeking' women, and consequently blameless men (Muehlenhard, Harney & Jones, 1992).

In the contemporary #MeToo context, Liam did not simply rearticulate these ideas; he equated his victim blaming with taking a "devil's advocate" position, a term often used to legitimise debating both sides of an (uneven) argument (Deeb et al., 2018). He positioned himself through this discursive move as logical and fair, in rhetorical opposition to her emotional or dramatic reports. He treated her claim as a story or an argument to be rationally disputed and assessed, rather than a simple retelling of events. In this extract, Liam mentioned his knowledge of support lines for sexual violence that she *failed* to access. This also discursively undermined her credibility as a legitimate victim: if he, a male, knew about such supports, then it is almost incomprehensible that she would not know, as it is women who the services were *for*. If she were *really* a victim of sexual violence, she would have used this knowledge in some way to potentially alter the encounter, or at least deal with the effects after the encounter. In this way, he effectively questioned the appropriateness of her womanhood. If women were expected to have knowledge around how to protect themselves from, or support themselves after, sexual violence, to not do so was positioned as negligent and a failing as a woman. She became, in this extract, an imperfect victim, and therefore not believable or worthy of empathy (Meyer, 2016), echoing

a longstanding discourse that keeps women quiet about experiences of violence from men (Franks, 2019).

Conclusion

Here I have highlighted the three key interpretive repertoires articulated by men in talk related to heterosexual dating in the current gender order. Many of the participants positioned men, in general, as *misunderstood* by women, as generally *good* guys, trying their best in a dating atmosphere where the 'rules' were no longer clear, and their abilities for interpreting signals from women were limited. This repertoire removed accountability from men, and from their actions in heterosexual encounters. In turn, the regularly articulated plausible explanation for women's accusations of inappropriate behaviour or sexual assaults (and the #MeToo movement) was that women were reacting in overly 'sensitive,' 'irrational' or even 'arrogant' ways when they 'misunderstood' men's innocent dating behaviour. Women were constructed as not being tolerant or understanding enough of men's *actual* intentions. Some suggested women might even accuse men knowingly out of maliciousness, positioning men as the victims, and women as the instigators, of problematic behaviour. Thus, women's experiences and stories of sexual violence were often spoken about as questionable and not 'fully' believed, although men expressed a common-sense condemnation of an evoked *real* sexual violence. This allowed men to position themselves as 'allies' against sexual violence, but 'logically' questioning and critiquing (and ultimately, rejecting) of individual stories of sexual violence or coercion. These often intermeshed repertoires evoked familiar broader rape myth discourses to make sense of – and undermine the validity of – women's reported experiences, particularly notions that women might be at fault or 'asking for it,' or that they might lie about sexual violence (Edwards et al., 2011). In this way, men could align themselves with a progressive gender order that stands opposed to (a hypothetical or extreme) sexual/gendered violence, but retain aspects of an older, patriarchal gender order in which women's stories of sexual violence continued to be questioned and disbelieved, in preserving a coercive male sexuality (and power).

This type of disbelieving and victim blaming of women who are victims of sexually problematic behaviour is not new – society has long held victims of sexual violence to

account as opposed to their perpetrators, resulting in well-entrenched and extremely high rates of gendered violence, particularly in New Zealand (Gavey, 2018). What is new is the #MeToo context. We have not before witnessed such a widely taken up global pushback against and calling out of gendered patterns of sexual violence as the #MeToo movement, and such a public and widespread call for men to stand in solidarity with victims, and oppose a sexually violent and patriarchal culture (Flood, 2019b). Thus, men in our study appeared to be attempting to find a space between socially popular and seemingly expected responses of *opposing* sexual violence, but also a denial that men *like them* could knowingly engage in and contribute to a culture of gendered sexual violence. And through these positionings, contemporary masculinity appeared to accommodate and even foster closed articulations of traditional denials of a reality of pervasive sexual violence, and backlash against victims who spoke out.

Similar themes of disbelieving women and backlash against other feminist claims, but within the social confines of a progressive gender order, will be part of the analysis for the next chapter. Chapter 8 will outline some of the more explicit misogyny evidenced through closed masculine rhetoric, and discuss (some) men's (often implicit) arguments towards increased men's rights. These arguments often included and elaborated on the idea that women's rights had gone *too far* in the current gender order and that women were to blame for this.

Chapter 8: Analysis: Men's rights and misogyny

"I'm not a men's rights activist – I'm not"

Introduction

In chapter 6, I discussed the idea that men within the sample were required to arrange themselves in relation to a new and progressing gender order (as theorised by Connell (2012)), in which an outwards acceptance or even promotion of gender equality had become part of a new hegemonic masculinity. Although this gender order appeared to require a disavowal of explicitly prejudiced ideas, in many of the accounts discussed in this current chapter, men took up and deployed patriarchal discourse and closed masculine practice (Elliott, 2020), albeit through new justifications. Thus, while in fitting with a progressing gender order where all men worked to avoid the direct label of 'sexist' or 'misogynist' (or racist, homophobic, etc), many still indirectly (or at times directly) supported sexist or misogynist ideas, positioning themselves in opposition to the new gender order. In this chapter, I will examine how men achieved this, through (carefully) lamenting a shifting gender order and an 'attack' on traditional masculinity, while still largely working to avoid or 'rebrand' socially unacceptable discourses, which are (now) widely critiqued as legitimising sexism.

Pushback towards feminist ideals and a progressing gender order was not new or surprising, nor was this careful negotiation with rising gender equality. What was surprising was the amount of sexist and misogynistic comments and ideas that men were willing to share. This was despite working to avoid unfavourable associations with sexism, and despite my gender as a woman interviewer, which might otherwise inhibit blatant sexism (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001). Entering into the study, I had not anticipated that my proposed subject matter and the planned interview questions would generate such animosity towards women, despite the caveats men deployed to keep within socially accepted discourse. Though not ignorant about the existence and relative popularity of 'men's rights' and anti-women/anti-feminist discourses in some (particularly online) spaces, such issues were not something I directly asked or prompted specifically about. As described in chapter 5, I had entered into the research design with the loose aim to produce conversation around men's

struggles with singleness and masculinity. I anticipated that this might involve some comparison with the different struggles faced by women, and that this might lead to *some* sexist discourse, but I had not prepared for the ways in which some men at times aggressively constructed feminism and, in turn, women, as the problem within the current gender order.

It must be noted that most men *did not* express openly misogynistic ideas, but that a large number of men *did* produce, and normalise, what could be interpreted as implicitly sexist and patriarchal discourse in some way (and some significantly more than others), through their promotion or acceptance of certain closed masculine ideals (Elliott, 2020). Of course, the difference between openly misogynistic and implicitly sexist rhetoric is important, but much of the men's talk was connected by the two. Here, when looking at patterns of discourse across the data set, normalising the rhetoric of closed masculinities appeared to commonly set up or allow for more aggressively misogynistic claims to be possible in later discourse. In this chapter, I will illustrate how different degrees of sexist and misogynistic ideas worked together across different themes to sustain discourses of patriarchy that competed for hegemony within the masculine field and continued to colour heterosexual relations within the current gender order.

The interview context – participation as protest

A common starting point and rhetorical base for the protestation of a new gender order was the idea that women's 'issues' took up more societal space than men's:

> *I think the amount of coverage that women's issues get is so huge compared to men's issues and I think that is really really off (Patrick, 32*)

This idea is in line with common post-feminist backlash, which positions ongoing feminist attention to women's issues as (now) going *further* than equality (i.e. giving women *more* power than men) (Nicholas & Agius, 2017) – contributing to a gender order in which men might struggle to maintain dominance. One reason given by several men for joining the study was that their participation, and the subsequent dissemination of the data they produced, would contribute to a 'balancing out' of the attention that men's issues received in comparison to women's. A couple of participants expressed gratitude that I was researching men's issues, a topic they argued often went neglected in society *in favour* of

women's issues. Some participants seemed to position me, the researcher, as 'on their side' in a type of 'war' between men's and women's issues, and the ultimate purpose of the interview was to take on their perspectives and advance those agendas (see chapter 5). Flood (2008) similarly described this type of assumed position of understanding/allyship, in interviewing men around (hetero)sexual storytelling. He indicated that by negotiating with and 'borrowing' from a familiarity with masculinity and homosocial bonds, the researcher could 'perform gender' with the participant, facilitating rapport and disclosure. This was ultimately towards the ends of examining and disrupting problematic discourse which was "constitutive of troubling practices of sexual coercion of women" (Flood, 2008, p. 356). This goal towards social justice was also the aim of my research, and of my allowing (though not encouraging) of this position of allyship (as discussed in chapter 5).

Although means of recruitment did not specifically draw on discourses of 'the other side' of a gendered story, this angle may have been assumed from mention in radio interviews of my previous studies with single women (i.e. inferring men would now have 'their chance' to engage through this study). One participant, for example, spoke to this directly when asked why he was interested in the study:

I *So why were you interested in participating in the study*

P *I thought it would be a good opportunity to tell the other side of the story*

I *Yeah do you mean the other side as opposed to the women's side or..*

P *Yes yes because men rarely speak about this sort of thing, whereas I suspect that women would be a lot more vocal and I thought it would be a good opportunity to say what we think for once (Rob, 55)*

Rob positioned the women's 'side' as the default in societal discussion around the interview topics – evoking a society that does not listen or give enough space to men, but allows limitless space for women who 'lean into' this favouritism. Women's 'equality' was often constructed as privilege, in turn increasing discrimination towards men, evoking a type of zero sum game – i.e. if one side gains, the other must lose (Bosson, Vandello, Michniewicz & Lenes, 2012). The bolstering of men's issues (and privilege) was thus constructed as neutral and needed. Despite the prevalence of this discourse around women dominating talk,

experimental evidence has suggested that female contributions to dialogue are often overestimated on account of social role expectations (e.g. women as 'talkative'), and such perceptions about women dominating talk are often false (Cutler & Scott, 1990). One US study, for example, found that men spoke twice as often as women in formal academic settings overall (Nittrouer et al., 2018). However, the interview was treated by some men as a much-needed platform to redress neglected men's perspectives. Ali evoked similar discourses through the example of a radio interview used for the study recruitment:

> *I was listening your um interview on the radio and um I forget the name of the host radio host now but um but she was going on 'oh it's (singleness) always very difficult for women' and um and that's always the case when you don't really have the other side to argue their point and um I think it's just as hard for guys (Ali, 36)*

Ali here relied on a rhetorical device of 'logic' – if such media sources were *only* commenting on women's struggles, but things were "*just as hard for guys*," it was illogical that their struggles were not equally acknowledged and considered. Ali and other men commonly drew on post-feminist discourses of gender neutrality where everyone should be 'treated the same' (Gavey, 2018) in a bid to silence women and their issues to 'even the scales' for 'neglected' men. Men who drew on this discourse invoked "a crude libertarian understanding of choice and agency to claim 'reverse discrimination' against straight, white men" (Nicholas & Agius, 2018b, p. 31). This construction framed heterosexual white men as the 'new minority' (Gest, 2016). This was a rhetorical move to position men as overwhelmingly victimised and less powerful, and in need of more 'rights' and recognition. Society was constructed as 'wrongly' considering them the most privileged group (Ging, 2019) – a common position throughout the extracts in this chapter.

Nolan accessed the same 'logical' positioning through discussing another media example:

> *The media seems a bit out of balance and what I'll say about that is that all too often we pick up even a Women's Weekly, not that I read them that much but sometimes I'll be reading one that mum's been looking at, it will actually say so and so and her new baby. But where's the photo of the father? All he gets is a mention there in the write up. Well it's just a bit unbalanced isn't it? (…) It just seems like the husbands are just sperm donors? It can feel like that at times (Nolan, 48)*

Nolan discussed a *women's* magazine with the complaint that it was focused on women, utilising such female-targeted media as a key example of the poor representation of men. He used emotive language such as "sperm donor" to emphasise what he positioned as the minimisation of men/fathers in stories about families. This extract reproduced a common discourse found in men's rights spaces, as fathers' rights/visibility has been a key aspect of arguments for increased men's rights and was referenced by several participants. Such arguments often drew upon discourses of gender neutrality referenced by Ali, where men might instrumentally use feminist arguments for equality to instead privilege men's claims to child custody (Williams & Williams, 2017). As will be explored more thoroughly throughout the chapter, men were here constructed as the victims in an unfair and biased feminist society, both socially and in law.

While most men focused the blame for this neglect of their issues on general society, and implicitly on women for taking up the available societal space, some men such as Cameron drew on neoliberal discourse to call on men to be more active in the face of such bias: "*It's up to men to actually voice their concerns of course well yeah, that's why I took part*" (Cameron, 38). Through this extract, Cameron drew on the imaginary position of an indisputably independent and strong man (Wetherell & Edley, 2009), utilising the interview opportunity to voice men's "concerns," *despite* an unfair social climate where others had been silenced. Participation and his attempts to rally other men's independence towards the same cause were thus constructed as acts of minor heroism for the good of other men (Terry & Braun, 2011), approximating hegemonic ideals of strength, courage and autonomy (Wetherell & Edley, 1999).

Similar rhetoric encouraging men to stand up to an 'unjust' feminist society can be found within men's rights spaces, in which men typically group and converse around a hatred of women and feminism, and bemoan a perceived loss of patriarchal power/power over women (Flood, 2004). Cameron and other men, however, were careful to individualise their positions. As discussed in chapter 6, explicitly aligning oneself with men's rights groups and known patriarchal ideology is not a socially tenable position to occupy in a 'fair' society (Fischer, 2012) that is beginning to outwardly/'officially' reject misogyny. Men displayed an awareness of these unpalatable and politically unpopular discourses, and societal distaste in accepting openly sexist or misogynistic rhetoric. Rather than necessarily indicating a

widespread *decline* in these ideas, discursive distancing (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014) from these ideas might indicate more about "the demands of a liberal ideology" (Billig, 1991, p. 133), and the changing boundaries of socially acceptable speech. This was at least relevant in the gender regime of the interview/university context, which men might have assumed to be more 'liberal' than their positions. This effect may also have been mediated by my position as a female-presenting interviewer, prompting assumptions around women as more likely to take offence towards explicitly sexist ideas (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001). As such, participants in this chapter distanced themselves from 'sexist' subject positions, even while still endorsing sexist ideas (a less sophisticated – and successful – approach to navigating the current gender order than the men in chapter 6). This socio-political awareness also extends to such men's rights groups, who typically operate anonymously in online spaces (Ging, 2019), presumably allowing these men to continue in offline spaces with no known association with this ideology.

Cameron demonstrated an awareness of this social climate and performed discursive distancing to this dis-preferred identity position (Sametband & Strong, 2018): "*I'm not a men's rights activist, I'm not, I'm a guy that just wants to do his own thing"* (Cameron, 38). Despite reproducing discourse that was central to men's rights ideology, Cameron individualised his positioning as doing "*his own thing*," again drawing on hegemonic virtues of independence and strength of will – and avoiding potential societal disapproval. These ideas were constructed as arising purely from his own intellect and courage. Different arguments around men's rights were part of the binding discourse of men's talk within this chapter, despite men similarly distancing themselves from the subject positions of men's rights activists.

With reasonings for participating often centred around a societal neglect of men's issues, participants in this chapter continued to discuss gender and heterosexual relations through similar discourses of victimhood for men. They did this by drawing on sexist and men's rights discourses, exemplifying some of the negative features of Elliott's (2020) 'closed' masculinities, while discursively distancing themselves from a fixed relationship to those discourses. As explained in chapter 2, 'closed' masculinities refer to 'bounded' masculine practice and discourse aligned with (older) hegemonic or complicit masculinities, which sit at the centre of the framework and commonly reiterate patriarchal ideology associated with

male power (such as masculine autonomy). However, the men in this chapter who aligned themselves with a closed masculinity, drew from a type of backlash masculinity towards a gender order they positioned as unfairly 'feminist-oriented.' Positioning themselves as marginalised through feminism (despite retaining many potential aspects of power, such as gender, race, class, etc), they drew on discourses associated with certain kinds of protest masculinity (Connell, 2012). This was in an attempt to convince the audience of feminism's shortcomings and the benefits of a patriarchal gender order in which they could (again) enjoy *more* power. The following analysis will discursively analyse men's talk in relation to these aims, through 'closed' discourses around the following themes: *Society as 'unfair' to men/masculinity; Men and women as 'naturally' different; Men as the victims of women; and Only certain types of women as 'worthy'*.

