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“It’s such a pathetic little operation”: Men, masculinities and vasectomy in New Zealand

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Abstract

This thesis examines vasectomy as a gendered practice of (non)reproductive masculinity. Taking the New Zealand context as my domain of focus, I will discuss the socio-cultural meaning of the operation both within Western society, and for individual (heterosexual) men in the ongoing production and reproduction of their identities. This project reports on interview and survey based data, in which a number of New Zealand men made sense of the operation. It is social constructionist in nature, critical realist in orientation and also draws upon poststructuralist feminist theory and critical masculinities theory. This thesis will rely on various forms of quantitative, discourse and thematic analysis to highlight the ways in which men talked about having a vasectomy and its impact on their relationships with their partner, themselves, their own body and others. It will examine the potential use of these in “disrupting and displacing dominant (oppressive) knowledges” (Gavey, 1997, p. 53) and producing inclusive expressions of masculinity, which will have material benefit for women (and men).

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Chocolate Fish!

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