Analysis

"Everyone loves Raymond; no one respects him" – Society as 'unfair' to men/masculinity

Throughout the data related to closed masculinities was a general tone of larger society being unfair to men, or not representing men fairly in the current gender order, as suggested in the previous section '*participation as protest*.' The media was often cited as a key contributor in this 'attack' against men, using tactics such as discrediting men's intelligence (a key masculine virtue):

> *Most sitcoms and cartoons on TV they very much have a set model, in fact these days it's very much always if it's a family, it'll be the husband's a bit of an idiot and the wife's sort of always having to put up with his rubbish and that sort of thing, although often times she's not necessarily very pleasant to him for some reason (Edward, 30)*

> *I think it's the books that we read the movies that we see men are always cast as this fool the idiot you know if you think of the programs at least I grew up with, Home Improvement you know Tim's the idiot and Jill is the relationship expert keeping the family together, The Brady Bunch all those sort of programs the woman was always the stable one that did everything right in the man was always the idiot um it's almost universal (Rob, 55)*

Edward and Rob described men as being 'unfairly' represented in hetero-family dynamics as incapable and foolish, supported by, and dependent on, the matriarch of the family (who was depicted as 'naturally' assuming this emotional labour, again in line with evolutionary constructions of women as 'biological' caregivers (Terry & Braun, 2011)). The male character created through these representations was a type of 'lovable idiot,' a man who meant well and treated others well, but was not respected by women or others – e.g. "*you know like, everyone loves Raymond no one respects him*" (Cameron, 38). Even worse, he was represented as intellectually inferior *in comparison* to his female counterpart – he lacked the *control* she had over the family. This male character was generally seen as a bad representation of men and an inadequate masculine role model – society's way of poking fun at and *disrespecting* men. This representation strayed from patriarchal ideals around male dominance of the household. Some men in our sample articulated this as upsetting or unacceptable:

> *I don't want to be the guy that boys laugh at, I don't want to be the guy in the sitcom that people make fun of (…) I can't think of one instance in the media with me growing up throughout my life where a man has been praised for his virtues as a man, I can't think of one single instance (Cameron, 38)*

In this extract, Cameron worked to create a space where men seeking more power within a changing and 'unfair' gender order were justified. He complained of society not representing, appreciating or acknowledging, the *virtues* or *goodness* of men, a common men's rights complaint (Flood, 2004). This tone resonates with men's liberation movements in the 1970s, which positioned men's roles as more difficult than women's, on account of expectations to perform stereotyped masculine practice (e.g. the 'provider' role) and contempt men might receive in failing to perform (Messner, 1998). Cameron's reproducing of this type of concern elicited vulnerability, a fear of being societally rejected for the *type* of masculinity that he strove to approximate – a potential feeling of discomfort as he perceived the boundaries and acceptable limits of hegemonic masculinity as changing in a progressing gender order. This concern spoke to a larger discourse, around society unfairly berating, rejecting and moving past a closed masculinity, and thus potentially (unjustifiably) rejecting men like him who worked to approximate it:

> *I kind of feel like masculinity is under attack (…) the ways of being masculine aren't always as accepted anymore (…) even things that I see as not immoral or illegal or anything like that, like even playing rugby now is like there's a movement to say it's 'thugby' and it's got a bad culture and it has an element of that culture, it does, but I think that's really unfair (Patrick, 32)*

Patrick discussed physical contact sport, and specifically rugby, which in New Zealand has been particularly linked with an older 'closed' hegemonic masculinity and various harmful discourses and behaviours (Park, 2000) (see chapter 3). Despite somewhat acknowledging problematic aspects of this culture (yet being careful to exclude explicitly harmful masculine behaviours), Patrick resisted societal criticisms and nudgings for rugby to further "civilise itself" (Phillips, 1996), insisting that calling out this element is "unfair." He further discussed positive aspects of the game during the interview. This response deployed a type of 'cancel culture' accusation as a rhetorical tool to undermine criticisms against problematic hegemonic culture as unnecessarily 'cancelling' or 'attacking' freedoms of masculine expression (Parker, 2020). This defensiveness around calling out problematic aspects of masculine practice (e.g. violence, homophobia, emotional stoicism, etc) can alternatively encourage acceptance of such aspects, squashing concerns through positioning them as 'over the top' or 'attacking' masculinity in general, allowing harmful masculine practice to persist unchallenged. Patrick positioned these hegemonic "*ways of being masculine*" as static and thus natural to men, and society's changing (or progressing) discourse around the appropriateness or acceptableness of such practices as the problem 'attacking' the type of (closed/traditional) masculinity he was invested in. Cameron similarly discussed some men's changing thoughts around masculinities or 'new' masculine practice (e.g. see chapter 6) as *denying* a 'true' underlying traditional masculinity:

> *Even guys in their 30s it's like what are you doing? You're wearing skinny jeans, you've got your hair in a faux hawk, what's going on? It's 'oh yeah I don't want to be seen as a stereotypical male' and I'm like 'well what's wrong with it! What is inherently wrong with it?' They're like 'nah they just oppress women and they do this and that' but this is the voice that you've been fed, you're not thinking for yourself you know reason, logic (Cameron, 38)*

Cameron positioned 'new,' progressive or 'open' masculinity (Elliott, 2020), or expressions of masculinity outside of closed 'stereotypical' practices, as complicit with, and weak to, a 'feminist' agenda (while these men, and men in chapter 6, might position themselves as instead strong against a closed, masculinist agenda, and the men in this chapter as weak to it). In contrast, he constructed his own identity as *actually* rebellious and strong (and therefore inherently masculine) in comparison to these 'faux' masculinities. Cameron pushed back against "a growing expectation that men have a role alongside women – indeed a responsibility – to challenge sexism and violence" (Flood, 2019a, p. 2386) within a new gender order. He instead positioned this 'oppression of women' as not valid or real.

In line with common men's rights and misogynist rhetoric (Flood, 2004), Cameron impressed on the audience a world that is *actually* equal and does not need feminism (Nicholas & Agius, 2017). 'Feminist sympathisers' were feminised in Cameron's account through caricatures of tight clothing and styled hair, a type of 'straw' masculinity which he could easily pull down through critique. These masculine practices were treated as a betrayal to a 'real' and 'unproblematic' closed masculinity. Cameron questioned these men: "*what are you doing?*", expressing a *disbelief* at the *absurdity* of such behaviour, a rhetorical tactic designed to police those stepping outside of traditionally prescribed norms. Cameron indicated that men in their 30s should be older and wiser, and past what might be a fleeting 'silly' phase for young men who have less hegemonic power in terms of age and resources, and need to experiment more for heterosexual success (Terry & Braun, 2016). Older men (e.g. "*in their 30s*"), with more established power, should be settled into loyalty to the 'natural' course of masculinity. Through this extract, Cameron displayed a disinterest in 'keeping up' with a new gender order and evolving hegemonic masculinity allowing of more diverse masculine expression. He therefore ridiculed new masculinity as an attempt to encourage others back into preserving and revering the (closed) masculinity in which he was invested, through positioning it as the only 'natural,' 'logical' and acceptable choice for men.

This perceived 'attack' against men and (traditional) masculinity was often 'evidenced' through the idea that men were (unfairly) subject to scrutiny and attack where women were not, again implying that women were *actually* the group with more advantages and power (e.g. "*who would dare to cast a woman as an idiot and have everyone laugh at her in a sitcom you know" Rob, 55*). Cameron continued his discussion with this reasoning:

> *You get fed these messages that masculinity in all these different forms is toxic or stupid or wrong all the rest of it and you grow up with that you know, it's kind of like if you took a girl and put her in the corner and for every day of her life you told her she was useless and she was a joke (…) she'd start to hate her own gender blah blah and it'd be very destructive (Cameron, 38)*

Cameron again equated masculinity with what a man actually *is*; he cannot be separated from his behaviour. Through this conceptualisation, critiquing masculinity (or at least the masculinity he strove for) was essentially critiquing and attacking his person – which he claimed men were subject to constantly throughout their lives, with damaging effects. Such descriptions called on the imagined audience of his interview to consider how *serious* this victimisation of men was and to empathise with the dire and unfair situation feminism had allowed for (Marwick & Caplan, 2018). Not only was it positioned in these extracts that society does not treat women like this, but to do so would be *unimaginable*. Men were thus set up as the unequivocal victims in a 'feminist society' which, through devaluing men (or closed masculinity), clearly favours women – a common backlash that positions feminism as causing misandry (Nicholas & Agius, 2018b). The framing that society is structured by *over* empowering one gender at the expense of the other was a consistent discursive mechanism also analysed in chapter 6. The difference in chapter 6 was that men approximating a 'new' or open masculinity instead constructed society as masculinist and man-privileging (Nicholas & Agius, 2017), at the expense of women. However, both Drishti and Cameron used the same rhetorical tactic of positioning 'general' society as 'passive dupes' (Hobbs & Robbgrieco, 2010) to problematic societal messaging, and themselves as 'woke' to, and strong against, these forces others fail to question or challenge. Through these moves they could both locate themselves within the imaginary position of the heroic, strong and autonomous man, fighting for good where others conform (Wetherell & Edley, 1999), but for opposite causes. These positionings again indicate the valuing of the strong-willed, independent man as hegemonic across both open and closed masculinity.

Victimisation was a recurring theme constructed from (some) men's talk, not only in the way that men and masculinity were positioned as undervalued, but through again tying into the idea that women's issues/rights receive more attention and validation than men's. A new gender order was positioned as something detrimental to men, that they are forced

into and cannot benefit from. Within a progressing gender order, Cameron, invested in closed ideals, could not approximate the masculinity that is evolving around changing axes of gender equality – and competing for hegemony. He therefore called on the audience to 'wake up' and place value back into the system of patriarchy and male dominance in which he was familiar with, invested in and benefited from (i.e. and place value back in *him*).

Men and women as different "on an evolutionary psychology level"

One of the ways that men worked to justify a return to a patriarchal gender order, and a continuation of a more closed hegemonic masculinity, were through 'common-sense' discourses around the 'natural' differences between men and women. These discourses could then be extended to naturalise inequality (a similar discourse to 'natural' differences in gendered communication discussed in chapter 7) and to justify differential treatment of the genders and male superiority (Arendell, 1997). This could also allow for more virulent strains of masculine discourse to flourish.

Gender differences were often positioned as biological and evolutionary – something inescapable and applicable to everyone. As such, they were treated as obvious and 'just the way things are.' The accounts of men in this chapter indicated investment in retaining this worldview, in the face of a progressing gender order where they may experience less privilege than men older than them. However, in order to fit with the current progressing gender order, men often drew on these discourses in seemingly 'positive' ways to explain the 'good' attributes of women, positioning themselves as obviously *not* sexist (demonstrated through talking about women positively):

> *I think again women are far better with people, understanding people than men are (…) we tend to be more single-minded in our approach to things (Craig, 30)*

Craig began with allowing that women are "far better" in interpersonal skills, a comment designed to praise women for relational skills they have long been aligned with, due to their traditionally expected roles of marriage and motherhood (Budgeon, 2016). Numerous other participants also reproduced this discourse, reinforcing ideas around gender complementarianism as natural and positive (Woolwine & Dadlez, 2014). For example, Timmy, who elsewhere often drew on open and 'new' masculine ideas, here demonstrated the widespread and normalised nature of such notions:

> *Males and females are different fundamentally, females are more nurturing, guys are more you know, leading (Timmy, 28)*
>
> *I think the masculine approach is generally more logical head based and the feminine approach is generally more heart based and feelings (Frank, 50)*

Praising women collectively for relational skills can work to naturalise these traits as inherently feminine, increasing pressure on women to conform to such behaviour in order to be seen as 'feminine' (and as such, socially acceptable and desirable) (Pickens & Braun, 2018). Such praise can act as a tool of oppression that invites complicity, encouraging women (back) into traditional gender roles (Bohan, 1993), accepting a type of 'pleasure' from conforming to dominant discourse (Bordo, 2004). Women's 'people skills' were contrasted to men's superior 'single-mindedness' and logic, implying that men might 'naturally' lead and achieve goals in the public sphere, where women might not (or cannot) due to a lack of these skills. These stereotypes work to mark public spaces as masculine, justifying (masculine-presenting) men's engagement and dominance in the public sphere, and limiting women's success there. Participants presented these different skills as complementary in a 'yin and yang' fashion, serving as a justification for gender roles to continue as they currently are/have been (i.e. in an older gender order structured by traditional gender roles). The idea that there might be "no real difference" between men and women in the absence of traditional gender roles was presented as a problem by Craig:

> *If we lose masculinity what is – there's no real difference, the reason I think humanity is successful is because women do stuff significantly better than men, and men do stuff better than women and the way it works cooperatively is how we've thrived as a race (Craig, 30)*

Craig here interpreted gender roles as integral to a successful society that is concerned with perpetual progression (Carlson, 2002), equating stepping outside of strict gender roles with letting down a society that relies on conformity to 'thrive.' Those who did not conform could thus be imagined as selfish, antisocial and going against the natural order (though Craig did not acknowledge this directly). Here, we can see the underlying stirrings of animosity towards those who do not conform to their prescribed gender roles, a common thread of anti-feminist and misogynistic discourse (Ging, 2019). The 'truth' around what masculinity *is*

was also concluded differently between the more 'open' (e.g. chapter 6) and 'closed' discourse. Here, through closed ideals, masculinity was portrayed as natural and oppressed, justified through evolutionary rhetoric, while more open understandings saw masculinity as constructed and privileged, explained through perceptions of patriarchy and power. Both sets of men saw society as unequal – but explained how and why in completely different ways based on their contrasting ideologies and investments.

However, as mentioned, Craig and other participants were careful to distance themselves from being positioned as anti-feminist or misogynistic. Instead, Craig took up the role of a purveyor of well-established 'facts,' simply a knowledgeable person sharing his logic. This was strengthened by directly aligning himself with *actually* being on the side of women, to talk about their 'feminine' traits so admiringly (i.e. if he is 'objectively' appreciative of women/women's traits, he is positioned as having no motive in discussing such ideas outside of simply conveying 'truth'). Thus, Craig reproduced complementarian discourse around women being 'equal in their own way' to justify the patriarchal status quo – one in which he benefitted from.

Other participants similarly used biological and naturalised language to discuss traditionally gendered behaviours (e.g. aggression) as "*hardwired into our makeup" (Patrick, 32)* and *"a very instinctual thing, like we can't help it" (Noah, 24)*. Through talking about gender differences as statements of fact – simple products of evolution/biology – they were constructed as foundationally sound and immutable. Within this discourse, 'scientific theory' and statistics were treated as the highest possible source of 'truth' (Urla, 1993). This framing allowed participants to present themselves as having valid and undisputable 'knowledge,' constructing themselves as 'experts' – a sound masculine identity (Bridges, 2017) (see also chapter 7). In other words, it was a rhetorical tactic used to argue their construction of reality "into being" (Potter, 2008), *and* position themselves as authoritative and their position as immutable.

Placing such value on science and reason can be seen as one of the cornerstones of traditional masculinity (Sonnert & Holton, 1995). The men I interviewed often seemed to draw on this masculine mode of talk to bolster their arguments – especially in contestable space. For instance, Cameron commonly combined his observations about heterosexuality and society in general with particular scientific, evolutionary and even business concepts to

enhance the believability of his truth claims. In the following extract, Cameron displayed his 'knowledge' and 'insight' about dating through this lens of 'science':

> *I worked in hospitality for pretty much all of my life um for a long time and it's interesting to see the dynamics you know of how men and women interact because you bring alcohol into the equation, you know inhibitions lower and you're seeing a base primal way that people interact, but for me because I'm older than you I've seen it change, I've seen a lot more hesitancy come into the equation (Cameron, 38)*

Cameron located his experience in hospitality as allowing him the vantage point to gain more knowledge (and therefore authority) around gendered behaviour. This is a complex position to take, as hospitality/service work is not a sector traditionally seen as masculine, and this could be seen to contradict traditional ideals of masculine power. Therefore, the idea of Cameron striving to approximate a hegemonic ideal may well have produced an ideological dilemma (Billig et al., 1988), as he attempted to negotiate two competing ideologies (Goodman, 2017, p. 149) – masculine authority and power with a 'feminised,' lower class workspace.

The way in which Cameron negotiated this ideological dilemma was to perform a type of compensatory hypermasculinity through taking up the subject position of an older 'expert.' This included towards me as the interviewer, a role that can already be portrayed as a type of 'threat' to masculine power and authority (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001) (see chapter 5). Through implying hospitality work had been a necessary means through which he has been able to understand *more* than others about "primal" behaviour, Cameron was able to assume the masculine role of 'scientific' observer and educator. This positioning can be seen as an attempt to almost cancel out the classed aspects of the service industry. This is in line with colonial constructions of New Zealand as a 'classless' society, where Pākehā across class have historically enjoyed a comfortable existence comparatively to other groups (Duhn, 2006), and disadvantage has been largely obscured. These constructions can work to allow Cameron's masculine authority and obstruct any associations with masculine 'inferiority' based on class. Work by Barber (2008) has illustrated similar strategies by UK men working in hair salons – employment traditionally coded as feminine – to avoid feminisation through relying on rhetoric associated with professional-class masculinities. These examples illustrate how men might be able to approximate more hegemonic

identities in some contexts or justify hegemonic 'failings' (e.g. through class) by emphasising or exaggerating other hegemonic conformities (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). Here we can see hegemonic masculinity as something unobtainable in the full sense for most men, and something to strive towards, rather than something that is able to be fully actualised in all areas (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). A lot of sexist and misogynistic rhetoric within the data can be similarly analysed as men enacting and promoting traditional gender roles as a 'safe' pathway to a misunderstanding of hegemony, in spite of, or potentially because of, one's own departures. Older, patriarchal frameworks of masculinity were here more recognisable and attainable for men who might have felt unable to understand or fit into a more progressively influenced masculinity that is gaining dominance.

These participants relied on a vocabulary of evolutionary psychology to strengthen the believability of their claims, as though they were scientific. This type of reliance on evolutionary psychology to explain perceived gendered behaviour has been routinely invoked to justify inequality in male-dominated online spaces, particularly within men's rights, pick up artist, and anti-feminist groups (the 'manosphere') (see Ging, 2019; O'Neill, 2015). Ging (2019) critiqued such a reliance on evolutionary discourse, as such usages can allow theory to be interpreted superficially and used in unintended contexts to support misogynistic claims about women's natural 'inferiority' and 'need' to be dominated. Pseudo-evolutionary rhetoric is commonly taken up to naturalise privilege (and injustice), promoting the idea that "whatever inequalities we see now between men are not the result of injustice, but simply the residue of natural difference" (Cameron, 2015, p. 357) – discourse that feminists have long had to battle against in the fight for equality. Through reproducing these 'scientific' discourses, misogynistic ideas can be framed as legitimate in spaces where these justifications circulate, becoming naturalised and potentially spreading out into wider discourse. This take-up of broad evolutionary ideas applied to a dating context was used by some men not only to explain and justify differences between genders, but in some cases, such rhetoric was used to justify men's aggression and coercion towards women:

> *So men are actually rewarded in the market for aggressive behaviour, so if if they roll in and you know they like press hard if they do that over and over and over again they are eventually going to get more of what they want you know, I'm not trying to define what it is that they want, but you know, they'll get the outcome which is a*

> *date or you know sex or or um a dance even more often than they would by being you know passive, yeah so when their behaviour, when the behaviour that creeps women out is actually rewarded by women this is right down to an evolutionary psychology level here, wow where do you go, where do you even start with that eh (Tom, 40)*

Tom explicitly referenced evolutionary psychology when discussing aggressively persistent and coercive behaviour towards women in the heterosexual marketplace. He claimed that women "actually reward" aggressive behaviour from men by 'giving into it.' This situated men's problematic behaviour as a product of women's ongoing acceptance of it, thereby locating accountability for the aggression with women (see chapter 7). It was constructed as logical that men will use aggressive behaviour if it is successful. Therefore, women's responses that allow the men to be successful were to blame, as they 'brought it on themselves' – a common victim-blaming discourse (Edwards et al., 2011) in which women are implicitly positioned as 'deserving' violence (Waltermaurer, 2012). Tom took up the position of an unbiased and removed observer who, like the perceived audience, was astonished by such 'findings,' (e.g. "*wow*," "*where do you even start with that eh?*") – findings that were constructed as indisputable through linking with evolutionary 'facts'/science. His reaction further increased the believability of his claims by presenting himself as uninvested and even surprised that such things could be 'true.' Within this rubric, it is simply a strange and shocking fact that women encourage and are therefore accountable for the very behaviour they are so often seen as 'complaining' about. This position located the cause of men's aggressive behaviour implicitly in women's lack of logic and surplus of emotionality, thereby removing accountability from men:

> *Height comes from the fact that you know, with a woman it's going to show more status, it's inherently violent but they don't want to admit to it, it's downward punching power and status within the tribe (Cameron, 38)*

This extract builds on similar misogynistic logic to blame women for men's violence against them/others. According to this 'fact' statement from Cameron, in a discussion about height and desirability, women desire tall men "inherently" because they have the potential and capability to be more physically violent (e.g. "downward punching power"). This was allegedly something women "don't want to admit," challenging anti-violence and feminist

rhetoric that Cameron implicitly set up as false or not a 'true' reflection of women's 'deeper' evolutionary desires or behaviours, illustrating the battle between feminist and pseudo-evolutionary rhetoric (O'Neill, 2015). Thus, in Cameron's conceptualisation, women choose men who gain status through their capacity for violence, which both naturalised men's violence as linked to successful 'mating' and positioned women as actually *seeking out* men with this capacity. This worked to essentialise a patriarchal gender order where men are active (and potentially forceful), and women are passive. The threat of violence here can exist in the background to enforce this order for those who might step outside it, or challenge this power. Through these extracts, both men set the scene for naturalising aggression towards women and blaming women for the constant potential of men's violence within the dating context. This illustrates just how dangerous the availability of these pseudo-evolutionary ideas in a heterosexual dating discourse can be.

"Hang on, this isn't right" – Men as the victims of women

These men who protested a more equal gender order through this type of evolutionary rhetoric, appeared to consider their form of closed masculinity as marginalised from an evolving, new masculinity which was clearly gaining traction in competing for hegemony. Feeling the effects of this marginalisation and attributing them to a society-wide problem affecting all 'regular' (closed) men, they displayed a type of protest masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) against what they positioned as a 'feminist-ruled' society (Jordan, 2016). Though men on the axes of different forms of privilege are usually not associated with protest masculinity (Elliott, 2020), due to the complex nature of masculinity, men with certain privileges can display protest-type masculinities (see McDowell, 2002). This is particularly in relation to any form of disadvantage (or *perception* of disadvantage through my theorisation) obstructing their access to the hegemonic centre (i.e. here through their inability to keep up with a 'feminist-influenced' masculinity which has begun to compete for hegemony).

As these men constructed society as *actually* post-feminist (i.e. already equal and not in need of feminism anymore (McRobbie, 2004)), women were constructed as able to take advantage of this 'surplus' of power from current feminist 'domination' – enabling them to help marginalise men. Men protested this in blame towards women, which was evident through a strong discourse of the victimhood of men at the hands of women, particularly

around women treating men 'unfairly' within heterosexual relationships and/or by leaving a relationship. These discourses could also be combined with evolutionary ideas to legitimise claims about women's toxic relations with men. In the following extract, Rob discussed women's 'natural' gender roles as influencing or accounting for their 'bad' behaviour towards men, appealing to a sympathy for the vulnerability of men. Notably, he appeared less aware or concerned about openly endorsing sexist discourse than some (younger) participants, instead vying for an empathy for men's hurt and struggles to justify sexist sentiment:

> *You know a girl marries you tells you she loves you and 10 or 15 years later and she decides to leave, does she take you or does she take the car and the money? She takes the car and the money and she leaves you (laughs) and so yeah I think that women do like um like a man with good wheels and money and a good job and they probably should, they're probably hardwired that way, they need a reliable provider for their family and that makes sense (Rob, 55)*

Here, Rob directly related naturalised and 'evolutionary' gender roles of women as mothers in need of men as protectors and providers – a key justification of masculinism (Nicholas & Agius, 2018a) – with negative and sexist stereotypes of women as focused on men's money/resources. This account drew on the imaginary figure of the 'gold digger' (i.e. women who use men for money and assets, or ruthlessly and 'unfairly' take them in relationship breakdowns), *despite* also constructing women as understandably in need of these things for children. This imaginary position (Wetherell & Edley, 1999) of women was rhetorically deployed by some other participants, with the aim of constructing an unfair hetero-dating environment for men, e.g. "*I've got a number of investment properties, once women hear that the ears prick up"* (Cameron, 38); "*I can think of one date where um like the first thing she asked me was how much did I earn, how expensive was my car and she like started berating me for not earning enough" (Simon, 29)*. These discourses suggested money and assets were the things women were *actually* interested in, and men were constructed as mere vehicles to reach these goals. Notably, the 'flipside' of this common evolutionary construction – that men in turn are expected to select women based on attractiveness/fertility (Fletcher, Tither, O'Loughlin, Friesen & Overall, 2004) – was absent in these men's complaints, affirming men's innocent positions.

This portrayal tied into hegemonic ideals of wealth generation as integral to masculinity (Donaldson & Poynting, 2007), with women obstructing men's ability to approximate this through their greed. Such discourse is common within men's rights rhetoric as a mode to justify misogyny (Maxwell et al., 2020). Flood (2004) described that within this space, men are often likened to "success objects" the same way feminists theorise sexual objectification towards women as "sex objects" – a discursive tactic designed to position men as equally or *more* oppressed than women. Men within this discourse were positioned as the innocent and vulnerable party – victims to being emotionally and financially depleted by women villains, or having his "*heart ripped out through (his) wallet"* (Cameron, 38). This demonstrated just how *dangerous* empowering women could be within heterosexuality (and laid a foundation for justifying a change in the gender order).

Rob personalised this sympathy for men by locating himself in the scenario as the relatable and injured party, powerless to alleviate a woman's flippancy *despite* her claims of love. Through positioning declarations and marriage vows as emotionally potent and permanent, Rob became reasonable in his expectations of continued commitment. There was no allowance for women to have legitimate grievances or reasons for leaving, or a right to change her mind and end a relationship. This is reminiscent of pre-feminism ideals where 'good' women were required to 'keep their husbands happy' through their own sacrifices (Budgeon, 2016). Rob's evolutionary reasoning worked to soften his animosity but strengthen the 'believability' of his claims through relaying them as evolutionary/scientific 'fact.' Here, we can see in more detail how some men might use misappropriated versions of approximated evolutionary psychology theory to justify and account for sexist discourse. These discourses were deployed to renew a call for traditional gender roles to return/persist on the basis of male victimisation from the current 'artificial' gender order where "*the good guys don't seem to end up with people*" (Frank, 50).

While Rob talked about his experiences of 'gold-digging' women in his own life, Cameron drew on such discourses as a type of general cautionary tale for men contemplating marriage and/or raising children with a woman:

> *I look at the family courts as well and I know a lot of guys being policed through that and it's just, it's the statistics are pretty much overwhelming in terms of women initiating divorces, in terms of child custody going to women, I'm sitting around the*

table with divorced men saying 'three quarters of my income is gone before I even see it' and I'm like I don't want this (Cameron, 38)

The idea of men as "policed" and victimised through feminist aims, backed by key societal institutions particularly during divorce/custody issues, is a key strand of misogynistic and anti-feminist discourse (Arendell, 1997; Flood, 2008). This discourse persists, despite an increasing 'gender neutrality' of custody law, which in treating parents as 'interchangeable,' fails to acknowledge the gendered division of labour, where women are still predominantly primary caregivers in families pre-divorce (Elizabeth, Gavey & Tolmie, 2012). At the core of this defence, is an inherent assumption that men are the natural 'police' and should rightfully be the most powerful and listened to group within any institution's gender regime (Connell, 2012) – that *they* should be policed is an unfair obstruction to this.

Cameron repeatedly returned to 'risks' around heterosexual coupling, presenting this as a pressing concern. In his estimation, contemplation of a heterosexual relationship involved an equation of 'statistics' and anecdotal evidence around the risk that women would later initiate divorce, and in doing so take 'his' assets/money/children – *"it is an actual quantifiable risk going into it, it's a risk equation"* (Cameron, 38). Mathematical statements again worked here to rhetorically legitimise 'blameless' men's situation as *undeniably* riskier (Urla, 1993), due to an 'overdoing' of women's legal rights (Flood, 2004; Tolmie, Elizabeth & Gavey, 2010). It was positioned in both extracts from Rob and Cameron's interviews as unethical and unthinkable that women should be entitled to the division of money and shared assets – their shared viable reality. A relationship here was solely about the man; a woman's decision to leave was positioned as selfish and an attack on not only his emotions, but his power and resources – denying or devaluing the possibility of her contributions to the relationship, financial or otherwise. These participants thus worked to justify a return to a patriarchal gender order where these risks were minimised through men's entitlements to lead relationships/relationship decisions. With the risk of male victimisation framed as inevitable within the current gender order, singleness therefore became a strong stance against feminism and 'female-domination' (see also Taylor & Jackson, 2018; Terry, 2012). This again worked to emphasise the *strength* of men devoted to a 'true' (closed) masculinity, that they would consider *not* following such a normalised path in protest.

Like Cameron, Craig also positioned institutions in general as detrimentally policed by a government-backed 'radical feminism':

> *The more moderate third wave feminists don't get a voice and what is portrayed and what you see and what gets pushed through governance is a bit more radical which is not about equality, it's more about equity and equity is bad because equity is 50/50 it's not equality, it's not about talent and ability, not getting the best person for the best job (Craig, 30)*

Craig distanced himself from any association with being 'anti-feminist' through allowing that 'some' unobtrusive, agreeable feminisms (that do not interfere with men's privileges, i.e. might not be considered feminism) might be more reasonable/acceptable to 'logic.' In positioning himself in this way, Craig reproduced rhetoric commonly used to dichotomise (and de-legitimate) feminist action (see Calder-Dawe & Gavey, 2016; Edley & Wetherell, 2001). He again constructed this argument as credible through positioning himself as unbiased towards women/feminists, and simply 'observing' an unfair environment ruled by 'radicals,' that could (theoretically) disadvantage anyone. What was left unsaid was that the purpose of equity policies is to benefit women and other disadvantaged minorities in the face of overwhelming white male privilege, which continually obstructs equality (Flood, 2020). Therefore, what Craig was implicitly protesting was the potential decline of the patriarchal privilege that is an outcome of this version of reality.

Outside of 'stealing jobs,' leaving relationships, and/or 'preying' on men for their resources, women were also often portrayed as treating men unfairly within existing relationships:

> *One that I hate to see is you know I've got a few mates that are in relationships like this, they're in relationships with these beautiful women who just treat them like crap (Tom, 40)*

Tom used the relationships of his peers as evidence for how women might use power over men irresponsibly. It was assumed in Tom's extract that beauty increased women's power within a relationship, a power that could easily be abused to victimise men. Beauty gave her power and ensured that he stayed for her to wield it, even despite lamentation by his (male) friends. This sort of account is reminiscent of historical references to female sirens of "pure desire" entrancing and enticing unsuspecting and innocent (male) sailors to their deaths

(Salecl, 1997). Men were here treated as prey to a dangerous 'femme fatale'-type character who used beauty, sex and charm to ensnare and control vulnerable men (Hanson & O'Rawe, 2010), a stable typology of woman "as old as Eve" (Place, 1998, p. 47). Men were clearly treated as the less powerful group in such scenarios, helpless to their 'Achilles heel' of uncontrollable sexual desire of which women could take advantage, representative of "male fears of an engulfing femininity" (Huyssen, 1986, pp. 52-53). In this world of female control, singleness again represented a safer and wiser path for disempowered men who had learned caution through the victimisation of other men.

Tom left exactly what behaviours constituted treating men "like crap" in the context of a heterosexual relationship unsaid. Kevin, however, in his discussion of unfair treatment of men by women, specified behaviours that he found unacceptable, both through abstract anecdotes and his own personal example:

> *I heard many horrible stories you know, women betraying men, backstabbing you know boyfriends and cheating and stuff like that, so and also I seem to have quite high standards when it comes to females, um uh my first love was my English teacher um she was actually really pretty I must admit uh her personality was a complete uh, was just terrible personality, terrible, she basically bullied me, yes she did bully me (…) I have to say she is a complete bonehead she didn't get her job because of based on her skills she got a job based on looks (Kevin, 27)*

Through Kevin's example we can see how discourse around women having more power than men and treating them unfairly in a heterosexual (or other) context can pave the way for explicitly misogynistic rhetoric. Kevin's story-telling led from "horrible" anecdotes he had come across of women betraying men, who were always presented as innocent and undeserving of bad behaviour. He framed these examples as "many" – implying a pattern or pervasive problem of women's bad treatment of unsuspecting "boyfriends." This claim serves as an extreme case-type formulation (Pomerantz, 1986), depicting his investment in legitimising his claims to the perceived audience and 'illuminating' women's perceived bad behaviour through exaggerated or extreme language (Edwards, 2000). This was followed by a comment about having "high standards" in a heterosexual context, which served to justify his singleness through the need to stay away from women who might do such "horrible" things. These "standards" also positioned him as 'above' such women (and the men who

accept them), accepting only an imagined elite of 'good' women (tying into ideas of 'worthy' women explored in the next section).

This type of misogynistic rhetoric can be found in 'incel' groups (men who are 'involuntarily celibate' and focus blame for this on women (Jaki et al., 2019)), who express disgust and hate speech towards a variety of 'undeserving' women (Ging, 2019). Kevin went on to describe his past feelings for a woman in an official position of power, and while he allowed her a redeeming factor of beauty, he then, like Tom, constructed this beauty as her weapon to victimise men. According to Kevin, this beauty both allowed her to assume a position of power (her job) and her alleged abuses of it. He attacked her character, professionalism and intelligence in his retelling of events, constructing her as a villain and himself as an undeserving victim. This anecdote, together with his generalised descriptions of women behaving badly, created a picture of evil, 'femme fatale' women undeserving of (limited) power (or a career), leaving the only imaginable solution as to disempower women's bad behaviour and (re)empower men who knew better (i.e. returning to a patriarchal gender order).

Such claims of male suffering in this section were woven together with sexism and misogyny, working as a strategy to rebuff threats to patriarchal power and reassert male dominance (Demetriou, 2001), through "reinstat(ing) the normalcy of white male privilege through the articulation of its loss" (Ging, 2019, p. 648). Men here exercised pushback to the effects of feminism, presenting their position in the social hierarchy as decreasing (Ging, 2019), and feminist efforts towards equality as oppression. In research by Maxwell et al. (2020), 'incel' men drew on similar discourses to position that "when women do evil, society rationalises it" (p. 8). While there is, of course, nothing wrong with speaking out about poor treatment of men, and it is logical to equally deplore harmful treatment against men and women, the problem with this type of discourse within men's spaces is that scenarios are often cherry-picked to emphasise *women* as the cause of men's suffering (i.e. ignoring men's patterned violence/bullying against other men). Such cases then become seen as representative of women's 'true' treatment towards men, positioning women – and feminism that has allowed women such power – as the enemy of men, which in turn incites anger and misogyny, or hatred of women. This discourse additionally also disputes and

denies the endemic problem of men's patterned violence/abuse against women as real and valid, as men are positioned as having it 'just as bad' (Nicholas & Agius, 2017).

These discourses around men's rights appropriate a "liberal vocabulary of 'rights' and 'equality'" (Salter, 2016, p. 74) as a rhetorical device to neutralise misogynistic and anti-feminist tones, and further defend against threats to male privilege from a 'logical' positioning. This talk serves as a reminder for how rhetoric around a 'logical' call for increased attention to men's issues or men's rights can slip into misogyny and aggression towards women – presenting heterosexual interactions and relationships as sites of risk for women, through the possibility of an aggressively enforced misogynistic patriarchal dominance.

"Can I invest in this woman?" – Only certain types of women as 'worthy'

Within men's talk around relations and interactions with women, and more specifically related to the interview topic of singleness and heterosexuality, were more subtle sexist discourses. When talking about masculinity and heterosexual dating, sexist comments or behaviour were often positioned as commonplace or even expected within men's talk about women, and were not generally acknowledged as sexist (laying the foundation for the above misogynistic claims). For example, some men talked about routinely sexually objectifying or harassing women, implicitly positioning such comments or behaviour as a normal homosocial activity with other men:

> *We all sit in the bar and act the sleazy people (laughs) eyeing up women and my mate will say 'ohh she's really good' and then another girl will walk past I'll be like 'she's amazing' (Frank, 50)*
>
> *The boys um like we have some pretty, like in our workshop we have some pretty crude conversations but it's not like, like it doesn't matter if you're single or not, basically we just drive past women walking down the road and we'll just say some stupid comment and then we'll keep driving (Noah, 24)*

These extracts echo academic commentary around heterosexual performance as still fundamental to the hegemonic centre (Elliott, 2020), at least in homosocial contexts which reward such practice. Here, an instance of objectifying or harassing unknown women in public can be seen as an "enactment of masculinity and a site of male bonding" (Terry &

Braun, 2009, p. 170). These heterosexual displays can be treated as an avenue to gaining male status and acceptance (Flood, 2008), and to enhance male bonds through sexualising and 'othering' women as a point of relating, both in social and work scenarios. Despite other forms of sexist discourse as routinely acknowledged as problematic by most men (or defended by men in this chapter), this masculine behaviour was largely normalised throughout the dataset. Thus, it appeared to remain as a feature of the remaining vestiges of the previous hegemonic masculinity, even within a shifting gender order. Themes of sexuality as masculine status were similarly evident in accounts of 'new' masculinity in chapter 6, despite men often positioning themselves as 'beyond' such pressures. These accounts echo Elliott's (2020) conceptualisation of contemporary masculinity as "not completely convinced of the merits of closed masculinities, but not ready to entirely let them go either" (p. 107), particularly in homosocial spaces where conformity might be more strongly policed, and closed ideals were more available and acceptable.

Both Frank and Noah framed these acts as *harmless* – a normal expression of masculine (hetero)sexual interest and virility (Flood, 2013a). This positioned them as doing 'ordinary' masculinity, much like other men (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). This positioning helped avoid associations with 'toxic' masculinity or accusations of sexism, which might be imagined as more extreme or deliberate. Frank described himself and his friend as "*act(ing) the sleazy people*," evoking an imaginary character of men who sexualise and bother women, while simultaneously discursively distancing (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014) themselves from these people who are *actually* sleazy. This was similar to the rhetorical work by participants in chapter 7, who worked to distance themselves from 'real' sexual violence. In contrast, they were only 'acting,' temporarily playing a part between themselves without directly involving the presumably 'unsuspecting' women. The act was therefore constructed as unproblematic. He laughed during this description, working to further convey the impression of light-hearted fun, a simple game or joke.

Noah described homosocial activities between himself and his colleagues, whom he referred to as "the boys" – a friendly, fraternity-type grouping of only men. As argued by Anderson (2008), "segregation of men into a homosocial environment limits their social contact with women and fosters an oppositional masculinity that influences the reproduction of orthodox views regarding women" (p. 257). These expressions of closed

masculinity can be seen as manifesting through their involvement in commonplace "crude conversations," evoking sexualised and/or sexist talk, 'unsuitable' or untenable for female ears (who are not invited regardless). Such 'locker-room' conversations (Cole et al., 2019) were described elsewhere as *"basically quite insulting and sexist conversations at times that you wouldn't say in front of a woman" (Paul, 49)*, the prevalence of which was marked as common, "*certainly that goes on yeah" (Paul, 49).* There was an implied awareness that this talk was problematic (i.e. through the description of it being "crude" or "insulting"), but this was justified through the implication that women were not directly involved/did not hear it. Thus, if women had no knowledge of it, they could not be harmed or offended, which excused and normalised the behaviour. However, in a study by Leone and Parrott (2019), the presence of a 'misogynistic peer norm' was associated with a lack of prosocial bystander intervention of sexual aggression against women. Cole et al. (2019) additionally found that pressure to engage in 'locker room' talk was positively correlated with conformity to masculine norms and rape myth acceptance. These studies indicate that even 'behind closed doors,' what men say to other men can have 'real-life' implications.

Women *were*, however, directly involved in the instance described by Noah that approximated 'cat-calling,' (which can be defined as "sexual harassment on the street by strangers" (Fisher, Lindner & Ferguson, 2019, p. 1495)), where his workmates commented/presumably shouted at women from their vehicle. These acts were minimised to "stupid comments", positioning them as inconsequential, and the men kept driving, evoking the idea of only a momentary interaction and 'no harm done.' Feminist rhetoric has long disputed the assumption that such acts are or can be 'harmless.' Instances of stranger harassment have been linked with numerous negative effects on the victim's well-being, including the objectification of self/others (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008), and increased anxiety and safety fears (Davidson, Butchko, Robbins, Sherd & Gervais, 2016; Macmillan, Nierobisz & Welsh, 2000). This can lead women to modify their behaviour in public spaces (e.g. not walk/take public transport) (McCarty et al., 2014). An *unknown* harasser can additionally increase the negative effects of harassment, as strangers are perceived to present more hostility and an increased threat to safety (McCarty et al., 2014). Yet by normalising and minimising these masculine behaviours, participants worked to preserve/ignore some forms of sexism within hegemonic masculinity.

Following on from the idea of men objectifying women *together* was the idea of being in a relationship with a woman, or being 'seen' with a woman, for the purpose of objectification from one's peers. Positive sexualisation of the woman from one's friends, or even the assumption of this, worked to enhance masculine status:

> *You often don't go out with your pretty girlfriend to a nightclub because you want to dance you go out because you want everyone to see your pretty girlfriend (both laugh) yeah there's that part to it, it is the ego we all have these things (Jarrod, 40)*

Within this extract, the very act of being in a relationship was constructed as a homosocial activity, or a statement to other men about one's heterosexual prowess and masculine capabilities to obtain relations with 'beautiful' women. Jarrod described that even an outing together in this scenario was not for a couple to socialise together; it was for the primary purpose of exhibiting the woman to other men – so long as she was "pretty" (and thus 'worth' showing off). This was again normalised as common behaviour, i.e. *"we all have these things,"* and something humorous (and thus, inconsequential). By locating the imagined individual in his scenario as "you," Jarrod also worked to universalise this objectification discourse as something *any* listener could understand and relate to, and likely be complicit in. Kevin also referred to this kind of treatment of women, but framed it as a weakness:

> *People think having a girlfriend makes them superior um I disagree unless you have like a really, really beautiful girlfriend but other than that uh nothing superior, but they think that they kind of like they have something possession yes status (Kevin, 27)*

Kevin distanced himself from the idea that being single/without a girlfriend might result in a loss of status for himself by positioning that most girlfriends would not *actually* contribute to masculine status, as they would not be beautiful/worthy *enough*. Thus, he could reject the idea that 'most' men with girlfriends might embody a more masculine status than himself. He directly described women as being considered possessions by their boyfriends in this scenario, epitomising the idea of men objectifying, judging and devaluing women based on their approximations of beauty ideals, and participated in this. As implied by Jarrod and Kevin, this can be seen as a practice reportedly shared by other men. Men in an Australian study by Flood (2013a) reported the same type of masculine status as arising from sexual

encounters with 'attractive' women, while sex with women perceived as unattractive was reported to bring little to no status, and was treated as a type of homosocial joke.

What would make a woman "pretty" or "beautiful" and worthy of such 'favourable' objectification was described in various ways, both through personal 'preference' or ideas about what other men/the media projected, often through a combination of physical attributes and age. Some participant statements, for example, mentioned specifications around particular physical parameters: *"I prefer tall girls, tall and slim" (Kevin, 27); "If you've got a blonde haired, blue eyed woman who looks between 20 and 30 you've made it especially if you're in like your 50s" (Joseph, 37); "Not just done up but the classically fit, generally thinner woman, you know bigger breasts, you know bigger hips" (Craig, 30)*. Men's objectification in this way was also treated as a normal part of heterosexuality and dating, as simple 'preferences,' and could often be joked about. Not only do such discourses normalise routine objectification from men, but they work to further reinforce punishing beauty standards for women in order to be valued and 'worthy' of heterosexual attention (Scharff, 2010).

Despite perceived overlap in men's 'preferences' for physical specifications of women, one participant positioned himself as apart from other men in his personal objectification of women:

> *I like chubby chicks, I'm a chubby chick kind of guy I just like it, I don't know why I'm a fucked up dude, I just like it (Dae, 24)*

Dae treated his body-size 'preference' as a type of disclosure, managing his masculine identity though a type of self-deprecation, "*I'm a fucked up dude.*" This constructed his preference for a "chubby" woman as outside of the norm of media-prescribed body standards for women as 'slim' (Gill, 2007), which might elicit ridicule from other men (Flood, 2013a; Maxwell et al., 2020). To defend this admission, he positioned this preference as outside his control (*"I just like it, I don't know why"*), as an unstoppable sexual urge of the male sexual drive (Hollway, 1984), which might elicit some understanding from other (similarly sexually-motivated) men. This type of talk around women's bodies reinscribes misogynist and body-shaming discourses, which position women of certain body sizes as of less value and subject to negative societal appraisals (Forbes, Collinsworth, Jobe, Braun &

Wise, 2007) – discourses commonly evident in misogynist and men's rights forums (Maxwell et al., 2020). Dae denied the possibility of these types of impacts on the very women he "likes," instead treating other's judgements of his attraction (and his masculine status) as the issue to be managed.

Disclosures or admission-type statements were common ways of owning, softening or excusing directly sexist or sexually shaming discourse within an interview context. Through the use of a disclosure, men could implicitly acknowledge sexist comments as problematic, but position them as natural and regrettably unchangeable:

> *It makes me sound like an asshole but that's fine, subconsciously I'm looking at that woman and thinking 'is she an investment for my future she just jumped into bed with me' and 'who else has she had sex with um what does that mean can I invest in this woman is she going to be the mother of my children' and subconsciously, physically, sexually I guess I'm turned off by that and I'm not going to invest in that (Cameron, 38)*

Cameron, like Dae, positioned this misogyny as outside of his control; it was a "physical" and "subconscious" reaction to *her* behaviour. Thus, he denied personal responsibility for his judgements through positioning this sexism as 'natural' and *actually* the fault of the woman. Cameron acknowledged the socially unpalatable tone of his talk, and that others might in response label him an "asshole," referencing common feminist pushback against this type of misogynistic talk (which the men in chapter 7 also commonly pushed back against). This talk was more extreme than the casual objectifying mentioned above and not necessarily hegemonic in the current gender order (at least in discourse). He declared, however, "*but that's fine*," positioning himself as strong enough to rebel against societal (i.e. feminist) criticism, again evoking a type of heroic stance (Wetherell & Edley, 1999) in the name of preserving a 'closed' masculine hegemony (Elliott, 2020). His acceptance of this assumed "asshole" perception implied that he had a 'truth' worth bearing, regardless of pushback, and that society were the ones who had, in fact, got it wrong (common men's rights rhetoric). The misogyny of his statement was also veiled by the personal nature of his constructions – they were merely *his* "subconscious" thoughts and preferences. This construction denied contradiction as right or wrong due to the uncontrollable nature of one's "subconscious," evoking a type of 'that's just the way it is' justification.

In contrast to these 'admissions' and justifications of sexist behaviour and talk, some men positioned themselves as critical of, or above other men's objectification or sexual behaviour towards women:

> *Guys often view women like it's something to catch, or like a goal or it's sort of something you win like a prize or an animal to catch when you're hunting or something like that, like it's a hunt, they do whatever they can to not see the person, the woman that they're chasing, the female becomes an object thing not a person (Don, 29)*

Don engaged in distinct identity work to position himself as above and more aware of sexist discourse than other men. He critiqued other "guys'" behaviour, in keeping with feminist discourse around objectification, positioning himself as a part of, or in on, the feminist cause – and apart from the objectifying behaviour of 'most guys.' In this way, he constructed an identity of 'new' and open progressive masculinity (Elliott, 2020) (not dissimilar to Drishti in chapter 6), which speaks out against misogyny and toxic masculine practice. However, while these declarations indicate positive moves towards equality within masculine discourse, this is not uncomplicated by the fact that presenting as inclusive and complicit with progressive and feminist ideology has increasingly become bound up with some societal privileges and approval for men (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). Such rhetoric can become a 'new' way of conforming to (or hybridising with) an ever-adapting hegemonic masculinity in certain contexts (such as in an interview with a woman), as progressive ideas become "adopted into the repertoire of ways men can perform masculinity" and maintain power (Ralph & Roberts, 2020, p. 83). Nolan attempted to access similar discourses of 'respecting' women to elevate himself above the masculine masses, but with much different conclusions:

> *I'm not into getting in the sack before marriage because I don't want to treat somebody like a, basically like a prostitute, because sadly I have seen at my age, so many who have gone off, 'oh we're in love,' shacked up all this and that, and then 'oh hang on, we fallen out of love' and next minute she's a solo mother, oh god. And um for me it's just like come on, if you love somebody, you will not use her like a prostitute (Nolan, 48)*

In Nolan's extract, a woman who had sex outside of marriage was likened to a "prostitute," which was positioned as the lowest form of woman, in line with misogynist discourse around sexuality as unacceptable for 'worthy' women (Ringrose & Renold, 2012). Having sex in this scenario again had no mentioned effect on the man's identity but degraded a woman to prostitute-like status, and/or a "solo mother" (which was proof and consequence of her indiscretions). This deeply misogynistic discourse was delivered under the banner of 'respect' for women, evoking masculinist ideas of protecting women from their own bad decisions (Nicholas & Agius, 2017). Nolan positioned himself as having the masculine power to either damn women to, or save them from, this dire existence. He chose to be benevolent and 'respectful' to them in his celibacy, setting himself up as an exemplar of a strong and selfless man, who resists his sexual drive in order to 'save' unwitting women (Terry, 2012). In this way he, like many men in this chapter, used misogynistic rhetoric to position himself as another 'hero' of a closed masculinity.

Conclusion

Upon constructing this chapter, I was struck by the amount and extent of sexist and misogynistic data. There was a distinct positioning of men as victims, and a *hostility* towards both women's issues and women being 'allowed' the societal space to voice them. It was set up as almost impossible for men to equally voice their issues, despite the fact that they perceived the study as *for men* to discuss such things. These reactions can be analysed as an attempt to both approximate and preserve a closed, traditional masculinity that is under threat from new and more progressive/feminist ideas and masculinities. As articulated by Ging (2019), "emotionally charged claims to victimhood can be strategically amplified in a bid to dismantle perceived threats to power and privilege" (p. 643).

Yet, one of the most striking aspects of the data around men's rights and misogyny was the uniform distancing of oneself from a sexist identity, or association with men's rights ideas or groups. Hesitation to openly identify with these types of positions may be considered a promising sign of a slow decay of misogynistic and problematic ideals within hegemonic masculinity and larger society. Men who might align themselves with sexist discourse may be becoming more answerable to the consequences of speaking it aloud in a less tolerant climate.

While we might find hope in this, it has also been argued that adopting 'progressive' or liberal positions may simply be "another strategy for white, straight, middle-class men to secure economic, social and political power" in a seemingly more socially just historical context (Ging, 2019, p. 641). Hegemonic masculinity here is fluid and responsive, and must adapt to and hybridise with popular ideals of the time in order to ensure "continued domination" in a changing world, where the objective is still continued social power over women/subordinate others (Demetriou, 2001). This tactic works to conceal and obscure patriarchal ideals that can hide beneath selective 'progressive' elements – i.e. Craig's use of naturalised (and limiting) gender roles as obscured by his 'pro-women' tone and justifications. And as we can see through the chapter, there was no shortage of sexist and misogynist discourse underneath a variety of different veneers, illustrating that:

> "Traditional models of how to be a man have not yet crumbled into dust. They continue to exert a powerful influence on many men's and boys' lives and relations, thus sustaining persistent and pervasive gender inequalities. But their authority is weakening" (Flood, 2019, p. 2387).

Despite a 'side-stepping' of sexist labels, these men might protest *so* strongly, and without much regard to social approval from a wider (presumably more 'feminist') audience/society, in a type of *desperation* to retain closed and traditional ideals *due to* their weakening. This indicated that closed versions of masculinity were, in fact, losing hegemonic status in the face of a progressing gender order, hence the need to fight so hard to retain them without regard to social tone. They perceived the social tone to have already been swayed, and the only tool left at their disposal was that of blunt argument and a direct degradation of feminism. Thus, we might celebrate what appears to be changing and progressing within hegemonic masculinity, away from more misogynist and harmful discourse and practice, and towards more open and egalitarian values – even if some closed ideals still exist and hybridise within hegemonic practice (and if some men still cling aggressively to traditional models). Masculinity in a general sense appears to be at least starting to move on.

To these ends, only a small number of men within the study could be classed as largely and exclusively *committed* to closed ideals, despite many men reproducing *some* closed ideals, indicating this slow but significant change in hegemony. Additionally, it must be considered that participation in this project was entirely voluntary and men self-selected (see chapter

4), which inevitably held some bearing over the *types* of men who participated and the data they produced. Men with stronger ideas around men's rights might be more likely to participate in a study around men's perspectives, potentially 'skewing' the data towards these ideas and resulting in this chapter.

In the final chapter I will conclude my discussions around masculinity within the data. I will discuss how both open and closed strains of masculinity have influence over the current hegemonic form in Aotearoa, how this thesis contributes to masculinity literature, and where there is space to hope.

Chapter 9: Concluding discussion

Beginning to stitch from a new cloth

This thesis has used discourse analysis to explore the ways that 31 men talked about masculinity, heterosexuality and dating in the context of being single in Aotearoa. Men drew on discourses of open and closed masculinities (Elliott, 2020) across different discursive sites, often simultaneously, to establish socially acceptable subject positions around potentially contentious issues. These presentations of self were inextricably mediated by the context of the interview – as a hetero-social relation with me, a woman researcher. Open and progressive discourses were evidenced as gaining substantial traction in the current gender order among these men. However, many still subtly reproduced and normalised closed and traditional masculine rhetoric, with some men identifying with closed positions strongly and explicitly. In these accounts, the remaining influence of patriarchal discourse was clearly evident as still providing structure to masculinity and the greater gender order. The question thus remains: How can we disrupt these problematic constructions and continue to foster men's engagement and alignment with more equal and socially just discourse, particularly among those who (mostly) reject it?

Overview of chapters

In chapters 2 and 3, I provided the background for the context in which the interviews took place, in order to 'set the scene' for the analysis. **Chapter 2** outlined literature related to social constructionist understandings of masculinity, including key theories central to my analysis. This included Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity and Elliott's (2020) conceptualisation of open/closed masculinities. **Chapter 3** focused on literature specific to Connell's (2012) conceptualisation of masculine relationality, including dynamics around homosocial relating, and topics related to heterosexual relating, such as societal discourses about women, sex and the #MeToo context.

In **Chapter 4** I detailed the methodology used for this project, including details of the recruitment and interview process, participant demographics, ethical considerations and

analytical approach. I located the analysis as grounded in social constructionist thought and utilising a critical discursive approach, with elements of thematic analysis.

Chapter 5 provided a critical reflection of the research process and analysis from my position as researcher (and a woman). Here I used the interview context as an example of masculine relationality in practice, providing an opportunity to examine implicit power structures at play, including how I unknowingly 'parachuted across enemy lines' to be positioned as an ally to men's rights. I analysed the implications of this both emotionally and analytically. This chapter considered how, as researchers, we might better equip ourselves for interviewing men.

Chapter 6 drew primarily on a case study to explore 'new' and 'open' masculinity as grown from the margins (Elliott, 2020), supported by similar data from other participants. Of key consideration was how discursive constructions within 'new' masculine ideals might both diverge from, or conform to, different notions of traditional hegemonic masculinity. I outlined how more progressive expressions of masculinity are beginning to compete for hegemony, providing us with hope for increasingly egalitarian gender relations.

Chapter 7 discussed men's accounts in relation to the local #MeToo context and heterosexual dating in general. Using the analytic tool of interpretive repertoires, I demonstrated that, though often more 'subtle' than previous gender orders, patriarchal and victim-blaming constructions of women still dominated the discourses taken up by men in relation to women's reports of sexual harm. The aim of chapters 7 and 8 was to draw attention to these harmful constructions in a bid towards interrogating and (eventually) dismantling them.

Chapter 8 went on to examine (some) men's more explicit expressions of misogyny, sexism and men's rights. I identified rhetorical building blocks and justifications of misogynist claims, such as male victimisation and discursive tactics used by men to separate themselves from misogynist identities (while still engaging in misogynistic and sexist discourse). By drawing on ideals from traditional 'closed' masculinities, men in this chapter worked to justify a 'return' to an imagined ideal of a patriarchal gender order, where the form of

masculinity they were invested in was not under threat from the progressive ideals detailed in chapter 6.

The importance of studying masculinity

This thesis contributes to a growing body of work that continues to report, examine, analyse and interrogate masculinities and gendered systems of power. The purpose for these efforts is ultimately to work closer towards wider social justice and equity. We must continue to 'problematise the powerful' (Elliott, 2020), in the hopes of reconfiguring the current power structure into something more equal and egalitarian. We can do this through "looking at those who make and benefit from the rules, whose self-image and experiences are the dominant cultural models" (Donaldson, 2003, p. 158). When thinking about the current gender order, which I have demonstrated remains influenced by older, patriarchal gender orders, we can see that men (and more specifically, those who can best approximate the ideals of hegemonic masculinity) continue to trade from more social power than women. I have argued that these patriarchal ideals have, in turn, remained an organising feature of hegemonic masculinity, despite more progressive and egalitarian ideas beginning to vie for power and increasingly being absorbed (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). The consequences of this continued (yet more concealed) dominance of patriarchal discourse can be evidenced in a variety of ways, as outlined throughout this thesis, including countless social pressures on women and men to present and relate in ways prescribed by traditional, rigid gender roles.

As evidenced throughout this thesis, men relate in a variety of ways in heterosexual contexts that enable the continuation of patriarchy within the current gender order. Men can employ subtle mechanisms to exert power over an interaction with a woman, such as the 'role of male educator' (see chapter 5) or other tactics designed to 'take charge,' such as personal questions/assumptions, even in the research context (Arendell, 1997). Within the dating context, we can find evidence of these attempts of exerting power in patterns of sexual coercion and violence, and discourses that naturalise this 'active' male sexuality and general dominance, with subsequent victim blaming towards women who speak out against it (Gavey, 2018) (see chapter 7). More specifically, throughout men's data around relating with women were numerous discourses that supported male power, such as disbelieving

women's disclosures of harassment, sexual coercion from men as an 'expected' part of heterosexuality, a normalised sexual double standard, denigration of women who might choose to divorce/separate, constructions of women as 'naturally' more relational (and in turn, less 'logical'), a subsequent dismissing of domestic/relational work, and feminists/feminism as the 'enemy' due to women already having 'enough' rights and attention. An implicit threat of violence existed in some men's talk, for women who might not abide by the 'rules' of the imagined patriarchal ideal, alongside various other consequences for women who might 'leave' or not 'respect' men, or for women who were generally thought of as less 'worthy' (i.e. through their (perceived) sexual behaviour or physical appearance). Even the men who did not partake in many of these discourses (i.e. in chapter 6) spoke about the existence of them, and of a society that generally treated women less fairly than men. This indicated the widespread prevalence of these discourses that support male power, even alongside a progressing gender order and (some) men who rejected them.

The maintenance of the internal hierarchy of masculinity can also be characterised by extreme pressures to conform to traditional ideals, with risks of bullying and victimisation for men upon failing to meet these standards. Drishti discussed these pressures in chapter 6 through his identity of being (somewhat) marginalised from hegemonic masculinity through his race/body. As outlined by Drishti, men who are not white, physically large or strong, or might display emotions (outside of anger), risk being coded as inferior, feminine or lacking 'control,' and may be subjected to bullying through violence, intimidation or ostracisation (Cheng, 1999). Gay men have also typically been subordinated within this hierarchy, commonly falling victim to verbal and physical bullying, and the threat (or reality) of extreme violence (Roberts, 1993) – typically because of the 'threat' their sexuality produces for heterosexual men. This can make presenting as 'not gay' integral to hegemonic masculinity (and though this expectation can be seen as loosening in the current gender order, elements of it still remain (see Ralph & Roberts, 2020)). Various other pressures for men were discussed in this thesis, as well as in literature more widely, including ideals around their bodies (Tiggemann et al., 2008), careers/money-making capacity (see Connell & Wood, 2005) and heterosexual prowess (see Flood, 2008). Even men in this study who

were invested in closed ideals would still at times point to the negative consequences for men who might step outside of some of those ideals:

> *I've seen men go through hell, they're going through something emotionally and all the rest of it and they display that emotion and ask for support in the workplace and what you get is a lot of aggression directed at them (Cameron, 38)*

Alongside consequences for stepping outside these ideals of traditional masculinity, the consequences of attempting to approximate them have also been discussed widely in literature related to men's health (and in chapter 3), illustrating a 'no win' situation for men. Research commentary has emphasised the mental health harms of repressing emotion and low levels of help-seeking for men as part of the overall picture of extremely high rates of suicide for New Zealand men (Gaffaney, 2017), with young men and Māori men as over-represented (Beautrais & Fergusson, 2006). These statistics indicate the potentially increased mental health strains for men marginalised from hegemonic masculinity, who are still pressured to approximate it without the resources. Traditional masculine values of glorified risk-taking and 'toughness' have also weaved throughout the analytic chapters (e.g. in the defence of rugby culture, or men's drunken 'mistakes' with women) as men attempted to access power in hegemonic masculinity. Such acts have also been attributed to poorer health outcomes in regards to violence and injuries, and/or long-term health complications (Gough & Edwards, 1998). These consequences sit alongside the various other pressures in many different aspects of masculinity outlined throughout this thesis – and the failure to adhere to these may increase these mental health strains.

Despite these harms born from trying to approximate, or being marginalised from, hegemonic masculinity, the men in this study who presented as most invested in this masculinity described struggling with changes to it from the new gender order. Men explained confusion and fears around heterosexual expectations, and not feeling equipped in approaching women amid a changing gender order in chapter 7. Men also displayed a desperation, through more overt patriarchal justifications, to cling to a closed hegemonic masculinity in which they were invested, amid threats to its dominance in chapter 8. Though men continue to trade from more power in the current gender order, *which* men and *how* they do so is up for contention. This appeared to create confusion and fear for men caught

in the middle and unsure of how to 'do' masculinity as it transitions, or as the type of masculinity in which they were invested decreases in dominance.

This fear can be linked to the rise in backlash men's rights cultures and rhetoric within the 'manosphere' (Ging, 2019), which draw on the similar discourses as the men in chapter 8. I argued that these men's expressions of (closed) masculinity were tenuous in the current gender order, thus they sought to reclaim obvious expressions of masculinity from the past – blaming women/feminism allowed these men to be 'justified' in their failure of current forms of (more open) hegemonic masculinity. As evidenced in men's rights spaces, men often voice a sense of disenfranchisement and isolation from not being accepted/valued in the current gender order (Copland, 2020). This is often due to their attachment to closed ideals or failure to meet hegemonic ideals, which are often still informed by closed masculinity, producing a situation that is cyclical. Their attachment to older models to make sense of their distress can then lead to further societal rejection – and to further distress.

While I am not suggesting that these complaints should be focused on *instead* of the dismantling of oppression of women and non-hegemonic masculinities sought through this transition, there is a need to also investigate and theorise these issues. We need to think about how to make the path to alternative and more egalitarian masculinities easy for men if we want them to be on board with the journey towards gender equality. This is not only towards benefiting women, but also to benefit men, who (as described above) can also experience significant distress and harms through the pressures and confinements of a patriarchal masculinity focused on domination and power.

All of these consequences of current gendered systems of power speak to the need for continued interrogation of the most dominant mode of masculinity that allows, structures and benefits from this gender and masculinity heirarchy. This can be particularly difficult, as hegemonic masculinity is often naturalised (or hybridised (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014)) in ways that attempt to render these structures of power, and indeed the mode of masculinity itself, as normal and thus invisible. However, "rendering masculinity visible is an important task for any sociological (or indeed psychological) analysis" (Campbell, 2000, p. 562), as only by uncovering and interrogating problematic hegemonic discourse and practice can we hope to disrupt it. And there is clearly much need to disrupt it.

The contribution of this thesis

By drawing on Elliott's (2020) conceptualisation of open/closed masculinities and applying Connell's (2012) relational theory of gender to the data, I have 'made visible' (Campbell, 2000) the masculinities being taken up and contested, and those that appear to be contending for the hegemonic position within local masculinity. I have also drawn attention to the implications these struggles might have for different groups of people (e.g. women, men who do not fit into traditional masculine ideals, men who are invested in retaining these traditional ideals, etc). This thesis contributes to work theorising contemporary masculinity, and more specifically to work aimed at better understanding men's expressions of, and investment in, Elliott's (2020) closed/open masculinities. I chose to focus mostly on men's words that fit with these analytical concepts, with the aim of discussing and deconstructing the (at times strong) remains of closed discourse and practice, to allow us to consider how to foster more open expressions of masculinity as viable alternatives. In this way, I hope this thesis can contribute to steps towards gender equality.

This thesis offers a *unique* contribution to feminist literature around masculinities and heterosexuality, both as a contextual example of masculinity in Aotearoa in a (post)#MeToo climate, but also as an application of masculinity as *relational* (Connell, 2012) to this context. Through this theory, discourse is deployed, reproduced and understood, and patterns of power reaffirmed through relations with others, which positions gender as a social structure (Connell, 2012). By treating masculinity as always interconnected to social relations, and gender orders as socially produced through these relations, I have been able to analyse the power structures that exist within and around heterosexual and homosocial interactions and how they operate. By theorising gender and masculinity in this manner, we can allow for movement and progress through these relations, and for men to be potential "actors in gender change" (Connell, 2012, p. 1675).

However, this analysis was not always straight forward, as these masculinities did not present as bounded, binary or consistent. As noted by Elliott (2020), "masculinities and men themselves are always more nuanced, complex, fluid and messy than can be captured in theory or in words" (p. 18). Hegemonic discourses that might enable power imbalances

were most often subtle, complex, largely obscured, and at times contradictory, as men worked to navigate different discursive sites and positionings (Wetherell & Edley, 1999) around open and closed masculinity. It is this complex nature that affords hegemonic discourses the invisibility to remain powerful in structuring men's lives, and in turn, the "continued domination" of women within gender relations (Demetriou, 2001). While it was important for some men to preserve male power in different ways across different contexts, it was also important for men to display favourable and acceptable identity positionings of themselves in a progressing societal landscape. This at times resulted in a hybridisation of old/closed and new/open masculinities (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014), which worked to obscure masculine power through (some) progressive discourse. This thesis thus contributes to ongoing work that attempts to capture and theorise these "messy" interactions as opportunities to analyse and disrupt (usually obscured) gender inequality.

This pattern of hybridisation offers some scope about the state of a contemporary regional hegemonic masculinity in Aotearoa. Overall, hegemonic masculinity appeared to be characterised by *some* ideals of a new masculinity, influenced by a more egalitarian, progressing gender order, but with remaining roots still tied to a traditional patriarchal gender order, as the new tussled with the old for hegemony. Men most overtly invested in new and open masculinity mostly failed to acknowledge any of their own preservation of these old, closed ideals, though they often illustrated this retention through various discourses around masculine autonomy and rebelliousness, and homosocial conformities. Conversely, the men most invested in closed ideals mostly failed to recognise the underlying patriarchal privilege they still held in the current gender order, and bemoaned the loss or threat from new masculinity and feminism, which they positioned as (unfairly and vastly) more powerful/hegemonic. Thus, men were not as polarised in their positionings or circumstances as they might have worked to portray, and likewise, regional hegemonic masculinity was inextricably tied to aspects of both open and closed masculinity.

Where there is hope

On the surface, analyses such as in chapter 7 and 8, which evidenced still-very-present misogyny and strong backlash to feminist discourse, can inspire a sense of disillusionment in

the current sociocultural context: “fifty-odd years on (from second wave attempts at similar consciousness-raising as #MeToo) and it’s apparently still the job of women to keep telling our stories over and over again in the hope that one day we’re believed” (Rosewarne, 2019, p. 175). We can, however, take hope at various points within this thesis. In chapter 7, we can view #MeToo as a “moment of rupture” (Fileborn & Phillips, 2019, p. 111) in which, as long as these issues continue to be discussed, we have an opportunity to expand and evolve the discursive constructions and our understandings of the boundaries of sexual violence. This is with an aim to capture and acknowledge harmful experiences commonly thought of as not *actual* sexual violence, and to create space for understanding – a call articulated by many others (e.g. Fileborn & Phillips, 2019; Flood, 2019; Kelly, 2013). I hope this thesis will contribute further to our understandings of men’s sense-making around this, to better engage men in understanding, resisting and working to prevent harmful renderings of masculinity and male sexuality that contribute to the practice and perpetuation of all forms of sexual violence.

In line with such ‘ruptures,’ I argued that men in chapter 8 defended closed masculine ideals as a reaction to their perceived slippage *away* from hegemony, with the new and open masculinity of chapter 6 gaining increasing power. As I have discussed, this threat to masculine power was perhaps overestimated on account of the patriarchal ideals that still underlie the current gender order. However, while patriarchal roots still stabilise this tree of evolving masculinity, at least the leaves are beginning to change colour. Relational theory provides space for hope in the ever-changing nature of gender orders (Connell, 2012), here through the influence of a more liberal and egalitarian environment. Masculinities viewed through a relational conceptualisation are likewise continually evolving and open to change in response. The hybridity of open and closed masculinities in this evolving hegemonic masculinity, as explained by Ralph and Roberts (2020), “is neither a means of reconfiguring male power, nor evidence of entirely inclusive masculinities, but instead constitutes an initial step toward inclusivity” (p. 83). While it is important to continue to untangle and deconstruct the problematic discourse that remains, we must also celebrate the steps forward in masculinity. Much *does* appear to be improving for both men and women under the influence of a more progressive gender order, and despite the inevitable backlash from

those who wish to retain older models of male domination, masculinity appears to be travelling on an increasingly progressive trajectory.

Many of the expressions of new and open masculinity evidenced in chapter 6 allow for this optimism. Men openly and firmly expressed support of feminist critiques around such issues as sexual double standards, beauty expectations for women, objectification and gendered single stigma. They also identified and rejected many problematic aspects of traditional masculinities and pressures for men, which they identified as once conforming to, but subsequently 'growing' (or progressing) out of. Drishti openly – and almost proudly – talked about the ways his body and his behaviour did not fit into traditional, closed masculine ideals and that this was *acceptable*, or even preferred, in his (rebellious) account. While this was of course complicated by the dynamics of justifying/protesting a marginalised identity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), and socially succeeding in a more liberal, feminist-influenced society (Billig, 1991), the incorporation of more socially just discourse into masculine expressions can only benefit the fight for gender equality. And evidenced through the protestation from men in chapter 8, this new masculinity is clearly growing in influence, to the point of vying for, restructuring and increasingly gaining hegemony.

As highlighted throughout this thesis, most men's accounts showed some influence from these open ideals, even from those who commonly expressed closed masculine ideals elsewhere. Dae, for example, appeared caught between striving to present as a 'new,' progressive man in some instances, but then also illustrated more implicit investments in misogynistic discourses in others. Despite common complicity with closed masculinity, Dae also talked about the ways that traditional masculine values around repressing emotion were being contested and replaced with more progressive discourse in his homosocial circles:

> *In the modern age (…) all my friends, especially guys, or the guys that I hang out with, all of them are very talkative about their feelings, about their emotions and we're very accommodating, I cry in front of my friends and they cry in front of me sort of thing, yeah and these are like men men but they don't care, they're very open I feel (Dae, 24)*

As illustrated through this extract (and Cameron's earlier extract calling for emotional understanding/allowance for men), some more open discourses, such as those looking to redress the harms of emotional suppression, for example, are beginning to work their way into hegemony. We must continue to support and foster these open and progressive discourses so they might become increasingly available for men to take up, with the goal of allowing more room for change, and for men to be agents of that change in their everyday relations with others.

How can we support change?

As referred to in chapter 3, Flood (2019b) identified three tasks that #MeToo asked of men, which, I argue, are also required of men to support and 'actualise' gender equality in the current gender order more widely. For masculinity to move further into a more egalitarian and responsive space, men need to: listen to (respect and believe) women's stories; reflect on and change their own behaviour (including developing awareness around more implicit patriarchal discourse and privilege); and contribute to wider social change (including the 'calling out' of normalised aspects of gender inequality). We can see throughout this thesis where the men in this study positioned themselves in relation to these aims.

Generally, increasing liberal ideas around inclusivity and addressing historical power systems – fuelled by 'moments of rupture' (Fileborn & Phillips, 2019) such as #MeToo (or other movements such as #BlackLivesMatter, or various marches/protests around human rights as backlash to the US presidency of Donald Trump, etc) – have set the cultural conditions that have provided opportunities for such change. Many of the men in chapter 6 in particular indicated that they had harnessed this opportunity and were actively working towards gender equality, signalling that some men may be meeting Flood's three aims. Men in chapter 6 showed clear alignment with feminist issues, including listening to and believing women's 'stories' about inequality, beauty standards, sexual double standards, gendered single stigma, objectification, etc. These men in chapter 6, through their protestation of traditional masculinities, had clearly reflected on harmful gender norms, including how their own behaviour had fit into them, and then how they had changed their behaviour by 'growing out' of closed masculine practices and ideals. Eric (61), for example, illustrated this

reflection and behaviour change over his life course, highlighted by his extract: "*In the past I may um have had a little bit of misogyny (…) I've sort of managed to, managed to unpack a bit."* However, the extent to which men in chapter 6 and throughout the thesis were contributing to wider social change around gender equality varied. Drishti, as the 'lead' exemplar of a man reproducing progressive masculine discourse within the interviews, did repeatedly call out the problematic aspects of normalised gender equality, as did some other men. However, this calling out was done *to me*, a woman, and in a professional (i.e. safe) space. Drishti did also at times express and exhibit some complicity with traditional masculinities, including participating in, or *not* actively disrupting, potentially problematic masculine practice in homosocial spaces. Whether Drishti and other men who traded on progressive identities would have similarly critiqued problematic ideals in the company of other men, and moreover men invested in closed ideals, was not known. This might be assumed as less likely, based on the higher consequences that can befall men not conforming with, or resisting, hegemonic practice within homosocial relations (Towns & Terry, 2014), as compared to hetero-relations (Goldberg, 1976). However, one might consider that taking part in these interviews and speaking about these gendered issues on this platform was, in fact, an act designed to contribute to wider social change.

While men in chapter 6 utilised this opportunity for change to take up more progressive subject positions, meeting some of Flood's aims, this post #MeToo context also provided the cultural conditions for men to get stuck in backlash. This backlash to progressive ideas around gender equality was evidenced strongly through chapters 7 and 8. Men here explicitly stated disbelief or disregard of women's stories, rejected the idea of male privilege, and instead positioned themselves as disadvantaged, naturalising their own problematic behaviours, and bemoaned and rejected feminist attempts at creating wider change. These positions remain open to men in a progressing gender order to varying degrees, with more subtle and normalised forms available without much societal censure or notice.

These men clearly rejected Flood's aims, leaving the question: How can we support such men to better understand and acknowledge gendered harm, and subsequently take responsibility for being agents of change? As a society, we need to work towards making the harms of patriarchy relevant and clear to men, and provide realistic and easy pathways to

change. How we might accomplish that may be most effectively answered in collaboration with those in diverse fields (e.g. education, health, politics) working towards social justice, forming a "politics of alliance" towards "dismantling hegemonic masculinity" (Demetriou, 2001, pp. 342-343). Connell (2012) pointed to feminist activism as the traditional social mode for shifting cultural ideas in gender relations, which is now able to be structured by transnational networks. She explained that these efforts might be most effective through the incorporation of feminist-aligned, international men's groups also joining public calls for equality. Through observing others, and particularly men in public forums who might be representative of collective masculine power, discourses of gender equality can become increasingly available and easier for men to take up and reproduce. For some men, society might need to change around them in this way before they take on more socially just values as their own.

I hope that this thesis will contribute towards such efforts, in terms of providing an understanding of 'where we are at,' what problems still remain, and what socially just discourses are available within contemporary masculinity in Aotearoa to be reinforced and encouraged. Only with men as part of the cause can we unpick the patriarchal fabric in a significant enough way to begin stitching from a more just cloth.

Limitations/areas for future research

The contribution of this thesis, however, remains inevitably limited in several ways – some key points of which I will expand on in this section. For example, though I explored some intersectional aspects of masculine identity and practice, such as race and class (though this was at times limited or brief), I did not meaningfully explore the intersection of age, besides a couple of mentions. This was regrettable, as men's discourses around heterosexuality, singleness and homosocial pressures *did* in instances present as related to ideas around age and experience. One example of this was in chapter 6, in Drishti's discussion around 'maturing out of' the pressures of hegemonic masculinity that he talked about conforming to in his youth. Some of the older participants also provided interesting data around an acceptance of singleness once past youth, and ways in which they had learnt to embrace/enjoy this lifestyle. However, age and masculinity was not a theme that fit in as

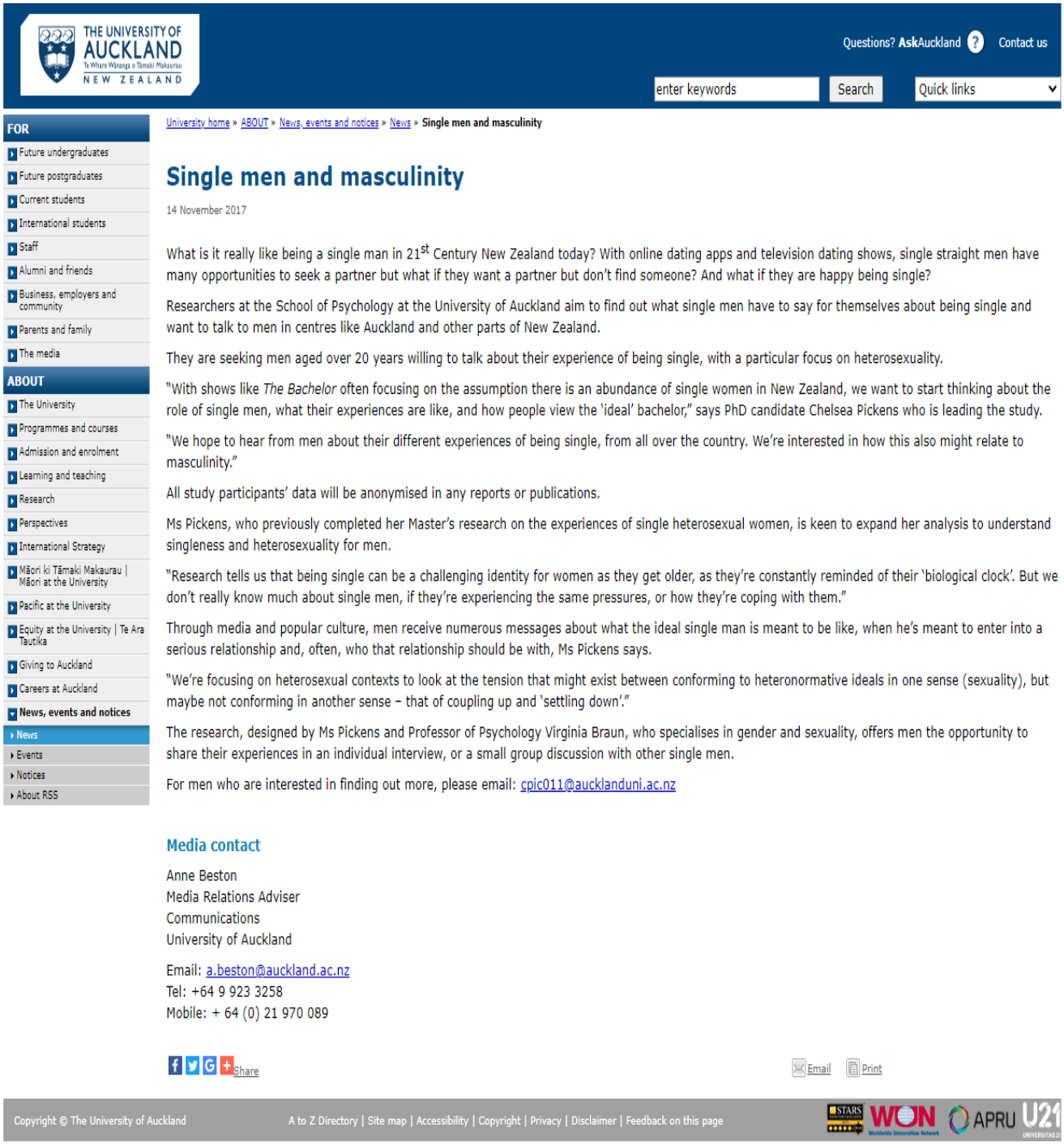
well or strongly with the overall data set or conceptualisation of the thesis, and the limited scope of one coherent document for a doctoral thesis. Some literature referenced throughout this thesis can provide more commentary around age and masculine identity (see Bartholomaeus, 2012; Korobov & Bamberg, 2004; Roberts, 2018; Terry & Braun, 2009). How age operates in examples of masculine relationality and men's constructions of singleness are areas that could be further researched.

As mentioned in chapter 8, it is likely that I may have been provided with an 'over-representation' of data about men's rights issues, based on the topic and means of recruitment. Participation in this project was entirely voluntary and men self-selected, mostly as a result of hearing one of my radio interviews or seeing the media release on the university website. This mode of self-selection from the general public inevitably held some bearing over the *types* of men who participated and the data they produced. Men with stronger ideas around men's rights might have been more likely to participate in a study around men's perspectives, which may have provided me with 'out of proportion' data around closed masculine ideals. Likewise, however, it is also possible that men with strong ideas about *protesting* traditional masculine ideals might have been more likely to participate as an avenue for voicing these oppositions. These potential recruitment pulls might be implicated in my analysis, contributing to polarised patterns of open versus closed masculine positions within the data. While this is not necessarily problematic within a qualitative study that does not attempt to *be* representative, whose voices get to be heard and why is something to continually be reflecting on in feminist post-structuralist work (Weedon, 1987). Though, as I did recruit a small number of participants through snowballing (see Braun & Clarke, 2013), there was the potential for some participants to have contributed to the study who were less likely to volunteer from a media release/radio interview, or from polarised positions.

It is important to recognise that the questions I chose to ask, and how I chose to ask them (along with how I presented as the researcher, as explored in chapter 5), shaped the type of talk that was possible within the interview setting (Schratz & Walker, 2005). My biggest concern throughout the research and writing process was that my treatment of gender/masculinity might reinforce the gender binary and ignore/make invisible issues around gender fluidity, transgender or non-binary identities. Likewise, my treatment of

heterosexuality as a bounded and recognisable term, and confining my study to only heterosexual experiences, also inevitably limited discussion and accounts to *only* heterosexual experiences. This treatment can contribute to implicitly reinforcing constructed heterosexual/non-heterosexual and gender binaries, without acknowledging the potential fluidity of sexual experience and identity, further reinscribing the gender binary and heterosexuality as normative (Budgeon, 2008). Though through using heterosexuality and masculinity as culturally recognised and bounded terms, I was able to theorise about men's discourse and practice in relation to shared understandings of gender and (hetero)sexuality, these issues of discomfort remain. How to engage men in research around heterosexuality and masculinity while leaving conceptualisations around gender and sexuality open/unassumed is an important area for potential future research.

Appendix A: Media release and news/radio stories



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Single men and masculinity

14 November 2017

What is it really like being a single man in 21st Century New Zealand today? With online dating apps and television dating shows, single straight men have many opportunities to seek a partner but what if they want a partner but don't find someone? And what if they are happy being single?

Researchers at the School of Psychology at the University of Auckland aim to find out what single men have to say for themselves about being single and want to talk to men in centres like Auckland and other parts of New Zealand.

They are seeking men aged over 20 years willing to talk about their experience of being single, with a particular focus on heterosexuality.

"With shows like *The Bachelor* often focusing on the assumption there is an abundance of single women in New Zealand, we want to start thinking about the role of single men, what their experiences are like, and how people view the 'ideal' bachelor," says PhD candidate Chelsea Pickens who is leading the study.

"We hope to hear from men about their different experiences of being single, from all over the country. We're interested in how this also might relate to masculinity."

All study participants' data will be anonymised in any reports or publications.

Ms Pickens, who previously completed her Master's research on the experiences of single heterosexual women, is keen to expand her analysis to understand singleness and heterosexuality for men.

"Research tells us that being single can be a challenging identity for women as they get older, as they're constantly reminded of their 'biological clock'. But we don't really know much about single men, if they're experiencing the same pressures, or how they're coping with them."

Through media and popular culture, men receive numerous messages about what the ideal single man is meant to be like, when he's meant to enter into a serious relationship and, often, who that relationship should be with, Ms Pickens says.

"We're focusing on heterosexual contexts to look at the tension that might exist between conforming to heteronormative ideals in one sense (sexuality), but maybe not conforming in another sense – that of coupling up and 'settling down'."

The research, designed by Ms Pickens and Professor of Psychology Virginia Braun, who specialises in gender and sexuality, offers men the opportunity to share their experiences in an individual interview, or a small group discussion with other single men.

For men who are interested in finding out more, please email: cpic011@aucklanduni.ac.nz

Media contact

Anne Beston
Media Relations Adviser
Communications
University of Auckland

Email: a.beston@auckland.ac.nz
Tel: +64 9 923 3258
Mobile: + 64 (0) 21 970 089

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What is it really like being a straight, single man in NZ today?

14/11/2017 Like 0

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What is it really like being a single man in New Zealand in the 21st century? Between online dating apps and television dating shows, single straight men have plenty of opportunities to seek a partner.

What if these single men don't find someone? Are they are happy being single?

Researchers at the School of Psychology at the University of Auckland aim to find out what single men have to say for themselves and want to talk to men in centres like Auckland and other parts of New Zealand.

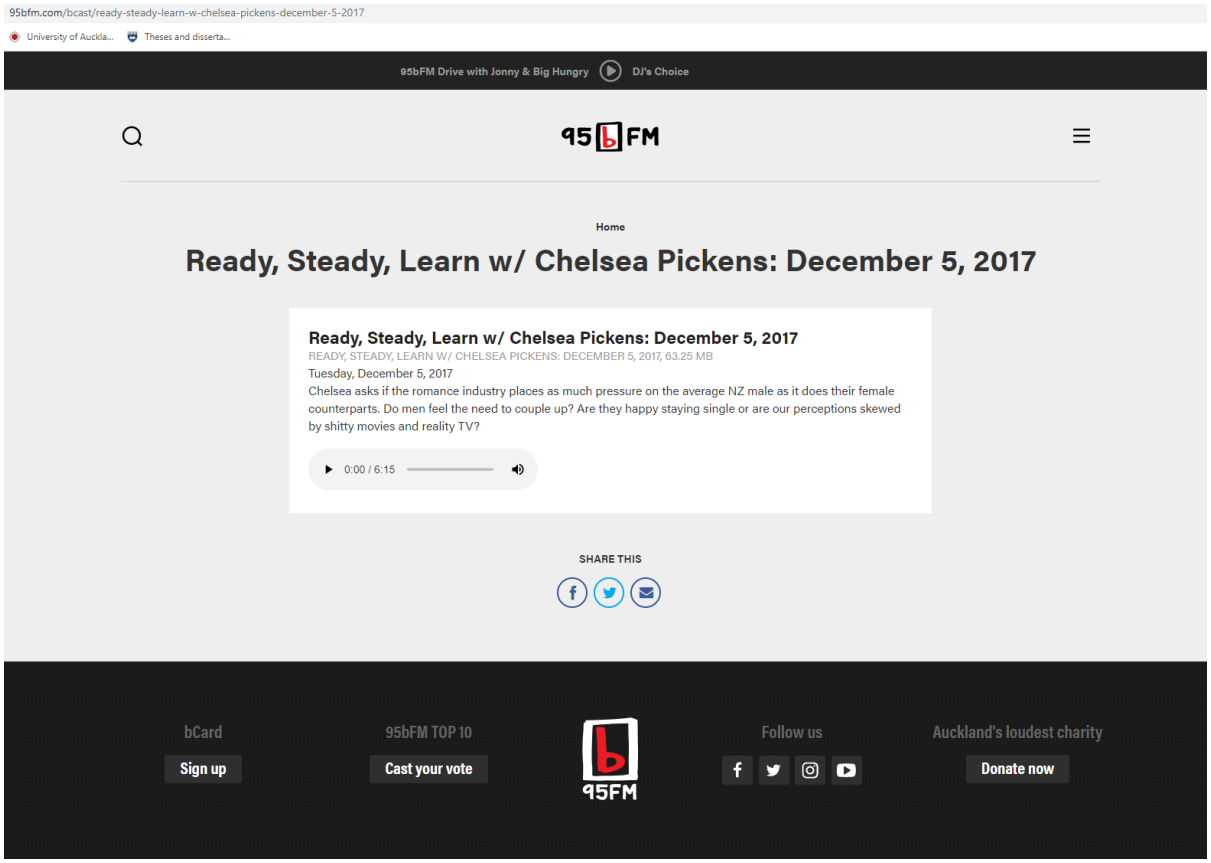
They are seeking men aged over 20 years willing to talk about their experience of being single, with a particular focus on heterosexuality.

Joining Ali Mau to discuss this is PhD candidate Chelsea Pickens who is leading the study.

If you are interested in taking part in the study click here.

Drive with Ali Mau, 3pm - 6pm on RadioLIVE and streaming live to the rova app on Android and iPhone.

RadioLIVE.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READY, STEADY, LEARN W/ CHELSEA PICKENS: DECEMBER 5, 2017, 63.25 MB
Tuesday, December 5, 2017
Chelsea asks if the romance industry places as much pressure on the average NZ male as it does their female counterparts. Do men feel the need to couple up? Are they happy staying single or are our perceptions skewed by shitty movies and reality TV?
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Appendix B: Participant information sheet

SCIENCE
SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

Science Centre, Building 302
2nd Floor, Room 236
23 Symonds Street, Auckland,
New Zealand
T +64 9 923 8557
W auckland.ac.nz
The University of Auckland

Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142 New Zealand

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Project title: Single men and masculinity
Researchers: Chelsea Pickens, Professor Virginia Braun

My name is Chelsea Pickens, and I am conducting a research project about single men for my Doctoral study in Psychology at the University of Auckland, supervised by Professor Virginia Braun. The project aims to explore how single straight men understand, make sense of, and act in relation to, being single, and ideas around singledom and masculinity within New Zealand society.

Who can be involved?
If you are a single man aged over 20, heterosexual, and have lived in New Zealand for over three years, we would be interested in talking to you.
We will be speaking to men throughout the country either in a one on one interview, or a small group (3-6 participants) discussion. We will be aiming to talk to about 30 men through interviews, and about 50 men through discussion groups.
Interviews will either be conducted in person or via Skype, depending on location.
Group discussions will be conducted in person, by myself or a research assistant.

What is required of participants?
Participation will involve a discussion about your experiences and thoughts about being single. For one-to-one interviews they should last around one hour, but may go longer if you have a lot to talk about. I will be the only other person present at the interviews. For the group discussions, there will be 2-5 other participants – probably not known to you. These groups will take 1-2 hours, and will be moderated by another person (maybe myself, maybe a research assistant). If you are part of a focus group, confidentiality of participation cannot be assured by the research team, but you will be asked to keep anything other participants say or share confidential.
Interviews and group discussions will be audio recorded, and then transcribed for analysis.
Interviews will be arranged at a time that suits you; focus groups will be arranged at a time that suits the most participants. If you are in Auckland, they will generally be held at the University of Auckland but can potentially be in another (public) place, if necessary. Outside of Auckland we will arrange for a public space (e.g. community space).
The interview/focus group will loosely follow a list of questions/topics, related both to your experiences of being single, to how single men are perceived and represented in society and the media, and to how you feel singleness relates to masculinity.

What are the benefits of being involved?

We hope participation will be enjoyable and interesting for participants. We are seeing some demographic changes which suggest people are staying single for longer, but this isn't often widely talked about. You may enjoy the opportunity to discuss an issue and express your views on issues that may personally affect you; in group discussions, you will hear what others have to say, too. You will also have an opportunity to experience a research project as an insider, and learn about the general process in general.

What are the risks of being involved?

We don't anticipate that participation in this project will be distressing. However, as the interview and group discussions will involve discussing *personal* topics (e.g. relationships), and sometimes in depth, there is a chance some of the discussion may be somewhat distressing. Overall, however, we don't anticipate this to be the case. Should you feel you need to access support services after participation, we will have a list of organisations available.

In the group discussions, there is a chance you might turn up and find you know someone else in the group. If you feel uncomfortable in that instance, we can look at rearranging your participation, or you can choose to withdraw.

How will the data be used?

Data (transcripts from the interviews and group discussions) will be analysed for my doctoral thesis. It may also be potentially used in presentations or publications arising from it. All data will be anonymised, and your participation in the research will be treated with confidentiality by the researchers.

Any identifying details of participants in the interviews and focus groups will be held confidentially by the research team. Pseudonyms will be used to replace participant and other names during the analysis and final write up. Chelsea Pickens will transcribe the data – if external transcription is sought, this will be under conditions of confidentiality. The full dataset will not be shared beyond the research team, which may include research assistants.

Hard copy data will be kept in secure storage (e.g. a locked filing cabinet) for a minimum of six years or until all interest in the project has finished, and electronic data will be backed up and stored on the University of Auckland server for the same amount of time. Hard copies will be shredded and digital files deleted after this time.

If you would like to receive to get a summary of the study's findings, you will be able to indicate this on your consent form.

Other things to note:

Participation is entirely voluntary.

For interview participants, if you wish to withdraw at any point, before or during the interview, this will be understood and respected, with no questions asked. You can also withdraw any or all of the information you have provided **up to one month** following the interview. Please contact Chelsea Pickens should you wish to do so.

For group discussion participants, if you wish to withdraw at any point, before or during the interview, this will be understood and respected, with no questions asked. However, you will be unable to retrospectively withdraw information after the focus group is over, due to the difficultly of correctly isolating and identifying one voice among many in our recordings.

Contact Details:

If you would like to be involved, have any questions, or would like to know more, please contact me (Chelsea Pickens) at School of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland Mail Centre 1142.

Email: **cpic011@aucklanduni.ac.nz**

Alternatively, you can contact Professor Virginia Braun, who is supervising the project: School of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland Mail Centre 1142.

Email: v.braun@auckland.ac.nz
Phone: (09) 373 7599 ext. 87561
If you require more information, you can contact the Head of School for Psychology, Professor Ian Kirk.
Email: i.kirk@auckland.ac.nz
Phone: (09) 373 7599 ext. 88524

For any concerns regarding ethical issues you may contact the Chair, the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, at the University of Auckland Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142.
Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz
Phone: (09) 373-7599 ext. 83711.

Appendix C: Participant consent form

SCIENCE
SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

Science Centre, Building 302
2nd Floor, Room 236
23 Symonds Street, Auckland,
New Zealand
T +64 9 923 8557
W auckland.ac.nz
The University of Auckland

Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142 New Zealand

CONSENT FORM – INTERVIEW
This form will be held for a period of six years

Project title: Single men and masculinity
Researchers: Chelsea Pickens, Associate Professor Virginia Braun

I have read the participant information sheet and understand the nature of the research project. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the research and have them answered adequately. I understand that my participation in the project is entirely voluntary.

- I agree to participate in this research project.
- I agree for the interview to be audio recorded.
- I understand that I have the right to stop my participation at any point during data collection, and withdraw part or all of the information I have provided up to one month after the interview.
- I understand that anonymised extracts of what I say may be used in research outputs, including published work.
- I understand that my demographic details will be collated and reported in research outputs.

I **would / would not** like to receive a summary of findings, which can be emailed to me at this address: _____

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 03/11/2017 for three years, Reference Number 020089

Appendix D: Participant demographic form

Single men and masculinity study - Participant demographics from

Date of interview/focus group:

Please give us the following requested information, to help us understand the range of participants taking part. All information will be anonymised in research output.

Age:

Gender identity:

Cultural, Racial and/or Ethnic identity/identities:

Sexuality:

Do you consider yourself disabled?

If yes – describe if you wish

What class to you consider yourself to be?

Current (main) occupation:

If studying – what are you studying?

How long have you lived in New Zealand?

What place (town/city/region) do you live?

What other places have you lived?

How long have you been single?

Have you ever been in what *you* would consider a 'serious' relationship?

If yes – how many?

If yes – how long was/were the relationship(s)?

Have you ever *been* married or civil unioned?

If yes – are you still?

Do you wish to be married/civil unioned in the future?

Do you have children?

If yes – how many?

If no – do you want to have children in the future?

Please add any other (demographic) information you consider relevant that we haven't asked about:

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 03/11/2017 for three years, Reference Number 020089

THANK YOU FOR PROVIDING THIS INFORMATION!

Appendix E: Participant support services sheet

Project title: Single men and masculinity

NATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

If anything came up for you during our interview or group discussion, listed are some services that you can contact for support from anywhere in the country:

Lifeline: (phone counselling service)

Ph: 0800 543 354

Website: http://www.lifeline.org.nz/

Depression/Anxiety Helpline: (phone counselling service)

Ph: 0800 111 757

Free txt: 4202

Website: https://depression.org.nz

The Lowdown: (online support)

Free txt: 5626

Website: https://thelowdown.co.nz/

OUTLine NZ: (sexuality or gender identity helpline)

Ph: 0800 688 5463

Website: http://www.outline.org.nz/

Man Alive: (counselling by/for men, non-violence programmes)

Website: https://manalive.org.nz/

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Appendix F: Interview guide

Single men and masculinity study - interview guide

(personal intro)

(Check they have read and understood PIS, ask if they have any questions)

(Give consent and demographics form; collect after completion)

(Check ok to turn on audio recorder)

Questions/points for discussion

1. Why were you interested in participating in this study?

2. Have you been in a relationship before? Are you interested in finding a relationship or dating?
- *If actively looking, how/ where?*
- *If not, why is it that you're not? (ask in way that doesn't suggest one should be!)*

3. How do you feel about being single?
- *Has this changed over time? Do you think it will change over time? (discuss)*
- *Do you know if you want to have children/do you want to? Does this impact?*
- *Tell me what's good about being single?*
- *Tell me what's hard or challenging about being single?*

4. How do you think *others* perceive you when they know you are single?
- *How do you feel about these perceptions?*
- *How have you responded?*
- *Do you get direct comments? How respond to those?*
- *(make sure to ask about positive AND negative if they only offer one)*

5. Do you ever experience any *pressure* from anyone around you to 'couple up'?
- *What sorts of things?*
- *How do you feel?*
- *How do you respond?*
- *What ways does this impact you – and how do you react to it?*

6. Do you ever feel 'pressure' from society in general to 'couple up'? E.g. the media

7. Do you ever feel pressure from others or society in general to stay or be single, or have you in the past?
- *From who? Different messages from men/women?*

8. How do you think single (straight) men are *perceived* in our society - what do people think of them? What are some stereotypes?
- *Do you think the age of the single man can change perceptions?*
- *How does the media portray them?*
- *Do you think men perceive single men differently than women do?*

9. As a single man, do you feel that there are right and wrong ways you should behave, in our current society?

   For example are there expectations or stereotypes about how men should look to be attractive to women?

   How they're meant to or do behave around or interact with single women, or other men?

   Jobs or personal characteristics they're meant to have to be attractive?

- *Where or who do these ideas come from? Are they realistic?*
- *What happens if men measure up to that?*
- *What happens if they' don't?*

10. As a single man, do you feel that there are right and wrong ways you should think and feel, in our current society? (e.g. about being single) (ask for expansion/examples; if they fit)

- *What are the consequences if you do?*
- *What are the consequences if you don't?*
- *What if a guy is really sad about being single and wants a relationship?*

11. How does singleness fit into the ways that men are taught or expected to 'be a man'? Does it fit in?

- *Is being a man related to one's relationship status?*

Thanks, and do you have any questions or anything else you would like to add?

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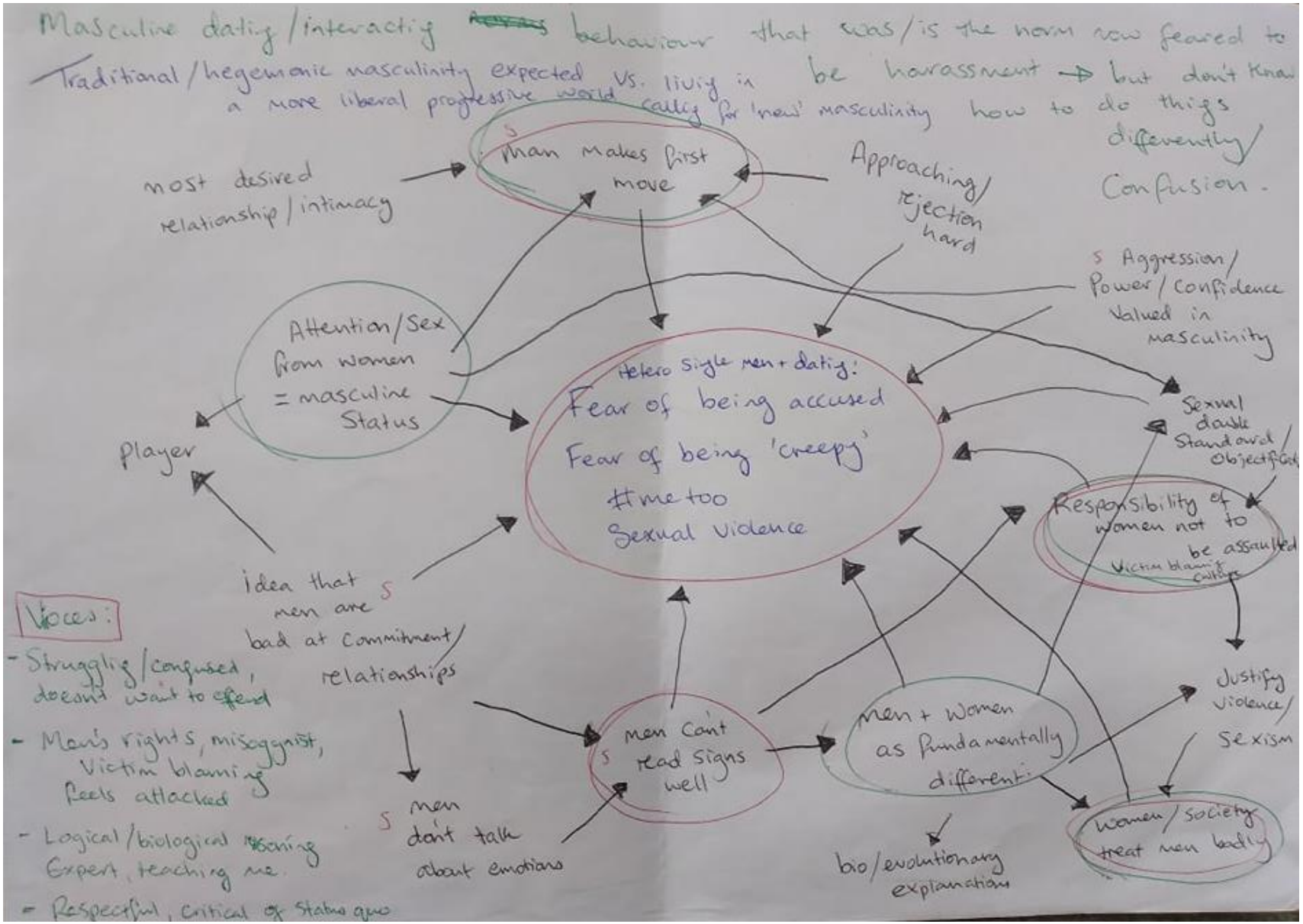
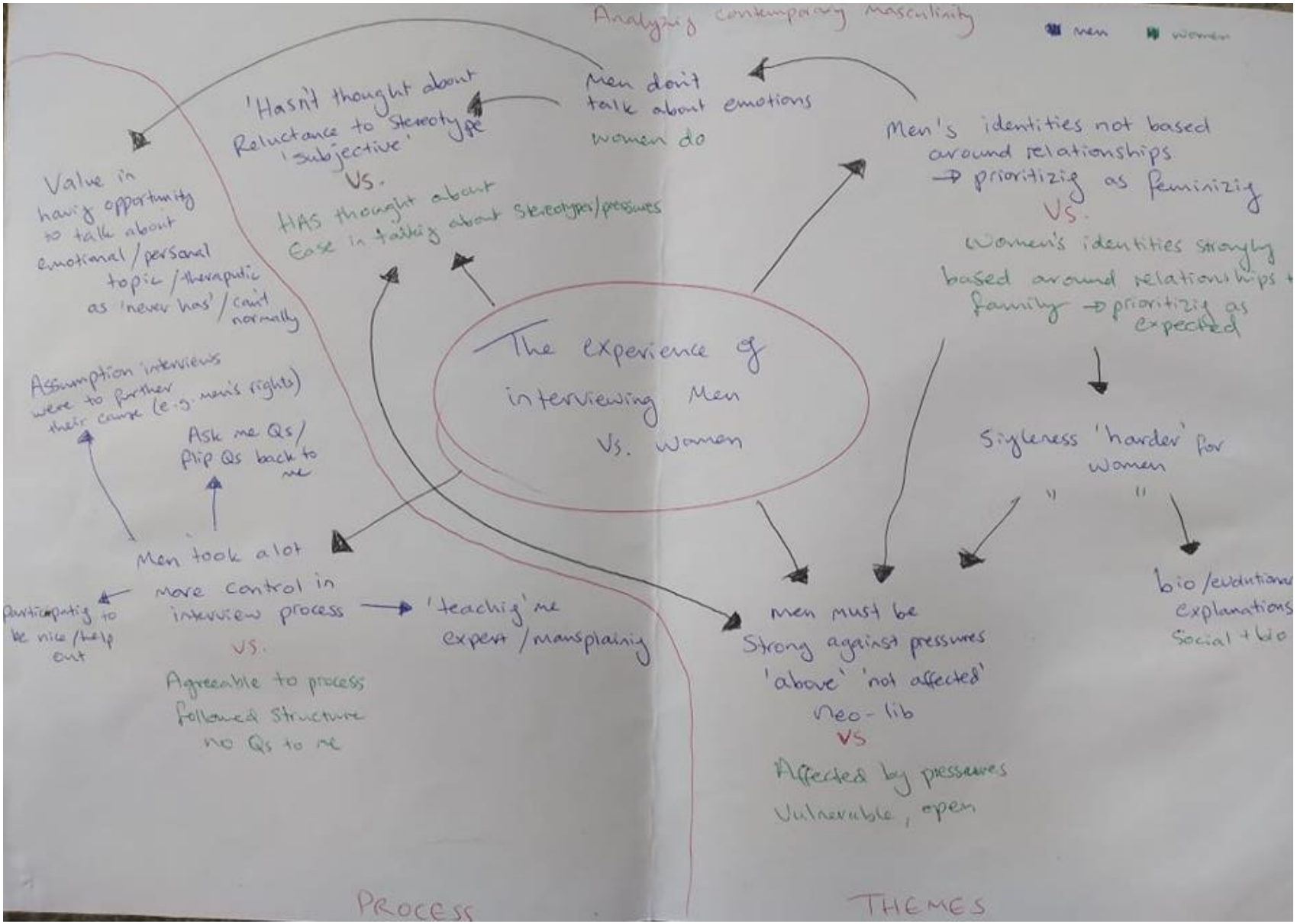
Appendix G: Visual maps for analysis


Masculine dating / interacting behaviour that was / is the norm now feared to be harassment → but don't know how to do things differently / Confusion.
Traditional / hegemonic masculinity expected vs. living in a more liberal progressive world calling for 'new' masculinity
most desired relationship / intimacy
Man makes first move
Approaching / rejection hard
S Aggression / Power / Confidence Valued in masculinity
Attention / Sex from women = masculine Status
Player
Hetero Sigle men + dating:
Fear of being accused
Fear of being 'creepy'
#metoo
Sexual violence
Sexual double Standard / Objectification
Responsibility of women not to be assaulted
Victim blaming culture
Idea that men are bad at commitment / relationships
S
Voices:
- Struggling / confused, doesn't want to offend
- Men's rights, misoggnist, Victim blaming feels attacked
- Logical / biological reasoning Expert, teaching me
- Respectful, critical of status quo
S men don't talk about emotions
S men can't read signs well
men + women as fundamentally different
bio / evolutionary explanation
Justify violence / Sexism
Women / society treat men badly


Analyzing contemporary masculinity
men
women
'Hasn't thought about
Reluctance to 'stereotype'
'subjective'
Vs.
HAS thought about
Ease in talking about stereotypes/pressures
Men don't talk about emotions women do
Men's identities not based around relationships → prioritizing as feminizing
Vs.
Women's identities strongly based around relationships + family → prioritizing as expected
Valve in having opportunity to talk about emotional/personal topic/therapeutic as 'never has'/can't normally
The experience of interviewing Men Vs. Women
Assumption interviews were to further their cause (e.g. men's rights)
Ask me Qs/ flip Qs back to me
Men took alot more control in interview process
Vs.
Agreeable to process followed structure no Qs to me
Participating to be nice/help out
'teaching' me expert/mansplaining
Sigleness 'harder' for women
" "
bio/evolutionary explanations Social + bio
men must be Strong against pressures 'above' 'not affected'
neo-lib
vs
Affected by pressures
Vulnerable, open
PROCESS
THEMES

Different views
logical/biological reasoning
Expert, teaching me, patronising
men's rights
feel attacked
by society
by women
Oblivious misogynist
vs. older, content happy single, no pressure
Struggling to meet woman, wants relationship, pressure
'Good guy' helping me, provider
'old fashioned' values
Critical of gender roles/pressures
Strong, invulnerable not affected by masculinity or sickness

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